

Sangfielle 31: Hark! The Citadel Beneath Pt. 4

Transcriber: robotchangeling

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

Austin: You also see a beaker overflowing with a dark filmic liquid, which you immediately recognize as the stuff that covered your room, Chine. This is...this is one of the things that Hollowfield developed. It's like liquid nothing. And it can be applied to nullify the Course, to nullify the heartland, to nullify weirdness.

Jack: Ah, Austin, are there any secret passages in here that would allow us to move around more easily Cluedo style? [Ali laughs]

Austin: Give me a Discern.

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

Austin: You've led them into like a different part of the castle. And this is the Marquis's Halls, and this is a strange rolling drunken party. You emerge from a door, and there are just dozens of people chattering. And I say chattering, 'cause they're skeleton people.

Ali: Ooh!

Austin: There's just dozens of skeleton people wearing masks and costumes and having just an absolute like ball. And this place is more confusing than the one you just left.

Austin: The problem is that you're walking through a living nightmare right now, and for a brief moment, you thought that you may have lost your friend to the nightmare, that the nightmare may have turned her against you.

Dre (as Chine): I don't...she's here. I don't know how, but she's here.

Austin: As you come into this room, the thing that grabs your attention the most is a ground of sand. It's like someone's poured sand out in the middle of this kind of square recess in the room. And rising out of that sand is a kind of stark white marble structure, and at the top of that is a model of a vast and beautiful city. Whether or not you have heard it uttered the way that Pickman has or if you've seen it written the way Marn just did, upon seeing this model, you know what you are looking at: Zevunzolia. The world shifts around you upon witnessing this paradise.

Jack (as Pickman): Zevunzolia in this book, right? The place.

Austin (As Appletun): No.

Jack (as Pickman): The book has nothing to do with Zevunzolia?

Austin (As Appletun): Well, it's through Zevunzolia, the visitor, that we got these books.

Jack (as Pickman): Someone has come from Zevunzolia and given you these books.

Austin (As Appletun): The visitor goes many places.

Jack (as Pickman): But someone has come from this city.

Jack: Points at the middle of the room, like jabbing finger.

Jack (as Pickman): They came from there, and they gave you this.

Austin (As Appletun): Do you come from the living room to the bedroom?

Jack (as Pickman): Where is the visitor?

Austin (As Appletun): Oh, if we knew.

Jack (as Pickman): When will the visitor be back?

Austin (As Appletun): [laughs softly] You are asking questions we wish to know.

[song ends]

Austin: The door back to the Marquis's Hall and then also the door kind of on the eastern side of this library both open, and the sound from both places begins to like echo in. And it takes you a second to realize like, why did that happen? And the answer is like, the ground shook. The whole ground all around you began to shake a second ago. It's like a tremor from something somewhere...not super close by, but not like, you know, maybe a mile away, there was like some sort of impact or something started happening. "Something is coming," says Forboding. [laughs softly] I'm showing the barrel of a gun here.

Ali: Uh huh. The Cleric Beast.

Austin: Yeah. [Ali laughs softly] I'll also say like, the party from the Marquis's Halls has continued, and there is the sound of like some... [sighs] God, what does it...what's it sound like? I guess sort of like a centrifuge like spinning around in the room to the east or the direction to the east. And then something kind of braying, the sort of sound of something braying.

Dre: I mean, east is where Chine wants to go.

Austin: It sure is. But yes, also briefly, Ali, you succeeded in that roll, right?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You did succeed? Yeah. So then, take a, um...take like D6 untranslated medical journal, you know?

Ali: Okay. Take some time with that later.

Austin: Exactly. [Ali laughs] So, Chine, do you just rush at...Chine?

Dre: Hmm?

Austin: The direction of the braying is the direction that the thing you're missing is at.

Dre: Yep. Um, I don't know if I rush per se, but I start moving that way, and I say:

Dre (as Chine): We need to go.

Dre: Like, I'm not gonna leave without everyone else, because I already tried to fight this person one-on-one when I was in much better shape than I am now.

Austin: Mmm. Mm-hmm.

Dre: But I am also...I'm sick of us looking at library cards, and I'm ready to go. I need to go.

Ali (as Marn): Sure.

Jack (as Pickman): Yeah.

Ali (as Marn): I finished my thing.

Jack (as Pickman): Yeah. I think so.

Austin: Alright. You walk down another long hallway, and there are small doors here left and right, presumably the quarters, maybe, of these researchers, these kind of...research assistants is what I have them down as in my notes. [laughs softly] Maybe they're other little rooms tied to the Wrights of the Seventh Sun's, you know, headquarters here. But the big room, the room you go into, is...there's a sort of double thing that's happened here. As you move out of the library and into this bottom level of the castle, the thing is, it's the bottom level of the castle, right? And so this is like, you know, at best, you're looking at like food larders. And then also you're looking at like, oh, this is a jail. This is a converted jail. Like, someone's bedroom is literally a jail cell that's been converted into a bedroom, and you walk past one of those. And the rooms that

you're moving through increasingly feel like, oh, this is an execution chamber. Oh, this is a torture room. This is a dungeon. You're in a proper dungeon down here. So that's one set of feelings.

The second thing is: you come to a room that is...you're like, okay, this is like a grand terrible like...a sort of like dungeon with arena seating, you know? This is like a hell pit. It's the sort of place where the powerful, you know, send people to fight and die, right? Except it has been converted into something, again, very striking and beautiful. Instead of this being a place where, I don't know, people were fed to lions or forced to fight for their, a sort of underground arena, it is an orrery. Which is, for people who don't know, an orrery is like a model of a solar system that is like big. It's like a huge...a very grand and intricate structure that kind of simulates the ways in which planets and stars and moons move around each other. And here, you have a very particular model of what...I mean, I don't know that you would even call it the solar system. This is not like what you think of as "the solar system," per se. I don't know what you do think about what the star— like, I don't, we have not talked about what the astronomy, the astronomical truth of this place is, right? But here, what you see is a sort of model of six suns, all of which have a planet rotating around them. Then, each of those six suns is itself orbiting a spinning disk. This disc is what's called a thaumatrope. A thaumatrope is like an optical illusion toy, sort of? Have you ever seen the bird cage and bird disc trick? You have like a little disc, and on one side's a bird cage, and on the other side is a bird. But if you spin them together—

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: If you spin it, it makes it look like the bird is in the cage. You know what I'm talking about?

Ali: Mmm.

Jack: My grandmother got me one of those from the Grand Canyon.

Austin: There you go.

Dre: Oh.

Jack: And it just showed the Grand Canyon and then the words "The Grand Canyon" on the other side. [Jack, Austin, Dre, and Janine laugh]

Austin: Exactly. And in— and so that is what these six suns are floating around or orbiting around. And in the middle, this disc is like rotating back and forth, like indefinitely, like a pendulum. And on one side of it is that rosette icon, that six petal rosette, and on the other side is the moon. And when they spin together really fast...well, first it looks like the moon has a rosette on it. And then it looks like a gateway to Zevunzolia. Everyone can heal D4 Stress. If you have any Stress.

Ali: Do we want to do this?

Austin: Everyone has come to this in a very strange way. But yeah, go ahead and do that, just from seeing it here.

Ali: I don't know that I want to accept this. [laughs softly]

Austin: You don't get to not. [Ali laughs] This is the thing, right? is like, part of the horror of this is that seeing it is fundamentally calming and healing to you. And if that's scarier than like taking Mind Stress from seeing something, some cosmic horror, then like, that's kind of the point.

[0:10:03]

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Yeah, I'm fundamentally opposed to the creation and existence of this place, but I do like that it keeps healing us. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: I don't have an Endure, but could I do an Endure check to not get healed and then be more...

Austin: Sure.

Ali: I'm not gonna do that. [laughs]

Austin: You sure? You know. Well, here's what I'll give you, Marn, because you're the one who...you vocalized wanting to resist this, so yours is the attention that first moves away from this remarkable machine in front of you and lowers. Because you're like, well, what's holding all this up? And it's this kind of like bronzed, partially gilded superstructure, this kind of huge collection of arms kind of, you know...not human arms, obviously. Though, you know, maybe they actually have a little bone-like quality to them. And those do literally come back down to a birdcage on a black pedestal, like a classical pedestal. And there...this *huge* structure is all being held up by this birdcage. And in the birdcage, there are two things. One is a kind of squared-off rectangular sternum with a kind of, uh...what's the word? Why am I blanking on this? Not geological, geographical. Not geographical either.

Jack: Geometric?

Austin: Geometrical.

Ali: Mmm.

Austin: Geometrical. Yeah, geometric shapes carved into it. Here is the sternum of Dyre Ode, [Ali gasps quietly] that is producing this sort of gilded rib cage from it and around it, that is holding up this entire machine. It's all being held up by the sternum of Dyre Ode inside of this birdcage. And then underneath that, this sternum has been plunged into a sort of, um...you know, collection of swaddling, rags and a little blanket, and something in there is moving.

Ali: Whoa.

Jack: This is a twofer. We got, uh... [Ali laughs]

Austin: It's a big one.

Jack: Yeah, you want to take the lead here, Chine? Since...

Dre: Yeah. Um, is there a way to get down there?

Austin: Oh, yeah. You just take some stairs.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: There's some stairs down from here.

Dre: Cool.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah, I'll take off down those stairs.

Austin: In this underground like pit fighter arena. Yeah. You take off down the stairs. You approach this thing. It's huge. It's scary. And as you near it, a shot rings out. And there is Mabriella, aiming down at you, kind of holding onto a rope, which you imagine is made up of hair. Presumably made up of her hair, question mark?

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And she's holding onto it like she's like a Cirque du Soleil performer. [Dre laughs softly] And she is dressed in a riding outfit, like an equestrian or hunting outfit with white pants and a burgundy shadbelly, which is like a riding coat, like a hunting coat, with kind of gold trim. And, you know, she has on like the black equestrian hat and has a hunting rifle and just shoots towards you, you know, to kind of stop you in place.

Austin (as Mabriella): [friendly] You woke up!

Austin: She says.

Dre (as Chine): [sighs] [irritated] Pickman, shoot her. [Austin laughs]

Ali: Perfect strategy.

Jack: I mean, yeah.

Austin: Pickman?

Jack: Am I being given an opening here?

Austin: If you want to make a roll.

Jack: Um, how close am I to her?

Austin: You're Ranged.

Jack: I'm at the Ranged distance? Yeah, sure.

Austin: You're at the Ranged distance.

Jack: I mean, I do the same damage either way.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Oh, but can your gun not do Ranged?

Jack: Can now.

Ali: Don't you have a weird gun? Okay. [laughs]

Jack: My gun got sick. It has a...

Ali: Okay.

Jack: It has a parasite, a parasitic illness, which—

Dre: Makes it better.

Jack: —lets me do Ranged weapons.

Dre: Alright. [Austin laughs]

Ali: Turns it into a gun.

Austin: Ah, right, yeah. [Ali laughs]

Jack: Yeah. Uh, yeah, so the question here is if I want to roll Compel to try and disarm her in some way, or if I want to roll Kill to directly attack her.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Jack: Did I hear the...through the door, the rundown of what had happened to Chine in the torture chamber?

Austin: I doubt it.

Jack: Yeah, it's—

Austin: Like, genuinely, that seemed like a personal, quiet moment. The idea—

Jack: Yeah, it's more interesting as well, if...

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: Uh, what do I know about this woman? I know that she is involved, she's...uh, what did Blick say? Like, she does weird stuff, right? Blick sort of intimated she does weird stuff.

Austin: Yeah. Blick is creeped out. Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, creeped out by her and doesn't like her. Alright, okay, so I'm gonna roll Compel here, and I'm gonna try and shoot the weapon out of her hand.

Austin: Mmm. That is...this is Risky.

Jack: And what Domain is this? Occult and...

Austin: This is Desolate and Occult.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So you have Desolate, thankfully.

Jack: Yeah. Compel, Desolate. [deep breath] Risky.

Austin: I just realized something. We need to, uh...briefly. Chine, you need to erase or deactivate another Domain, because we got through another situation in the library.

Dre: Oh. Yeah.

Austin: And you still have that Nullified.

Dre: I will get rid of Technology.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: Oh, and this is a new situation?

Austin: We are in a new situation.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Alright, so go ahead, and you're making this roll. Pickman, are you getting any help with this roll?

Dre: Um...

Austin: Is anyone distracting? Is anyone...

Dre: Yeah. I'll help.

Austin: I guess Chine literally is, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: I wonder if like the distraction here is that like I'm saying to shoot her as an like, shoot to kill—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: So she is not expecting a disarming shot.

Austin: Sure. I think also just being up in her face.

Dre: Right. Yeah.

Austin: Or not up in her face but charging in has done that with Kill probably too or Hunt. Hunt is what you've been doing, so. Go ahead and take that plus one. And remember, Pickman, you should have Mastery on this. You haven't rolled since taking Mastery, right? No, that wasn't you.

Jack: I didn't get—

Austin: That was only Es.

Jack: No, it was...

Austin: Es got that. Es and Marn got that, right. So Es, remember, you still have Mastery on your next roll.

Jack: They had a more productive time in the library. [Janine laughs softly]

Austin: I don't know. You had a good conversation. You met a new friend. Ah, there's an eight.

Jack: So...

Austin: Take no Stress.

Jack: I think, you know—

Austin: Nine gets discarded, but you get to keep the eight.

Jack: Chine, you know, shouts, "Pickman, shoot her," and, you know, without missing a beat, Pickman just sort of like slides the rifle off her— or the espignol off her back.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And the pilot light—which is just, you know, has sort of like appeared like a infestation on the side of this weapon—like flares, and the gun makes a sound that's something like a cross between like a cough and a scream. And I think that just like hooks and chains pour out of the front of the espignol at great speed.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: And just knock the...it's, um...it's not a bullet. It's still like attached to Pickman in some way. But it goes lashing out and knocks the weapon out of Mabriella's hand.

Austin: Give me your damage, which is D8.

Jack: Oh! [laughs]

Austin: Yeah. Uh huh.

Jack: I rolled a one!

Austin: You sure did.

Ali: Oh my god.

Austin: You sure did.

Jack: It knocks it out of her hand, and she picks it up. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Uh, it falls to the ground.

Jack: Nah, it was a success, yeah.

Austin: It was a success, you know? And in some ways, one is appropriate, right? So it falls to the ground, and the person who picks it up is Fabriella. Actually, I guess, in my notes, I have it down here as, uh...let's see. Sorry, I said Fabriella. I meant Mabriella there.

Jack: Fabriella is fabricated Mabriella.

Austin: Is fabricate— well, you know? So here's the thing.

Dre: [apprehensive] Mmm.

Austin: Coming up through the the cracks in the ground is a bunch of hair that forms into another different Mabriella. This one in my notes is Feza, and this one is wearing a kind of peach gown with her hair up. It might be a wig. It's probably a wig, a powdered wig. And she just like picks up the gun and points at you, Pickman, and begins to fire and, you know, reload and fire and reload and fire, kind of trying to drive you away. I mean, trying to kill you, but I'm not doing damage 'cause you succeeded, you know?

Jack: Where did we hear Feza's name before?

Austin: That's her last name. Mabriella du Feza.

Jack: Oh, okay, cool. Right.

Austin: So.

Jack: Fuckin' Witches of Hemwick vibe going on here. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: I think you're thinking of Fezh, who was the...

Jack: I am thinking of Fezh. No relation.

Austin: Right, that's what's...that's, yeah, uh huh. That'll do it. No relation. What's up? Who's doing something to these marionette...marionettes? Or people. Who could say which one's real, you know?

Jack: That's how they get you.

Austin: That's how they—

Ali: How many figures are in the room at this point?

Austin: Two plus the pedestal with the sternum and the mewling thing. So, two people trying to hurt you, very clearly.

Ali: Yeah. My hope would be to like sneak over there as a little guy, while... [laughs]

Austin: Ooh.

Jack: [intrigued] Mmm.

Ali: You know, things are happening. [Janine makes amused sound] That was my kind of play, but...

Austin: Yeah. Do you want to do a little sneak? You can do a little sneak.

Ali: I can't Sneak. I can Evade, but... [laughs]

Austin: Mmm. Different than Sneak, huh?

Ali: Different.

Janine: Mm.

Austin: Different.

Ali: Different. Um, but yeah, to Evade I would have to be drawing attention in some way. But I do want to get over there.

Austin: Getting shot at.

Ali: Yeah.

[0:20:00]

Austin: Yeah. What is your goal when you get over there? 'Cause let's focus on what that is, and then we can talk about if that's rollable.

Ali: I mean, I presumably recognize those blankets and stuff, right?

Austin: Yes. You know that the egg sac was in...um, maybe they put it in new blankets, though. How were the blankets you were using— did you have it in blankets, Chine?

Dre: Um...

Austin: What'd you have it wrapped in?

Dre: Uh...

Ali: I mean, I was on the Yellowfield mission.

Austin: Right, right.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: I'm saying they may have replaced it.

Ali: Oh, sure, sure.

Austin: Unless Chine had good blankets.

Dre: Probably did not have good blankets.

Austin: Yeah, see? These are...these are Macula blankets, for sure. But you...I think you can guesstimate—

Ali: Okay. [laughs]

Austin: —that this is the thing that Chine is after, which is the egg sac.

Ali: Right, right, right. Okay, yeah. Yeah, I just kind of want to go secure that thing. I guess that these people should be dead though, first. Maybe getting ahead of myself.

Austin: Up to you. Up to y'all how you want to handle this whole situation.

Ali: Yeah.

Dre: I mean, I don't want to take an action per se, because I don't want to like...I did a thing already.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: But narratively, Chine is not engaged in combat. Chine is also moving towards the cage.

Austin: Gotcha.

Dre: If that informs what you want to do with Marn.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: I'll throw this bomb.

Austin: Ooh!

Ali: Ooh!

Jack: Oh!

Austin: Bomb time!

Dre: Bomb time.

Austin: We've had this bomb.

Ali: Dy-no-mite.

Austin: It's time to take that bomb down from...wait, which bomb? 'Cause you have the dynamite, and you have the Hollowfield bomb.

Janine: I have two chunks of dynamite. I also have one of the Hollowfield bombs.

Ali: Ooh.

Janine: And I believe Pickman has the other?

Jack: Yeah, I do.

Austin: That's...right, yeah. Uh huh.

Janine: Yeah. I would like to throw this Hollowfield bomb.

Austin: Let's do it. And that's Spread, which means it'll hit.

Janine: It is Ranged, Spread, One Shot, Kill.

Austin: Uh huh. Give me a Kill Occult, then, Es.

Janine: Um, what is the best way for me to roll that? Should I roll on the weapon or... 'cause I have Occult.

Austin: No, roll it like...roll it like a Skill. 'Cause you have to throw it. To see if you hit, basically.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: Like, do it like a Skill check. So it's Kill and...oh, wait, do you not have...you have Kill now, right?

Janine: I have Kill and Occult.

Austin: Yeah. So yeah, go ahead and give me a Kill Occult, Risky.

Janine: I'm well suited for this one.

Austin: Are you getting any help? I don't know really what that...

Janine: I've got Mastery.

Austin: You do have Mastery. That's true.

Ali: I do not know how to help here.

Austin: Eh, that's fine.

Janine: Let's just do it. Let's just see how it goes.

Austin: Let's just do it. Let's see how it goes. Yep.

Janine: Kill, Occult, Mastery, Risky.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: Success at a cost. That makes sense.

Janine: Eh.

Austin: That's two sevens. Okay.

Jack: Who are you targeting?

Austin: Do your— yeah. Well, it's Spread, so it's gonna hit 'em both.

Jack: Huh.

Janine: Exactly.

Ali: Wahoo.

Austin: Which is fun. So do your...you can just click on the little button next to the Hollowfield bomb.

Janine: Yeah, that's...yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, to do that damage. Five damage. That ain't bad.

Janine: Alright, I'll take it out of six.

Austin: And it's...it's the special like anti spooky stuff Hollowfield bomb, so that's very good against her. You're gonna get five back, but you're gonna do five. Take five Blood as, you know.

Jack: Um...

Janine: I'll take three Blood, personally.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. [Ali laughs softly]

Jack: I, uh...are you within arm's reach of me?

Janine: [brief pause] Probably. I haven't moved. I just chucked that thing.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Then you get one additional Blood Protection.

Austin: Look at that.

Janine: Nice.

Austin: That's the tank. That's the tank I know. Give me your...

Janine: Fallout test...no Fallout.

Austin: No Fallout. Okay. You...the thing that happens here is that the one with the gun fires back at you, and one of the rounds does like wing you, but the bomb actually destroys the gun.

Jack: Oh!

Janine: Good.

Austin: And the two of them...I think the one that's on the ground in the dress grabs a nearby piece of hair and kind of like lifts up into the air to begin moving around this space like an acrobat, along with the other one who is also doing that at this point. They're kind of Cirque du Soleil-ing across the air here, and as they do that...again, you hit them both. This explosion knocked them both, you know, kind of singed them both pretty bad. And so, to some degree, this is about defense and getting themselves to be less predictable and less attackable.

Janine: Listen, this is the wrong party for them to be doing that. [laughs]

Austin: Fair.

Janine: This is...I don't...

Austin: But also, but also, the thing that...the other part of this is that they are like whipping this hair around now in front of the cage and between all of you and the birdcage. And as Chine knows, this stuff will cut you. This is like sharp razor wire at a certain point. And so they're kind of...kind of releasing a flurry of kind of defensive strikes to try to like keep you all at a distance. Who's up? Who's doing what? Does anyone want to try to pass through this web of sharp hair? [Dre laughs]

Ali: That now sounds like an Evade.

Austin: It does sound like an Evade. [Ali laughs]

Jack: Mmm!

Austin: It does.

Ali: Yeah, I think...I don't want to speak for Chine here, but I think Chine and Marn being like team go secure the egg while—

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: —Es and Pickman engage is probably the good play here.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: Also the sternum, please.

Ali: Oh, yes. [Ali and Austin laugh] So that's gonna be an Evade...? Where are we?

Austin: Evade, Desolate or Occult.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: And then still Risky here. Everything against this character is Risky.

Ali: Sure.

Dre: I can help with this.

Ali: Okay, cool.

Austin: Absolutely.

Ali: Sure.

Austin: Between the two of you.

Jack: Ah, lovely.

Austin: There's a nine.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: Ten does not happen, unfortunately. But yes, you get into the middle of this thing. You manage to get through without getting any cuts. The distractions being provided by Es and Pickman have given you enough cover. And yeah, in front of you is this cage, this birdcage, inside of which is the sternum of Dyre Ode and...something new that wriggles out of the swaddling.

Ali: Whuh oh.

Austin: Its side...its kind of eel-like mouth opening wide and mewling.

Ali: [sympathetic] Hmm.

Austin: Is that about right, Chine?

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Is that described well?

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I think it kind of stands up like a little baby deer. But— you know what I mean? Like, where like, “Oh, my legs.”

Janine: It has legs?

Austin: “I don’t know how to stand yet.” Uh huh. [Ali laughs] I think, Dre, let me see if I got this right here. Let me see if I...let me reread.

Dre: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Austin: Looking through this here, sounds like what you wrote here was “What if a dolphin was like a velociraptor?”

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: And then you sent me a gross eel-looking thing. And then you mentioned being freaked out by eel mouths. [Ali laughs softly]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You say “quadripartite jaw,” a phrase I don’t really understand.

Dre: A four part jaw.

Austin: But I’m grossed out by anyway.

Dre: Yeah.

Janine: Ah.

Austin: Yeah. Uh huh.

Dre: So like, its jaw opens up left, right, up, and down.

Austin: [slightly grossed out] Mm-hmm.

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: And it kind of like mewls at you and then pukes on your chest.

Dre: Ah, babies.

Austin: Those babies.

Ali: (??? 27:32)

Austin: You got a new move, right?

Dre: Me?

Austin: Yeah, didn't you take...isn't this part of that move?

Dre: Yes, I have the Major move Bloodbound Beast: I am accompanied by a ragged cryptid that follows my commands. I feed it my blood and it fights for me.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Great. [Jack laughs]

Ali: That's what we're doing with this egg?

Dre: Yeah. It's my bud.

Austin: Well.

Ali: [in character???] This egg has to stay at home so it can cure a curse. What are you talking about?

Dre: Well.

Austin: Oh, well the egg hatched, didn't it? [Ali laughs softly]

Dre: Yeah.

Ali: We will definitely talk about this later.

Jack: Oh...mmm.

Ali: But. [laughs]

Austin: There is something very strange about the thing you're looking at. [Dre laughs] I just want to say this.

Dre: Oh, word? [Dre and Jack laugh]

Austin: Beyond what you're talking. Beyond what we're...beyond the like grossness of it. Um...whew. You know how birds and dinosaurs are like the same, but they're different?

Jack: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Mmm.

Austin: How like, I imagine, if you— or you know how like...let's go with birds and dinosaurs are the same but different. [Dre laughs] If we saw— if I looked outside right now and saw a dinosaur, even the most bird-like version of the dinosaurs we're talking about, right? The version that we now admit, like, oh, there's feathers and like, they're basically like big birds, right?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I would be like, “Oh my god! That doesn't...that's a different type of thing than the things I know.” There's something like that happening even here in Sangfuelle with this thing. And it's, the part of it that's hard to communicate because of what we decided it looks like...I guess maybe leaning into the dolphin part of this a little bit. There's something about it that's a little majestic. [laughs softly] There's something about this thing that's mewling, and maybe it's in the way it stands up in this deerlike, baby deerlike fashion, that's like, oh, this is a type of life that has been absent for a long time.

Ali: Dolphins are super majestic.

Janine: Is it majestic before or after the puking? [Ali laughs softly]

Austin: Before. Before the puking.

Janine: Okay. [Ali laughs softly]

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Real quick.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Was there some sort of...there was like a lot of grape and vine imagery around the Mother-Beast and its child?

Austin: There was. There was a grape— it was a grape seed.

Jack: There was a mural.

Austin: The mural. There was a mur— or, a vision that we know Chine saw, in which a pair of hands, of like humanoid hands, were like giving a grape seed as if to the Mother-Beast, and that grape seed would one day become this egg sac.

Jack: Hmm.

Austin: Yeah. Anyway.

[0:30:00]

Ali: The circle of life.

Austin: That's right. Normal stuff. [Ali laughs] A pair of hands gives a grape seed to a seven-legged undead dragon, which raises the egg for centuries, until a shrew person shows up. [laughs softly]

Jack: [laughs] Midway through a fight with two Cirque du Soleil dancers.

Austin: [laughs] Anyway. What's going on, everybody?

Ali: Oh, quick point of order. This might not come up.

Austin: Yes.

Ali: But in case I take—

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Until I take another action, everybody rolls Mastery on Evade, 'cause I succeeded at that.

Dre: [impressed] Oh.

Ali: I don't know that y'all are gonna be evading.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: But if you'd like to.

Jack: Wait, all of us? Oh, that's great.

Austin: That's great. That's a good ability.

Ali: If you succeed on an Evade roll, all nearby allies roll with Mastery when trying to Evade until you next act.

Austin: Love that. Keep that in mind. Speaking about the— speaking of your allies, Es and Pickman, what are you up to?

Jack: Alright, let's make an attack. Um...

Janine: So, I have a very clear idea of what I want to do, if you want to divide and conquer here. [Ali laughs]

Jack: I mean, yeah, talk me through it. What's the plan?

Janine: So, you know one of...remember how one of the things I picked up was a capture hook?

Austin: Oh yeah. I do remember that.

Janine: And also I have a thing where my true form is all floaty and weird, kind of like these folks.

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: I kind of just want to get in there.

Austin: Mmm. Mm-hmm.

Jack: Yeah, I mean, absolutely.

Austin: Let's do it.

Jack: Just a hundred percent, go for it.

Janine: Hang on. I want to double check that Chine is...did the thing—

Dre: No, I still got it. It's fine.

Janine: The thing where Chine—

Dre: It's fine.

Janine: ...Oh, okay.

Dre: It's fine. Don't worry about it.

Janine: [laughing] I wasn't sure if that...

Dre: No, it's all good.

Janine: Right. Okay. [Austin laughs softly] 'Cause I could just try and grab 'em and bring 'em down, but I'm just better at killing. [Austin laughs softly]

Jack: Mmm.

Janine: When I'm in that form.

Austin: You're like way— you're like very good at killing when you're in that form now, right?

Janine: I roll with Mastery on Hunt and Kill checks.

Austin: Yeah. And you have Kill now, so it's not even like...at the beginning of the game, that was a way for you to kind of like secretly get Kill, whereas now you also just already have Kill, so.

Janine: Yeah. I also have the buffed up version of this, where I don't have to roll Risky for Sneak or Evade.

Austin: Ah. Very good.

Janine: So I can, yeah.

Austin: So you could in fact Evade, if it came to it.

Janine: Yes.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Do what you need to do.

Janine: Anyway, I would love to use a capture hook to grab the... [Ali laughs]

Austin: Let's do it. So, you transform into your true self.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Your true form, rather.

Janine: True form. Slightly different.

Austin: Becoming a big floaty eye.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Let's resolve the Chine part of this after we do your fun attack.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: Go ahead and give me your Kill Occult Mastery attack. And you do this on the one...which one? Are you doing this on horse rider or ball dancer? [Dre laughs]

Janine: Uh, those are weird distinctions.

Austin: Okay.

Janine: Which one...one of them is hurt slightly more than the other one, right?

Austin: Mmm...no, because—

Janine: 'Cause they took the same damage from the scatter bomb but didn't take like one damage from the gun?

Austin: That one did not get through their Protection.

Janine: Oh, okay.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Alright, well.

Austin: The scatter bomb did, but the one did not, so they're equal.

Janine: Uh...horse.

Austin: Alright. Going for horse.

Janine: So, Kill Occult...

Jack: [laughs softly] I'll take horse, please, Alex.

Janine: [laughs] Is this Risky or Standard?

Austin: Risky.

Janine: I think this is...is it? Is it even with my thing? I guess that's different. I guess that's a different thing.

Austin: Wait, what thing? Which thing?

Janine: My true form thing about...

Austin: Yeah, no, it's Risky because this person is Risky.

Janine: Yeah, roll with Mastery. All other checks become Risky. Okay.

Austin: Yeah, this is just about who you're fighting is Risky.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: Neigh. [Jack laughs] You rolled a four.

Janine: That sucks.

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: I got a ten! But it was Risky.

Austin: Risky. Two, ten, four, one. The ten gets taken away.

Janine: That feels unfair.

Austin: [laughs softly] Why?

Janine: 'Cause it just does. [Dre laughs] It just feels unfair. When things feel a certain way, it doesn't mean they are.

Jack: [sympathetic] Ooh.

Austin: Take...well, here's one. Take eight Blood.

Jack: Seven Blood. Well, ooh. How close are you to me?

Janine: No, I'm...well—

Austin: You're floating through the air now, baby.

Janine: I'm floating, and I did say that I was gonna pull myself towards, I think, right?

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Janine: Yeah. So that's a six, though.

Austin: So take six Blood, yeah, after your two Protection.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Wow, this is gonna go bad because of a thing. Well, we'll see if you get the— if you get Fallout or not. They have a very fun and terrible Fallout that's just gonna be the worst.

Janine: Ah, cool.

Austin: Hey! No Fallout. You manage to res—

Jack: Oh!

Austin: I'm gonna tell you what the Fallout— I'm gonna give you a hint on what the Fallout is and say that you got to resist this, 'cause I think it's an important Es moment to have successfully resisted this. As you fling yourself towards them, you like, you're like, "Ah, I found the way forward," and then it's like one of those great shots of like, oh, the light reveals that there were actually more of their sort of, you know, the strings than you thought there were, and—

Janine: Actually, we might need to change the narration of this, 'cause it doesn't make sense if I failed but the capture hook still capture hooked them, because the capture hook does damage.

Austin: The capture hook doesn't do damage, 'cause you didn't succeed.

Janine: But then why would the capture hook bring me in?

Austin: 'Cause you connected to one of these strings instead of one of them.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: And you pull yourself forward, and as you do...I mean, you're flinging yourself forward anyway, right?

Janine: I was gonna use the hook for momentum.

Austin: Okay. If you want to just still be on the higher level of the arena, that's fine, and they can just reach out with their hair. I don't...do you have a preferred way to take this damage, I guess? [Dre chuckles]

Janine: No, I don't know. I just, it doesn't... [laughs softly] That's the thing, is like, I...

Austin: Okay, how about this? They catch it when you throw it and pull you towards them.

Janine: Okay. That makes more sense.

Austin: Or she pulls you towards her and into a trap of this hair. And I will reveal what the special Fallout is that they can give, which is you feel them doing to you what they did to Chine, trying to get into your head with the hair and compel you to hurt one of your friends, but you've managed to resist them doing that. They try to puppet you.

Janine: Cool.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Uh, Chine. Or, I guess, Pickman.

Jack: Hey, remember that tar I picked up?

Austin: I do. I do.

Janine: [laughs] I was just looking at that.

Jack: Um, you know, given what these people do, I think I would like to power up my armor.

Austin: Ooh, okay.

Jack: I have a bunch of options here, and I will... [Austin laughs] I think I have a preference as to what to use in this moment, but I would absolutely hear suggestions from other people. My armor can remove Stress marked against Blood, Mind, or Echo equal to the amount rolled on the resource dice.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: This is an Occult bottle of tar for D6. [Austin chuckles] I could burn these books, but my armor doesn't know what to do with niche items, sadly. [Jack and Austin laugh] They would just burn.

Austin: Yeah, that's true. Uh huh.

Jack: I can inflict Stress on a Delve or adversary equal to the amount rolled. If I use a—

Austin: That's fun. That just happens direct, huh?

Jack: Yeah, it does. Um, if I have a D8 resource or higher, I can gain access to a Skill or Domain for the rest of the session. And if I have a D8 resource or higher, I can increase my Blood Protection by one for the rest of the situation. This is a D6 die, so I'm thinking that I should inflict Stress on one of these targets.

Austin: What's it look like, yeah, to do this?

Jack: Hmm. Um, you know, just like shifts her weight on the gun so she's able to have a free hand, pulls the tar from her pack and throws it—bottle and all—into the furnace on the side of the armor. What happens here, Austin? What is this tar? If you tell me—

Austin: I know what it is.

Jack: If you—

Austin: It's— go ahead.

Jack: Give me properties, and I'll come up with a fun attack for it.

Austin: It's...the thing that it is—and everyone can, at this point, write it down. If you took some of this tar, you can rewrite “tar???” into slowburn tar, D6 Occult. It burns really slow. It's like a really effective tar. It's real effective fuel, rather. It's like a very thick, coarse oil that burns very slowly, so it's really good for like torches and stuff.

Jack: Mmm. So is this like a...but this does damage.

Austin: Yeah you're just gonna do damage. Are you just like using it to propel yourself into an automatic hit? Like, what's that do? We've never used this ability before.

Jack: It's something spooky. It's the ghost of the train in the armor.

Austin: Oh.

Jack: When the... 'cause like, what this is is the armor is doing damage.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And the thing—

Austin: Separate from you. You didn't, like...you're not in control at that point in a certain way.

Jack: No. I mean, I'm in control in the sense that I, um...it's like when you push boost on a car in a racing game, you know? Like, I put the armor on. I chose to pour this tar in.

Austin: [laughs softly] Mm-hmm.

Dre: Shit. Pickman got NOS. [Dre and Jack laugh]

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: So, what is a...what is a way that this, that the ghost of this train would exert itself for a hit? I might actually roll before we narrate, 'cause it'd be really funny if we did something gigantic and then I do one damage. [laughs softly]

Austin: Yeah, and then you did one. Yeah, uh huh. Go ahead and give me your D6 damage, then.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: And you're going for which one? Equestrian or...

Janine: It's horse or ball. [laughs softly] Those are...

Austin: Horse or ball.

Jack: You're going for horse, right, Janine?

Dre: Man. I love *Shin Megami Tensei*. [Austin laughs]

Janine: It doesn't make a difference right now.

Jack: I'll go for ball. Slowburn tar, D6.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: That's a three.

Austin: That is a three. That's like...it's a lot because you rolled half, but it's not a lot because of their Protection. So basically like, you score a pretty good hit, but like they're gonna shrug it off because of being—

[0:40:05]

Jack: Oh, I know what it is.

Austin: She's gonna shrug it off, 'cause she's being a— she's a hair monster. Go ahead.

Jack: Um, you know when there are geometry bugs in games?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: That rare and wonderful kind of thing where it suddenly looks like something is stretched to four times its size and just sort of like collapses into like a whirling mass of...

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: You know like when your character like half falls through the floor, and suddenly their arm is 45 feet long and has like a ball of wire at the end?

Austin: I do remember.

Jack: I think Pickman's armor just sort of like glitches? Except instead of it being like a ghostly thing, it is absolutely physical.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: You know, something that just looks like a nest of metal and barbed wire and is still attached to Pickman by like a ten foot piece of rebar coming out of their arm or something.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Just like screeches and lurches into existence around the ballroom dancer.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And then, you know, as soon as it was there, is gone.

Austin: Is gone, yeah.

Jack: Pickman is breathing heavily.

Austin: Yeah, and I...the ballroom dancer, I think, is back grounded from this charge, back on the ground. Chine and/or Marn, what are y'all up to? You have a baby. You have a sternum. What's better than this? [Dre, Ali, and Jack laugh]

Dre: Um...okay. I guess I'm gonna remove egg sac from my resources.

Austin: Yeah, I guess so. [laughs softly]

Dre: Hmm. So, can I also...can Chine also get into this cage where Marn is?

Austin: No, the cage is...no, Marn took this thing out of the cage, I believe.

Dre: Oh, okay. Gotcha, gotcha.

Austin: Right?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: I think this is a...it's like not a...you would not fit in this cage, Chine.

Dre: Yeah, okay. Fair.

Austin: This little creature barely fits in it once it's standing up, you know?

Dre: Chine is jealous that Marn got to be thrown up on. [Ali laughs softly]

Austin: No, threw up on your chest.

Dre: Oh, I didn't realize I was with Marn.

Austin: You helped on that roll.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay. But I didn't realize that made it—

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Okay. Um...

Austin: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Sorry.

Dre: No, it's fine.

Austin: Yeah, I wouldn't've taken the baby's first puke from you.

Dre: Gotcha. Okay. Now...okay, now I'm in it. Alright. Um... [Austin laughs] I don't...how is it responding? To me.

Austin: Uh, it's...at this point, it's like very...it's braying like it was before. Or like trying to. It's trying to make more noise, louder noise, and it is very nervous. But I guess it's like nuzzling up to you for protection.

Dre: Um. Gosh, I still have this thread of the Mother-Beast.

Austin: Yeah?

Dre: Um...I think I just...I just like wrap it around my wrist, and I go to pet it.

Austin: Okay, yeah. It opens up all four of its jaws, and then you pet it.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: And it goes: [friendly creature noises]

Dre: Um. I ask it:

Dre (as Chine): Can you fight?

Ali (as Marn): What?

Dre (as Chine): I don't know.

Ali (as Marn): Chine, we have to get out of here.

Jack: Child, can you fight? [Austin laughs softly]

Ali (as Marn): [sternly] Chine. [Austin laughs]

Dre (as Chine): Yeah?

Ali (as Marn): We have to get out of here.

Dre (as Chine): No, I want— I asked. I have to...I asked it. [Ali laughs softly] I mean, it could say no. I'm not gonna be disappointed.

Ali: Marn hasn't read your character sheet, and is like, what the fuck are you talking about? [Ali and Dre laugh]

Dre (as Chine): I'm talking to it.

Ali (as Marn): [exasperated] Mmm.

Dre (as Chine): Marn, this is...this is the Course.

Ali (as Marn): What? [Austin laughing softly]

Dre (as Chine): This is the Course. This is it. This is what I've been meant to do. I've been...I've...

Ali (as Marn): I'm glad we got it. It seems safe and healthy. I don't know that this is the time. This situation is kind of intense right now.

Austin: As you say that, [Ali laughs softly] you hear the metal of the orrery begin to like bend, because the sternum was very clearly holding it in place. And in fact, you realize in this moment, the sternum in its place was holding more than just it together. The walls around you begin to shake. There's this kind of double shaking happening here. There was the already distant tremor of...well, there's a concert happening across town that's kicking into high gear right now.

Ali: Mmm.

Jack: Ah.

Austin: That's not doing good things to Sapodilla.

Jack: Five star review. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Uh huh. And then meanwhile, right here, right now, the removal of the sternum has begun to fuck with the stability of the Sunken Citadel. The...at this point, I think you have a choice to make, and the choice is continue— use the time you have before this place sinks to try to finish your tasks here, or fight Mabriella to the death. I mean, maybe if you...if you win, you kind of get like a...you get one more swing in on her here or look for a weak point or something, you know what I mean? But like, it's got to get...I guess I shouldn't close the door to doing both. It's going to get increasingly risky to do both as you remain. Does that make sense?

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And it's worth saying to Es specifically—

Janine: Yes.

Austin: It's very clear that further on beyond the orrery, the...at this point, the sound of the heritrixes that have been captured are panicked, because—

Janine: Yeah. I was gonna say Es is literally on her way— like, she's leaving.

Austin: Yeah. Yep. [Ali laughs]

Janine: She is leaving this. This is not...

Austin: Hey, you might recall—

Janine: This fight is not interesting to her now that the rib cage is fine and—

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: Just...

Austin: And you got a baby. [Ali laughs softly] You get, uh...you might recall, you get Evade Mastery.

Janine: Yeah, but I still don't have Evade. [Ali and Janine laugh softly] So.

Austin: Okay. Well, you take plus one on the roll, if you want to...I...if you want to make a different roll, you can make a different roll. I'm just saying.

Janine: I mean, I don't...is this Sneak? Are they distracted by stuff starting to collapse?

Austin: Uh...

Janine: Am I just trying to like peace out while they're like looking around nervously or something?

Austin: I could imagine that.

Janine: Or distracted by Pickman, or...

Jack: I could try and create an opening for you.

Austin: Yeah, I think that would probably be stronger. I think we need a specific thing. Having two of them means one of them can probably keep her eyes on you, you know? Plus also the hair is very good at keeping, you know, this kind of sensation of where people are. So yeah, an opening would definitely help.

Jack: What is your...would you like me to clear some Stress before we act?

Austin: Mmm.

Janine: Uh, I have six Blood Stress.

Jack: Holy shit.

Janine: And nothing else.

Jack: Okay. [Austin laughs] Yeah, I'll...I think I will clear some Stress. Once per situation, you can bellow an order, and remove D4 Blood or Mind Stress from a nearby ally.

Janine: Sounds good.

Austin: Yeah. Give me that. Alright, that's two.

Jack: That's a two. Yeah.

Janine: I'll take it.

Austin: What do you...what do you bellow?

Jack: Um, I think just:

Jack (as Pickman): Get out of here. I've got this.

Austin: That works.

Jack: Yeah, classic Pickman. It's not it's not particularly interesting, but it gets the job done. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Austin: How, then, do you...

Janine: Wasn't gonna wait for permission, but appreciate the support.

Austin: [laughs softly] How, then, do you act on that? How do you...how do you got this, Pickman?

Jack: [thinking] Whoo. Hollowfield bomb? Time for another Hollowfield bomb? [Ali laughs]

Austin: I guess you still got 'em. Yeah, totally. They're very good against these folks. This person. It's one person. It's one person, to be clear.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: I guess I...that's kind of a spoiler, but you know. Go ahead and give me your Kill. That's a Kill or a...I think it's a Kill. Kill Desolate or Kill Occult.

Jack: Yeah, this is Kill Desolate. Uh, Kill Desolate. No additional die, 'cause I'm not getting any help here, I don't think.

Austin: Doesn't sound like it.

Jack: Risky. I mean, this does sound Risky.

Austin: This is a tough roll, but it is Risky, yeah, for sure.

Jack: The important thing here is giving an opening for Es.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: That's a nine.

Austin: Hey! That's a nine. In fact, it's five, nine, nine. One nine gets taken away. You still get to keep the nine.

Ali: Wow.

Austin: The second nine. Give me your...

Jack: Pickman just flings this overarm at...at. [Austin laughs softly] You know like when you... [laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: In video games, where you try and throw a grenade not near someone but you actually want to...you want *it* to make contact with them?

Austin: Yes. Yeah.

Jack: Um, D6.

Austin: Give me your...it's D6, yeah. You can just click the button, if you want.

Jack: Aw, come on.

Austin: Alright.

Jack: It's a three.

Austin: No, that's not bad. These are very good against them.

Jack: Oh, sure, yeah.

Austin: These ignore Protection.

Jack: Oh, sick.

Austin: That's part of the joy of this. So, the...there's this big bright blue explosion. The hair catches fire, and Pickman, for one brief moment, you realize that the hair—like, not all of it, but part of it—is lined up exactly like the Shape.

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: And it's like staring at you in the eyes, and then the fire claims it and then claims these two bodies, which fall to the ground in pain and then begin to burn up. But then the fire kind of goes out, and they are both revealed to be wicker dolls underneath the skin.

Jack: Do the wicker dolls get up?

Austin: No. They stop, and you can tell that the hair is beginning to retract at this point. You don't know if this means you've...you don't know what this means at this moment based on what you have.

[0:50:06]

Jack: Can I take some wicker?

Austin: Sure. So you go over and take— yeah, in fact, you're gonna get more than just some wicker. You're going to get...from...okay, so there's three things here from these wicker bodies. One is the wicker.

Jack: Oh.

Austin: Which is—

Jack: What kind of...what is this wicker? Is there an adjective here?

Austin: In terms of...what I've written here is occultly charged wicker.

Jack: Sure.

Austin: I described it as just kind of being like a brown rattan wicker, you know? before. I don't know if you're looking for a different adjective.

Jack: No, that's fine. I'm gonna say charged wicker finger, 'cause that's spookier.

Austin: Love that. [Ali laughs softly] Yeah, sure. You take that. There are two other things here. Figure out who wants what. But I guess you're going through the stuff, as Es runs for forward. There is a hair comb made of bone that is a D10 haven resource. It's like a really nice pre-Panic comb.

Jack: Hmm.

Austin: And then, there is a—

Jack: Pre-Panic.

Austin: Yeah, before the Panic, yeah.

Jack: Huh.

Austin: And then there is a good deck of strange playing cards. Or tarot cards, you're not sure. That is D8. That is a good D8 Delve equipment. And it's Occult is the, uh...you can write that as its Domain. The thing that makes it...the thing that's weird about it is you don't know these suits. The suits—as you flip through these cards and pick them up from inside of the, like a pocket on the riding jacket—is...there are six suits. There are ten cards per suit. And the suits are blades, wheels, chairs, puppets, bread, and cards.

Jack: Cards?

Austin: Cards is the sixth suit. And there are ten cards per deck. It's one through six, and then it is...it's hard for you to maybe be sure right away, but seven through ten are a traveler; a warrior or a knight; a wizard or a vizier or a, you know, an advisor, a wiseman, something like that, a witch; and then a noble.

Jack: And that's a D8?

Austin: That is a D8 Delve equipment.

Jack: What is the dice value on Domains for the wicker finger?

Austin: Uh, that's a D4. D4 Occult.

Jack: Does anybody have any strong feelings about which of these they want? The only reason I ask now is if I keep them and we divide them up later, we'll forget.

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: I would enjoy a comb, but you know. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: Just 'cause it goes with my metal makeup clutch and brooch and bracelet set made of human hair [laughs] that I've hung onto this long.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Go for it.

Dre: So, it was the comb, the cards, and what else?

Austin: Everyone could have a wicker finger, you know?

Dre: [interested] Mmm.

Ali: Oh, yeah, I'll take one.

Jack: The comb, the cards, and a wicker finger for everyone.

Austin: For everyone. Yeah.

Janine: What are the stats on that? Sorry, what's the business with the wicker finger, again?

Jack: D4 Occult.

Austin: It's just a D4 Occult wicker, charred wicker finger, yeah.

Janine: Okay. I mean, I'm collecting stuff for Lye still, so, you know.

Austin: Yeah, absolutely. [laughs] Yeah, I got you this.

Janine: He might enjoy a finger. I got you a finger and some tar.

Austin: Uh huh. In any case, Es, you are spiraling away, right? You're moving as fast as you can. No one else is like...you're not investigating anything else here. You're not trying to track down any pieces of hair, just to be clear. Es, I know, is moving forward at full speed as things begin to break away.

Ali: I think I also have some urgency. I think that I think that it's time to go.

Austin: It's time to move.

Dre: Yeah, fair.

Austin: Yeah. Okay. Um, then I think, you know, we can kind of...Es, you move from this room immediately into the next room, which is the true lab of Hollowfield.

Jack: [gasps] Marn!

Ali: Here we are.

Austin: Uh huh. Here it is. Yeah.

Jack: You made it. [Janine makes amused/exasperated sound]

Austin: This is the area that looks closest to just a fucking raw-ass dungeon. Like, there are empty cages and shackles on the walls, and there are strange devices that are sharp and dangerous. And there is like, you know, there are multiple iron maidens here, including some that seem to be like running an electric charge and some that have like blue flames pointed inwards on them, et cetera. And also this place has been tossed lately, more than the other lab you'd seen. It seems as if...in fact, I think you probably find—or you see in passing; the others can maybe see more, with more detail—that there was some sort of cage or cradle or like cage cradle where the egg sac had been until it was moved into the other room recently. So you kind of just interrupted this thing happening. Like, Mabriella just did that today. That was not a Hollowfield decision. Hollowfield was happy to study the egg sac indefinitely until he was sure what was going on. Mabriella seemed a little more eager.

In any case, you very quickly from there see a...there's a side room that's absolutely the...there's like this just terrible echo of the heritrix sound, Es, that has like an iron door that has been...you know, it's shut in a way that doors are not generally shut in Sangfielle, which is that like, it's airtight. It's like watertight. It's sealed. It's like perfectly...it's a heavy iron door that has basically like, you know, weather sealing on it against the wall. But you are able— from this side, you're able to open it, use your strength to open it. And inside is a tall— it's like, in some ways, it's like the inverse of the tar pit. It's a tall room, much like a tar pit was, but instead of the bottom being where a bunch of weird stuff was, it's the top. The top of this room—which is marked “Materials,” by the way—is covered in a golden gas. And that gas is sort of like...like an adhesive or a glue that you can tell is keeping, you know, more heritrix souls than you can count locked in place, like stunned and frozen, where they can be kind of brought down from there and used. You've no idea how long they've been up there. And it is kind of terri— it kind of strikes you maybe in this moment, based on the coloration of— their coloration, some stuff you've seen in the true lab, that there's been a...these are these are heritrixes that have been purposely separated from the hosts, from their hosts, and have been kind of left in this painful stasis indefinitely until Hollowfield could find a use for them. So yeah, that's what's up there right now. This is the materials room or the Well of Souls. There must be some way to kind of disperse that and free these people. This isn't like a puzzle, there's just like a...we just need a solution, you know?

Janine: I have an idea, but it feels like...I don't know. [laughs] It's an idea that like, it feels like it would work at a smaller volume. I'm not sure if it's fair for us to say it works at a volume like this.

Austin: What's the idea?

Janine: I was gonna suggest using Exsanguinate.

Austin: Mmm, that's fun.

Janine: If the target is the well...

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Sure.

Janine: And I pluck a target's consciousness out...

Austin: Uh huh. Listen, I'm gonna say that you should swing big.

Janine: It's Kill, directed to the thing.

Austin: Right.

Janine: Not the consciousness, but the like container.

Austin: Let's do it...I'm gonna treat this the way I treat a lot of Lyke stuff, right? Lyke has a bunch of spells where sometimes I'm like, "Oh, but you kind of have that spell, and maybe this is a modification of that spell." What if you did this with Endure, where it's about like, you're just grinning— or not grinning, but grinning and bearing it, right? You're just like, "I'm going to get everyone out of this thing. I'm going to maintain this effect." Even though you're not using it in the traditional sense of killing a human or a mortal person and taking their soul out, you're doing the thing of ushering a spirit from its container, you know?

Janine: Right.

Austin: So what if instead of Kill Occult, it's Endure Occult? And it's about like—

Janine: Okay.

Austin: —the stress this is going to put on you.

Janine: Um, I don't have Mastery anymore. I'm trying remember if I used that Mastery that I had that was like clear and on its own and wasn't attached to Sneak or Kill.

Austin: I believe you did on your first thing with the bomb. You did— yes, you did.

Janine: Right, yes.

Austin: And you did...yeah.

Janine: Yeah, yeah, okay.

Austin: Because that was a huge roll. [laughs softly]

Janine: Yes.

Austin: So yeah, Endure Occult. Is that right?

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: Could I try to assist here? Oh, I guess I don't have either of those things.

Dre: I do, and I'm trying... 'cause I think... I think Chine would try to help in this, because like Es helped Chine get what they wanted out of here.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Dre: I guess I'm just not sure what it would look like either.

Janine: Did we ever do— sorry, this is a really bad ??? 59:47

Dre: Oh, no, I know exactly what you're asking, and I don't think we did.

Janine: We didn't do the roll to hurt Chine for looking.

Austin: Oh, we didn't. We didn't. We didn't do that. Well...

Janine: It feels... [laughs] It's a terrible time to bring it up, but.

Austin: No, but go ahead. Let's, you know, like, let's... I'm gonna make this a weird double bind or double roll in that way. Chine, that's a... what was it, Endure check?

[1:00:02]

Dre: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Austin: Let's do an Endure Occult check. If you succeed on that Endure Occult check, not only will you not take that Stress, but I'll let you be able to just like give Es the moral support necessary to like help, you know? Where like... we'll see what the roll is.

Dre: Is this Standard?

Austin: Standard. Endure Occult. Yeah.

Dre: Do I get Mastery? 'Cause I never... what was the thing that we were getting Mastery for?

Austin: No, the Mastery, the Mastery...there's a couple different things for Mastery. Neither of them apply here.

Dre: Okay, yeah.

Austin: One was looking at Zevunzolia. One was the Evade check from Marn.

Dre: Gotcha. Okay.

Austin: For other Evades, specifically. So just Endure Occult. Hey, look at that! Success, no Stress.

Janine: Nice.

Austin: So like, the way in my mind, what is happening here is that like, Chine, you are not afraid when you look at Es here, literally in her true form. Unless, did you change back to other form? Or are you still true formed?

Janine: No, I ima—

Austin: You imagine you just rushed over here.

Janine: I needed the speed, you know?

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: Then yeah, despite that, Chine, you're able to approach feeling safe and feeling secure to like offer whatever it is Es needs to do this? Like, I don't know if that's like a washcloth? Like, I don't...what is it that you need Es? Like, what's the moral support you need? Or like the bottle of water. Like, how can Chine be your cut man in this scenario?

Janine: Um, I kind of...there's like another layer I want to pitch adding to this.

Austin: Please.

Janine: Which is I have those heritrix bones, which are Cursed and Taboo.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: And a D6.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: And they're also a resource where, like, it's hard to imagine using them any other time than this.

Austin: Yeah, sure. It would feel like a—

Janine: Because they sort of belong to this place in a way.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: But also to these, you know.

Austin: Well like, plus like part of what you freed them from was instrumentalisation in that way.

Janine: Yes.

Austin: And so this is a sort of use case where it feels appropriate perhaps.

Janine: Yeah. Like...

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Es isn't going to trade those. She's not going to consume them in some way to, you know.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: But using them to like, you know, increase the pull, for example.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: Of like, you know, trying to pull the heritrixes towards, you know, something physical even if they're not actually...it's not a body, necessarily, but it's...

Austin: Right, right.

Janine: You know, it's just like a...something to like enhance this pulling kind of thing.

Austin: Totally. Yeah. Do you think you're giving those to Chine or giving one of those to Chine to use? Are you... 'cause you mentioned you had an idea for how Chine...unless I misunderstood that.

Janine: Oh, no, my idea was just like using them.

Austin: I see. I see.

Janine: For something towards this roll.

Austin: I was gonna say: what if Chine ate 'em?

Dre: I...

Janine: I don't like that.

Dre: Yeah, I... [laughs]

Austin: Okay. No? Okay.

Janine: Okay, I was...

Dre: I mean...Chine would, if you told him to.

Janine: After the stuff I just said, it feels really weird if it's like, yeah, eat these.

Austin: Well, the thing that I was thinking there is that like consuming those could allow him to help you literally do Exsanguinate in a sense, right? To free the rest of these people. But no, that's fine.

Janine: Nah, I wanted it to have more of like a witchy vibe.

Austin: Okay.

Janine: More of like a ritual kinda...

Austin: Less of a flesh monster. Yeah, okay. So then—

Janine: Less of a my friend is eating these bones.

Austin: Right. [Janine laughs softly] So you're holding these like bone trinkets and...

Janine: Or even like scattering them on the ground or...

Austin: Right. So then is this like a fun Chine is helping you draw circles on the ground type of a thing?

Janine: Um...

Austin: I'm just trying to figure out where this extra die comes from.

Janine: Oh, I know what it...mmm, okay. I know what it is. Chine has to hold...has to like hold Es by the foot or something, because otherwise...

Dre: Oh.

Janine: The act of like pulling is so strenuous that Es could get pulled up.

Austin: Right, right. Yeah, totally.

Janine: Into it, you know?

Austin: Out of— yeah, totally.

Janine: And that also ties into the fact that Chine has to...had to confront the like...

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: The Fallout issue.

Austin: This like, literally approaching the physical touch.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: That literally scarred him earlier. Yeah.

Janine: Exactly.

Austin: Alright, so then they take hold of you to give you that support, and you do this roll.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: Endure, Occult, plus one.

Janine: Do I get anything for the bones?

Austin: Are...you're consuming them, right? You're...I'll give you Mastery for that, yeah.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: That's fun.

Janine: Yeah, I'm using them in a vague sense of like...

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: I'll give you Mastery.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: Look at that! That's a crit.

Janine: There we go!

Austin: Boom.

Janine: That's what we're looking for. And it's the first one, so technically we didn't need any of that. [laughs]

Austin: You didn't need any of that shit. You just rolled a ten.

Janine: But it's good flavor, you know?

Austin: It is good flavor. And yes, the...the gas kind of disperses or you're able to like kind of pull them through that golden haze and out into...I mean, you're not seeing anything, right? I guess you're not seeing the ooze that we [laughs softly] normally see with Exsanguinate, because that's not the form of a heritrix.

Janine: Yeah, because that's...Exsanguinate is like a physical...

Austin: Yeah, exactly.

Janine: There's a physical quality to it.

Austin: Well, what if the...like, as you do it, the kind of gaseous stuff kind of crystallizes and falls to the ground shattering, you know, or something.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: So we still get a visual effect. Like amber falling or something, and then, and then yeah, you can feel the heritrixes like swimming out around you, and then...and then, you know, they're heritrixes. They can deal— once they're free.

Janine: Yeah. They can go through walls. They can whatever.

Austin: Exactly. Exactly.

Janine: It was being trapped in that amber stuff that would be a problem, right?

Austin: Exactly. And so now they have fled. I think that they...that you can feel them saying the name that you have that we don't hear, you know? Or that part— or I guess, actually, maybe they— they actually just say Es, right? 'Cause you're Es right now. Fundamentally, that is who you are. And so I think that this is, you know, we're not gonna get the coda explicitly, but like this is definitely "Have a cocktail named after you," type shit, right? Like...

Janine: Oh, yeah. [laughs]

Austin: These people are going to celebrate who you are in some way. I don't know what that way looks like a week from now, you know what I mean? Like, I don't know, as they return to culture, how that solidifies, but like, Saint Es.

Janine: This would be like the next time that Es goes to the like heritrix sanctuary place—

Austin: [overlapping] Right, yep. Yep.

Janine: —there's the heritrix equivalent of a cocktail.

Austin: Named after you.

Janine: Or— yeah.

Austin: Exactly. Yeah, whatever that is, yes. So yeah, go ahead and mark that for sure. Alright. The heritrixes freed.

Janine: Let's get the hell out of here.

Austin: The ground shaking beneath you. What do y'all do? Time to flee?

Janine: Book. Yeah. [laughs softly]

Austin: Book it. Give me a—

Jack: Secret passage?

Austin: You look for secret passages in the lab?

Jack: No.

Austin: No? Yeah?

Jack: We know where this secret...

Janine: [doubtful] Mmm...

Austin: You could go back to the other secret...

Jack: Oh, I suppose it doesn't actually...right, yeah, that's...just because you originally drew it there doesn't mean that's actually true about the world.

Austin: I mean, there might be another one there that you could find, but you didn't...

Jack: Yeah, but that's a risky...we know we...up through the Sinking Halls, maybe?

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Oh, we go through the ballroom and fight the final boss! Let's go!

Austin: Oh, there you go. Uh huh. [Janine laughs]

Ali: Ballroom.

Austin: I am sad that we didn't get the full ballroom experience. It's fine.

Ali: It was a complete distraction from the action in the lower quarter.

Austin: I know. I know, but. [Ali laughs] The Oblique Ballroom is a fun place.

Janine: To be honest, I thought that was where the rib cage was gonna be.

Austin: Sure, totally.

Janine: I thought it was gonna be someone having a...like, especially if it's a skeleton party.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: I thought like the king skeleton was gonna be wearing someone else's ribcage.

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: He's the Marquis skeleton, and...

Janine: Whatever. [laughs]

Austin: Having a party. Give me...we need to get out of here, so I feel like this is a Delve or an escape, or an Evade rather, or a Sneak or something to get...to lead the crew back the path that you already know or to find kind of new ones as a sort of escape. As, by the way, at this point, like you get everybody out. And then the far side of the Well of Souls begins to crumble, Es, and you're like, "Phew, did it," and you just look out. You're looking east. You know, if you think about where Sapodilla is, you're looking from the Sunflower District towards the Hibiscus District and towards the inland sea that it's up against. And I don't even know how to describe what you see in the distance, a kind of writhing mass of metal? It's like a mile away. There's nothing between you and it. It's like an underground cave system is revealed.

Dre: Hmm.

Austin: Don't worry about it. Someone else will deal with that.

Janine: [doubtful] Hmm.

Austin: For sure.

Janine: Oh, I can clear Siren Song, right?

Austin: Yes, you can clear Siren Song. Correct. [laughs softly] There's another song playing in the distance now, and you're not compelled by that one, thankfully. So who wants to lead the crew out of this underground nightmare castle?

Ali: I would be happy to do it again. Um, I'm gonna ask a slightly annoying question, which is: while we're on our way out...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Anything in that lab that looks cool? [laughs]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: That's a Discern roll to me. That's what that is.

Janine: [noise of concern]

Ali: Okay. We'll just go, then.

Austin: You sure? 'Cause there's stuff in that lab, I mean...

Ali: I feel like it's...I don't want to hold anybody up. [Janine scoffs, Ali laughs]

Janine: What if Marn just grabs something as we run by? Just like a blind grab, and then it's just a dice roll on an old school...

Austin: Like a one D10, like a...

Ali: Yes.

Janine: Loot table.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Janine: You got a loot table handy, Austin?

Austin: Here. [Ali laughs] I do, sort of, kind of. There is like a...there is like a resource table of a sense in this book, sort of.

[1:10:01]

Ali: Okay.

Austin: Let's do it. It's fun. It's fun. We don't ever get to do this.

Janine: It's very fun.

Austin: No, give me a— yeah, so give me— yeah. First, give me a one D10.

Ali: That's a four.

Austin: That's a four, uh...okay. Well, that's a...it's gonna be a D4 resource. Give me another one D10.

Ali: It's a ten.

Austin: Alright. Now, I need two more D10s, because you just rolled a ten. The ten on this thing was "combine two results," so.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Janine: Ooh.

Austin: I need two more D10s. Oh. Well, give me another one. You're not gonna get two twice.

Ali: Oh.

Austin: So give me one more D10. This is actually appropriate in a way. Alright. So this is a... [Ali laughs softly] You tell me. This is a D4 resource with the Domains Desolate and Warren. Is this like some sort of...did you get like some sort of castle rat?

Ali: Excuse me?

Jack: I'm sorry? [Jack and Ali laugh softly]

Austin: Oh, I know what it is. I know what it is. I know what it is. It's...I know exactly what it is. You got D4 raw feast mushrooms.

Ali: Sure.

Janine: Well, that's better than running past and just grabbing a rat by accident. [Ali and Austin laugh]

Ali: That makes sense, yeah.

Austin: The rat is funnier. Uh, they are delicious mushrooms that you can eat raw. [Ali laughs] You saw some people snacking on them in the Marquis's Halls. And you're like, oh word, yeah there's some. Grab 'em. They're just like on a...you know, I think...

Ali: A little takeout box?

Austin: I think Hollowfield was gonna eat some and just didn't get around to it because of how he got killed.

Ali: Sure.

Austin: And so they're a couple days old, but they're good for like a week, easy.

Ali: Damn.

Austin: Don't worry about it.

Ali: Grab a snack on the way out.

Austin: So. Yeah, grab a little snack on the way out, exactly.

Ali: Sure. This is Delve Occult, presumably?

Austin: Occult. Yeah, Delve Occult or Desolate, whichever you have.

Ali: Uh...

Janine: I'll help.

Ali: Please.

Austin: Yeah, please.

Ali: Is this...

Janine: I got Occult, so I'll help. I'm also still eyeball mode.

Austin: This is—

Janine: So I feel like I'd be good for...

Ali: Ooh, 100 percent.

Austin: Yeah, for sure.

Janine: Floating.

Ali: Is this Risky or Standard?

Austin: This is still Risky, because of how the Citadel is collapsing around you.

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: Falling into the ether, it seems. Alright.

Ali: Success at a cost.

Jack: Uh huh.

Austin: Success at a cost. Yeah. Uh huh.

Jack: It would have been a ten, though, keeping up Ali's streak. [Ali laughs]

Austin: It would've. It would've. Alright. Marn, you should take four Supply Stress.

Ali: Three?

Austin: Yep.

Austin: Es, you should take four Mind Stress.

Janine: Why?

Ali: Taking a Minor Fallout, here.

Austin: Okay. Are you? Damn. Supply Stress on the way out, why not? One for the road, right?

Janine: Oh.

Austin: You both got Minor Fallout on the way out of this fucking place. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Unbelievable.

Janine: Five V. five.

Austin: Unbelievable. [Ali laughs] Marn, your...uh. You...okay, so part of the reason this is Supply Fallout for you is you are trying to...you gotta like use some ropes. You gotta like use some tools to try to like produce new ways up and out of this fucking place. At one point, you do pass through the Oblique Ballroom, which by the way, is a ballroom just like at a ridiculous angle. It's like falling, and everyone was dancing at a weird angle constantly. But everyone's already evacuated there into a different place. Don't worry about where they went.

Jack: No Marquis?

Austin: Marquis's gone. Everyone left because of the way the world is falling apart. But along the way, you did lose...I'm gonna say that one of the crystals that you had fell out of your pocket, and the Coursed Crystals drop from a D8 to a D6. And then your Minor Mind Fallout. I think this is...I think I would say that this is perhaps fair. And you could tell me what it is. But you got a...Es. Take the Edge Off: you can't get your head right until you have a drink or something stronger. Until you reach a landmark with access to intoxicants—this is the way it's written—and render yourself insensible roll, two dice when you mark Stress to Mind, and pick the higher. Can be upgraded. It does not have to be a drink or something stronger, but like, you need to...you need a day off, right? Like, you need whatever your personal vice is.

Janine: Yeah, that's fair.

Austin: Bad, at this point. So, so, that is...I'll put that in chat. And until then, you cannot clear.

Janine: The language on the quick sheet is less...

Austin: Oh, yeah? Okay. I did not open...

Janine: It's better. No, it's...

Austin: Okay.

Janine: The quick sheet says, "When you take Mind Stress, roll twice and keep the higher, until you reach a haven and partake."

Austin: There you go. That's it. That's exactly the thing. But you succeeded here, and so yeah, what we get is just a montage of you all breaking your way back out of this place, heading back towards the top of the castle. Bits of it are falling out, you know, below you as you leave. At one point, you get a...you know, you're coming back up to like the main stairwell, and enough of...like, this entire corner of the guest wing has fallen away, and you just see like a different Sapodilla below you. Like, not literally, like it's not the same. It's like, you know how underneath Seattle, there's a different Se— there's the old Seattle. Do you know about this? Or like, I guess France, Paris does this too, right? There's like, old Paris is like underneath Paris in points. That's, you know, basically the area around this castle was just pushed underground, and so there's like a little corner of Sapodilla down there that some of the people who you saw at the Marquis's party, they've now moved there, and they are looking out east to where bad things are happening near Davia Pledge's estate. But you climb the stairwell. You jump the stairs properly. You make your way back up to the Macula tower, and the mood here is weird. You kind of come back out. The guard kind of nods at you as you walk past, [laughs softly] and is like:

Austin (as guard): You guys better be careful. There's, uh...sounds like bad stuff happening in Hibiscus.

Austin: And people are still like playing the music and eating food late into the night, but like, the world has finished shaking, and it feels like something different has happened. Something strange has happened. Maybe peeking up over one of the rooftops is a tower that was not there before, [laughs softly] a black mechanical tower. That's weird. And I guess, you know, as you...you managed to get back to a safe place. Marn has that ability where someone will always give you, you know, a place to chill. You learn that half of Sapodilla has sunken into the earth, much of it into the sea, much of it swallowed in fact by a strange machine, which is what you were feeling the aftereffects from. A lot of the Macula leadership was killed tonight, along with much of the aristocracy. And here in the Sunflower District, people are confused and are unsure of what to do about it. One person who doesn't seem particularly perturbed is Dyre Ode.

Jack: Oh!

Austin: Who I think is just sitting at a long table. Hands, you know, gloved hands kind of held together.

Janine: Ah. I've got that sternum, right? Chine has that sternum? Or Marn?

Ali: Yeah, I think I have it.

Ali (as Marn): Oh, did you need this? [Austin and Janine laugh]

Janine: I guess we take it...it seems weird to just like put it on the table, but.

Ali: Maybe it's wrapped up in like a cloth or something. Like, I didn't want it to poke through in my other things. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Um...Dyre willingly gave...uh, what pronouns does Dyre Ode use?

Austin: He/they.

Jack: Okay. Dyre willingly gave their skull to sort of tether the Aterika'Kaal, right, in Roseroot?

Austin: To leash it more than tether it.

Jack: But it was, uh...Dyre knew what their skull was being used for, right?

Austin: Yes. It was specifically about stopping that god from killing people in the village that he was from.

Jack: Then I think that Pickman would probably have questions about the sternum.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Jack: Not conditionally. This isn't like a [mocking] "You tell us, or we won't give you the thing back."

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: But I think, yeah, I think Pickman, you know, says...well, actually, other people have the sternum, so I'll let you take the lead in terms of giving it back. [Austin laughs]

Janine: I would kind of like to give it back because of how the skull thing went.

Austin: Right, sure.

Janine: Remember, Es felt like really bad about that. 'Cause, you know, they weren't trying to withhold it, and there was that whole misunderstanding where they thought they were trying to like get more money or whatever, and it was just like...

Austin: Yeah. Right, right.

Janine: The thing that Es was nervous about was just like, we don't know you. [laughs nervously]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: And is this gonna make it worse? And that kind of thing. So I think this time, it is very much just like, as soon as she sees him, she's going to hand that over.

Austin: He reaches out a hand, a kind of long, very clearly bony hand underneath the glove, and takes the sternum from you, and like unwraps it carefully and appraises it.

Austin (as Dyre Ode): A few more scratches.

[1:19:53]

Austin: And like, just very much in the open, like unbuttons part of their shirt, and the sternum like floats into place. You can see that there are like a number of ribs already there. There are no organs. This is a— at this point, at least, this is a person made of bones entirely. And this...and all of them with that particularly carved, cubed, geometric patterned, you know, decorated shapes that their skull had. And here, he just hovers it right back into place. It kind of clicks into place in a very satisfying way, and kind of lowers the cloak, you know, around his body again. Same mask as before, the kind of blue ocean-like one. And says:

Austin (as Dyre Ode): My thanks. I sense that the rest of your trip went well?

Jack (as Pickman): Hmm.

Janine (as Es): Well in the sense of being productive, but not well in the sense of being pleasant.

Jack (as Pickman): We found an orrery down there, showing seven...

Jack: Six, Austin? Yes, six.

Austin: Six.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack (as Pickman): We found an orrery—

Austin: The seventh sun is Zevunzolia itself, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: That's what they say, anyway.

Jack: Yeah. [laughs softly]

Jack (as Pickman): Six worlds orbited by six suns, themselves orbiting...I don't know, the symbol of Zevunzolia. And your sternum below it in a birdcage. There was also a sort of beast down there. What do you know about Zevunzolia? And why was your sternum anchoring it?

Austin (as Dyre Ode): My sternum could no more anchor Zevunzolia than the words of a politician could. It *could* be misused to whatever end it is you saw, but that is...that was not my intent when I gifted it to the people of Sapodilla. But Sapodilla has changed, hasn't it? And yet again tonight.

Jack (as Pickman): What is the purpose of the orrery?

Jack: And then, I think, with a real impatience born of just like a long evening, [Austin laughs softly] Pickman just again says:

Jack (as Pickman): Speak plainly.

Austin (as Dyre Ode): [uncertain sound] You're asking me about a thing I haven't seen for myself. I imagine you refer to a device made by the Wrights.

Jack (as Pickman): Mm-hmm.

Austin (as Dyre Ode): A troubled sort. They've seen something and they want it. And they don't understand how far away it is from them. Perhaps I'm not being plain enough.

Jack (as Pickman): Mm-hmm.

Austin (as Dyre Ode): Uh...they caught wind of a better place, a place they call Zevunzolia. And they work towards building it, whatever the cost to themselves and especially to others. I tend to be concerned with more terrestrial matters.

Jack (as Pickman): The sternum was to hold it back, then.

Austin (as Dyre Ode): It?

Jack (as Pickman): The construction.

Austin (as Dyre Ode): No, the sternum had nothing to do with their...project. It predates their project. It, in fact, explicitly predates the possibility of their project. I don't believe we've exchanged names.

Jack (as Pickman): My name is Pickman.

Austin (as Dyre Ode): Pickman. I see. Well, I am Dyre Ode, and I've been here quite a long time. I've seen this place before it was marred by the devils of Aldomina. And the gifts I gave predate the Panic. I feared a new world was coming and offered to shelter those I could and myself by twice as par. It seems as if another new world is coming, and for that I'll need my bones back. The gift to Sapodilla was to keep *it* out. It was the danger of the Heartland. The beasts freed from caves and the specters returned from under the ground and the monstrous truths that these people knew all too well before they fled here. For 300 years, it seems as if the gift was well spent. Today, I am not so sure. I do suspect they'll be having a different relationship with the train schedule now that I have it back, hmm?

Jack (as Pickman): Hmm. Well, then I'm glad it has found its way back to you. I think I understand.

Jack: Big, big nod of the head.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Steps awkwardly back to where the others are standing.

Austin: Uh— now, whoa, mm, uh.

Austin (as Dyre Ode): I did procure remuneration for your services as I said I would.

Jack: Uh, looks to Es, sort of like, [laughs softly] this is Es's deal.

Janine: [amused sound] Uh, you know, part of me does want to refuse on grounds of principle, but the other part of me wants to make sure that...I guess I didn't even use Lye's dynamite, did I?

Austin: [laughs] No, you kept it.

Janine: I've been building a gift basket for him.

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: And I have any...I still have to...well, maybe they'll come in handy later.

Austin: And I think they say, like:

Austin (as Dyre Ode): It's no matter. I promised...I promised pay, and you'll have it such.

Austin: And from under the table, or like, you know, the benches. I'm imagining that he's seated at the head of a long kind of almost like picnic table type thing, and resting on the table benches are four perfectly wrapped like boxes, basically. [Jack laughs, Janine makes amused sound] Which he picks up and slides across the table.

Janine: Amazing.

Jack: God, Dyre Ode rules. Dyre Ode is playing a completely different game to us.

Austin: A hundred percent, yes. That is true [laughs] in many ways. Who opens theirs first? It's the same thing in all of them, but it's...but who gets to see it first?

Janine: I guess Es goes in.

Austin: It is a custom-tailored cloak.

Janine: Ooh.

Austin: That has like a differently colored inside and outside. I think it's a dark color on the outside, like a black, and the inside is like a shimmery red. And it has the Block tag. These are like the warded cloaks of Dyre Ode, the red cloaks of Dyre Ode, and they give you plus one Blood resistance when worn.

Jack: Huh. Is it equipment? Does it have tags? Oh, Block, I suppose.

Austin: Block, Block is the tag, yeah, correct.

Jack: And, uh, Domain?

Austin: Uh...Hav— mmm, Occult.

Jack: And a dice value?

Austin: Occult. D...it doesn't. It doesn't do that really. But let's say it's valuable, right? So like, D8.

Jack: Wow. I'm just gonna put it on straightaway.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: One additional Blood Protection. [Janine makes amused sound]

Austin: This is like a big gift. This is like...armor doesn't exist in this game, really. There are things with the Block tag.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: And you can destroy them or steal them. I can take them away from you. But like, they're very rare, so hold on tight. And I think at that point, he stands up, and he says:

Austin (as Dyre Ode): Now I will be leaving the city. I suggest you do the same. I think I saw your friend Duvall wandering here or there. [chuckles]

Jack (as Pickman): Huh.

Janine (as Es): [concerned] Hmm.

Jack (as Pickman): How did he look?

Austin (as Dyre Ode): Hmm. Empty.

Jack (as Pickman): Yep. Sounds about right.

Janine (as Es): Well, the bugs will come back.

Austin (as Dyre Ode): Oh, no, they were there.

Janine (as Es): Oh.

Austin (as Dyre Ode): But only them.

Janine (as Es): [dismayed] Oh.

Jack (as Pickman): Forgive me for asking. I believe that we first encountered you as the manservant of Roseroot Hall. And then once again, weeks later in Sapodilla, on a night in which all hell seems to have broken loose. Where is your next destination?

Austin (as Dyre Ode): Mmm. To tell you the truth, uh, I haven't fully prioritized, but I think I'm headed west. A few pieces of me, I left to a few families who'd done me good service. I shall perhaps see if that service has continued. If that's all.

Austin: And they stand up, and as a reminder, they're very tall. They're like taller than Pickman, and Pickman's very tall. So, kind of towering here. You know, in the distance there's like an explosion somewhere. [Jack and Austin laugh] There is the sound of a—

Janine: We gotta get out of this town.

Austin: There's the sound of a...to the south of where you are now, there is the sound of a train crashing into one of the walls of Sapodilla, smashing through it.

Jack: [laughing] Great. Do I recognize the sound of the engine?

Austin: Uh, yeah, you totally do. You totally know exactly which one it is. It is...Black Hook.

Jack: Oh, great. [laughs] Oh, great.

Austin: Somewhere, Blick is like, "Oh my god. It better not be coming for me."

Jack: Just... [laughs]

Austin: And yeah, I think that that's...you know, we're gonna have to figure out how you're regrouping with the rest of the crew, because...

Jack: And fleeing Sapodilla, presumably.

Austin: Uh huh. You know, I think you probably find Duvall. I'll figure out if you find Lyke. I don't know. Maybe you find Lyke on your way out, your way back north. Lyke's already ahead of you walking slowly. I don't know. We'll see. And Vir—

Janine: There's only so many roads.

Austin: Yeah. And Virtue, eh, you know. That's a whole other situation, at this point.

[Music plays: "**Sangfielle**"]