

Sangfielle 56: Six Travelers: Pickman

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.

[music begins: “Six Travelers”]

Austin (as narrator): Ernestina Pickman, the Shape Knight. Of all the members of the Blackwick Group—yes, including Queen Virtue down Sapodilla way—there is none I wish could have been here in town more when they pulled this huge, uh, what do they call it? antenna out of the mines. “What’s that?” she’d say, “Don’t trust it.” Something like that. Y’all know how Pickman gets. But give it a few months, and I bet she’d come around. Hell, she might have even found her way into this very booth. That is the hard to understand thing about Pickman. Most people know danger well enough to recognize it. She knows danger well enough to respect it.

Jack: So, my character's name is Pickman. My class is a Shape Knight.

Jack (as Pickman): This fucker thinks that you can just get off a train.

Keith (as Lyke): You did just get off the train.

Art (as Duvall): We just got off a train!

Jack (as Pickman): You can't get off with the—

Jack (as Pickman): Oh, yeah, the Macula, uh huh. You see a lot of them around here?

Jack (as Pickman): And the station. Has anything happened with the train?

Jack: Every single one of these motherfuckers keeps trying fancy business with the trains. Leave them be or kill them. That's it.

Jack (as Pickman): Wake up, you little worm.

Jack (as Pickman): Anything you think you have taken will be stolen back tenfold by the Shape.

Jack (as Pickman): You have become a creature of fire and majesty.

Jack (as Pickman): This is a book from the future?

Austin (as Appletun): No. It's a book from a different present. [chuckles]

Jack (as Pickman): Shut the fuck up. What do you think you're doing?

Jack (as Pickman): The entrepreneur moved into town and starts distributing his own scrip. The sheriff kills Ekashi Wolff. Who the hell knows what the Sister voted? This is a work.

Jack (as Pickman): Every time I have met the city, it has done me good and it has brought me immeasurable unease.

Jack (as Pickman): I don't know how to explain to you that you are making a dangerous mistake. You might not care about the consequences, but I do.

[song finishes]

Austin: Okay, Pickman. Where are you headed? What do you— what's going on with you? What's this Delve gonna be?

Jack: I think we gotta deal with Sheriff Black.

Austin: Sheriff Price, please. [Jack laughs] I called him Maleister Black by mistake—

Jack: And it stuck.

Austin: But that's too close to a wrestler's name, whose character's name was Aleister Black. Maleister Price.

Jack: Having dealt with Sheriff Black just now—

Austin: Oh my god.

Jack: It's time for us to move on and deal with Sheriff Price.

Austin: Right. Done. We dealt with Black just now, right, exactly. So, what is this? Do you think that this is a...is this happening inside of Blackwick? Is this a sort of, you know, wild chase on the fringe? Is this in the mountains? Where are you headed?

Jack: That's a great question. Um, I feel like the showdown with the sheriff traditionally takes place in the town that the sheriff is upholding one kind of ideology for—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And the challenger wants to do another.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I don't know whether or not we want to stick with that. We could have Pick— nah, 'cause it's like—

Austin: I will tell you, if we stick with that, things in Blackwick are going to get stranger than they've ever been before.

Jack: Yes. Which I think is a good reason for sending Sheriff Price out into the world.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: And Pickman has been— when we last saw Pickman, she was watching Price.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: And basically doing a stakeout on this idiot.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And I wonder if Pickman is like, okay, now is time to make my move. Price is going out to a cave in the mountains to meet with some local no-goods, or Price is...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I feel like Price is going out to make a shifty deal of some kind.

Austin: I mean, we know— we know that [**Jack:** we know] Price is part of the Wrights of, uh...

Jack: Oh, shit! Yeah.

Austin: The Seventh Sun. I believe we know that. I believe we know that.

Jack: Yeah, no. No, we do.

Austin: Yeah. So, yeah.

Jack: Along with that whole Dayward YVE crew.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. Dayward himself was not a member, just a financier.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: Uh, did not really understand the— understood that there was a cult and that cults like to spend money, you know?

Jack: [darkly] Mm.

Austin: Someone has to sell them real estate, and someone has to...

Jack: Extremely Pickman voice: that's a member.

Austin: Yeah. [laughs] Not a believer, though. Not a true believer and not a member of the deck.

Jack: Oh, right.

Austin: Right? Did not have a leadership— uh, you know, had informal leadership in the way that anybody who controls the purse...

Jack: Holds the purse strings, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, exactly. So, do you want your above or below card first? And I'll read you what these— what that means. Let me just read here from...we're doing, again, we are playing Delve Draws, or we're using the Delve Draws system from *ICHOR-DROWNED* by Sillion L. and Brendan McLeod, which is an unofficial supplement for *Heart* that is extremely good. I've shouted it out in each of these so far, so do it one more time. The card above will flavor that which is fortunate, positive, and hopeful. [Jack chuckles] The lights at the ends of tunnels, and more literally, your potential allies, resources, boons, 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. We can take these as literally or as metaphorically as we want. There have been times in these recordings where we've taken them extremely literally and times where it's been more of a mood.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Sometimes it's something that comes up for a single element of the Delve, a single encounter, and other times it's something that's all the way through it. So, you want your good news or your bad news first?

Jack: Give me the bad news first.

Austin: Bad news first. Oh, that's— wait, that card— oh, yeah, that's right. Okay, here we go. Bad news first, you said, right?

Jack: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Okay. I'm gonna need you to roll a D6.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: You got the ten of clubs. And then each of these is broken down, not only by card and suit, but by D6.

Jack: I've rolled a five.

Austin: You got a five. All right. The ten of clubs is a wedding in an old sickly way. And a five on that roll is statues of petrified aelfir couples embraced in desolate union. The aelfir are the elves from *Spire* that are like the kind of oppressive regime there. For us, we've been talking about them as Aldominan. So these are devils, these are petrified devils for us. I mean, we might even think of them...I've already dipped my toe in this once, and I don't know what the order of these recordings is coming out. I've played with the aelfir as something slightly different in another recording, but here I think we're just gonna say they're Aldominan. They are, you know, Dominion devils out here having some sort, uh...I mean, they're not, 'cause they're statues of petrified devils embraced in desolate union. So somehow, somewhere, part of what we're doing is in some sort of petrified...

Jack: Petrified wedding.

Austin: Wedding, yeah. Uh huh. Like a statuary of these couples being wed somewhere out in the wastes.

Jack: And this reflects a hindrance, a negative.

Austin: A negative, so maybe they're not totally petrified. Maybe there is something cursed about this place that we'll see develop as we continue. Let's see what your positive card is. Can you give me another D6?

Jack: Yes. I've rolled a six.

Austin: That's a six.

Jack: Bodes well.

Austin: And the card is...I fucking knew it. [whispers] I fucking knew it. I knew you would get the adversary. I knew you would get the fucking joker. God damnit. This is so wild. All right.

Jack: [laughs] How many jokers are there in a standard deck? Two.

Austin: Two.

Jack: Right?

Austin: Two.

Jack: Yeah, two.

Austin: There's two, and there's five card draws per one of these delves, right? We're doing the three plus the top and bottom. Which means it should...

Jack: Those are still not regular odds.

Austin: They're not. When you draw a joker, invoke the power of the Heart Itself. For us, the truth of the Heartland. Depending on your game, your players, and your own inclinations, you might immediately think, 'Aha, I know exactly how I want to do that.' If so, spectacular, carry on. If not, here are a couple of ideas on how the Heart Itself might manifest on a Delve.

Complication: set up a Delve obstacle as normal, but invoke a pulse at the same time. A pulse in *Heart* is like a change of the seasons, but the seasons in *Heart* can be like, hey, a bunch of mechanical tendrils have just just burst through the ground.

Jack: [laughs] Sure.

Austin: Or hey, everything becomes swelteringly hot as an underground sun emerges, right? Confrontation: something that a delver or delvers have been putting off or avoiding or have otherwise been anxious about is made physically manifest in front of them. The Heart draws upon their fears and their worries to force the issue and see what happens. A wronged loved one, an old nemesis, a betrayed confidant, a job left undone. Is it the real thing? Just a meaty illusion? Does it matter? And then Invocation: take a moment to make the experience at the table truly weird, within the bounds of the safety mechanics used at your table. Invite the players to trade character sheets for the remainder of the Delve. Play the rest of the game outside. [Jack laughs] Set *Heart* aside for a brief moment and play another short game to dip into some new aspect of the Delvers' experiences. Don't force the issue, and take your players' interests into account, but consider what you might do to make this particular moment truly different. Jack, do you have any ideas?

Jack: I mean, we could just load it up and start stacking some dice, Austin.

Austin: I— we— can I— [Jack laughs] I already had this conversation with another player. I don't know when this is airing, Ali. You might have to cut this. Let me just tell you— and feel free to cut all of this, Ali. Because again, we don't know the order of these at this point.

[0:10:10]

Jack: But the cards are not on our side.

Austin: The cards hate us right now, Jack. The fact that this happened a third time in the opening gambit, in the opening three cards is wild to me.

Jack: Wait, it's happened in the opening each time?

Austin: Yeah, it's never the—

Jack: That makes the odds even higher, right?

Austin: This is the thing that's unbelievable, right. It's never been the last card or the second card of the journey. It's been either the top or the bottom card or the first card. No one's gotten through an encounter and then gotten the joker yet. It's always been one of the— and I guess the first three is more likely than the final two, but still. With Art, we brought Chine in and we got Dre into the call. With Keith, we played that really good tarot game about amnesia. What do you want to do? This is not for recording, necessarily.

Jack: No.

Austin: And Art and I joked about playing the dice stacking game, but were like, that's gonna take too long probably.

Jack: For consistency, it probably makes sense to do something...to do something other than just be like, "Oh, and for this one, we're gonna make the Heart do something," right?

Austin: Yeah, I think it...I feel like it's...it would have to be something really wild to feel like it stands up to the other two, at this point. Do you know what I mean?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And yet to keep it inside of just the system we're already using. You know, we could just like play this straight and make you roll dice when no one else has had to. That feels kind of mean. [laughs softly]

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: We could find another game to play.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: We could pause and take a second.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And see what else there is.

Jack: Are there games about dueling? Um...

Austin: There probably are. Right?

Jack: Are there *good* games about dueling? [laughs]

Austin: I mean, right, this is the thing. Right.

Jack: Let me look in my folder of tabletop games as well.

Austin: All right, we took a step back, and I think we have some ideas.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: I think the bulk of what we were doing before is right. You're still—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You're pursuing Maleister Price. You've, you know, we didn't really— we kind of moved past this very quickly, but I imagine that there was sort of a...there's been a tussle back and forth in Blackwick. You know that Price is going somewhere. You know that you don't have what you need to do the classic high noon, you know, duel, you know, gunslinger thing to win this one. And so you've begun to pursue Price out into the world is my understanding. Where do you follow him to?

Jack: Out into the wastes of Sangfielle.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Where out in the, you know, probably south of Blackwick. The, you know, you describe it on the— you keep saying on the map that it looks like a desert, but it's not necessarily a desert.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: It's all kinds of stuff. But here it is. It's scrubby, there's low...there's low bushes, cacti. It's not pleasant. You can see the kind of curl of the river moving on down towards the lake. Let's say we're actually going north slightly, so there's the river below us. And then way further south, you've got Bell Metal Station. And Price is moving through the brush, and Pickman is kind of following at a distance, I think.

Austin: Yeah. A classic Western pursuit.

Jack: Yeah, absolutely.

Austin: Across the wastes.

Jack: Except without the horses.

Austin: Right, right, right.

Jack: And in the middle of the desert, desert area, there is a sort of a small mesa, a clump of rock. You know, not large, about the width of a house.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And maybe about twice the size as an additional sort of lump of rock on top of it. And all in all, it's maybe, you know, 30, 40 feet tall. And when he reaches the bottom of it, kind of glancing back behind him nervously, because how could you look behind you and not see Pickman lumbering after you in her green armor? And he puts his hands in the gaps of the rock and begins to climb.

Austin: Hm. And so, by the time you get there, I'm guessing, has he already reached the top? Or has he gotten away?

Jack: He has already reached the top by the time Pickman is hauling herself up painfully and heavily in her armor. She can kind of see that at the top of the mesa, Black— [quietly] fuck. At the top of the mesa... [laughs softly] At the top of the mesa, Price is standing there and looking around nervously, and it strikes Pickman even in this moment that this is a strange place to run to, a rock out in the middle of nowhere about 30 feet high.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And it's very strange, because you know when you're doing some sort of physical exertion or physical activity and someone near you is standing still, everything feels kind of off and

dreamlike. Like, you can't really quite understand what's happening in the realm of stillness—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: When you're so firmly in the realm of movement and activity.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And so I think it strikes Pickman as extra strange when Black glances up, and falling at speed from above him is a coiled rope ladder.

Austin: Huh.

Jack: It is falling at great speed, and it extends so far up into the, you know, slate gray low clouds over the desert. And eventually this ladder falls and sort of jerks as it— it doesn't quite hit the ground, but it's clearly done to the exact length to reach the top of this little 30 foot high mesa. And Price, you know, brushes dust off his shoulders, and glancing still nervously back down at Pickman climbing up, sets his foot in the ladder and begins to climb.

Austin: Do you catch up at that point? Or are you—

Jack: Not until he's about 60 feet up the ladder.

Austin: Wow. This is a very high ladder. You said, I guess, it came through the cloud cover.

Jack: This ladder is— Austin, this ladder might be the biggest ladder you've ever imagined.

Austin: I've imagined some pretty big ladders, but I get it. I'm imagining it now. I'm looking out my window and thinking: wow, that would be a really tall ladder.

Jack: And it's—

Austin: Is it blowing around in the wind?

Jack: It's thin. It's blowing around, yeah.

Austin: [displeased] Oh. Ooh.

Jack: It's presumably weighted such that it's not blowing around horrifically.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: But it is blowing around. And I think that when Pickman reaches the bottom of the ladder

and, with particular Pickman stolidness, puts her foot on the lowest rung of the ladder, it breaks. And—

Austin: I was gonna say, your armor is so heavy.

Jack: Pickman's weight and armor just breaks the thing.

Austin: Right.

Jack: So she, you know, hoists herself up and tries the second rung, and it too breaks under the, um, British Racing Green metal of her armor.

Austin: [laughs softly] Uh huh. And at this point, you're in trouble, 'cause if that third one breaks, you might not have what you need to get onto the ladder.

Jack: Which is swaying, and then there's that—

Austin: Have you tried shaking it to see if you could just shake Price off?

Jack: Yeah, definitely. [laughs] I think at that point, Pickman just grabs the ladder and shakes it. [Austin laughs] And I think that Price from, you know, but now 70 feet above on the ladder, probably calls down and taunts Pickman in some way. I'm not sure, what's the taunt from this sheriff?

Austin: [thoughtful sigh] I don't—I don't even know that you'd be able to hear it from that far away, right? With the wind whipping and everything.

Jack: It'd be some kind of just like distant cry.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: That Pickman would definitely interpret as a taunt.

Austin: It is a taunt. It's probably just the equivalent of "Piss off," you know? Or like, "You're wasting your time." I don't think that Maleister Price is a particularly good one-liner type of villain, you know?

Jack: Or he expended all his one liners in firing the Blackwick Group.

Austin: Right, exactly. Yeah, I guess that's true. [laughs softly]

Jack: Um. Pickman looks back down at Blackwick.

Austin: Maybe it is just like:

Austin (as Price): You'll never make it up in that armor.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You know? Thinking: I dare you to follow me up.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I'd beat you without that fucking armor.

Jack: Yeah. And it's tough, right? Because...

Austin: You know, maybe we had that moment of like, you'd've been shot in the heart, except you're wearing armor, you know? You know Maleister Price would have been able to outshoot you in a fair fight, but you're a Shape Knight, you know?

Jack: Oh, he's definitely tried to— if Pickman is staking out outside.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Maybe some of his goons, maybe some of his toadies—

Austin: Right, right, right.

Jack: —have actively taken a shot at Pickman in the past.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And it's just like, what are you— you know, what are you gonna do? Looks down at Blackwick. Looks up at Price getting even higher. Begins to put together in her head what might be involved with this man climbing a ladder of this height.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And Pickman is not imaginative or particularly emotive, but she is very obstinate.

Austin: Mmph.

Jack: And so I think she opens the armor and takes the Blick's hand cannon from the holster on the outside of the armor and just like stuffs it into, you know, into her belt. I don't know if she— she has pockets. She's not wearing a holster.

Austin: She doesn't have like a holster. Yeah.

Jack: She's wearing a white shirt. You know, dark gray pants.

Austin: I know exactly the type. Yep, yep. I know exactly what this is.

Jack: Suspenders.

Austin: Yeah, totally. And like, Pickman's still fairly big even without the armor is my understanding. Is that right?

Jack: She's tall.

Austin: Right.

Jack: The impression— I think she is a...the impression that you get seeing her out of the armor is that she is very slight.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: But I think that is just as a result of how huge the armor is.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: I think if you were to actually put her next to somebody, you'd be like, "Oh, that is a big person."

[0:20:02]

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: But yeah, you know, wriggles out of it and sets her— hoists herself up onto one of the higher rungs.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And, you know, setting her face into a grimace, begins to climb up after Maleister. You know, Pickman's green armor waiting patiently at the bottom of this ladder that's thousands of feet tall.

Austin: Do you have in mind what your first vision is when you climb to the top of this thing? I think Price outpaces you here. You lose sight, you lose sight of him as he moves through the

clouds, and he's not there when you pass through. He's already made it to his destination. Do you know what you see when you first come through the clouds? Or is there something, like, do you have that image in your mind?

Jack: Uh, not...

Austin: What's the— what's it connect— is there like a little moor? Is it like a...do you pass through something? Is it like a dock? Do you know what I'm saying? What's it connected to?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I know what it's connected to, but what's it *connected* to?

Jack: Oh! A well.

Austin: A well. Oh, I love it. Is it like you pass through the clouds, and so you don't even get to see the outside shot of this? You just are in a well. You're, at some point—

Jack: You climb through. You suddenly realize, hang on, I'm in a stone...

Austin: I'm in a stone well.

Jack: Like a stone chimney, almost.

Austin: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. And then you pass up through the well and out of the well. You pull yourself up into where there is sunlight and a bustling town center, right? Or some sort of crossroads, as you've made your way into a city of white marble and beautiful architecture, people going about their days in their finery. You know, people with parasols over their shoulders, you know, biting into fruit and laughing. There is a...I would say that there is a beauty and a balance here that you have never seen before, except you saw it in one place. You saw it on the scale model of Zevunzolia, where you now are. We will be playing *A Visit to San Sibilila*, a solo journaling game by Peter Eijk, E-I-J-K. I hope I'm pronouncing that okay. You can find this game at jimmyshelter.itch.io. J-I-M-M-Y-S-H-E-L-T-E-R. San Sibilila: "This city never changes, this city never stays the same. Close to the coast in a river delta, San Sibilila's sprawling districts are connected by rambling trams and ramshackle ferries. You may have read about San Sibilila once in a 20-part encyclopedia in a dusty shop around the corner, but haven't been able to find the bookstore since. *A Visit to San Sibilila* is a solo journaling game in which you roleplay a character chronicling their visit to the city of San Sibilila. It is a city not found on any map. San Sibilila is both part of and distinct from our world. The city manifests itself differently to every visitor." The game is also available in print at FloatingChair.Club for 10 bucks. There's a little zine version of it that seems very cool. And this is what we're gonna do instead of finishing out our Delve Draws. [Jacks laughs] We are going to put Pickman in this mysterious city for some amount of time.

Jack: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Should I just start reading from the book?

Jack: Yeah. I mean, I want this image, right, of Pickman having emerged from the well.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: And realizing where she is. And perhaps could have known where she was going to be, when she was pursuing.

Austin: At a certain point. Yeah.

Jack: But she was in the excitement of the pursuit.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: So it's just like this great slow shake of the head. [Austin laughs quietly] Turns round, moving more lightly than we usually see Pickman move, because there's, you know, she's had the weights taken off in a very real sense. [laughs softly]

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Jack: Leaning over the well mouth, peering back down into the well in a like, "Fuck, do I just go— do I just go *back*?"

Austin: Well, no, and of course, there's just like, someone walks over to you and pulls a bucket of water out. Right? [Jack laughs] Like instantly, just is like, "Uh, excuse me," and then like begins to work the well and pulls water out as if you had— you're not soaking wet.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So like, that route seems to have just been—

Jack: The rope ladder is—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: The rope ladder is still going down into the well, but it presumably just goes down to the bottom of the well.

Austin: Yeah, totally. To play *A Visit to San Sibilila*, you need a journal, digital document, or something else to write on. We're using a microphone for that. A writing utensil or text editor. We got computers. A standard deck of playing cards, jokers removed.

Jack: Good!

Austin: I'm gonna leave them in, and we're just gonna ignore them when they pop, [Jack laughs] because I don't want to fuck with the Roll20 deck. "A six sided die, optional. This game takes between one and two hours, depending on the cards you draw and the time you spend on each journal entry. Your journaling might deal with themes of loneliness, alienation, and failure. If writing an entry ever makes you feel too uncomfortable, either discard your cards and draw again or put the journal away, returning if and when you feel ready to do so." They have a description here of some districts for the city. There's kind of a church and temple district. There's a sort of Bohemian, open air cafe district. There's sort of a factory district. And again, it reiterates the thing of like, you may have seen a map of this place when you were browsing the atlas in your mother's study, but when you checked the book later, the city disappeared. Or maybe you read about it in an encyclopedia, but you can't find the bookstore again. In this game, you'll log your experiences during a visit to San Sibilila. First, shuffle your deck and either brainstorm persona for yourself, or draw two cards to generate a character using the following table.

Jack: I'm playing the world's most reluctant tourist.

Austin: [laughs] There's some fun stuff here, where it's like there's a character table. And it's like, you know, your first thing is an adjective, like lonely or intrepid or curious or blasphemous. And the second thing is like missionary, journalist, explorer, poet, scholar. And I think we've got a cantankerous Shape Knight, if ever there was one. So. [Jack laughs] That's not on the list already, but that's where my mind goes, certainly.

Jack: Oh yeah.

Austin: And I'm gonna, at this point, just start saying Zevunzolia instead of San Sibilila. The fact that they both end with that, they're the same amount of syllables and that they—

Jack: It's great.

Austin: It's so good. "You are a visitor in Zevunzolia. Maybe you've been looking for this city for years, or maybe you arrived here trying to escape another place. Maybe this is your first visit, or maybe you've spent your youth on these ever changing streets. Start by writing your character's name. Next, draw a row of four small boxes underneath your name. You'll be checking these off later. Then, start the first entry in your journal by writing the title 'Day One' and answering all or some of the following questions over the course of your journal entry." I'm gonna send you this book, Jack. I've just realized I haven't done that.

Jack: Yes. [laughs softly] I'm also in a place where I'm trying not to touch my computer too much.

Austin: Right. Well, I'll— I think mostly you should be fine to not have to.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: And I'm just gonna answer— I'm just gonna ask you these questions, and we can...I mean, first of all, we've already basically answered many of these. And I will add the four boxes to check in. But really what we need to know is: hey, we're gonna check boxes four times. You know?

Jack: Oh yeah.

Austin: That's what matters here, but I'll add some boxes here. Boom. Three, four. Day One: How did you come to Zevunzolia? [laughs softly] I think we've just answered this.

Jack: Pursuing a sheriff, I climbed a thousand foot tall rope ladder through the clouds.

Austin: How did you learn about Zevunzolia?

Jack: I first heard about Zevunzolia through a...well, okay, this is Pickman writing in her journal.

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Jack: That she has in her back pocket.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: She has a tiny stub of pencil that she is writing with. Pickman hunched over, you know, holding this tiny bit of pencil. And she writes: "Stuck in Zevunzolia. Learned of city from worm Calen. Finally here. Wish Alekest could see it." Crosses it out. "Despicable place."

Austin: [laughs] Where are you staying in Zevunzolia? Did you find lodging in a rundown hostel run by a nosy widow? Are you renting the penthouse in a lavishly decorated hotel? Or maybe you sweet talked an aging socialite into letting you sleep in their spare room?

Jack: Um...become unpleasant patron of local bar. [both laugh quietly] "I pay a small amount of money daily to sleep in a loft room. Pianist downstairs," dot dot dot, "terrible."

Austin: [laughs softly] Wait a sec. I bet you actually cannot pay money, right? [Jack laughs in realization] First of all, I don't know that you have money. Second of all, you don't have any

resources at all. I'm looking—

Jack: Also—

Austin: Oh, sorry. I'm looking at Chine, sorry. I should be looking at Pickman. Pickman probably does.

Jack: No, I do have some resources.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: But it's like, they'd be in her armor.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Pickman would be very stupid to keep her resources...

Austin: Inside of, yeah. You probably don't have...

Jack: 'Cause she's like, "All right, give me 20 minutes. I need to—" [laughs softly]

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: I don't have money. Okay. I'm sleeping in doorways, right? It's just like, it's...

Austin: I mean, do you trade your gun? Do you trade your cloak that you had from Dyre Ode? Do you trade...

Jack: No.

Austin: I mean, you definitely don't— your tools, your torch are probably both in your armor. Your various Macula arms and weapons are in the armor. Blick's signet ring? Could you be wearing that little ring?

Jack: It would be...I think about this stuff as like—

Austin: It's worth like nothing. It's worth D4.

Jack: Pickman would burn it in her armor to power the armor up.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: Which means it would have to be on the outside.

Austin: Right.

Jack: 'Cause she can't just like wriggle a little hand out of her sleeve.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, totally. Then yeah, I guess...

Jack: I think she's just miserable. She is— she's sleeping in doorways.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: She's wrapping herself up in a blanket that she managed to find. She's like exceedingly grumpy, because she's also lost her quarry.

Austin: Yeah. Who have you met in Zevunzolia? Did you encounter an old friend? Did you convince a lover you're someone else? Who made you feel welcome and who made you want to leave?

[0:30:03]

Jack: Hmm. Gosh. Who made me feel welcome? What kinds of...I mean, like, let's make a— let's decide what kind of a bit of Zevunzolia I am in right now.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: I think I am in like a shopping arcade.

Austin: Yeah, that's what it seems like. I think that that's true.

Jack: Where there's like a shop selling sausages [Austin laughs softly] and a shop selling leather goods and a shop selling toys. I have like a very particular image of like British shopping arcades. Let me see if I can find it. Oh, yeah. Google Image Search "Royal Arcade Norwich." And Norwich is spelled N-O-R-W-I-C-H.

Austin: Right. Right, right. Yeah, for sure. A hundred percent. This kind of lots of glass, lots of white stone, lots of, you know, large—

Jack: Shops with names like Langleys.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. Totally. This is the vibe. I mean, there is a...you know, Zevunzolia is a place that I would say the most direct comparison for me is Falconia from some of the final chapters of *Berserk*. But also, as many places, it's drawn on a history of strange cities what appear, you

know, from nowhere.

Jack: Uh huh.

Austin: Or, you know, I talked about this in another person's thing. The village from *The Prisoner* is a huge influence for me. Lots of Kafka's work, obviously. We talk a lot about *Dark City* as a place.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: And, you know, in some ways, for me, Zevunzolia is like, what if *Dark City* but it worked right and it was good and utopian and beautiful. And maybe not utopian in a political sense, utopian in an aesthetic sense. Right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Utopian— which, not that those two things are completely unmoored from each other, but this kind of like bright beautiful world where people feel.

Jack: It's Havnor in Earthsea.

Austin: Yes. Right, yes. And I think that there is something...you know, I don't want to— I'm not gonna spoil *Berserk* here. But part of the part of the terror of the final arcs of *Berserk* is that this place Falconia exists, and it seems to be this perfect beautiful place where people are taken care of and are able to become their best selves. And the cost of...the cost of making it is incredibly high, in a way that is terrifying. And I don't think it's an argument. I don't think it's utili— I don't think it's being deployed by me or as like a utilitarian argument.

Jack: Sure.

Austin: Of like, if only we burnt the world down, we could build a beautiful, perfect city. Do you know what I mean? I think it's—

Jack: Boy, do I love Omelas.

Austin: Right. I mean, yeah, it's Omelas, right? It's that again, right? The...but, but, but, you know, I think aesthetically that there should be some— there is— I'm evoking a lot of utopian architecture and utopian, you know, cities and utopian use of circles and stuff like that.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Because those are often attempts at an apolitical view of what a beautiful city is supposed to look like. And putting "apolitical" in scare quotes here, right? Particularly, you know,

often in particularly liberal minded vision of like, the perfectly managed shopping arcade, right?
[laughs]

Jack: Mm-hmm.

Austin: The market still exists, obviously. But then there's an added layer here, which is that this is also...Zevunzolia was theorized, and even as it was theorized, it sort of existed. And then it becomes more, it gets brought more and more into existence, as these various forces—in this case, Aldomina—begin to build it. And they've built their petal of it. I first described this as a rosette.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Remember, as this sort of like, this kind of six petalled flower that you might find in a lot of Medieval and Renaissance iconography. And if you take a look at that sort of style, it's like the Aldominan one is completely built in. If you could see this city from above, the Aldominan, the Dominion one is completely built in. And they've begun to build into the Ojan and Republica—

Jack: [laughs] Oh, sure.

Austin: Oh, sorry, Ojan and Magistratum ones, right? And they're the only ones building here yet so far.

Jack: Wow.

Austin: So there is a degree of like, there's a bit of a race between planes or something happening here, except that not everybody's in the race yet.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: And so there's a particularly like, special Aldominan quality to this place, which means that we're drawing on a lot of kind of Imperial Spanish Catholic architecture.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: There's like that color to it to some degree, but brighter somehow, you know? Which, you know, given Spanish Catholic history, not hard to get brighter because of how dim certain parts of the historical Spanish Catholic, uh, you know.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: The Inquisition was a real fuckin' thing, huh? So, given all of that, I think it's fair to say that you're sleeping in the alleys of this shopping arcade, you know?

Jack: There's a bookstore in the shopping arcade just selling fucking hundreds of the books that...

Austin: Oh, right. Of course.

Jack: That won me the porcelain heart from Alekest.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: And also just confounded Pickman so much in their rarity.

Austin: Yeah. God, that means the language here is that, right?

Jack: Yes. Yes.

Austin: It's like this just off from what you know. Even if you'd studied the— it would still be hard to hear it. I think it's like all the cognates are the same. You know what I mean? Like, there's an overlap here. And maybe it's enough to, you can hear it, and— I mean, I was just reading about this with— what language was I just reading about this with? Ah, this is gonna kill me. Ah, this is gonna kill me that I'm not gonna be able to find this thing and I don't know how to even get to it.

Jack: All right, we can narrow it down. There aren't many languages.

Austin: [laughs softly] German. No, it wasn't German.

Jack: [laughs] Was it Spanish?

Austin: Japanese. No. God, it was an example of some language that was like, if you read this...that basically, like English is German with a bunch of romance language things, this other language is another thing with a bunch of romance language things put in, which means that there are sentences that you as an English speaker would be like, "Oh yeah, that totally makes sense." But there are other sentences that are just completely a language you would never—

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: You'd understand nothing of. This is going— [Jack laughs] This is going to kill me that I can't remember it.

Jack: I feel this way sometimes reading like Dutch and Afrikaans.

Austin: Right, right. Totally.

Jack: Where I'm like, "Yeah, I understand that." And then I'm like, "Oh, no, god."

Austin: [laughs softly] Exactly.

Jack: It wasn't like Swedish and Danish? Was it a Scandinavian language?

Austin: It wasn't. It was because it was a language with Arabic on top of...

Jack: Oh, sure.

Austin: Romance language stuff. And it's, I'm mad at myself for not...for not having this on the top of my head, but it's fine. We can keep moving. I don't want to fall into the trap of trying to find this language and scroll through all of my history and all of that, you know? So we're just gonna move on.

Jack: Yeah. Who made you feel welcome here? I think that like there's just an old bespectacled bookstore owner, like an elderly elderly man who comes in every morning with like, uh, he's clearly just been to a very nice bakery. And when he realizes that Pickman is there, he offers some food or something but doesn't really stick around to have any conversation. It's a very sort of genteel kindness that this man is offering.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And who makes you not feel welcome here? The whole fucking city. [laughs]

Austin: The whole place.

Jack: It's so bright! It's so noisy and bright, and Pickman can't really understand what's happening. And also, she's just...she was coming here for a job, and she has now lost the thread.

Austin: Right. Right. What did you bring to Zevunzolia?

Jack: I brought one white shirt, one pair of dark gray pants, one pair of dark gray suspenders, one journal, one small stub of a pencil that is sharpened with a knife, one harmonica [laughs softly] with carvings on it from the faerie court or something? It was one of Pickman's starting items that she doesn't need when she's in her armor. That's it.

Austin: That's it. All right. Well.

Jack: Oh, my gun. I put it in my belt.

Austin: And your— right.

Jack: Yeah. Blick's hand cannon.

Austin: Yes. As days go by: You can decide how many fictional days have passed between journal entries or roll a six sided die to determine the number of days for you.

Jack: Dice!

Austin: Which do you want to do?

Jack: [chanting] Dice! Dice!

Austin: Give me a D6.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: A six, [Jack laughs] so it's been six days. You've spent about a week in Zevunzolia. Now, title your next entry Day *blank* of your visit and draw two cards. So, it's day six. Or is it day seven? 'Cause that was day one.

Jack: I think it's day seven.

Austin: So it's day seven. It's been a week. Draw two cards. Do you want me to just draw these out?

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: And place them down. In fact, let me make it so that it's a little easier to draw these out, and they'll be face up when they come out, since...all right. First one is a— oop, I'm on the wrong layer.

Jack: Oh, that looks cool. It's behind some chicken wire.

Austin: It does. It is. There we go. I've moved back to the token layer. All right, the first one is the adjective. Consult the adjective table for the first card drawn and the location slash event table for the second. So, adjective here. Seven in a red suit is queer. And four in a red suit on the second one. This is very interesting to get a double like this immediately.

Jack: Mm-hmm.

[0:40:02]

Austin: Consult the adjective table for the first card drawn and the location/event table for the

second. Four in a red suit is a gallery opening. It's a queer gallery opening. Does Pickman know the word queer in the way we know the word queer?

Jack: [laughs] No.

Austin: 'Cause I'm reading it that way. I'm reading this as queer as in the way that we use the word queer.

Jack: Oh, this is like gay shit.

Austin: This is gay shit! That's right!

Jack: Oh, hell yeah! Let's get a gay gallery opening.

Austin: Uh, combine the resulting adjective and the resulting location or event to inspire your next journal entry. Once you've completed your entry, place both cards at the bottom of your deck after. An interesting thing here is that whenever you draw two cards of the same suit or two cards with the same value, the city changes. It might be an expected change in season or politics, but it might also be a shift in reality. Whenever one of these changes occurs, check off one of the boxes beneath your name. And it's when we check all four of those boxes that your stay in Zevunzolia draws to an end. Write one last entry in your journal answering all or some of the following questions, which we'll get to when we get there.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: And so the two diamonds in a row is a ripple moves through the city. Reality is shifting. Streets may have moved, new buildings are sprouting up, a generation may have been skipped. Are you the only one noticing the difference?

Jack: I have a pitch here.

Austin: What's your pitch?

Jack: One morning, Pickman wakes up, and she's in a bed. [Austin laughs softly] And she goes downstairs, and downstairs is her roommate. [laughs softly] Who, you know, I think much like the way modern society works, maybe— oh, I don't know. Would there— yeah, people who choose to live together platonically.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Yeah. And I think Pickman's— god, who is Pickman's roommate?

Austin: I don't know. What type of person is it? Are they tied to this gallery opening?

Jack: Yes. Oh, they want Pickman to come to the gallery opening.

Austin: Right, right, right.

Jack: Because they know who— this is, they're like, Ernestina has just come downstairs in the morning.

Austin: Right. And do they call you that? Do they say, "Oh, hi, Ernestina."

Jack: [laughs] Yes. How did you sleep?

Austin: How'd you sleep? Uh, there's some coffee brewing, you know?

Jack: Just a hand to her head.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And, you know, completely stonewalling this poor, uh, friendly devil.

Austin: This is, uh, this is Colette.

Jack: Colette. Uh, Pickman does not know that this is Colette.

Austin: No, but this is Colette.

Jack: Whatever the ripple is has not affected Pickman's mind.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And so I think she just sort of grumbles and pours the coffee herself and like, you know, parries conversation attempts from Colette, who's— Colette works at the gallery.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: She sells stuff in the gift shop of the gallery.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And Ernestina has a poster on the wall of her room from the gift shop. [Austin laughs softly, sighs] And this is partly why Colette thinks that Ernestina will be interested in this.

Austin: Right, of course, this opening. So, day seven, what's your entry say?

Jack: "I have a bed. Zevunzolia shifted. Attached at the hip to—" no. "Zevunzolia shifted. Stuck to roommate Colette. Friendly lady. I think she has begun to realize that something strange has happened. Colette invited me to gallery opening." Why would— why would Pickman go? Oh. "Cajoled into it."

Austin: [laughs] Yes. You failed your whatever roll to resist this effectively.

Jack: Yes. "Stuck in long queue. Extravagant costumes. *Where is Price?*" underlined. Oh! "At gallery, met man who calls himself local," um...what are Spanish police officers called? You know how the French have gendarmes?

Austin: Oh, fuck. Gendarmes, yeah. I don't know. We don't need to use exactly Spanish, but I do know what you— there is—

Jack: I don't think it would just be like, "Met local police chief." I think there's a word for it.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: 'Cause I think that the language of Zevunzolia is beginning to slip into Pickman.

Austin: Uh— mm, no. The one that I know is from— the thing that I was gonna go to was slightly more like a sort of like magistrate mayor type, which is an alcalde, which I know from the Gene Wolfe books, the...

Jack: Oh, sure, the New Sun.

Austin: There's an alcalde in the New Sun, yeah, yeah, yeah, but that's not right. There might be another term that I don't know the name of, but...but yeah, but this is what you're getting at. You're getting at a sort of colonial magistrate type, colonial like officer.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Police officer type.

Jack: "Asked him about Price. Man stonewalled me, said he was at a party." Cut to Pickman at this like, what is this gay gallery opening?

Austin: I truly am curious, right? Because if we've painted Aldomina as such an oppressive place, right? Is part of the Zevunzolia project, for them— or not *for* them. But is this that you've wound up in a sort of Bohemian place, right? That is, it's literally far away from the Imperial core, which is their— the plane of existence where Aldomina has fully conquered the continent, right?

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Has fully conquered the world. Here is, in some ways, both the greatest Imperial colonial project, right? but also the furthest from the reaches of the church of devils, right? The whatever— we haven't even established necessarily that queerness is, you know, a sin in the realm of the Aldominan church, but when we're wielding historical Catholicism especially, where we know that queerness was not only policed—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: But remains policed and remains a place of violence, or a target of violence rather. It's hard to not— it's hard to want to be like, "Well, and our Catholic Church is oppressive, but not in the— not in this one gross way!" you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And so I'd rather elbow out a room for this to still feel...you know, if we're calling it queer, we're not saying...it's not queer as in gay marriage, right? That's not what I mean when I say queer.

Jack: No.

Austin: I mean, I think we can talk about various visions of gay liberation. But I think when I'm using the word queer, I'm talking about a broader political project that is oppositional, right?

Jack: Yes.

Austin: And not assimilationist. And so I have to imagine that feels this way. So maybe this is truly, you're with someone who is part of a group that's elbowed out some space here in some quarter of Zevunzolia.

Jack: Yes, there's a cabaret show.

Austin: Right. Right.

Jack: There's an open bar. [laughs softly] There's people doing art. There's like people painting in the back. There's probably, um...god, I don't know. There is, um...they've got something. They've appropriated some piece of Aldomina, like physically.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: God, it's like there's performance. I'm thinking of like a cross between performance and

conceptual arts. I'm thinking of like the nudes drawn by Lucian Freud [**Austin:** sure] and Egon Shiele [**Austin:** yeah] and Gustav Klimt. There might be like a aspect of a sex show to this.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: There's like...

Austin: And I do think that zeroing in on...I think part of this then is thinking about Aldomina and thinking about, you know, our closest...the character who we know from Aldomina the closest is Duvall, right?

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: And so much of Duvall is about body horror but also the body as a thing that there is a...the body is supposed to be a certain way. And a lot of the anxiety in the way Art plays Duvall [**Jack:** yes] is about losing autonomy or shifting autonomy and shifting the vision of the whole body into something else and trying to find the agency inside of that or insist on it in this very Aldominan way. And then between— besides Duvall, we have Dayward and we have...

Jack: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Teresa, Reese, the cousin.

Jack: Ah, Reese. We saw Jolyon as well.

Austin: Jolyon as well. These are all very presentational people.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: These are all people who are very put together in a way that is about refusing to reveal— they're still, they can still be playful. You know. I think Jolyon is queer, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Like, I've depicted Jolyon's affect— you know, not affectation, but affections as being open in a way that I think, you know, Dayward certainly doesn't have, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I don't know that Dayward has many affections except for himself.

Jack: Money.

Austin: Money, right. But we— but I think maybe the art really leans into the giving up of bodily control or autonomy or the opening of vulnerability and—

Jack: The liberation.

Austin: Right, exactly. Right. You know, I think that's the space at which we can start to open up queerness for us.

Jack: Yeah. And I think—

Austin: That's one way. There's infinite ways that we could discuss this, right?

Jack: [laughs] Sure.

Austin: But that's one way that we'll move on with, right?

Jack: Yeah. Yeah. And then, of course, all the, you know, good characteristics of good queer parties I've been to. People sitting around talking.

Austin: [laughs] Uh huh.

Jack: People singing.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: People smoking and drinking.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Someone's found a kind of game that they can play.

Austin: Uh huh. [laughs]

Jack: There are people making out in the corner.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Pickman just, shoulders hunched, sitting like a storm cloud in the middle of this, basically interrogating this poor, uh, like local...well, hold on, this is interesting. Why would there be a cop at this kind of place?

[0:50:04]

Austin: Yeah, I don't know.

Jack: Why would there be?

Austin: Why were you introducing a cop?

Jack: Because she— because Pickman can't— Pickman is like, is there value in...Pickman hasn't given up on the— she knows why she's here.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And she is so obstinate. Oh, so maybe there isn't— well, there definitely wouldn't be a cop at a place like this.

Austin: I mean, there could be a cop who comes to bust it up. And Pickman's like—

Jack: [laughs] Even in Zevunzolia.

Austin: I don't know. I...

Jack: Pickman's like, "I have questions for you.

Austin: Yeah. [both laugh]

Jack: Pickman, you know, like grabs him before he's— ah, no, 'cause then he would...this is, Pickman is out of armor.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: I just like the idea of Pickman asking very, uh, inappropriate not in the sense of propriety, but inappropriate in the sense of venue.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Just like, "Why are you talking about this here, Ernestina? I thought you loved this museum. [both laugh quietly] I thought you loved this gallery." Oh, no, she's just asking Colette. She's asking Colette's friends.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: "Do you know someone called Price?"

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: And they're like, "It's a fucking city. No." [Austin laughs] I mean, I know someone called Price, and she's called, like, Jenny Price, and she worked—

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: It's a common name.

Austin: And you're like, [imitating Pickman] "Well, where is she? Where is Jenny Price?" and they're like, "Uh..."

Jack: Can you, you know. And then later when she gets back to her room, and you know, Colette is like, "What the fuck is up with you, Ernestina?" and Pickman's like, "Don't call me that."

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And, you know, goes to bed. I think Colette, you know, if this ripples again and we get Ernestina and Colette back, that house is probably going to have a friend breakup or something. Something weird has happened there.

Austin: I mean, wait, wait, wait. Wait, wait, wait. The thing is, you're— sorry. Are you saying if it ripples again and Colette shows back up?

Jack: No, if Ernestina wakes—

Austin: If there's another big change.

Jack: I mean, does this— does reality go back to normal? I mean, if—

Austin: No. This is reality now.

Jack: Oh. [laughs]

Austin: You are Colette's roommate.

Jack: Yes, you're right.

Austin: Reality didn't shiver.

Jack: It's not like we've moved into a— no, no. It has shifted.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, so I think that probably...well, let's see what happens over the next coming days. [Austin laughs softly] But I think when Pickman gets back to her place, she sits down and sketches a really nice drawing of the party. [laughs softly]

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: 'Cause, you know, I've talked about Pickman journaling and drawing before in the same way that like Arthur does in Red Dead.

Austin: Right, you have.

Jack: And so I think there's just this very like delicate, pretty little drawing of the party.

Austin: Is this...can I ask, is this the kind of art practice slash performance?

Jack: No, I thought of a different art practice before we went to fucking Zevunzolia. [Austin laughs] So let's say that she draws it, and then on the next page, she draws— I was lucky enough to see a DaVinci exhibition when it came to London.

Austin: Oh, nice.

Jack: And my favorite piece in it was DaVinci was drawing a sketch for a portrait of a young like lord or something.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And he had finished the sketch, and in the very bottom corner, he had started drawing a detailed skyline.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And I love the idea of DaVinci finishing early and wanting to keep drawing and just being like, "Yeah, keep sitting there, I've got more work to do," and just starting work on the skyline.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And so I think that on the opposite page Pickman draws the same view but imbued with some of the liberatory— [laughs softly] or the first stumbling attempt at the liberatory art practice that she saw.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And then she crosses it out.

Austin: Right. Yeah.

Jack: But I think that's what she spends her evening doing.

Austin: For people who don't remember, Pickman now has this move called Sound and Fury. You can shift reality via your imagination and your parallels to the Heart's power as long as you have fuel to burn. And you get some dice to spend, basically, to kind of leverage chaos. And the way that you get that back, you gain more of these points, is you unleash your unholy performance in whatever manner you see fit that connects you to raw unreality. This is, you know, opening your mind up to the psychic maelstrom. This is you rolling Shivers and then picking up a paintbrush, right?

Jack: God. I was just thinking about how weird it was to feel to play that scene in Sangfielle.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: To like go to a gallery showing and talk to people. And we, you know, we've done a lot of talking about how Sangfielle is a chaotic and strange place, but it really does feel bizarre to be narrating characters like Pickman in a place like Zevunzolia.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Jack: And in the same way, when we talk about touching the Heart and unleashing raw unreality, that's not what Pickman's— I mean, maybe back on Sangfielle, Pickman, would be doing something else and more chaotic, but here she's, you know, taking stumbling steps into like impressionist art.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Jack: In the upstairs loft of a woman called Colette who works as a museum attendant.

Austin: And I mean, there is something...it's hard, because what I don't want to do is bask in the glory of Zevunzolia, but that's also the pull of Zevunzolia is it asks for that. And part of the problem here is like, our imperialists got here first, right?

Jack: They sure did.

Austin: Our, you know, you know, our proto magicians are off doing— or rather our magicians are off doing deep studies. Our proto communists or, you know, whatever, our freed slaves of

Kay'va are busy trying to figure out how to make sure they can protect people. They're not expansionist in that way, right? I think Ojan, the Ojantan world is probably getting close to building theirs, right? And no idea what's going on in the Magistratum world, right, in the plane of the magistrates. [Jack chuckles] You know, they're building a big statue of fucking Fulmina that you can climb to get up here. I don't— they're building a big lightning gun to shoot this place down with. Like, I truly don't know yet.

Jack: You've described them as like, they don't like anybody who says the word Zevunzolia.

Austin: Right, right. Right.

Jack: And their net. They have a dread net that has spread the whole "it's heresy."

Austin: Right.

Jack: And the Pale Magistrates are hunting down that heresy.

Austin: That's what it was. Yes, exactly. Which is like, long term, that might not be what you need, guys. Like, that's gonna...Zevunzolia is coming into existence. Whatever is next is on its way, right? Who gets to define it is part of what the question here is.

Jack: This is a great point, though. And I think it is something that we should use to inflect our narration going forward is that this is still Aldomina's Zevunzolia.

Austin: Right. Well, and it is Zevunzolia— so, here's the other thing I wanted to say is, you know, at the center of Zevunzolia is something that was always in Zevunzolia, that is Zevunzolia. That is natural Zevunzolia, or it comes from a place. And the thing that you're drawing on here is not the raw chaos of the Heartland, is not the truth of the Heartland. Right? It's not the— all season, we've been talking about the Shape, the Course and the, uh...the Shape, the Course, and the Structure, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: As the kind of three main forces of the truth of the Heartland. You know, I never said it in as many words, or maybe I kind of gestured at it in one of these other epilogues, but there is also the blood, the blood of the people of the Heartland, right? The history of the people of the Heartland that gets drawn on and that reshapes—

Jack: The blood in the blood fields.

Austin: The blood in the blood fields. And the blood of the Mother-Beast.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And the blood of, you know, that vampires consume. The blood in the blood fields, that is also one of these four structuring, you know, things. The Heart of Zevunzolia, the middle of Zevunzolia, the kind of center of it is an amalgam of all of these forces in a way that is held in balance. But not in a way that diminishes any of them, right? I don't think it's a synthesis. I think it's this other thing beyond synthesis. It's this... 'cause, you know, synthesis is about something meeting its negation, and then the negation meeting its own negation, and then this third thing comes out, this synthesis. None of these four things are being negated. They are somehow coexisting in wholeness without... and maybe they're moving around each other. Maybe they're reshaping themselves around each other in this weird metaphysical cosmic way. But what is generated is all of possibility, all of momentum, all of the stability of structure, and all of the will of blood, right? Somehow, right? And that is what, is maybe what Pickman is drawing on when she does that second version of the drawing.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Anyway, we should keep— we should draw— you should roll another dice to see how many days go by.

Jack: [sighs, then laughs] I just did a forward slash and typed, “days.”

Austin: [laughs] You can hit up on your arrows, and it'll give you the last thing you typed in.

Jack: You're kidding me!

Austin: I'm not.

Jack: We've been doing this for seven years.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: You held that information to yourself.

Austin: I'm sure I've said it once! To someone.

Jack: I haven't heard it before. [laughs]

Austin: Maybe not to you?

Jack: Okay, four.

Austin: All right, four more days.

Jack: Four days.

Austin: So, day 10. Day 11, day 11. We get two more cards here. We've got the king of hearts, so it is, uh, a jubilant. And a six of diamonds, a night at the theater. A jubilant night at the theater. [Jack laughs softly] This does not tick a box, because they are not of the same suit or...

Jack: Wait, they're the same color though. Does that trigger anything?

Austin: No.

Jack: No.

Austin: It's only when they're the same exact suit.

Jack: Okay. Day—

Austin: So, a jubilant night at the theater, day 11.

Jack: Yeah. On like day, the day after the gallery showing, Colette and Pickman fight. [laughs softly]

Austin: Uh huh. [laughs softly]

Jack: Colette is like, "What is up with you? What's the matter?" And at first, Pickman is just like rude and, um...what's the word I'm looking for? Just doesn't want to talk about this. There's stuff to do. Stop bothering me with this. And of course, this just, as is the way of things, makes it worse. And eventually, you know, Pickman has to explain what's— ah, now, does Pickman say that they climbed up a ladder from another world? [Austin laughs softly] Or does Pickman say:

Jack (as Pickman): I was sleeping in a doorway, and then I woke up and I was your roommate. And I don't understand.

[1:00:11]

Austin: Which she, of course, both thinks you mean abstractly or metaphorically in the sense of like, we've all had rough times. [both laugh]

Jack: We were just at this cool liberationist party.

Austin: Right.

Jack: I can see how you might have, you know, gotten really hung over, and...

Austin: But also— well, no, I think literally like, you know:

Austin (as Colette): We all came here from somewhere else.

Austin: Right? Or, and the other thing is like, I think when you say that like, I used to sleep in the— she's like:

Austin (as Colette): Right, of course. And then we found you, and then I had this room available, and you promised that you would, you know, cover the rent, and, you know, you caught up on that, and you got that little job for a little while, and you're between things right now, but it's gonna work out.

Austin: And it's just like, you don't, that's not the experience you had at all, you know?

Jack: Yeah. Lowers her head into her hands, doesn't say anything for a minute. Tries again, gets the same kind of...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: The same kind of response. And so I think Colette is like, "You know what? You're coming out to the theater, and we're gonna have a good time. You need something to take your mind off things."

Austin: Yeah.

Jack (as Colette): Stop asking about Price! What was that shit about Price? [Austin laughs softly]

Austin (as Colette): You had Jenny real shook. [Jack laughs] Jenny's a nice girl. Just let her...

Austin: Et cetera.

Jack (as Pickman): Does she know him?

Jack: Says Pickman, you know.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah.

Austin (as Colette): No!

Jack: Does Colette— if Pickman were to say, "I came from Sangfielle," would that mean anything to Colette?

Austin: No, because I think she would think that you're mispronouncing, uh, San...whatever we said it was in the very first opening, right?

Jack: Oh, San Sibilia?

Austin: No, no, no, no.

Jack: Oh, no. Um...

Austin: [typing] Why am I blanking on things that I said? I think it was just like, you know, Sangfielle is the blood fields. But they had called— they originally called it San Fielle, which meant something like the saintly fields, the holy fields.

Jack: Yes, yes.

Austin: And so she's like, yeah, that's like, yes. Like, that's a place that Aldomina conquered, and it's like...it's like saying I'm from, you know, the Midwest, you know? Especially, I guess the thing is like, unless what you're saying is "I worked the fields there," you know what I mean? But that's not what it seems like you'd be saying, because you didn't, you know?

Jack: No.

Austin: In the world of— to be clear, in the plane where Aldomina conquers the continent, in the plane that Colette is from, like, the...it is still, those places still existed. The Pale Magistratum still existed. The people, you know, the Kay'van and the drakkan who lived here or who lived, you know, in what Aldomina called San Fielle in where the Ojan were pushed away, where the carpana were killed, all of that stuff, all that just happened more. Until, you know, it all just happened more, and then it never got as weird. The Panic never happened there, right? The Panic, the arrival of these, of the Course, you know, the kind of truth of the Heartland was not— Concentus doesn't exist in those worlds. Do you know what I mean? Like, that's just not...it's a different world that has been conquered by Aldomina. They took it over, right?

Jack: Yeah. Their capital city is still somewhere to the north...

Austin: Northeast, exactly.

Jack: Northeast of what we would call Sangfielle.

Austin: A hundred percent. A hundred percent, yes.

Jack: Ugh, god.

Austin: So. All of which is to say that like, you have lots of reference points. Also, a thing that happened when the ripple happened that we didn't refer to is: you know the language now, Jack. Pickman.

Jack: Oh, yeah! Uh huh.

Austin: Ernestina can speak this language now, can read this language now. It all seems to fit. Or it shifted into something you can read, you know?

Jack: Which makes Pickman feel more at ease, in the sense that I think it would make anyone feel more at ease. But if anything, it just emboldens her cantankerousness, where she's like—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: “Okay, fine, I can read your fucking signs. Where’s Price?”

Austin: So what’s your journal entry for this?

Jack: Also, I might have invented pointillism. [both laugh] “Just got back from the theater. Long play. [Austin laughs softly] Sat in velvet box with Colette and two of her friends. Jenny, brackets, scared of me, close brackets. [Austin laughs softly] Mikhail. Play about hunting and killing a dragon across generations. Compelling.” Cut to Pickman at the theater sort of leaning forward over her box and Colette nudging her and handing her the little opera glasses. You know, Pickman’s huge hand holding these tiny opera glasses, peering at the stage. And then, because she’s Pickman, also just like peering into the wings, looking at other people in the audience, looking for Price. [laughs] No sign of Price in the audience. Is there a way we can inflect this to reflect further that this is Aldomina’s...this is Aldomina’s Zevunzolia. I’m wary of what you said, of just being like—

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I get you. No, I think—

Jack: I don't want to just be like, “Zevunzolia’s lovely.”

Austin: No, but I think part of the...part of the thing we have to contend with is that Pickman is not a rev— does not have revolutionary politics. Pickman is a regular person who lives in a world that has also been shaped by Aldominan aesthetics. Do you know what I mean?

Jack: [laughs] Yes. Yes.

Austin: We don't get to have our heroes be the ones who like, like good art.

Jack: Pickman—

Austin: You know?

Jack: Pickman, do you have revolutionary politics? “No.” Should everybody eat? “Well, yes, of course.”

Austin: Yes, exactly. Right. This is, you know. So.

Jack: You know, when Pickman sees injustice and she's able to identify it, which is not all of the time, she might act.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: But at the same time, she's at the theater, you know?

Austin: Yep. Yep! Yep. Yeah, I think that that's good. I think we should keep moving, because again, this could go a while, so let's not...

Jack: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: I'm cautious of gilding the lily on each of these.

Jack: Of gilding the lily.

Austin: Yeah, exactly. All right. The queen of hearts, which is...

Jack: Oh, we're in the red deck right now.

Austin: Apparently, yes. Queen. A red queen is, da da da da da...oh, wait. Didn't we just get a red queen?

Jack: No, we got a red king.

Austin: No, wait, we got a red...oh, that was jubilant. This is joyous, much different. [laughs softly]

Jack: Oh, it's jubilant because at the end of the play, when they eventually kill the dragon after three generations—

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Everybody in the stalls produces party streamers from their pockets. And it's as though the stalls, looked down on by Pickman, erupt into paper fireworks.

Austin: Oh my goodness. Incredible. This is a joyous, and then the black jack here is day in court. Oh, roll your dice. How long— how many days has it been?

Jack: [laughing] A joyous day in court?

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: What the fuck?

Austin: Uh huh!

Jack: Six days!

Austin: So now it has been...so, 7, 11. This is day 17. A joyous day in court! Why were you in court?

Jack: [bewildered] Why was I in court?

Austin: And also, I should say, as I'm looking at these, it kind of like, red suits seem to be like, ah, you know, I'm going to the theater or I'm going to a gallery opening. The black suits are things like days in court or letter from a city official. You know?

Jack: So we've got a joyous day in court.

Austin: Yeah, we do. Yeah, uh huh. And likewise, for the emotional side of this, the adjective side, joyous, jubilant. But then the black suit stuff is like sinister, erratic. So like, we just haven't gotten any black suits on the adjectives yet, which is part of why we keep getting good days.

Jack: Okay, hold on. We need to figure this out. 'Cause otherwise we're just gonna be like, "Pickman goes to court and has a good time," and it's like...

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Okay, what is a joyous day at— well, firstly, why is Pickman at court? Has she got jury service? [laughs softly] No. I don't know if jury duty—

Austin: Exists.

Jack: Do they have juries in...

Austin: I don't know. In Zevunzolia? I don't know, you tell me!

Jack: Okay, what is Zevunzolia's court system? It's a utopian project that is currently being run

by—

Austin: But it's, again, it's utopian in aesthetic. It's not our utopian ideal, right?

Jack: Oh, right. Yes. Yes, you're right.

Austin: It's utopian in the way that utopia is a word that just generally means an imagined place where everything is perfect.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: That does not mean that it's *our* imagined place where everything is perfect, you know?

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Right. We don't need to do the work that we did on the Mirage here.

Austin: Correct. Yes.

Jack: And took us— took years off our lives.

Austin: Well, and it's explicitly a place that we've already said— I know we keep saying it to the point of I'm sure people are sick of hearing us saying how compromised it is, you know?

Jack: Yes. But we're gonna keep saying it.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: 'Cause you're listening to this show.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Okay, so there's a jury system. There is...you go to court. [brief pause] Oh, wait. I mean, we could just read it as like a palace court, as like a royal court.

Austin: We could, but I like it being— I like that Pickman has jury duty.

Jack: You like putting us to this problem.

Austin: I do. Well, like, and is it that someone who you think is innocent gets to go home? Like, maybe—

Jack: Yeah. Oh.

Austin: You know, jury duty is not always a murder trial. Sometimes jury duty is like, you know, small, you know— not small claims, but.

Jack: What if it's something that in Pickman's Sangfielle mind is extremely open and shut?

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: Is just like, there is no...of course you did that. You needed to do that. That's fine.

Austin: Right.

Jack: Why are we all doing this? Why did I have to go? And she didn't. She didn't go on day 15, and then someone came.

[1:10:07]

Austin: Oh.

Jack: And was like, "Ernestina Pickman, you need to report to so-and-so or there'll be a big fine."

Austin: Right.

Jack: And Colette was like:

Jack (as Colette): What the fuck are you doing? [Austin laughs] I know you're going through it, but you can't— can you pay 500 crowns or whatever it is?

Austin: Right.

Jack (as Colette): I can't pay 250 crowns. Go and sit there. They'll tell you what to do.

Jack: She goes, and she's like, why are we spending so much time? The journal entry says: "Some sort of courtroom. Idiot got himself caught up in something that he didn't need to be caught up in. Me and the others voted, after a long preamble by opposing lawyer. All sorts of regulations. They had the paper streamers again at the end when he was innocent— when he was declared innocent. People outside celebrating with paper fireworks. Seem to have smoothed things over with Colette by attending the court." [Austin laughs] It's not joyous for Pickman. It is joyous for— eh, satisfied that this didn't get worse for this man.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. Give me a D6.

Jack: [laughs softly] Five. Five days.

Austin: Fuck. Day 25, or day 23 rather. Day 22, 22. I know how math works.

Jack: Journal entry: "I think I have lost Price."

Austin: Uh huh. Ooh, four of spades. Six of hearts. Four of spades on the adjectives is intriguing. Six of hearts is—red six—is night at the theater! [both laugh] Intriguing night at the theater. I can't believe Colette's brought you back to— you're really, Pickman is living such a different life. And now you're on week three of this life. Or I guess week two, 'cause the first week was this other life.

Jack: Gets up, goes down.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: There's coffee.

Austin: Yep. You know, Colette is like, you know...

Austin (as Colette): Francis Trois is doing the show tonight. Are you going to make it?

Jack (as Pickman): Did he do the one— the last one we saw, with the dragon?

Austin (as Colette): No, no, no, no, no. No, no, this is a much different thing.

Jack (as Pickman): Oh yes?

Austin (as Colette): No dragons this time.

Jack (as Pickman): Different how?

Austin (as Colette): Um, personal. This is a, you know, like a one man show.

Jack (as Pickman): No. What is a—

Austin (as Colette): Memoir and comedy and a little intriguing kind of room work. I believe François will talk to the audience a little bit, incorporate answers, but not in an improv-y way.

Jack (as Pickman): It's just one man?

Austin (as Colette): That's right.

Jack (as Pickman): And it costs the same as the dragon?

Austin (as Colette): [sighs] It costs a little less, but it's probably not going to be as many people.

Jack (as Pickman): Mm.

Austin (as Colette): So I tend to leave a little tip, because—

Jack (as Pickman): I don't want him to talk to me.

Austin (as Colette): You don't get to decide.

Jack (as Pickman): Well, I— yeah, I just...right, but if he tries to—

Austin (as Colette): It's not a big thing. It's just he'll ask a question. He'll ask you what you had for breakfast. Maybe he'll ask you, you know, the last time you kissed someone. It's not a big deal.

Jack (as Pickman): [shocked and dismayed] What? Why? What?

Austin (as Colette): So that he can bounce off of it and tell a story. He'll be reminded of something in his own life. And, you know, a lot of these people, they already know what they want to say. They have a pool of different like, you know, bits that they're ready to give you, and they want to make it seem like it's improvised. But my understanding is François, François Trois is like actually pulling from a life of, you know, all sorts of...I don't want to say the word "adventure," because it's not like, you know, it's not adventure. But, you know, lowercase A adventure.

Jack (as Pickman): I'm not going.

Austin (as Colette): You have to go. We have tickets. Jenny wants to show you that she's not afraid of you.

Jack (as Pickman): I don't know what what she's got to worry about, but.

Austin (as Colette): Just give it a shot. If you make it through the first 30 minutes and you hate it, I'll cover for you in the afterparty.

Jack: [imitating performer] The big caprak up there in the velvet box! [both laugh] Just deeply uncomfortable crowd work from Pickman. Uh, to, at Pickman.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Invariably, I think picking up in the way that people who do crowd work are able to do, laser focusing on the most uncomfortable-looking person in the place.

Austin: Uh huh. And I think this is like, I think that the show is like one of these almost maudlin, you know, person tells a story about their life and like, it takes all sorts of kind of, you know, sentimental turns. You know, François Trois is up there just sipping on some sort of— sipping on a Sazerac and like, you know, entertaining but like...I don't know, it's intriguing, so—

Jack: This is a real fucking Wes Anderson character, right? Of like...

Austin: Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

Jack: With a Negroni or something in his little...

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly, exactly.

Jack: On a little stool.

Austin: Yep.

Jack: It's intriguing in the sense that...what does this have for Pickman? It's...

Austin: I mean, you've never seen anything like this, certainly, right?

Jack: Oh, yeah. Yeah. [laughs]

Austin: You've never seen like a spoken word memoir show in Sangfielle.

Jack: In the journal: [emphatically] “No more theater. [Austin chuckles] Thinking about Alekest. Now that I have seen this place, I understand why somebody like him would think so highly of it. [Austin laughs softly] Dot dot dot dot dot. Zevunzolia. Dot dot dot dot dot. If you have a vineyard.” And then another little—

Austin: God, this is like, it is amazing how much we've built the Zevunzolia for Alekest.

Jack: Yeah, truly!

Austin: All of this he would be just eating up.

Jack: Honestly, it's great. Oh, let's flashback, right, to Alekest going, “You want backup?” on... [laughs softly]

Austin: Right. Yeah. Uh huh. [as Pickman, gruffly] "Nah. I'm good," you know?

Jack: No, no. Off we go. I'll be fine.

Austin: Alekest finding your armor a week later.

Jack: It's just empty.

Austin: And being like, "What the fuck?" Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: It's Sangfielle, and this is Pickman. So I imagine that Alekest's first reaction isn't "Pickman's dead," right?

Austin: No, no. I think—

Jack: It's "Something very strange has happened to Pickman."

Austin: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Jack: So she draws Alekest. I think, you know, I don't know that it's great. I don't know that Pickman's great at drawing people. But it's recognizably Alekest.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And then a tiny little drawing of François Trois. Let's roll the dice. Four days.

Austin: 26 days in Zevunzolia. Let's see. Eight. Black eight is erratic. Uh oh. An erratic...two of hearts, incident at the bookstore. We talked about a bookstore. That was—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: The bookstore was the place where you were showed kindness, right?

Jack: Well, kindness.

Austin: I mean, yeah.

Jack: [laughs] You know. Yeah.

Austin: Limited kindness.

Jack: [thoughtful] An erratic incident at the bookstore. Now, when I think of erratic, I think of running and chasing and things falling over.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: Is there— are there other inflections of erratic that I'm missing? Sort of like scatty, sort of like, uh, not being quite on top of things?

Austin: Yeah, I think something being erratic can feel kind of like, um... [sighs] hazardous in the sense of like, you know, if I was like, oh, I'm walking down a road, or if I'm in traffic and the traffic is erratic, it's stop and go traffic, not just in the sense of like, "Ugh, I'm so exhausted of hitting the brakes and then the gas and the brakes and the gas." I think it's also like dangerous because of that, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: People stopping and going and people coming in and out of the bookstore maybe, quickly, or...but I don't know. Maybe it's erratic in a more playful, softer way.

Jack: Oh, shit. I mean, maybe it is just Price at the bookstore.

Austin: You just run into him.

Jack: Yeah. Pickman going to the bookstore to pick something up for Jenny.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: I want to be— I want to be as clear as I can to the listeners here. I am not aiming for a Pickman/Jenny enemies to lovers, was scared of... [Austin laughs] I don't think Pickman has a romantic bone in her body.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And I want to be clear that this isn't Pickman being like, "I'm gonna win over Jenny," and Pickman more being like, "Jenny asked me to pick the book up, and we're now on speaking terms."

Austin: Yeah. Right.

Jack: Jenny works as a like plumbing, she's a plumber. She's like a plumbing and irrigation specialist. And this is a book from the bookstore that is a series of short stories about plumbers. [Austin laughs] Which you don't—

Austin: And Jenny was like:

Austin (as Jenny): I need it! Please, Ernestina!

Jack (as Jenny): I have to get it. I got it under my name.

Jack: Pickman saying:

Jack (as Pickman): Don't call me that.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: You know. But I think saying that less and less.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And still deeply uncomfortable with her first name.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: But is saying that less and less. And goes to the bookstore and, you know, is like:

Jack (as Pickman): I'm looking for a book for Jenny Price. It's about plumbing.

[1:20:09]

Jack: And the old man, without a hint of it being like, "You were the person at the door," 'cause it was a different old man and a different door, you know, it's a different reality.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Hands the book over, and then Pickman turns to go, and in the queue three paces behind her, looking for a book— and we don't, uh, Pickman doesn't know what it is, but the narrator knows that this book is somehow related to the project back in Sangfielle. He's trying to find something that will be applicable from the bookstore.

Austin: Oh, right. Right. Yeah, totally. Of which, you know, this is, we've seen them do this exact thing before, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I think specifically, you know, Maleister Price is a people person. Maleister Price is a puppets, is part of the puppets suit. And so, I don't know if this is the Zevunzolia version of *How*

to Win Friends and Influence People or if it's some sort of broader, you know, history of rhetoric or something about, you know.

Jack: I like that each of these— that the books in this bookshop that we've seen [**Austin:** Uh huh] are the extremely nondescript detective stories [**Austin:** Mm-hmm] and a book of short stories about plumbers.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: So I like the sensation [**Austin:** Yeah] that the stuff here is inconsequential, unless you are not from Zevunzolia.

Austin: Right.

Jack: At which point it becomes like, of critical genuine interest.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: So...

Austin: Is it like a book of poetry? It's just a book of poetry. But like, there's something about the way verse is written in Zevunzolia that is distinct from how it's written in our Sangfielle, in our world.

Jack: And it might be able to be used as a leverage point or a pinch point back in Sangfielle in some way.

Austin: Even just as an occult, you know, the words have power in some way maybe, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: They can anchor something. They can bring part of what the Course in Zevunzolia is like back to our more violent Course, you know, or something.

Jack: Yeah. And it costs, you know, like, um...what was the old Spanish currency before the euro? [laughs softly]

Austin: I truly don't know, Jack. I liked that you're using crowns before, but... [typing]

Jack: Well, but crowns are big, if...um, real? Or...

Austin: Was it the real? It was the peseta from 1868 to 2002. Along with the French franc, it

was also the de facto currency in Andorra.

Jack: Huh. Yeah, but this is like—

Austin: Which had no national currency.

Jack: Huh.

Austin: Wild.

Jack: It's like six peseta. It's like nothing.

Austin: Right.

Jack: It's, you know, it's a used book. And Pickman just lunges for him, and we can, you know, we can...

Austin: [sighs] There's a— is there a fight? Does he get away from you?

Jack: There's a race.

Austin: Is he shocked at seeing you? Yes.

Jack: There's a chase. There's, um...

Austin: This is the erratic.

Jack: This is the erratic. A bookshelf comes down.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Because if you're doing erratic stuff in a bookstore, a bookshelf has to come down. The gendarmes or whatever, these Zevunzolia police officers are called.

Austin: The Civil Guard is what the...

Jack: The Civil Guard.

Austin: Is what the Spanish version of the gendarmes was.

Jack: Oh, yeah. The Civil Guard come in their like red and yellow uniforms and separate the two. And Pickman is, you know, shouting about how, you know, [laughs softly] "I'll get you!" All

the kind of like, “You think you could get away from *me*?”

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And Pickman spends some sort of like uncomfortable night in a lockup.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And is fined something, is fined some...some sum. And then, you know: “Found and lost Price. Won't have an opportunity like that again. [Austin sighs] Not my first night in a cell. Colette is going to be furious. The book of plumbers short stories confiscated!” Exclamation mark.

Austin: [laughs] Oh, unbelievable.

Jack: All right.

Austin: Okay, give me dice.

Jack: That's a six! Oh, it's just...it's just...

Austin: So, you've past a month now. 30...

Jack: Awful. Like, there's been a festival that they all attended.

Austin: Uh huh. Yeah. Well, let's— well, slow down, 'cause festival is one of the things that's in here. So we could end up getting a festival, and I don't want to... [Jack laughs] I don't want to blow the possibility of that, you know? All right, here we go. Three of hearts is mysterious. And a ten of hearts is...

Jack: Night at the theater. [laughs] It's not.

Austin: [laughs softly] Is a week long festival.

Jack: You're kidding me!

Austin: And that is two hearts. Which means, two hearts in a row: a change of heart. Who had the change of heart? Was it a spurned lover, a rival, your patron, or yourself? So it's a mysterious week long festival. On the fucking nose.

Jack: [laughs] Oh, shit. Okay. A letter arrives for Pickman. It's addressed to Pickman.

Austin: Ooh.

Jack: Instead of Ernestina Pickman. And Pickman's been getting letters.

Austin: Of course.

Jack: And at first didn't open them, with a sort of like, uh, it's the former occupant lived here. You know, like when you get [**Austin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah] letters addressed to Irene at your house, and you're like, "What?" But then she starts opening them, and they're just, you know, like, what did we learn about the Pickman of this job? Oh, it's um...it's like bills. [laughs] It's bills. It's a letter from someone elsewhere in the city asking how she's been. This one is to Pickman, and it says: Let's settle this, like...let's settle this with...

Austin: Ooh.

Jack: What's a better way of saying like, "Let's settle this like men," you know? Like, let's—

Austin: I think it's like, "Let's settle this like where we're from."

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You know? Like, there's a degree of like, even in just this little communique, there's the sense that— this is from Price, right? This is from Maleister Price?

Jack: Oh yeah.

Austin: That's like, even I've had enough of this fucking place.

Jack: I wanted to come here for a little visit. I can't get back down the well now.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: There might be other reasons why I can't leave.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And it says, "Festival of Clasped Hands, Tuesday, the square." And this is the Festival of Clasped Hands, where, like one of those awful improv games...

Austin: Oh.

Jack: People at the beginning of the festival hold hands.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And they don't let go, other than for like emergencies or like, you know.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And so Colette is like, "Do you want to do this, Ernestina?" [both laugh quietly] and Pickman is like, "Well, sure, 'cause we have to do it at the beginning of the festival," and then just spends just this deeply... [laughs] Just...

Austin: Is this...real quick question. Is this where we get our statues? I didn't know if that was where you were building to. Because statues of petrified devil couples embraced in desolate union. Are they like, are there big statue floats above the people who are holding hands in this parade?

Jack: The parade is the climax, and yes.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: There are these big statues. And in fact, they parade to a church in which there are normal sized devils holding hands.

Austin: Right. Right.

Jack: And this is what the festival is celebrating. It's celebrating this wedding or this union that happened. It's an Aldomina tradition that they then took...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: They took the relic up into Zevunzolia when...

Austin: Into Zevunzolia. Gotcha.

Jack: And these desolate, this desolate marriage from...it's like old, old Aldomina. Maybe it's from Hell! Maybe they...

Austin: I was gonna say, does it predate— yeah, does it predate Aldomina from when the devils were still in Hell?

Jack: Yes, they took it first up from Hell, and then they took it again up in...it's, insofar as the devils have holy things.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: It holds a great reverence. And so there's this week long festival, everybody holds hands,

and then there's a parade to the square. And in the center of the square, like those churches in the center of the square in Florence, there's this church which doesn't get used, and inside it is the wedding.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And when they're there, Pickman makes a excuse to let go of Colette's hand.

Austin: Oof.

Jack: And Colette rolls her eyes and it's like, oh, this sucks.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And she spends— she just doesn't know what to do with her— everyone around her is holding hands. She just sort of stands there awkwardly, separated from her partner, as Pickman goes to find Maleister Black...Price.

Austin: Tell me what happens by telling me what you've written in your journal.

Jack: "Price dead. Wounded in stomach. Resting in bed, Colette sent for Doctor." Quotes, "You got shot on the day of clasped hands." [Austin laughs] Pickman's notes: "Inauspicious. Price wanted to finish this Sangfielle style. We stood like duelists in the back of the square." Uh, Pickman wouldn't write this, but the gunshots are hidden by the drums of the parade.

Austin: Right, of course.

Jack: That is too poetic an image for Pickman to notice.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: "Loud drumming," Pickman writes. [both laugh] "Felt weird without armor. I let him shoot first. Bullet arcing towards my head, right between my horns. Porcelain heart beat. Clipped me in my torso. Maleister out of bullets. Shot him in the head. No more sheriff in Blackwick. Stuck in Zevunzolia. Still wounded. Colette angry at me." [both laugh]

[1:30:30]

Austin: Give me a dice roll.

Jack: God, what does she do with the body?

Austin: I don't know. Throws it off the edge.

Jack: Well, there's no edge, 'cause otherwise— [laughs softly] is there an edge? 'Cause there—

Austin: Yeah, there's an edge.

Jack: Well, the well became a well functioning again. So I didn't know if...

Austin: It did. I think that there's just, at a certain point, you get to the edge and you look out and it is the clouds. It is the sea of clouds forever. You are in heaven, baby.

Jack: And of course, the people in Zevunzolia...like, what happens if you jump off there? Well, no one knows. 'Cause they go—

Austin: No one knows. Don't do it.

Jack: No one goes.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: We lower a rope down, and you're just in the clouds forever. And the trick is they didn't use a long enough rope.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. Or maybe it doesn't work that way. We don't know.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I don't think that this is like, you could just, you could take a hang glider and glide down to one of these places. Like, I—

Jack: Oh, so whoever dropped the rope ladder was doing something.

Austin: Right. That was an intentional...yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Someone was letting Price up.

Jack: Price had been told, "Come to the rock mesa on whenever."

Austin: Yes. Yes. Yes.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Pickman plagued with dreams.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: Feverish dreams of Sangfielle. Of, you know, worms in the fields. Of the bottles of the pre-Panic wine, drinking the pre-Panic wine until she's sick. Hearing the sound of a train whistle and waking, and Colette being there being like, "No, it's okay, Ernestina," you know. Two days pass.

Austin: Oh, so that means we're at 34 now, right?

Jack: Yeah, we haven't quite hit the length of one Zevunzolian month.

Austin: Wait, what is— how long is— do we know this? Is this a thing that I've established that I've forgotten?

Jack: [laughs softly] No. No, I'm just...

Austin: [relieved] Okay, okay, okay.

Jack: Just ad libbing it.

Austin: Okay. Red jack. Oh, Red Jack. Uh, is hopeful. And a black six. Have we had a black six?

Jack: I don't think so, no.

Austin: Oh, a message from a long lost friend.

Jack: I mean, this is Alekest, right?

Austin: It has to be Alekest.

Jack: This has got to be Alekest. Now like, this...

Austin: It has to be.

Jack: On the one hand, when we play tabletop games, the good motto is: don't always give the audience what they want.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And in this case, the audience is me wanting to see Alekest in Zevunzolia. Like, there's part of it which is like, does Alekest get here? And it's like, I don't— it would be really lovely.

Austin: I don't think it would be.

Jack: He'd be so delighted.

Austin: I think, to me, that requires one of these ripples, right? This needs— I don't know if there is a ripple that's like, "a new person shows up," but...

Jack: But he gets a message in somehow.

Austin: He does get a message in. Yeah.

Jack: And the message— [laughs] It's a letter to Pickman, and Pickman's first thought is, "Price survived."

Austin: Ah!

Jack: But she opens it, and it's just a letter from Alekest. I kind of love that, um...people who are less enamored of Zevunzolia might have taken efforts to encode this message or something.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: But I think Alekest is so...he's like a, he's like a giddy kid about Zevunzolia, that I think he just writes Pickman a letter.

Austin: Briefly, I just realized I did not mark the last, that double heart.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: So we have two changes left.

Jack: Yeah, you're right.

Austin: Two ripples left. What's the letter say?

Jack: You have a better handle on Alekest's voice than me.

Austin: I do.

Jack: But I think the gist of it—and you can figure out what it is—is that he knows where I am.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, exactly.

Jack: And he's envious. [laughs softly]

Austin: Yeah. It opens with:

Austin (as Alekest): I cannot believe it. After all of the hemming and hawing, all of your resistance to even talking about the place, you've ascended! How's the view from up there, Pickman? You still see the little people like me down here? I'm kidding, of course. I'm worried. I hope you're well. Get me a message somehow if you need me to make the impossible possible, come get you. I hope you haven't, uh, broken that heart of mine. Uh, joking. Platonic joking. You get me. [Jack laughs softly] Be safe. Take notes! [Jack laughs] -A.

Jack: Is Alekest his first name?

Austin: Yeah. Uh, yeah, it's Alekest san...

Jack: Of Tescano.

Austin: No, Tesc— yeah, Tescano is the place. [clicking] It is Alekest san something. What is it? Alekest, uh...this is what it's like at the end of a season.

Jack: Uh huh.

Austin: For people who don't know, is you're just burnt. This has been the wildest of all of our...of all of our finales I think in some ways, because it's such a strange multi-part thing. Alekest san Geraint, san Geraint, G-E-R-A-I-N-T, the Margrave of Tescano, the Porcelain Knight.

Jack: It's extremely Alekest that no one uses his full name and just calls him like, Jake.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: Just, ah, Alekest. Yeah, I was talking with Alekest.

Austin: Yeah. Alekest, yeah.

Jack: Real delight and comfort wells in Pickman. It's been 34 days.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And she's wounded. She knows what she got done.

Austin: Right.

Jack: She's happy that she's got done what she got done here, but she is homesick and worried about possibly getting back.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And so this message from Alekest is a real...is a real comfort.

Austin: Uh, hmm.

Austin (as Alekest): P.S. Something happened in Concentus. Figuring it out. Would love to have your help.

Jack: Narrows her eyes. Looks... [laughs]

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Rereads the final sentence again. Folds it up inexpertly, puts it in her pocket. In her journal, writes down, "Alekest wrote." I mean, she got shot in the side. The porcelain heart made it so that it wasn't bad.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: But it's still being shot. But at the same time, this is Pickman. So I think that she is able to be haltingly, carefully up and about, more than maybe somebody else might be.

Austin: Yeah, than most folks. Yeah, I think that's fair.

Jack: Let's roll the dice.

Austin: Let's do it.

Jack: Three.

Austin: 35 days. All right.

Jack: No, no. 34 plus 3 is not 35. [laughs]

Austin: Oh, wait, you're at 34. I thought you were at 30— sorry, I thought you were at 32 for some reason. Yeah, so not— [laughs] So, 30— that would be plus 1, Jack. Yeah.

Jack: New maths.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, in new maths, 34 plus 3 is 35. Deal with it. [Jack laughs] That's 37. Uh, ten of diamonds is inventive. And the nine of hea— spades, not hearts. Nine of spades is a trip to the countryside. An inventive trip to the countryside. What does that mean? Would love to know. Would love to know what that means.

Jack (as Colette): Well, Ernestina, you know, you're getting better, and it's good for you to get some fresh air.

Jack: Says Colette one day.

Jack (as Pickman): [obstinately] No.

Jack: Says Pickman. [laughs] You know, cut to Colette and Pickman walking with a cane or with a...yeah, I think walking with a cane.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Leaning heavily on a cane. I'm trying to think, what would Pickman's walking aid be? And I think it's just like a stout stick of some kind.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And Mikhail, the other person who was there. Jenny, you know, just like:

Jack (as Jenny): One book, Pickman, and you got arrested. I'm not gonna come out to the countryside with you.

Jack: Where on the edge of the city, you know, in the same way that you described the fields of clouds.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: That sort of, there's not like one place where that happens. There are sort of several breaking off points. And, you know, great colored windmills have been attached to the side to catch the breeze and power millstones.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And, you know, turn, presumably, you know, since we're in this kind of weird period, like rudimentary dynamos to allow for things to function. And there's like hanging gardens hanging off over the side of the place. And even Pickman, you know, has to concede that this is very beautiful, and she very grumpily thanks Colette [Austin chuckles] for bringing her out as they're resting on a thing.

Austin: Ah, god, I want to note that the countryside is at least partially on the edge or towards the edge of one of these, the kind of...again, for people who are having a hard time thinking about this, think about a circular table and think about it with clock directions. In my mind, the parts of Zevunzolia that are built are from like the 12 o'clock to like the— or like, from the 11 o'clock to like the four o'clock part. Or maybe even the 12 to the 3, right? And I think that like, the...and it's like a piece of the pizza pie has been filled it in, right? Like, that part exists. The rest of it is open, right?

Jack: Mm.

Austin: It's not a full circle yet. Then there's a circle in the very middle. There is like a circle in the very middle like a dartboard. The bull's eye exists, and then these kind of pie pieces exist alongside of it. And the bull's eye is also the kind of central tower structure that goes down into the clouds, right? And I think that the countryside is the edges where the city has not yet been built, and it's just raw fields. And it's beautiful, and there's hills out here somehow. And maybe some of that's in the center as well, you know? But eventually, that will be city in some way. Either Aldomina will build—

[1:40:31]

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Or the Ojantan will get there and build out their side, or whatever.

Jack: And fluttering through the sky here is a bird that Pickman recognizes.

Austin: [intrigued] Hmm. Oh.

Jack: It is a bird from Sangfielle. It is noticeably different from the birds that she has seen in Zevunzolia to this point.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Presumably this is some sort of migratory bird that has been able to— and, you know,

swallows migrate from like my house in England to Africa every year.

Austin: Right.

Jack: So the thought of like migratory birds being able to move from one sort of magical plane of existence up through endless cloud to the other is perfectly consistent with what I think of birds as being capable of.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: But this is interesting to Pickman in that it is sort of first sign of something moving between the places other than her, Price, and Alekest.

Austin: That's interesting. Yeah. What's the journal say?

Jack: "Migratory birds move from Sangfielle up into the city. Harness the birds?" question mark, crossed out. "No. [both laugh quietly] Feeling better slowly. Now Price is gone, like a worm in my head, the question of how to get back." Page over, drawing of the bird. But like, you know, slight extension of this impressionistic artistic practice. Feeling a bit more comfortable drawing non-representationally, maybe.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Yeah, that's a fun development. I mean, it's what you've been doing now for a month, you know? That's not— it's not serious art practice or something, but it is an art practice, right? It is like...

Jack: Well, we know Pickman can draw.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Like, there must have been a point in her life, maybe when she was stuck on a train for 15 years—

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Where she was like, I'm gonna get better at drawing landscapes or whatever. So I think—

Austin: And...

Jack: Oh, go on.

Austin: You've been exposed to new stuff.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: So. Opens the mind.

Jack: Pickman is incurious, but she's not utterly incurious.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: I think she's like, uh huh, yeah. Something interesting happening here. I'll draw the pictures.

Austin: [laughs softly] All right, give me a dice roll. 40 days. You rolled a 3, so 37 plus 3 is 40. I got that one right. Let's see. Black seven, seven of clubs, is harrowing. And the king of spades, so not another double, but two black cards. King, a black king is memory from times long past. A harrowing memory of times long past, Pickman. Interesting. Is this a bad dream? Is this just a thought you can't get rid of? Is this a sort of deja vu event? Harrowing memory from times long past.

Jack: I mean, this is absolutely a dream of being on the train.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And Pickman has had these dreams before, but I think that this is a long, long dream.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: The dream feels like it takes, you know, months.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And Pickman is...she has angered the train in some way.

Austin: Right.

Jack: Maybe an attempt to escape. Maybe, uh, just a weird slight that the train took that she didn't intend.

Austin: Right.

Jack: She's maybe 16 or 17 years old. Maybe she said something to another one of the passengers, and the train took it to mean something that the train found offensive. And so in Pickman's dream, the train has separated her from the other people on the train and from the neighboring carriage. She's standing on the coupling between the two carriages, where there's like this little banister. And through the little window on one side, she can see the people in the

carriage, and they're all crowded around the window saying, you know, "Come back in, Pickman. Come on, come on." And Pickman's saying, "The door won't open. I'm trying to open the door, and it can't open."

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And behind her in the other carriage, the train is slowly filling the carriage with gandy dancers.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: They are slithering out of the weird little golden tubes on the walls. And Pickman looks back and says, you know, "That's enough. You've made your point." And the train keeps extruding gandy dancers, such that they begin to fill up the inside of the carriage behind her just completely. They're pressing up, the sort of horrible papery, the tools clinking against the window behind her. And the train is just like taking these tight hairpin turns around like blank mountain after blank mountain after blank mountain. And this dream goes on for, you know, like weeks.

Austin: Mm-hmm. God. Journal entry.

Jack: "Train dream."

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And that's it.

Austin: And that's it.

Jack: Three days pass.

Austin: 43. So not for weeks and weeks, but maybe it predated this.

Jack: Oh, the dream feels like it.

Austin: Oh, the dream feels like it's weeks and weeks. I see, I see, I see. All right.

Jack: And she wakes up, and like Colette's making coffee downstairs, and you know, Jenny's come over, and they're all hanging out.

Austin: Oh, we got doubles. We got— we've not had this type of double before. We have double numbers. I don't know what this is.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: Eight of hearts. Eight of hearts is...I mean, they're both red, so. Illuminating. Parade through the neighborhood. [both laugh] And double numbers. Getting two of the same number is you change the city. Do you leave a mark or will no one know it was you? Did you instigate a minor change, or will the city never be the same? And what did I say it was again?
A...inspiring?

Jack: Parade through the streets. [laughs softly]

Austin: An illuminating. An illuminating parade through the streets. It illuminates something, in you? Question mark? Oh, and that's another mark, which means we're in the territory. It could happen at any time.

Jack: Mm-hmm. Okay. The parade is because, after a long like time trying, a new thing has opened. Like a—

Austin: Mm.

Jack: It's a funicular railway.

Austin: Oh, love it.

Jack: Like a small little funicular railway, which if you're not familiar with—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: A funicular railway is a train that goes diagonally upwards. It's a train that goes up a very steep slope and is sort of managed such that you the passenger are not on an angle.

Austin: Right.

Jack: You sort of just like rise up the slope. It's a bit like what if a train was an escalator.

Austin: Right, yeah.

Jack: And there's a parade because of the funicular railway. And Pickman is...Pickman is not afraid of trains. I sort of think about Pickman's relationship with trains as someone who works with dangerous animals, like a snake specialist.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Where if you get— if you're a snake specialist, and you get a call saying, "There's a snake

in my house," your first reaction isn't, [horrified] "Oh god, no!" [both laugh quietly] It's: "Okay. All right. Yep. I gotta be careful of the snake, but my job is about snakes. So let's go and see what the deal is."

Austin: Right.

Jack: So when Pickman hears that this railway has opened, she goes, "Uh, I didn't know that there were trains here. Is this one of my trains?"

Austin: Right.

Jack: By which she means is this a train from Sangfielle.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: So they parade through the streets, and...it's not. The train is inert.

Austin: Ooh, interesting.

Jack: It might not even be a train, in the sense that, you know, we've talked about how trains don't exist in Aldomina, and I sort of want to keep that. So I don't even know if what these people think they've built is a train. They're like, it's a little vehicle that lets people move up and down hills. [laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: But Pickman seeing it is like, that's a train. And it's inert.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It doesn't react in any way. It doesn't...

Austin: There's no gandy dancers. There's no...do you sense...have you drawn the Shape up here?

Jack: Nope.

Austin: Huh.

Jack: But I'm going to.

Austin: Ah.

Jack: And that's what— that's the change that Pickman is going to effect because there— it is genuinely a...

Austin: Mm.

Jack: This is utterly bizarre to Pickman, because the way this train works [**Austin:** yeah] is that there's a woman at the bottom in a cap. You get into the train, she pulls a lever, and the train goes up the little funicular, and then everybody gets off at the top. And this feels—

Austin: And is Pickman like, “Well, that's enough of that”?

[1:50:00]

Jack: That's a great question. Yes, because...Pickman doesn't like it— this is heretical in a way that Pickman views heresies, which is people sort of completely appropriating the power of a god.

Austin: Ah. Yeah. You're happy to wear the parts of a god, but you're not happy to disarm the entire affair.

Jack: It has become their god.

Austin: This is a change in who Pickman has been then from the jump, at this point. I'm asking. Or has this always been in Pickman, it's just surfaced in a more...

Jack: Pickman has expressed it in different ways.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And I think the main way Pickman expresses this is: don't mess with trains.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Trains are like a— trains are a thing that is, not better, but bigger than we are.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And no good comes from trying to mess with trains.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And of course, Pickman has spent the season messing with trains.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: But I don't know that that is necessarily...I mean, I wonder if she has examined that in herself. Or if she's like, "Well, I'm allowed to. Do as I say, not as I do."

Austin: Uh huh. Uh huh. Yeah.

Jack: But part of the reason that the *Zephyr* struck her so painfully, as did the way that at first she thought that the Triadic Pyre was using that burning train.

Austin: Right, right, right.

Jack: Before she realized that it was actually the other way around.

Austin: Quite the opposite? Yeah.

Jack: Was that it was people really taking a big swing at going, "I can...I am worth holding that flame."

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Or that flame is something for me to have. And so, in this way, seeing someone just driving what looks to all intents and purposes a dead train but Pickman knows isn't a dead train, is...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Is very, very strange. So she draws the Shape. Less out of an ideological "I need to bring the Shape here," and more out of a "Will it react if I draw the Shape?"

Austin: Right, right, right.

Jack: And it does.

Austin: Huh.

Jack: The dark, alive presence of the Shape awakens in the funicular. And I don't know that it does anything. I think that...I think that if it were to just take all the people up to the top and then break off and go rolling all over the place. I think the Shape has the capacity to be subtler and scarier than that, which is that it gets the top and all the people get off and all the people get on.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And it comes back down to the bottom, and it's a living Shape train, up in Zevunzolia.

Austin: And now it's a living train. Yeah, uh huh. And we'll see what happens long term, right?

Jack: "Woke a train in the city. It was not my intention. The dead thing responded to the Shape." Uh, someone more introspective might make a value judgment here, like "Did I do the right thing?"

Austin: Right.

Jack: But instead, I think Pickman just goes to sleep with uneasy queasy sensation on her body.

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm.

Jack: Like that that might not be something that in her core she feels necessarily comfortable with.

Austin: Right.

Jack: That's four.

Austin: Four more days, so we're up to 47. Nearing a Zevunzolian month at 50. No, that's a...that's a Principality month is 50 days, so it can't be the same thing.

Jack: I was— when I joked about a Zevunzolian month, the number I had in my head was 43 days. So, one month has...

Austin: All right. So we've done it. We've passed a month in Zevunzolia, 43 days.

Jack: Colette turns the big calendar downstairs. They have a calendar on, and it has a series of pictures of still lifes that were shown in Colette's gallery that Ernestina bought from the gift shop.

Austin: Amazing. [laughs] This is a king, a black king, which is inspired, which I didn't know that that— I expected that to be a red one. And a queen of diamonds, a red queen, is a find in the antique store. An inspired find in the antique store.

Jack: "At the antique store, I bought a telescope. Telescope had name of Sangfielle manufacturer on it."

Austin: Huh.

Jack: "Old, reputable brand. Good telescopes. When I look through the telescope, I see what

lies below us in the blood fields.” And this is like weird *They Live* glasses almost.

Austin: Uh huh. Of course, yeah.

Jack: In that it's like a little window. It's not like it gives Pickman a particularly good view of anything, but if she points it at the clouds—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: She sees straight through the clouds to the like north-south mountain range. She can see a little dark shape that is presum— well, hold on. What does Pickman see?

Austin: Mm. I mean, I think you see..I think you...I think you see what is basically home. And I think I like the idea of like part of this thing is like, this is a relic from Sangfielle. And there's probably a version of this that can look out and see the Republica version of the world instead. You know what I mean?

Jack: Oh, sure, yeah.

Austin: But this one sees Sangfielle. And I think you see what you just set up. It's familiar enough. Sapodilla is still where Sapodilla is. You can see, you know, from the right angle, maybe you can see the tower at Bell Metal Station. You can see all the way west to, you know, over the mountains. The first, you know, hints of the lake where Erlin the wet god's place is, right? You can see Vish. But I think there's something has happened, which is there is a...Concentus is broken somewhere in the north, right?

Jack: Hmm. [laughs softly]

Austin: Just walls tumbled over, people rushing into the Heartland in some places and rushing out in others, like queues of people. So many— you can't see an individual person, right? But you're like, “What are those lines?” And the lines are people trying to get in or out past Concentus, waiting in line to be...not to like be approved, it's just it's a small, you know, hole in the wall or whatever, right? People are passing through in, you know, four or five people wide, but there's so many people that that's taking forever. There's a great— we already invoked— I already invoked Gene Wolfe once, and there's a bit at the very first of *The Book of the New Sun* towards the very end that, uh, in *Shadow of the Torturer*, of Severian and the kind of group that he's traveling with trying to get through these walls, out of the kind of capital city of this place where he is. And there's this *wild* section where like he's looking into like, into the interior of the walls, like through holes in the walls, and there's just like otherworldly creatures contained inside. And the whole thing is this chaos of people trying to get out. Not 'cause there's an emergency, just 'cause you have to get through this very strange dangerous place, and there's always risk of being trampled.

Jack: Huh.

Austin: Because people are just trying to get through as quickly as possible, through this slightly too small passage from the interior to the exterior.

Jack: Wow.

Austin: It's so good. I, you know, reading through *Book of the New Sun* this year has been very rewarding is what I will say, and I'm thinking of that here to some degree. You know, Conventus is also very wide. It's a big wide city. And so you have this happening on both sides of it. You have it happening at the near wall, where people are just queuing up to try to pass into Sangfielle. And these are people who are trying to escape something. They think maybe Sangfielle is like getting into the eye of the storm. And then you have people who are like, "No, we just have to get further away."

Jack: It's bad here. We gotta go.

Austin: Yeah, it's bad here. And I think maybe...you know, there is a sort of...there is a sort of way in which maybe you also see...I mean, I don't know how good this magic telescope is, right? But you do start to see something like new communities popping up here and there. There are a couple of collections of buildings and places where like, there weren't buildings there before, you know?

Jack: Mm.

Austin: You rode that river all the way back, right? And on the way, you didn't— wait, did you ride it all the way back? You didn't get off with Pickman and—

Jack: No. God, no.

Austin: No, yeah, that was Pickman and— sorry, that was Chine and Hazard and Lyke.

Jack: The sign said, "Don't get off the boat," Austin.

Austin: I know. Yeah, and you didn't. I know. So like, you know, places alongside the river up here, where like you didn't see anything before. You're seeing like big caravans of people putting together new communities, building stuff. And you see other places that you know you last saw, like Cantbank, that seemed to have been hit by something. Maybe not destroyed, but. You know, you see that Bridge Cathedral, and there's just like a big hole in the side of it.

Jack: God.

Austin: Right? And who knows, maybe that was just the train god being like, "You know what?

Fuck this,” finally. But it's, something has happened here.

Jack: Do I see—

Austin: The world is moving into a new phase.

Jack: Do I see the Shape from above for the first time?

Austin: Oh, I think you do. You truly do, right?

Jack: And this has got to, like—

Austin: You see it, and it's powerful.

Jack: Two things here, right? Like, one: we talk about the Shape as a compelling object being a particular shape made of railroad lines on Sangfielle.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: But we've always sort of talked about that in the abstract.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: So I think it is worth reiterating that that's literally what it is.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And this is the first time any of our characters have seen it. It's just the great black shape stretching across Sangfielle.

[2:00:00]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: The second thing is—

Austin: And you can see the smoke and sparks of the trains moving.

Jack: Of the trains!

Austin: You know?

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: I like want you to make a Fallout test. Do you know what I mean? Like, it is...you truly are moved in some way. Positive or negative, I don't know, but it is—

Jack: I think Pickman just breaks down. I think this is like...

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: This is, you know, this is *the* Shape.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: You're, you know.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It might...there's that joke about like, this would obliterate a medieval person if they—

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: [laughs] If they ate a single Flaming Hot Cheeto. God.

Austin: [laughs softly] Yes.

Jack: I think anybody who isn't Pickman or anybody who isn't a Shape Knight or has spent their life looking at the Shape might just be killed by this.

Austin: Yeah, totally. A hundred percent.

Jack: And as it stands, it just, the Shape suddenly burns in bright flame on the top of Pickman's head.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: All the objects around her are lit with the strange light of the flame between her horns.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: She vomits. She, you know, she can hear the sound of the engines moving and grinding. Somewhere on those lines below her is every train she has ever boarded, ever seen, you know.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It's just...it's unbelievably powerful. There is some separation. There's a real like blessing here, which is that if you are able to see the whole Shape at once, you are by definition not touching it.

Austin: Yeah. You have that distance, yeah.

Jack: And being on the Shape is the way the Shape is able to enact a lot of its power.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: It would kill Pickman. It would kill anybody if you were able to be physically touching the Shape and seeing the whole thing at once. [Austin laughs softly] But as it stands, it just knocks Pickman flat on her back for like a couple of days. It's spectacular.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And as for the thing being broken, the first part of her journal is about how she saw the Shape. She doesn't really know how to express it. She just describes it as like wonderful and horrible. She draws the Shape in her notebook, and it burns through a couple of the pages.

Austin: Of course.

Jack: And then she talks about how she saw that the wall has broken. And, you know, "That must be what Alekest was talking about. I hope he's okay. I never thought the walls would fall." End of journal.

Austin: End of journal.

Jack: The next two pages are unusable, because they have the burn marks from this.

Austin: Uh huh. 49 days. Uh, let's see. Three of clubs, which is black: sinister. Four of hearts. Uh... [laughs]

Jack: Yes?

Austin: A sinister gallery opening.

Jack (as Colette): Uh, this one's gonna be a bit...it's gonna be a bit weird, Ernestina. [laughs] I don't...

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, exactly.

Jack: It's gonna be a bit like... [laughs] It's like sick and twisted.

Austin: It's gonna be a little bit twisted, a little sick and twisted.

Jack: But I mean, you know, I think—

Austin (as Colette): Ernestina, I'm gonna tell you: you don't have to come to this one if you don't want to.

Jack (as Pickman): I'll come.

Austin: Now, uh— [laughs] Yeah, of course. Colette's trying to, you know, warn you off.

Jack: What, like art can make you feel feelings? No, of course not.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: I'll go. [both laugh quietly] Ah, god. This is from the same school of thought as the disappear completely and never be found art exhibit.

Austin: Right. Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Jack: In fact, it might actually be the same lady.

Austin: It's probably— yeah, uh huh.

Jack: And Pickman goes:

Jack (as Pickman): Oh! I—

Jack: And Colette says:

Jack (as Colette): Shh, shh.

Austin (as Colette): [hushed] Shh. Don't. Shh.

Jack (as Colette): Shh, she might— it's participatory. She might notice us. [Jack laughs]

Austin: She might no— yeah, uh huh.

Jack: Uh, what's she doing this time? She is...oh, she has a booth on the stage that she invites

an audience member to come and stand in.

Austin: Ah.

Jack: And then she closes a curtain, and the audience member steps back out of the booth behind the curtain. You know, steps from behind the curtain onto the stage.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And says, you know, "Ooh," everybody applauds. And then she raises the curtain, and the person's still behind the curtain. [Austin laughs softly] And they look at each other, and she says, "Do you want to go again?" And if the person says yes, they enter the booth again. And now there are three of the people on the stage, and by now they're starting to feel a little weird.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: You know, what do we do in terms of our significant other in the audience? Or, you know, what do we do about our jobs? There's now three of me. Do we have the same memories? What's happening? Some people see their double and start breaking into tears. And one guy goes up and just makes 12 of himself really quickly, and they all leave the room really, [laughs] you know, like in a little tight pack all together. And in doing so, this woman, you know, slowly multiplies the audience, and eventually the show kind of comes to an end. At the end, she duplicates herself, and you know, shakes hands with herself and both people thank everybody for coming out to the show, and...

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: You know. The one who got duplicated, you see her out of the back, packing everything away and putting it into a second wagon that was laid, and she sets off into the streets of Zevunzolia.

Austin: God. Journal entry.

Jack: "The woman from the terrible circus showed up. It feels like such a long time ago. I think it's been 40 days." She's wrong. It's been 49 days.

Austin: Uh huh. [both laugh quietly]

Jack: And then on the back of it, she's done a self portrait of...

Austin: Oh.

Jack: She's done a couple of self portraits in the style of the woman duplicating, imagining what

it would be like to duplicate Pickman.

Austin: To duplicate yourself. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I love it. [brief pause] Phew.

Jack: I rolled a six.

Austin: Six! Which brings you up to 55 days. Six of clubs. I almost said the red one, which is planned, but clubs are black, so it's unexpected. Unexpected. And there's our— that's a club. So that's our final thing.

Jack: Ooh.

Austin: Eight of clubs is encounter at midnight. An unexpected encounter at midnight. And double clubs— we haven't had this yet, right? We haven't had double clubs?

Jack: Nope.

Austin: A new wind is blowing. This could be as simple as a change in the weather, or it could be a new political power rising or a new artistic movement or a new fad sweeping the city.

Jack: God. I have a pitch, but I don't know if it would be...

Austin: Let's hear it.

Jack: I mean—

Austin: Always interested in a pitch.

Jack: What if I'm woken up by a noise in the house, and I go downstairs and it's Dyre?

Austin: Oh...

Jack: But I don't know why Dyre would come and see Pickman.

Austin: Uh, I don't know where this is— Ali, get ready to break this, but uh, Dyre's dead.

Jack: Oh shit! Oh shit! In a good way? I mean, is that what Dyre wants?

Austin: Dyre expended all of—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Dyre, um...I mean, what's dead mean to someone who was, moments ago, hundreds of bones scattered across the Heartland?

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Dyre...the thing with Janine was that Dyre needed to be put into a coffin and brought to the bottom of a spire in the mountains of Concentus, like between the Pale Magistratum and the Republica.

Jack: Ah, Janine went down, and I went up.

Austin: And you went up. And inside was Dyre Ode's heart, which is the magical source of power that kept the wards of Concentus running.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: And so they recovered that, put it into Dyre's chest, and then Dyre exploded into a bright golden light that destroyed all of the wards of Concentus and cracked the city open.

Jack: Amazing.

Austin: And left behind a new cape for Es.

Jack: Oh, love to get a cape.

Austin: Uh huh. So.

Jack: That's gotta be at least (??? 2:08:23) tier equipment.

Austin: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Uh huh. So, so probably not Dyre. Wait, what was the...?

Jack: It's like a...

Austin: So it's a new wind is blowing, and then it's...

Jack: And it's an encounter. It's something encounter, an unexpected encounter at midnight.

Austin: An unexpected encounter at midnight, and— yeah, an unexpected— right, an unexpected encounter at midnight.

Jack: And this has to be the way Pickman can get back.

Austin: It has to be, right?

Jack: I was gonna say, “if she wants to,” but this is Pickman. She does not belong in Zevunzolia.

Austin: And the final step of this game is the end of your stay. When you've ticked off all four boxes, your stay in Zevunzolia draws to an end. Write one last entry in your journal, answering all or some of these questions.

Jack: What's this unexpected encounter?

Austin: I mean, is this Alekest coming to get you? Is this another Wright of the Seventh Sun that you run into, and you're like, that motherfucker knows how to get out of here? Is this... [sighs] Is this a, you know...

Jack: I mean, the encounter could be with Sangfielle, right? Like, this could just be the door opens.

Austin: It could be. This is true. This could be that. I have no problem with that. You just like open the— you literally open a door somewhere, and the other side of that door is this other place. It could be... [laughs softly] It could be one of those great moments of the Wrights have opened a door to Zevunzolia, and you happen to be in the right place to like, “Oh hey, here's a door for *me* to get out, actually.” [Jack laughs softly] God, it could be...I mean, here's the other thing. It could be someone from another world. It could be someone from Kay'va world. It could be someone from...

[2:10:10]

Jack: Oh, shit. Yeah.

Austin: It could be a Star-Touched. It could be a...

Jack: Do you have one of these cool weirdos to just show up at the end of the season? [both laugh]

Austin: No, because of how it's the end of a season. Oh, let me see something. [typing]

Jack: God, a Kay'van Zevunzolian would be really cool.

Austin: [sighs] But I don't know why they would care about you. You're just another caprak, who like maybe looks out of place, but not so out of place, right?

Jack: No, yeah.

Austin: I'm reading my like deep...my deep lore.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: "The Panic begins," it says, right? Uh, da da da da da. The already multifarious world is split into da da da da da. Six suns, six worlds. Only clear from Sangfielle where the moon falls forever between them. Oh, right. This is fun. This is— these are notes I made probably eight to ten months ago, and just the story hasn't been interested in Zevunzolia in that way.

Jack: Huh.

Austin: And so we haven't really, you know. Because this is like, there's stuff here I don't want to read out loud, and there's stuff here that's interesting. So like, I think you do meet...you do meet someone from Kay'va, but it's not just...it's not just a Star-Touched agent. It's not just like someone here to investigate. It is the Visitor. The Visitor who was first referenced back when you talked to Appletun. The Wrights were told, you know, or the Wrights told you, those kind of librarian or those students in the library told you that there was a...that there was a visitor who came and kind of got them on the level about what Zevunzolia is, right? And my notes say: the Kay'va world discovers it first, sends out a visitor. The Unscholan world hypothesizes that these worlds will reunite, the Seventh Sun will re— hmm. Unschola world hypothesizes the reunion, the Seventh Sun Zevunzolia, and rushes to build a prototype, but does not reach yet for the real thing. The Magistratum world closes its gate and works to block out the sun, which we— this is what we talked about already. The Aldominan world rushes to build the first Zevunzolia, from which they will try to conquer the rest. Ojantan follows not far after, taking greater care. And so the Visitor who traveled the world and was like, "Hey, there's this fucking place," is of course the person who came from a world of greater actual equality, where the slave rebellion and the slave liberation world became a liberation of all people. And so that Visitor, who has slowly been visiting each of these places, is who first told people in Sangfielle about Zevunzolia, right? And I think you meet this person, who has probably aged in a way that has, you know, made them less naive about maybe telling people— because you have to remember, the people, the person who first discovered this and the first scout they sent up here and then across to these other planes of existence doesn't know anything about these places, right? This person shows up and is like, "Oh, I'm in a new place I guess. The language is a little weird and a little different."

Jack: Right.

Austin: "Let me give you a little something. Let me tell you where I come from," right? "Let's try to work together on something." And then eventually is like, "Oh my god, you people are monsters. I'm moving on."

Jack: Wait a second, it's Aldomina!

Austin: It's Al— well like, they know devils in their world.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Do you know what I mean? Like, they—

Jack: But they don't know the great devil empire.

Austin: It's been 500 years of— exactly, exactly. Right? They know there was once a great devil empire, and they overthrew them. You know?

Jack: Yeah, they threw them off. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. And have lived through whatever sort of, you know, rehabilitative, reparative, you know, conditions were necessary to reach a state of something like an equilibrium and an equity in that world. So you meet this person who's like an elder Kay'van. And Elder might not even be the right word, but like, this is someone who is...who knows all of the dialects, who knows how the worlds are all different, et cetera. And I think who wields their knowledge very carefully now, having come to regret that they may have pushed something into motion when they were young and excitable. You know?

Jack: If you...do you know how I meet them?

Austin: No. It's an unexpected meeting, and we pulled some cards from a deck, so no, I do not. Do you have an idea?

Jack: Yeah, at the gallery. At the...

Austin: Ah, sure.

Jack: Or if not the gallery—

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: At the sort of queer space that Colette runs with.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And, you know, she and Pickman are there one night, just sort of like getting a drink after, I guess, work? 'Cause I guess Colette is like, you have to— I can't pay for both of us.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: So Pickman has just been like lifting boxes at some place or whatever. And then in the

way that you fall into talking with people at a bar, especially when it's late. Does this seem like the kind of space this Kay'van visitor would be in?

Austin: I think so. I think that they have a great deal of...a great deal of curiosity about this place, about what will Zevunzolia be at this point.

Jack: And this explains why they find Pickman, because it's not that they're like, "I must find Pickman, who's critical to this!"

Austin: Right. No.

Jack: It's just that like, we're talking over a glass of like absinth or whatever it is that they're serving here.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Jack: Do they offer a way out?

Austin: [sighs] I think so, right? I think that they effectively tell you...I mean, I think this is another one of those conversations where— because I don't have this character fully in my head yet, right?

Jack: Right.

Austin: I've done a little sketch, let's say. I think this is a person—

Jack: Does Colette know them?

Austin: No, definitely not. This is a person who has like shown up in a way that's like, there's something touristy about it. Not like, not out of— touristy is wrong, but like a visitor, right?

Jack: Right. Then—

Austin: Oh, yeah.

Jack: We haven't seen them before. They seem cool.

Austin: They seem cool. They seem like they're passing through town. You know?

Jack: They tip well.

Austin: Right. Exactly. Exactly. And so there's a degree here where what we got is like, a person who's like, seems like maybe they know a little bit. This is the sort of person you would

have asked if they know Maleister Price 40 days ago. [Jack laughs] You know?

Jack: But Colette's like, "Oh, I heard from...that they're new too, and you're...you seem like you're..." Well, Colette doesn't know Pickman's new. They get introduced.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. And you end up having a, you know, I think a conversation that quickly reveals that...I think maybe reveals to them. There's a point at which they say like:

Austin (as Visitor): You're not from here, huh?

Jack (as Pickman): No.

Austin: And like squints at you and says:

Austin (as Visitor): But you're not from...you're not from...

Austin: Whatever, what are we— what is the name of the Magistratum's world? You know, this person would not say Magistrate World, you know? [Jack laughs] What is the plane? That you're, you know, you're not—

Jack: "You're not with the Magistratum," or...

Austin: But no, because that would mean something different, right? 'Cause that would mean, like, you're not from the Second Canton in the lowercase way. They mean you're not from the Pale World. You know? You're not from the Pale Dynasty. You're not from the world where it's all Pale Magistratum, you know? Because you're a caprak, right? So they're running through the list in their head of like, hmm, where are you from? Like, what...

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You know? And then they're like:

Austin (as Visitor): Ah. You're from Sangfielle.

Jack (as Pickman): How could you tell?

Austin (as Visitor): The way you breathe.

Jack: Pickman narrows her eyes, big rectangular pupils.

Austin (as Visitor): Like that.

Jack (as Pickman): Hmm.

Austin (as Visitor): How'd you get here?

Jack (as Pickman): I climbed a ladder.

Austin (as Visitor): Are you with the Wrights?

Jack (as Pickman): Oh, god, no. Do you know where they are?

Austin (as Visitor): Hopefully still low in Sangfielle.

Jack (as Pickman): I chased one of them up here, climbed a long ladder.

Jack: Colette is just like... [laughs] Colette is talking to a hot guy on the other end of the bar.

Austin: Uh huh. Oh, a hundred percent.

Austin (as Visitor): Are you looking to go home?

Jack (as Pickman): Of course I am.

Austin (as Visitor): You could go home tonight. Are your affairs in order?

Jack (as Pickman): What?

Austin (as Visitor): Tonight. It's...

Austin: And then checks their watch.

Austin (as Visitor): It's tonight or it's weeks from now.

Jack (as Pickman): What do you mean are my affairs in order?

Austin (as Visitor): [brief sigh] I have no idea how long you've been here. But most of the time when I come to a place, I make some connections. It becomes hard to extract myself.

Jack (as Pickman): Well, I killed the sheriff.

Austin (as Visitor): Then come with me.

Jack: Pickman stands up.

Jack (as Pickman): Give me a second. Colette. Colette!

Austin (as Colette): Oh, uh. [giggles awkwardly at bar guy] [hushed] What is it? Ernestina!

Jack (as Pickman): I have to go.

Austin (as Colette): Okay, I'll see you back at the apartment.

Jack (as Pickman): No, no, no.

[2:20:00]

Austin (as Colette): What do you mean? What? What? [to bar guy] Ah, I'm sorry. I'll be right back.

Austin: And like, you know, takes her drink and comes over to you.

Austin (as Colette): Where are you going?

Jack (as Pickman): An opportunity came up for me to go home, and I have to take it tonight. Thank you for your hospitality.

Austin (as Colette): Go home? What? Did I do something wrong? Are we fighting again?

Jack (as Pickman): No.

Austin (as Colette): Is this your way of telling me you want to go back to the theater?

Jack (as Pickman): No! Are we fighting again? No. I...I don't know that we're going to be able to see each other again.

Austin (as Colette): This is extremely dramatic for you, Ernestina.

Jack (as Pickman): I don't...

Jack: Turns and looks. Is the visitor just like hovering? [laughs]

Austin: Waiting. Yeah, uh huh.

Jack (as Pickman): I think that I will be able to write to you.

Austin (as Colette): I don't know what you have going on, but I guess it's not stranger than a lot of things around here. Um, you know my address. [sighs] You're lucky we just paid rent. I should be able to get someone to sublet.

Jack (as Pickman): I don't know what that is. Um...

Austin (as Colette): [sighs]

Jack (as Pickman): I appreciate...yeah. Yeah, I appreciate it. Okay.

Austin: Gives you a big hug.

Jack (as Pickman): Okay. I'm going now.

Jack: And turns around and makes her way back through this...god, it's just a extremely cool bar, I think. [laughs]

Austin: Uh huh. Yeah, I think so too. Yeah.

Jack: Where the visitor is, where the visitor is waiting.

Austin: And what do you write in your diary? I think that this is the way it works. You are brought to a place in Zevunzolia that seems out of place. In a city of marble, it is a small building made of wood, a little more than a shack. There is a bed. There are some candles. There is a statue to a Boundless Conclave god.

Jack: Ha!

Austin: Maybe it's Slumbous. Maybe it's someone else. Maybe it's just like a generic Boundless Conclave, you know, icon of the vast pantheon. There's tea waiting for you in this small room. And there's a window that looks out onto a field that could not possibly be there. And the Visitor tells you to go to bed tonight, to keep your mind as clear as possible, and that when you wake up, you will be returned to your home.

Austin (as Visitor): More or less.

Austin: They add. What do you write in your journal that night?

Jack: "To Colette: I'm sorry I am leaving so suddenly. I have never been one for words." Long break as Pickman thinks. "When I told you that I came from a place far away, I was not speaking metaphorically or as a joke. I think it is something magical that separates us. Again, I am not

speaking metaphorically. [Austin laughs] I meant what I said when I would try to write. A friend of mine from the faraway place wrote to me when we were living together, so I assume that it can be done. I appreciate you and our friends' hospitality, but I do not belong in this world. The world I belong in is changing very quickly, and I would be there to see it. I'm sorry that I killed that sheriff on the festival and left you standing there without a partner. It had to be done, and if I am being honest, I would do it again. Nevertheless," comma, "Yours, E. Pickman." And then a little drawing. I think a little drawing of like the four of them. Pickman, Jess Price. What was their name? Jess, or Jenny? Jenny.

Austin: No, Jenny. Jenny Price.

Jack: Pickman, Jenny Price, Colette. And Mikhail, the guy that they were hanging out with.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: And it's a really nice little drawing, you know? It has a delicacy that we don't associate with Pickman. And she folds it and puts it down and goes to sleep and wakes up in her own bed, which is the headquarters of the Blackwick company, because who's going to come and collect the rent? [laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm. No, sorry. It is not there, Jack.

Jack: Oh, shit! Okay, yeah. And she goes to bed.

Austin: You are here, northwest of Old Roseroot. You are miles and miles away from Blackwick when you wake up.

Jack: Oh, shit! [laughs] Oh, shit!

Austin: You're in the exact house that you went to sleep in, except it is out in the middle of a field in northeastern Sangfielle.

Jack: No armor.

Austin: Let's answer these questions. No armor. [Jack laughs] Nothing, yeah. How did the city change you? In what ways will your life never be the same? What mark did the city leave on you? Will any other city ever feel as home?

Jack: Okay, let's do these in order. What was the first question?

Austin: Did it change you?

Jack: Yes, absolutely. Pickman has never lived in a place where someone made her coffee in

that way in the morning. And they, you know, would go to the theater and go to art galleries. A deeply alien experience for Pickman and not necessarily a pleasant one, but it has changed her. Also, I think the fact, you know, I say it as a joke, but the fact that she has been doing impressionism [**Austin:** mm-hmm] in her otherwise pretty straightforward representative drawings is interesting. Given the amount of shift that it did to Western art—

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: I think it happening to a goat lady in a chaos plane [Austin laughs] is like, oh yeah, that's probably significant to her at least.

Austin: Yeah. How did you leave? I think we already answered this.

Jack: Yep.

Austin: What will you take with you? Do you take anyone with you? Which memorabilia did you collect and which memories? What did you leave in Zevunzolia?

Jack: Well, I left the little letter.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: I left the single living funicular.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: That is just sinisterly with a kind of blank-eyed malice ferrying people up and down a small hill.

Austin: [laughs softly] There's a second one now.

Jack: Oh, a second funicular. [laughs] Great.

Austin: Yeah, no one built it.

Jack: Oh, great.

Austin: Everyone's happy about it, 'cause it means you have to wait less.

Jack: Mm.

Austin: It gets you to and fro a little bit quicker.

Jack: Mm, mm-hmm. I left friends there, in the sense that I think Pickman values friendship, is like, I enjoyed spending time with those people. They took me to the theater too much. Did I bring anything with me? No, not really. The telescope, but that was from Sangfielle anyway.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: In my pocket, I find a napkin from the bar that we were at.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: That I, that was, you know, that I'd had my glass on that I'd just taken with me.

Austin: No books?

[music begins: "Pickman Goes Home"]

Jack: No. Not really. I could trade them to Alekest, but it would feel— [laughs] it would feel—

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: If I know their actual value, and I could just get them, it would feel like such a scam.

Austin: Ah, it's so funny. Yeah. Will you ever return?

Jack: I don't know. If it's willed, I suppose. You know, if the circumstances are right, if I need to go back to Zevunzolia. If there are any more...if there are any more sheriffs that I need to chase up there. It's not something I'm seeking out, but I know that it's there and that you can get there.

Austin: [slowly] On your way back, you hear the sound of a horn. And you think of the parades and the theater shows and all of the different type of life that you had no idea existed. But it is not a horn. It's just the cold wind.

[song plays out]