

Sangfielle 51: Six Travelers: Marn

Transcribed by: Iris (@sacredwhim)

AUSTIN (as NARRATOR): You didn't think the story was over, did you? No. Not quite yet.

[MUSIC INTRO BEGINS - ["Six Travelers" by Jack de Quidt](#)]

AUSTIN (as NARRATOR): We got miles to go, but we will be traversing them quickly. After all, what covers more territory: seven folks traveling together, or six going different directions? I know hearing that might hit some of you in the heart, and well, good. It's good to feel a little bad now and again. But if I can try to put you right, let me raise you this. In a thorough way, the Blackwick Group has been walking in different directions since the very beginning. Take Marn Ancura. I think the little Keen has had the best idea of what her little cadre was meant to do. But that didn't stop her from having different priorities, did it?

[RECAP]

ALI: So I'm going to be playing Marn Ancura. My class is the Hound. My Calling is Enlightenment. And my ancestry is a Carpana, which is the name of like, capybara-rodent people in this setting now.

[STITCH]

AUSTIN (as KERR KERN): Oh, this is kind of a lot, Marn.

ALI (as MARN): Um, yeah, I'm really concerned about this. There are some people who have been trying to achieve something, trying to find another world. And the things that they're capable of now are extremely worrying.

[STITCH]

ALI (as MARN): What happened with the Magistrate was self-defense. And whatever's happening between the Magistrate and me, I'm not gonna hurt you.

[STITCH]

ALI (as MARN): We can't like, talk to them? We can't just, you know, go with our hands up, with a white flag or whatever?

[STITCH]

ALI (as MARN): Can we get back to the task at hand?

[STITCH]

AUSTIN (as BUCHO): Marn, you found me as a sort of living scarecrow. I never thought it would be chill.

ALI (as MARN): Yeah, well. Could have been better than that, at least.

[RECAP ENDS]

[MUSIC ENDS]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker, and today we are going to finish Sangfielle by combining a couple of things. We are going to be continuing our game—sort of—of *HEART: The City Beneath* by Grant Howitt and Christopher Taylor, and we're going to be combining that with a sort of system—a kind of oracle card draw, a kind of procedural Delve system, from *ICHOR-DROWNED*, an unofficial supplement for *HEART: The City Beneath*, which is by Sillion L. and Brendan McLeod, and that is available on itch.io. I forget what the address itself is. *ICHOR-DROWNED*, itch. Let's see if this just pulls it up. It does. It's S-I-L-L-I-O-N-L.itch.io [sillionl.itch.io]
—you could also just do a search for *ICHOR-DROWNED* [PRONOUNCED 'ICK-CORE'], or *ICHOR-DROWNED* [PRONOUNCED 'EYE-CORE']. I-C-H-O-R.

And again, about 40-some pages into this, there's a system called Delve Draws: "Let the whims of fortune decide your fate. This is a pseudo-tarot system done with a traditional 52-card deck (and as many Jokers as you desire) to help with on-the-fly design of Delves to and fro within the Heart." And basically, using a deck of 52 cards, plus Jokers, you can kind of get a prompt for a series of encounters on a Delve. And it's a system I always wanted to use this season after this book dropped, but we are kind of past the point at which procedural Delves made a lot of sense, and so I thought a good place to deploy it would be here, in this series of vignettes that form a sort of epilogue to this first season of Sangfielle, in which we see the members of the now-dispersed Blackwick Group going about their business and pursuing their own individual ends and getting a taste of what the world is like here in these days after the big kind of crisis at Blackwick.

To start that off, Marn Ancura, Ali, hi. How you doing?

ALI: Hey, hello.

AUSTIN: So I feel like we should just come in—we kind of left you on the beginning of a Delve. Right? We left you leaving Blackwick with 15-20 people—

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Plus Bucho.

ALI: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: To go either to Vish or the Telluricist Union H.Q. Those are the two that we kind of floated.

ALI: Yeah, the way that I think about it, and I guess I'm still a little bit torn, but it feels like—the Telluricist Union is obviously farther, but it also feels like it's the sort of place that would have this

sort of like—enough of an infrastructure set up that they could like, reasonably help an additional 15 people for a couple days.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And then also have the resources to like, move them to somewhere on the map that—

AUSTIN: Is potentially safer, or—

ALI: Right, so these people would have some sort of agency over where—like, you know, somebody knows a cousin somewhere else and just needs an escort there or whatever. You know what I mean? So, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yeah. 'Hey, we can get there, and then from there, we can decide where to bring people.'

ALI: Right. Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: But you're walking overtop of these mountains, which is difficult. We haven't really put a specific point on this map, but I'm guessing it's kind of the very northern end of this mountain range. Right?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: That goes almost to, but not all the way to, Concentus. Or actually, it does. It passes up through Concentus, but not that far. You wouldn't get to the city, presumably. You would be south of the city. Kind of where the T is on the word 'Concentus', right?

ALI: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: That makes sense to me. Cool. Um—

ALI: I have two—okay, I have two—[LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Off of the top, two just short bargains.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Can one skeleton be there?

AUSTIN: In the mix—

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Just one of the skeletons—a skeleton who is like 'you know what, I'm done with this bullshit.'

ALI: 'I gotta go.' [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: 'I'm done with being on either side of this weird skeletal civil war that only popped up a couple of times this season.' Yeah, uh-huh. Absolutely.

ALI: Second bargain: Ana Berylia and Mr. Kenson. [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Ohh. Do you think that they go with you?

ALI: I would hope that they would.

AUSTIN: I think Ana might, I don't know about Mr. Kenson.

ALI: I understand that, yeah, I do. [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean? But... hm. The question ends up being 'is there another place for them?'

ALI: Sure. Yeah.

AUSTIN: It would be fun to see them work with Chantilly Scathe—

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: —on the train, but we can get that later if the world shakes out that way. For now, I think—I think let's have them with you.

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: I think that like, I think—I think I'll give you Ana, because Ana was so put upon.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: I think Mr. Kenson is too much of that, like, stereotypical butler who is like, waiting for his lord to come back.

ALI: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: You know? Waiting for his—that's what he's for. You know, that's what his job is. He doesn't bear—or he says he doesn't bear any ill will against Ana for leaving. You know?

ALI: Sure, sure, sure, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: So Ana for sure can be there, and like, you know, have a little suitcase filled with all of her finests, and, you know—

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: All of the things she happened to have—you know, she probably—like I said, she was staying—Dayward was staying in the city, and so—or in town, and so she probably had brought, like, a suitcase of her most important stuff.

ALI: Oh, sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: She probably will—does not have everything because some of it is still in the house that is—I mean, who knows what’s up with that house at this point. But yeah, this makes sense.

ALI: [OVERLAPPING] [LAUGHS] Yeah, I was thinking, like... that house would be up for ransacking, but I don’t know if like... [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Oh, a hundred percent would be. And actually, maybe the thing is, you’ll be walking past it if you’re headed north through the mountains.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Right? So, next you’ll wonder if stopping there could be a thing that we end up doing here. Let’s turn to these cards.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: I’ll read from the book again here—this is from *ICHOR-DROWNED* [PRONOUNCED ‘EYE-CORE’], or *ICHOR-DROWNED* [PRONOUNCED ICK-CORE].

“There are two recommended kinds of Delve Draws, one a modified version of the other. The traditional is three cards drawn left to right, representing the beginning, middle, and end. These will give you a vague design for the path between two places within the Heart—” for us, the Heartland. “For longer Delves, two more cards may be drawn and placed above and below the three-card spread. The card above will flavor that which is fortunate, positive, and hopeful; the lights at the end of the tunnel, and more literally, your potential allies, resources, boones, and haunts. The card below will flavor that which destroys and hinders; the Heart itself, as well as the adversaries, banes, and obstacles the Delve will consist of. Listed below the card descriptions are a series of potential options for the card drawn. Rolling a d6 on each option will clarify the cards drawn even further, though inventing new interpretations of the cards’ themes in context of the full spread is encouraged.”

Do you want to do—and I don’t—I might offer everybody this option—do you want to do just the basic three-card draw, which is just three encounters, effectively, or do you want to do those plus the above and below flavor? The sort of fortunate light that shines on you, and the card below which hinders.

[10:02]

ALI: Oh, sure. Um...

AUSTIN: You know, it’s kind of like—it’s kind of hard—I know it can be hard to guess what that might mean without having done one of these draws yet, you know?

ALI: [LAUGHING] Sure. I—

AUSTIN: But like, as an ex—go ahead.

ALI: Well, I was just going to say, the hesitation that I have about this, especially, like, the framing of this Delve, is that it ends up being consequences not just for Marn, but for a group.

AUSTIN: This is true.

ALI: And I—I don't, like—'cause it's a game and it is what it is, I don't want to shy away from like, big consequences, but I just want to keep that in mind while...

AUSTIN: I mean, the thing is, as we've talked about it, the consequences will only be—I mean, I'll just say how I'm planning this.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: The way I'm planning this is, we'll come to an encounter, and then I'm going to ask you for a Skill, Domain, or an Ability that you use to get you past that encounter.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: And then I'm gonna ask you, 'do you get past that encounter safely?' And I'm going to leave it to you to tell me if you do or don't, or if there are consequences.

ALI: [LAUGHING] Okay.

AUSTIN: I might, you know, maybe lean on it and say 'do you really think that was enough?' And then, at that point, the next time we come to one, I'll ask you for a Skill, a Domain, or an Ability, but not one—not one you just used. Right?

ALI: Oh, sure, sure, sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: Not a Skill if you just used a Skill, not a Domain if you just used a Domain, et cetera.

ALI: It's going to be like as if you had marked it off or whatever, right?

AUSTIN: As if you had marked off that entire—all of your Skills. All of your Domains—do you know what I mean?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, I want to get kind of that spread, that color of the character sheet.

ALI: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: My interest here is not—you know, I am framing this as vignettes, character vignettes, as a farewell to this season, and potentially as a farewell to these characters, because I suspect from talking to a group—the whole group—some people will want to come back to a Sangfielle 2, which will be in a different game, and maybe even after a little bit of a time jump, we'll see—this could be a farewell to those characters in a way. Or at least, temporary, you know, 'so long.' At least a final image for now, for who these characters are. Which means, hey, if you want to kill Marn here, we can kill Marn here.

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: But, if you instead want to just show, you know—give images of Marn struggling, or succeeding remarkably, that's up to you. Like, I'm flexible on that.

ALI: Sure, sure, sure.

AUSTIN: I'm not gonna make you roll dice here. I thought about it. I really did think about it really hard, about like, 'am I being too soft at the end of this season? Is it better to like, game-ify this in a way that's like, oh, and you can call on an ally, and you could roll some dice to get extra da-da-da—' I was like, you know, 'do I really want to emphasize that you're separated now and that that means you don't get helping dice anymore?' You know? I thought about that, and I thought that like, I think that that's one way to do it. But I don't know that it's the core goal of what we're getting at here. Especially as we know that Sangfielle's going to come back for a second season at some point, right?

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: That, to me, is like, a different—I'm not trying to sell Sangfielle as deadly at this point. I think it's pretty fucking clear—

[ALI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: —that it could take anybody at any time.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: And who knows? We could go—we're having this conversation, we could turn that third card and you could be like, 'you know what? Damn. I hadn't even thought about it, but that's an interesting outcome.' So.

ALI: [LAUGHS] Right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: But yeah, so if you want to, we can keep it to this three—this basic encounter of three cards.

ALI: Sure, sure, sure, sure. I guess like—I guess, talking through it now, I feel like five—I would prefer it because it's more interesting and also like, more honest to like, the hurdle of this action. But like, if we end up in like a group violence thing, that's like a bail for me, for instance. You know?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I gotcha. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you said yes, then, to five?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: So it's three encounters, and then there's going to be an above and a below, which are flavor cards, effectively.

ALI: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: A positive and a negative. Alright, I'm gonna draw this spread out. Alright. I wish I had a better tabletop for this. This is just the messy-ass map of Sangfuelle. It's fine. Alright. One... two... three... I'll give you above first. I'll turn that. And then I'll do below. Um... Should I reveal above and below first, or should I reveal above and below after I reveal the first location? Or the first encounter? I feel like let's reveal the first encounter first. And then—hm.

ALI: Okay, yeah, but are those other two things supposed to be an umbrella over the situation, though? Or is it like—

AUSTIN: They are, they are. So yeah, maybe them first makes sense, right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. So then, this card—I guess, bad news or good news first?

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Do you want to know the flavor of the fortunate, positive, and hopeful, or the flavor of that which destroys and hinders?

ALI: Um, let's do bad and then good.

AUSTIN: Bad and then good. Alright. Flipping bad. [CHUCKLING] The Ace of Spades.

ALI: That's probably fine. [CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Let's see what that is. Uh... huh. The Ace of Spades, in this case the thing that will hinder you, is 'light'.

[ALI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Do you want more specifics, or do you think that that's enough to play from? You could roll a d6 to pull from this secondary kind of chart on each card.

ALI: Wow, um, I—[LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: This is really fun. I think you should roll it. Roll the d6. This is my—

ALI: [LAUGHING] Okay. I—yeah. Well, 'light' just feels like one of those things where there's a lot that we can choose from.

AUSTIN: There is. And it's interesting, because these examples are actually not very light-focused.

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: These examples are very—it's like this is the 'light deck,' is the way it's kind of feeling to me, in that these are positive things, generally speaking, in this deck. Do you want to roll, or should I pick one of these potential six things?

ALI: Let's roll it, yeah.

AUSTIN: Give me the 1d6.

ALI: Okay. That's a 5.

AUSTIN: Alright, 5. Oh, this is a wild one.

[ALI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: The kind of negative, destructive element of this Delve will be "a half-dead god desperate for a single bearer of their liturgy." There is a half-dead god that wants someone here to carry their belief forward.

ALI: True.

AUSTIN: And I wonder who that could be.

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: That's not even—this is me being 'hmm, interesting.' I mean, we do have a particular goddess tied to the—

ALI: The Mother-beast, right?

AUSTIN: I mean, the Mother-beast, who is absolutely more than half-dead at this point, right? I mean, is being—the last of her is being consumed as we speak by Alaway. Or ongoing-ly, or has been. So that's—the idea of you moving through the sort of mountains of the Mother-beast, and like, her desperately calling up to you to be like, 'please, if you're going to leave this place with more people, you have to—I'm insisting that you take something of me with you' is interesting.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Let me flip the positive card.

[ALI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: The Seven of Clubs. Seven of clubs is "an old flame rekindled against nature." Interesting.

[ALI SCOFFS]

AUSTIN: Give me another d6.

ALI: Will do.

AUSTIN: Is this a literal flame, or a metaphorical flame?

ALI: You know...

AUSTIN: Another 5. “A simulacrum of a long-lost love, armed and dangerous.” We don’t know much about Marn’s past, do we?

ALI: [LAUGHING] We sure don’t.

AUSTIN: Is there a long-lost love in Marn’s life?

ALI: You know...

AUSTIN: Or can we read that in a more metaphoric sense, you know? Is there a—is there part of Marn’s life that we haven’t talked about, that is particularly dangerous, or particularly—or not even dangerous in the past, but now, protective of you?

ALI: Mm. Can you just write the two prompts like, in the chat just so I can—[LAUGHING] Sorry. Just to keep track.

AUSTIN: Yes, absolutely. So, I’m gonna put “good omen” or, you know, ‘positive thing’ here is “an old flame rekindled against nature” and then the subversion of that is “a simulacrum—” so not the literal person— “a simulacrum of a long-lost love, armed and dangerous.” And then, you know, the bad omen part of this is “light” and then “a half-dead god, desperate for a single bearer of their liturgy.” The irony there, too, remember, is there was that book—where did that book end up? We—Virtue had the Book of the Mother-beast at one point.

ALI: Oh, that’s true. [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: The literal liturgy of the Mother-beast. It’s totally possible that one of the final things that you find here is literally that, or that some sort of terrible, you know, version of the Mother-beast’s—you know, are we getting—are we getting—I mean, we should see what this first actual place is. And then that could help us, you know, interpret these positive-negatives.

ALI: [LAUGHING] Sure.

AUSTIN: Flipping this first one. The King of Diamonds. The King of Diamonds. Let’s see what ‘diamonds’ is all about, huh? “The King of Diamonds—” Oh my god. Okay.

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Give me a d6 and then I’ll start to describe what you see. Okay, yeah.

ALI: You sound exasperated, and [LAUGHING] I’m so worried.

AUSTIN: I mean, you drew a King, you know what I mean? Uh... yeah, okay. I needed to make sure that this word that I saw was like a thing from this setting that I could just kind of discard, if that makes sense.

ALI: Oh, sure, sure, sure.

AUSTIN: Which I can, but, uh... Alright. This is kind of fun. Okay. So you’re going over land, and also through the mountains and everything, presumably, and tunnels maybe similar to those that

you took when you first went down to Yellowfield—remember I kind of gave you that option back then?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Of like, 'do you want to go above, or do you want to go below and through?' And I think you've traveled for like half a day. You think you're probably up near where Roseroot Hall is, up in the mountains north of Blackwick. You're not that far away. And you're walking through areas that previously would have been filled with the lava of the Mother-beast, and so would have been impossible for you to walk through, which means no one's been in these places in such a long time.

[20:00]

And you come to a huge cavern that's almost like stepping into—it's almost like stepping into something—it's as if you've moved through the esophagus into the stomach of the mountains themselves. Like, it's that sort of—you're leading these people, you have a little torch, Bucho is maybe up front, you're in the middle or in the back making sure people don't get lost, you're making sure to light the way—and it's this huge, cavernous, almost organ of a room, and again, all of this would have been filled previously with the kind of golden-orange blood of the Mother-beast that kind of saturated these mountains and became the literal stuff that people were finding. And so, one, you find this kind of hoard of stuff.

The card you drew, the King of Diamonds, says "a broken dragon atop an alien hoard." And in case there was any question about whether it was a literal dragon or not, it is described as a—because you rolled a 2—"a serpentine creature defending a Prokatakos mystery." Prokatakos are the—in *Spire*, is like the pre—*Spire* is the game that sets the—is the first game set in the world that *HEART* is set in. We do not really reference *Spire* that much. *Spire* is a really interesting resistance game about a sort of revolution in a high elf city where the high elves are these, like, terrible oppressors who keep the dark elves underfoot as a sort of servant class, and as kind of second-class citizens, and—it's a really interesting and very fascinating world that we've referenced maybe once or twice during, like, worldbuilding and character creation.

And the Prokatakos, the part of this that I want to—the part of it that I would keep is, my understanding is that that is, in *Spire*, the sort of pre-imperial kind of historical people from where the Spire is, and so for us, I think this is a kind of serpentine creature defending some sort of hoard of stuff from the era of the Mother-beast from before Aldomina's invasion. Right? This is like—it's not quite an old god, do you know what I mean?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: We're not talking about—but it's the sort of—it's a sort of cousin to the Mother-beast, or a kin to the Mother-beast. Another—maybe another creation of the Mother-beast that is—that would have been maybe worshipped or feared by the people who lived here before Aldomina came and, you know, drove them away and killed many of them. Maybe even before our version of the Temple of the Mother-beast was first built. You know?

And I think it's made of the random stuff—it's like, it's as if that spirit has imbued parts of this hoard of materials, right? So it's like—and I think that this gets colored very easily by the half-dead god desperate for a single bearer—is like, the last little bit of spirit of the Mother-beast has poured itself into this collection of half-formed things that are in the caves. Right? We've talked about how the caves don't produce new stuff anymore—

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And so it's like, you know, again—I'm just now doing the thing of looking around my room and being like—

[ALI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: A bottle of soda, and a salt shaker, and a window! [CHUCKLES] But you know, whatever stuff is here, right?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: An old wheel—has been, like—has become a sort of like, as if you've magnetized it all and turned it into a big dragon. And it's like [IMITATES DRAGON FLARING] [INHALES] 'Rawr.'

ALI: Oh, the dragon is made up of these things.

AUSTIN: It's made of the stuff. It is. It is the hoard itself. You know?

ALI: Boy, howdy.

AUSTIN: And there's also a hoard of all the stuff.

ALI: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: It's like a classic dragon treasure hoard, except the treasure is, you know, old picture frames and bicycles and, you know, whatever, ovens and candelabras and stuff.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: And then also, you know, stepping between it is this ancient dragon that is—or this—it's the form of an ancient dragon made up of all of this stuff. You know?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: It's like—we don't have a Mother-beast, so we've made—you know, the stuff has remade the Mother-beast almost. You know?

ALI: Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Out of itself.

[ALI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: And you gotta get past this thing somehow.

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: And you have your Skills, your Domains, your Abilities, and then “an old flame rekindled against nature, a simulacrum of a long-lost love, armed and dangerous—”

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: —that you could talk about as ways to get past this.

ALI: Sure could. I like—on the ‘long-lost love’ thing, because it’ll probably show up in different ways—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: But up top, I’m wondering if it’s like—if it becomes too metaphorical if like, part of that is Marn’s sort of ambition in this trip, you know what I mean? In the terms of like, you know, I’m turning away from what I thought would be interesting and the career that I thought would work for me to like, really just be a person who’s gonna help people, and like—[LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Ali, listen. As someone who is going through a crisis of confidence as a creator currently, I fucking get it. This is like you seven years ago with all that spark, and that sense of like, ‘Yeah, I could change the world. Of course I could.’ You know?

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: And specifically that version of yourself that was committed to this other way of being that we talked about a little bit in the last episode. Right?

ALI: Right, yeah, exactly. Because, you know, I think the trigger point for Marn is really that conversation with Bucho where she was like, ‘I feel like I lied to you and I don’t feel like I did anything that was worthwhile.’ Right?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Like, ‘I put you in danger by saying I could lead you to a safe place, and that is so the opposite of what I thought that I would be doing.’

AUSTIN: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That like—this full rejection of like—that pathway is now like, [LAUGHING] ‘I’ve gotta find what’s right for me’ or whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. I love that, actually.

ALI: [LAUGHING] Okay.

AUSTIN: I think that is perfectly fine. And I think that’s super interesting to place that in the position that it’s in, where like, that’s not guilt dragging you down here. That drive to become

that person again that you used to be, or to prove that you can help people in that way, is the positive thing here. It is the thing that you can call upon to push through this.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: It's fortunate, positive, and hopeful. Right?

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: And it is also the light at the end of tunnel. Right? It is like that is what you're working towards. So, given all of that characterization, how do you get past this weird junk dragon?

ALI: [LAUGHS] Wonderful question. I really like that this is the first stop, because it feels like Marn just like accidentally walking into a sanctum.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. I mean, after all that, right? After all the shit that we've seen with Lyke and the various gods, and—

ALI: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: It's like, 'well, here we fuckin' are.' And also it's like, 'yeah, this is why we gotta leave.'

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, the Mother-beast of Blackwick is literally—the remnants, the spirit thereof, is like 'no, don't go. You have to stay here. You have to stay in the muck with this shit. You have to keep trying to solve the problem of Blackwick, and of the Mother-beast, or you have to take part of me with you. I'm begging you.' You know?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: I think this thing is like—instead of fire, it is basically spewing other stuff. You know? It's spewing out other parts of the hoard. It's almost like it's a hose for all of these hills and mountains of old rusted, you know, boat oars or whatever—I know boat oars are made of wood, but these are metal and they're rusted. Fire hydrants and, you know, old blankets are being spit out instead of fire. Do you know what I mean? And it's not—I don't think it's seen you at this point, necessarily, but it is—it is like, kind of stomping around or slithering through parts of this huge hoard of what would be gold, but in this case is just stuff. Just mountains of it inside of this big cave. So what Skill, Domain, or Ability do you want to call on here to get past?

ALI: Yeah, I, um... I have—I think I—I feel like have a combo here.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Which is—especially as the cover of the prompt is turning towards like, 'take a part of me with you,' I think like a Compel plus this weird branch is [LAUGHING] the way to go.

AUSTIN: Oh, interesting.

ALI: I was like—when I first framed it I was like, is this gonna be a scene of Marn like, making this exchange with the creature to be like, ‘here’s a powerful object, I’ll take one too, and then I’ll go on my journey with this—’ Yeah. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: ‘We’ll switch.’ Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ALI: Or is it like—‘cause I don’t want it to be like, ‘Marn gets the Orb of the Mother-beast’ or whatever, right? ‘Cause it’s—[LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: No, but I actually do know what you get. I do know what you get here. So yeah, you hand over—what, you hand over this—it’s the Course-touched Branch, right?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Something like that? Coursed Branch? With the orb indented, it looks like it could be a staff. It could hold an orb in it, is what I said, right?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Something like that? Yeah, you offer that up. The dragon huffs and puffs, and as it does, you know, instead of smoke coming out of its nostrils it’s like—or maybe it is smoke, but it’s like smoke that smells weird, ‘cause what it really is is like perfume, you know? We always talked about this place producing solid things, but it’s totally possible that the Mother-beast, that the tunnels of Blackwick, could have produced just like, ‘oh, I hit a vein of CK One perfume.’

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: [CHUCKLES] Right? Or like, some sort of, you know, I don’t know, incense mist that’s already burning. And so like, that’s coming through. And as you hand it over, we get something we haven’t seen that’s connected to Marn for a little while. Which is that little stick figure. You’ve got that little stick lizard that has been following you.

ALI: True.

[30:05]

AUSTIN: And I think it follows the Coursed Branch that you hand over. Or you kind of like, gesture, or put on top of a mound of stuff or something. And it climbs up to the top of that branch, and then raises its little hands, it does that kind of like, praying mantis dance, you know what I’m talking about? And like four or five other little junk insects crawl out of the mound. There’s one that’s made out of like, a spring that’s all bent up in a weird way, like a little hand-sized spring, there’s one that’s—they’re not all mechanical necessarily, I think maybe one of them is like a sort of spool of—just like a spool of thread that rolls itself up to you, and leaves a little bit of thread behind, and just kind of like, follows you around. All of these kind of living pieces of junk is what you’ve traded for, and these are like, you know, things that have some small spirit of the Mother-beast in them. And the dragon kind of goes off into one corner and like, huffs and puffs and lets you past.

ALI: Everybody, I have a soundtrack to that encounter, you can go to YouTube.com and search “geckos with Yoshi sounds”.

[ALI AND AUSTIN LAUGH]

AUSTIN: God. Uh-huh. Perfect. Yeah. Good. And yeah, you lead everybody past. Everyone is very confused by everything that just happened, and the new additions to your little group, these strange little junk-creatures that are following you around now. Weird.

ALI: Is it the lizard as well, it's like the group of them are now—

AUSTIN: I think the lizard stayed with you, yeah.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: I think it kind of called out from the top of the branch, like it used the branch to echo its voice out and recruit these kind of—or like, you know, welcome these creatures, these junk-creatures, these stuff-creatures, with you. So yeah, it's a little living spool of thread, some sort of little spring-like slinky creature. I kind of imagine there's one thing that's like—it sort of looks like one of the stick—like a stick insect, except it's made of like, the handlebars of a bicycle or a little tricycle, you know what I mean? Like, that style of metal that's been kind of in that weird shape anyway. Almost like a Y-shape anyway. There's all sorts of just little—you know, four or five of these little creatures, you know? It's hard to come up with just, stuff that could be a being off the top of your head sometimes.

ALI: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: But you get it, you know?

ALI: Oh, these are great examples.

AUSTIN: Alright, good.

ALI: And, you know, come onto the wagon, guys. [CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Come on in, yeah, that's right. Alright. You ready for the next stop on this trip up?

ALI: Yes. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. The Nine of Spades. Which of course is “an oracle reluctant to part with their portence.” Give me a d6.

ALI: [CHUCKLING] Sure. Right on theme, these.

AUSTIN: I know. Oh, interesting. This is interesting. Because it's—this is train lore from *Spire* and *HEART* that's different than our train lore. And I want to kind of—I might keep it that way. So this says “a Vermissian sage searching for the last train.” Which is, there's a big difference between the way *HEART* trains are written and our trains, which is that they exist in Sangfielle. In *Spire* and *HEART*, there were tunnels of these trains that—the TL;DR is they all fucked off to

another dimension and destroyed a bunch of stuff in the process, but there might be one left out there. We—all of our trains are still here.

But I think you come across a Shape Knight, who is like, 'I can't let you pass.' It's a big Ojantani who is in big Shape Train armor, and is like:

AUSTIN (as SHAPE KNIGHT): I can't let you pass, the last train is behind me and I've almost—it's the last one I need to kill.

AUSTIN: And like, has a big—has a huge axe, like a—it's the sort of thing that like—in a previous season we had a character who was able to wield a mech-sized weapon in their hands, as a human being, and that's what the situation is. This is like, a big, you know, buffalo-person holding a giant axe over their shoulder. And the axe is dripping with oil. And they say to you, that like, 'I can't let you past here because—' and here is like down into a valley, and down in the valley you can see smoke coming up from what would—you imagine—be a train. The sort of like—the smokestack of a train. And you would hear the train whistle every now and then. And you can maybe even see some of the tracks. I imagine you've popped out of the mountains, and you have to cross a little valley. You're looking down and it's like, misty. And through the mist you can kind of just barely see some motion. And this big Shape Knight is like, 'you're not allowed to go north, because I have to go kill the last train.'

ALI: Hm.

AUSTIN (as SHAPE KNIGHT): I'm sorry, you're gonna have to turn around.

ALI (as MARN): Well, I'm not gonna be able to do that today, sir.

AUSTIN (as SHAPE KNIGHT): Any who crosses me will bear the sharp end of my axe.

ALI (as MARN): I'm sure we can figure something out.

ALI: [LAUGHING] As I look over my character sheet.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ALI: God. I—fuck. [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: You saw—just to be super-clear, you saw a train like two days ago.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Or three—whatever it's been, five days. Whatever it's been since you were at the carnival, there was a train there. You are pretty sure this is not the final train. You don't know why this person believes that is true, you don't know, maybe it is true, maybe it's been a weird five days out there.

ALI: Right, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, I fucking... [LAUGHS] I keep thinking of like, an extremely *Dark Souls* solution, which is like, you find this person 20 hours later and give them a piece of a train, and it's like, 'don't worry about it.' [LAUGHING] But that's like—

AUSTIN: 'Don't worry about it. We'll be back.' Uh-huh. And you've used your Skill already, you've already used Compel, right? So you can't Compel him to just let you pass.

ALI: Oh, sure. Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: So now we've got Abilities, and we've got Domains left.

ALI: Mhm. Yeah, that's true. I removed the stick from my inventory, but not having Compel is a good one here too.

AUSTIN: It is, it is.

ALI: This is such a weird thing, because I don't want the thing—I don't want Marn to approach this person as if they're being unreasonable, right?

AUSTIN: Right, right.

ALI: And like, whether or not there's like some delusion about the situation, there is danger afoot and like—

AUSTIN: That is true, yes. A hundred percent.

ALI: You know. For Marn, I don't know that there's like, a real meaningful difference there. 'This person thinks it's the last train' versus just 'a train that will hurt these people either way.'

AUSTIN: Yep, yep.

ALI: But, you know. There's also some crisis in terms of... [LAUGHS] interacting with someone who doesn't seem...

AUSTIN: But also, you know, you've walked through a strange place.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Are you now in a place where this is the last train? Who could say?

ALI: Absolutely, yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, I truly don't—you truly don't know in the Heartland, so.

ALI: Okay, just to—maybe this is also another combo one, because, just to talk through it a little bit, the—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: The two that I was thinking of was either the move that actually gives me the Compel skill, which is "once per session when you enter a landmark, you learn of an injustice, threat, or danger that's worrying the people there. Some folks might be able to pay you if you help them." Which like, I don't know that the framing of this scene is like 'Marn and this guy go kill a train—'

AUSTIN: [OVERLAPPING] 'Go kill a train,' yeah.

ALI: —but at least it can be framed as if that, like, Marn could find a way into this conversation where like, this person is able to open up, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

ALI: This person has warned me of a threat or danger, and I can try to assure them that I could try to help them, and the other one would be Around the Next Corner: "Once per Delve, you may find an out of the way location where you can catch your breath or recuperate without fear of being discovered by your enemies." And now that I like, put those two cards on the table, for instance, there's a way of like—maybe being like, you know, 'I understand your fear, so let's maybe me and you just go scout out this' and then being able to like, either give this person, like, a beneficial place to have this fight, or to assure them like—

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean, I—

ALI: 'We're gonna go this way.'

AUSTIN: 'And we'll be safe, and we'll be...'

ALI: Yeah. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: So the thing that I think comes out of that conversation, just to stay abstract with it a little bit, is you are not the first people to come down this way, and at first, he let people past, and when he did, they either joined the train voluntarily and became defenders of the train, or were consumed by the train, not only losing themselves, but also making the train more powerful.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And he doesn't trust you. And he neither trusted you to be safe, nor to necessarily stay on the side of the Shape Knights against the trains, right? You also just get like—it's as if you're talking—the thing that this reminds me of in tone—we talked about *Dark Souls*, and this is like, connected obviously, is like, *The Green Knight*. It feels like you've wandered into someone in the middle of their own weird, like, vignette.

ALI: Sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: Their own weird paranormal vignette, where like—it comes out in conversation that he thinks he's the last train knight, and like, Bucho is with you. Do you know what I mean?

ALI: Uh-huh.

[40:03]

AUSTIN: And it's not a delusion, because he's able to—I mean, we play fast and loose with reality in Sangfielle specifically, but more broadly I think that we are very interested in perceptive modes that are non-normative, and not dismissing them as being—it's what you said before, of

just like—hey, it's one thing if someone is being unsafe or dangerous to you, or like, threatening you, but like, if this person is in the middle of a kind of—whatever, you know, spiritual journey this person is fucking on right now, in that, they are able to—he is able to talk to you about what the history of the Shape Knights have been. And he is able to talk to you about it as if he is from a future that you have not yet accessed. Right? The like, 'oh, right, and then the Shape Trains ran into Sapodilla, and destroyed everything in Sapodilla.' And you're like, 'well I kind of remember when the Shape Knights got access to Sapodilla,' but you don't necessarily remember all the parts that he's talking about. And then—like, he's basically giving you the history of train *Mad Max*.

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean? He's like, 'and then the trains just fucking killed everybody, and now I'm the last—' He might even say, like I said, he thinks he's the last Shape Knight. You know? It's all come down to him and this train. There's something *Beowulf*-ian about it.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Right? There's like—it's—this is, you've stepped into the world of legend and this particular almost genre of epic story, but having convinced him that you both can take care of your people, and that you are not—you know, you've helped him in some way. And it does not even need to be, 'oh, I found a good place for you to fight this thing.' It could literally be 'here is some clean water, here is some oil for your armor, to polish,' you know what I mean, like?

ALI: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: I think that's enough for him to let you pass, again, as long as you think that that makes sense. Do you think everybody gets past this—is able to walk across the mountain pass safely as you kind of hear this person go off to fight his own dragon, in a sense?

ALI: Sure, I think it is that, but I think the like compromise there and what feels honest to what we've sort of laid out, is that this was a campsite. Like, we spent a few days here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ALI: It took a lot of back and forth with Marn and this person, it took a lot of like—sort of the repairs that you were speaking of, a lot of the like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: You know, Marn, Bucho, and this person that they don't feel one hundred percent safe with like, you know, doing that scouting and like, looking for train marks, or like trying to figure out how close it is to be like, 'oh, you know, it feels like it's moving to the left, so we can—' you know what I mean?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Like, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. It takes some time. And people are getting antsy, and hungry, and frustrated, and like, 'should we have just stayed in Blackwick?' and starting to doubt the process, and yeah.

ALI: Right. Yeah. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: I just love the image of you crossing these mountains, and like, down from the foggy valley, you can hear the fight happening, and you can see the sparks of it, you know?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: You were gonna say something else?

ALI: Oh, no, no, I—I keep going back to like, the sort of danger that you felt in *There Will Be Blood* when like, um—I was about to say Dayward—Daniel Lewis is like, alone with his brother who isn't his brother, and sort of the like, just like, Marn, Bucho, and this guy alone, who like—yeah. Just the sort of like, 'I'll watch your back.' There's like a—[LAUGHS] There's like a horror movie aspect of being like, is this—

AUSTIN: Yeah. Just lit by the firelight, and just like, 'fuck, bro, I do not know if we're gonna make it through tonight. I don't trust this person, because he thinks I might be on the train's side. You know?'

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Like, 'I don't know.' But yes, so as long as you're good with it I think you pass. And here is our final card. The Four of Hearts. Uh... huh.

ALI: Another roll?

AUSTIN: Give me a roll, yeah.

ALI: A 6. Rolling good today. Whatever good means.

AUSTIN: Yeah. You come to the—a plateau, here in the mountains. And you know that all you have to do is get across this plateau, and then you'll be on the final stretch, right? This is our last encounter. We haven't talked about what this place really looks like, except for—the place that the Telluricist Union is set up—except for maybe in like, the very early character creation and maybe the—a Patreon behind-the-scenes conversation between us, where we're trying to figure out who Marn was, and who the Telluricists were.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: But you know that that's about a day away, but before you get to where that is—and we can talk about what that looks like and stuff when we pass this, if we pass this—we have just this kind of green plateau. This beautiful field. Little wildflowers covering it all, kind of, you know, not super high grass, but this is not a maintained garden by any means. You know what I mean? And the suns are out, and you hear... you hear a crack. Like a—you almost might think it was the sound of a rifle shot, but it was really a bow being fired as loud as fuckin' hell. And a rain of

arrows cuts across this garden—or not this garden, this field—and you realize that it's coming down from—you know, you look for where it is, and you kind of look up, and you see a figure kind of silhouetted by the moon. It's one of those days where the moon is out early, you know, and the suns are still up, but the moon is also up. And silhouetted against this moon is—it's a god. Right? It's a godly figure. You got a six—or, sorry, you got a Four of Hearts, which is “a cosmic lover's quarrel slips from beyond the veil.” And the 6 is “a rain of arrows shooting from the sky itself as you cross the meadow.”

[ALI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: And you've wandered into a strange echo of a fight between what you can only say are a goddess of the moon, and someone of the earth itself. And there is something—I say it's an echo, because this is “a cosmic lover's quarrel slips in from beyond the veil,” and I'm calling this the veil of the past, sort of. These are huge beings. Or if they're not huge, they are like—gravity kind of swirls around them in such a way that they are able to do the impossible. You know, I know it sounds like we're still in *Dark Souls* world in some ways here.

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: But we're in the mythic. Right? You are crossing over these mountains and they're getting increasingly mythological, even though the numbers have gone down from King to Nine to Four.

ALI: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: And you are witnessing a war between two gods. Again, there's a kind of moon goddess, and what I guess you would say is like an earth goddess, someone who's like blocking these incoming arrows with—by raising up shields of the earth itself. And the earth itself looks sick, you know? It's like, when—not sick as in cool.

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Sick as in broken. It's like, this beautiful field is—just underneath it all, this kind of ghostly image of what the ground was before the field was grown, is this cracked and decrepit and like, lifeless dirt. You know, the kind of like desert where it's—all of the humidity is gone, and the entire ground has that sort of like, running broken vibe that certain deserts have. And yeah, so you're seeing this battle between these two gods hurling themselves at each other in a way that is completely intensely, you know, driven by a sort of resentment and a sort of broken-heartedness. Again, this is “cosmic lover's quarrel,” right?

[ALI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: So like, these are love—these gods were lovers at some point. And it seems like it came to blows over something. And like, the funny thing here is, it sounds like I'm improvising shit, but like, this is just true about Sangfielle lore.

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: This is—I'm like, referencing a thing that's in a document that's tied to major—other—I will tell you this, the Ace of Hearts being—or sorry, the Ace of Spades that you drew, the thing of “a half-dead god desperate for a single bearer of their liturgy,” intersects with this image I'm telling you in some important ways that I don't know that we'll ever get to, because it's just not what Sangfielle is about. You know what I mean?

ALI: Sure. Sure, sure, sure.

AUSTIN: But it's in the lore bible, so. So how do you get these people across this fuckin' strange field, where ghosts of gods, or echoes of gods, are just tearing it apart?

ALI: This is so funny. I can't wait for Lyke to do this and be like, [LAUGHING] ‘you find a well, and there's a big storm,’ or whatever.

AUSTIN: [OVERLAPPING] I know. I know. Like, deadass, that's all stuff that's possible. Do you know what I mean, like? There is other stuff in here that's like, “an inscrutable factory,” but there's absolutely other things where it's like, ‘you meet a nice merchant!’

ALI: That's so fucking funny. I hope all of the other journeys are super normie.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Me too.

ALI: Um... boy howdy. I gotta re-spec Marn for this one now. [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: I mean, all you have left is Domains, right? What do you have?

ALI: Um...

AUSTIN: What are your Domains?

ALI: My Domains are Haven, Religion, Technology, and Warren.

AUSTIN: Okay. Well, it's not technology here. It's certainly not Haven.

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: It might be Religion, but I don't know how you use it. You know what I mean? You tell me how you use it.

ALI: You know, I don't know—I—god.

[50:00]

ALI: I don't know if this is too out there, and it's sort of another, like, combo thing, but I wonder if it's just like—'cause it feels like I would suddenly be writing Marn raising a sword to a rainstorm. Right? To like, find a solution that's like, ‘Marn stops this,’ or ‘Marn—’ you know? [LAUGHS] ‘Sharpens their knife enough and goes out.’ But—so I think the like—having the Religion Domain and having the books on the nature of a god, I feel like almost the more honest thing is

like, researching that enough, having the foundational knowledge enough to be like—find a solution in terms of the way that they should walk across the thing, or like—yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean, this is—the thing that it is, straight up, is you just have to walk across it. You just have to trust that it's not—that it's an echo of a thing that happened here when this was not a beautiful field. This is a beautiful field.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: 'I'm going to walk across the beautiful field, and then I'm going to get to the other side. This is not happening, currently, no matter how much I can feel the wind of the moon-arrows, no matter how much I can sense the heat of the desert that was here before, and the cracked earth. None of that is real. Or it was real, it happened, and everyone just hold each other's hands, and we're gonna walk into the battle, and through it, and we're gonna get to the other side safely.'

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Does it work?

ALI: I think so, because I feel like the real image here of Marn like assuring people, or doing the like, very straightforward anxiety therapy thing of like, 'name five flowers that you can see.'

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And like, getting people really distracted in that, or like, you know, 'pick some of them and make a flower crown,' or like, you know, things like that, of like, 'interact with the area that you're in so you can like, know what's present.' You know what I mean, like? The—yeah. [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Yeah. I totally do. I totally do. Alright. So, I think then—yeah. You get across, and you're climbing up to this last kind of area of—the last kind of leg of this journey to get to the Telluricist Union. And you look back, and when you look back, it's as if you're on one or the other side of what that fight was. Which is to say, you're either looking at something that happened right before that fight happened between these two gods, or right after. And it's an image that the listener has heard described before, but not that Marn has seen before. And you're seeing it from a different perspective.

It is a pair—it is the two of them handing down something. We've seen it before as a grape seed. Their hands kind of barely holding it between the two of them, because it's so small. I described it at the time—this is back in the Yellowfield arc, the Candle Factory arc—passing it down to the Mother-beast—who I think you actually see as the sort of simulacrum of the Mother-beast, the junk Mother-beast—reaching up and taking something from these ghosts, which is, you know, a ghostly form of the small grape seed that would one day turn into the egg sac that would one day turn into It, the creature that Chine began to raise. And you are on the other side of it now. A strange vision of gods giving something to another god, another godly beast. And you get the sense that there's something different between these types of creatures, and again, you don't know if this is happening before or after the fight, but—or if it's happening

in an alternate universe. Like, who—you're seeing a weird thing with gods happening, you never know what the fuck that means. But Marn has seen it, and presumably jots it down, probably in a notebook where you're keeping all of your notes on books on the nature of a god, because boy, if this doesn't intersect with that somehow.

ALI: I gotta talk to somebody about this.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And you'll soon have lots of people to talk to about it, because that is the final leg of your journey. You pass on from the mountains and to the Telluricist Union headquarters. What's this look like?

ALI: Um... you know, since we've been talking about it in the peak of this sort of mountain range, I've had it in my head as sort of like this space between like two sort of short canyons, where it's like—because I think we set them up as like, a group of people who had lived through a disaster and needed to be—needed to, like, secure a place of security, and then also like, be able to live off of something that was sort of barren or not as supple or whatever as the land was pre-Sangfielle or whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: So this sort of, like—it looks like you're walking up towards these two mountain peaks, but like, there's this curvature of the hills that's like this—you know. [LAUGHS] Environment or city that's built. Or not city, but like, you know. [LAUGHS] Settlement in this—yeah.

AUSTIN: Whatever—yeah. It's bigger than—it's probably bigger than a small village, but probably not as big as a big town. Right?

ALI: Sure, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: It's not a city. It's certainly not Sapodilla-sized. It's—is it Blackwick-sized? Is it smaller than Blackwick-sized?

ALI: I think it's probably Blackwick-sized.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: I've been like, thinking about how many people lived in Blackwick.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And I didn't know if it was like, a hundred? Is it more than a hundred?

AUSTIN: I think it's more than a hundred, probably, but less than a thousand. You know what I mean?

ALI: Sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: And it probably fluctuates based on seasons, and based on—I mean, now, who the fuck knows, because the mines are gonna be empty soon enough. You know?

ALI: Right, yeah. And I think it's also one of those, like, it looks like a place that isn't—not run-down, but also not upgraded. You know? It's a lot of like, single-floor buildings, and like little, you know, tents sort of tucked into different places against these hillsides. But you know, seems also sort of like... you know, robust and lively, I guess is sort of the thing, like—

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ALI: There's this relief of like, people coming into this space and also this acceptance of, you know, having people come in and like—there's like a system for this, so it feels—

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: You know, the arrival of somewhere that feels prepared for what your problem might be is like—[LAUGHING] you know?

AUSTIN: Right, like, you're only a few yards in before people are bringing over water and blankets and like, being 'oh, where do we, what's going on—'

ALI: Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: 'Do people need a place to rest?' Like, you know, 'we'll get a fire going,' da-da-da-da-da. 'We'll get some food ready,' you know, whatever that is. Like, that's happening instantly. And I think Bucho is like—you sense that Bucho is like taken aback by the warmth of this place. And I think he's like:

AUSTIN (as BUCHO): I knew what you had said, but I did not expect such a welcome.

ALI (as MARN): Yeah, well, you know. I've—this is... This is what we try to do here.

AUSTIN (as BUCHO): [SIGHS] It is not like this with the Shape Knights.

AUSTIN: I don't think he says more than that, but, you know. There's competition, there's a sense of, you know, brinksmanship and bragging and trying to figure out who's the strongest, and all of that is just not here. And maybe that's here in the Telluricist Union in other ways, you know, maybe there is like 'ooh, I want to get the best thesis this year' or whatever, but the immediate response was to take care of people, not to be suspicious of them. Right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And like, you just came off of meeting a dude who is like, 'I'm suspicious of you. I'm a Shape Knight who's suspicious of you.' You know?

ALI: [LAUGHS] Yeah. Uh-huh. And I—but, you know, some of the thesis of the Telluricist Union was like, the people who are gonna be best at community building are the people who have made that their goal, so I think that some of the like—I guess the way that we've framed Telluricist so low that it seems like such educational-built, or like, you know... [LAUGHING] It's funny to sort of have this like, [LAUGHING] reputation of a bunch of nerds, you know what I mean?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: When like, really, the purpose of it is like, I—the thing that I want to do is to have the ability to help in a situation that I might be able to help something in. Because I've, you know, looked—

AUSTIN: Because you've done that training, and you have that experience, and you've made it your life's work to do that.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. Well, and I think it's like—this is about Bucho seeing the Telluricists that he has seen. Right? He has met you, who is always researching stuff. He has met Kerr Kern, who is like, also was up researching stuff in the Magistratum, and like—I mean, tending to the ill, but that's—it was such a crisis, that's of course what was happening. And then the vampire one, maybe, who's in—who's in—

ALI: [LAUGHING] Right.

AUSTIN: You know, Lenore, Lenore Voivode, who is in the library in Sapodilla. Which I don't know that they ever actually were in the same scene together, but presumably they—maybe they've crossed paths at some point, you know?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Not so much—and you know, Bucho lived in a city mostly, you know? I mean, went out in the world to do Shape Knight shit, obviously, but the sorts of—

ALI: [OVERLAPPING] Oh, but yeah, was not—

AUSTIN: —Telluricists you're talking about, right.

ALI: —yeah, encountering this in Sapodilla, right? Like he had one—

AUSTIN: No.

ALI: —barista who really liked everyone, but not the sort of like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

[1:00:03]

AUSTIN: He had a butcher already, he had a knife-sharpener already, and it wasn't Telluricist Union people.

ALI: Yeah. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean? He wasn't—the thing about the Telluricist Union that we didn't really get this season, so much—I mean, I think the stuff with going to Yellowfield almost feels like this, is like, 'alright, I've come to town, what do you need?' You know? And the answer in that case was just fucked up because of how Alaway was. You know? But there's a degree of

like, you come to town and you attend to people's needs. And in this case, we're getting the opposite. Which is a bunch of people are going to the Telluricist Union town and getting their needs attended to. You know? So.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: I think that's as good of a place to wrap things up with Marn as there could be.

ALI: Yeah. Here, home base. Kerr Kern is here, presumably.

AUSTIN: Yeah, with—the research has all been presented. I think no one wants to push you to like, 'alright, now tonight, come talk about this stuff that you've talked about,' but like—do we see a sort of group meeting to talk through your notes, you know, in an abstract montage-y way? What do we see Marn doing over the next month or so?

ALI: I think it's a lot of like—'cause I was always wondering what I was like, sort of expecting the Telluricist reaction would be, and like—I mean, I guess it's one thing, the like, 'genius finds someone who's brilliant but willing to do extreme violence for their ends,' and being like, 'well, I have to stop this, right? I have to understand this in some way, right?'

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ALI: But also like—yeah, I, you know, whether it's like a technology that feels familiar to them in terms of like, 'we know what the Wrights are doing,' like—[LAUGHING] You know? Like, I don't want it to feel like this secret agent thing of like—

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ALI: —you know, 'we can point you in the right direction now.' But I think that there's like something sort of foundational in like—in both like, 'somebody did these things to learn A to B and those things were horrible,' but I don't want it to be a thing of like, 'and they're able to develop something' or something like that.

AUSTIN: No, right. Right, right, right.

ALI: But like, I feel like there's—but there should be something like, in either the history of Sangfielle or the history of the Telluricists where it's like, was Zevunzolia ever a concern for them? Or like, is that—

AUSTIN: Right, I mean, this is—part of the thing I've been thinking about is like, how much of what the Wrights and the Macula and all that other shit, what they've done was original versus stolen. Right? How much of this was them making new developments versus like—we know, for instance, the Wrights get a lot of their information from books just given to them by someone called the traveler or the—I don't think they're actually called 'the Traveler' because that's a *Destiny* thing, I don't think I want to call them 'the Traveler.' But there is a traveler, right? There is someone who has come from Zevunzolia, or from another one of these worlds—I think I've said outright that it's a person from another world who gave them some of their information. We

know that the Glim Macula were all about just taking shit from people and turning it into their shit, like with the—literally what they were doing to heritrixes, right?

And so, you know, I do think that maybe there is a world here where what you've—coming back to base and talking to other experts, going through your notes in the library here, one of the things that you hit upon is that, yeah, Zevunzolia was like a hypothesi—or something like Zevunzolia. Maybe those words weren't used. Those were the words that the Wrights used. Do you know what I mean? But like, soon after the panic, you know, is the first time that you're able to dig into the archives and see that there are notes from other Telluricists and other Keen who went out into the world and talked to people who are like 'yeah, I saw a city in the sky.' Or 'I was compelled to draw this. I was compelled to build this model of a place.' And in fact, maybe a fun thing to do here is to have the sort of like, you know, the Telluricist elders all looking at each other, like, 'alright, I guess it's time to tell her about the weird city.' You know?

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Not that you haven't brought them something. Do you know what I mean? Because you've brought them a lot in terms of what's actually—what this other group is doing, what their motivations and their techniques have been, but I think that you're right to be like, 'oh yeah, this isn't news to the Telluricists.'

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: This is something that there's already work being done on. Or had—you know, some record thereof. You know?

ALI: Right. Yeah. I wonder if the picture is like, Marn being pulled towards like a—[LAUGHS] a table by some elders or whatever, and like, there's this really old scroll or whatever, and it has like the—an image of Zevunzolia close to what it was in the library and Marn's like, 'fuck.'
[LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: 'Fuck, there it is.' Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah, I think that's good. Yeah, lose 1 Stress because you saw a depiction of Zevunzolia.

ALI: Oh, great. Yes, baby!

AUSTIN: [LAUGHS] Alright.

ALI: Oh, one more thing, because we—[LAUGHING] sorry.

AUSTIN: No, please.

ALI: Because we talked about the Telluricists being sort of silly nerds, I really need a scene of like—either like, a group of freshmen or whatever coming up to Bucho, or the weird Mother-beast insects of being like—

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah.

ALI: [LAUGHING] 'I have to—you have to let me shine your armor, I have to do my final on, like—'

AUSTIN: On like, shape knight armor, or like metallurgy, unique living metallurgy, so they're like, looking at the whole springs guy and being like, 'okay, what's your deal?'

[MUSIC OUTRO - ["Six Travelers" by Jack de Quidt](#)]