

Sangfielle 54: Six Travelers: Duvall

Transcriber: robotchangeling

[music begins: "Six Travelers"]

Austin (as narrator): Meyer Leopold DU-vall. Now, why did I put the emphasis on...? I must be getting tired here near the end of my run, I suppose. The new format and all that. Anyway, tiredness is something I suspect Duvall knows quite intimately. Not that the rest of the erstwhile Blackwick Group hasn't been through their own trials and tribulations, but by and large, I would define those that Duvall traveled with as confident about who they were. Even Chine at the end there, torn between friends and, let's say, vision. They knew who they were. Day in, day out, Duvall has been trying to answer something fundamental, like trying to invent a whole new part of speech just for himself.

Art: This is Meyer Leopold Duvall, and class is Deep Apiarist.

Art (as Duvall): I was— I went somewhere I wasn't supposed to go.

Austin (as Jolyon): Oh, we did that all the time in the day.

Art (as Duvall): Well, some places it's a little worse than just being out of bounds.

Art (as Duvall): I don't remember how I'm bleeding. Does anyone?

Art (as Duvall): You can't say that you get to experiment with these things and no one else does.

Art (as Duvall): I am cautious and just kind of accepting of the way the world works in terms of doing favors for people and having them owe you one.

Jack (as Pickman): Are you extremely naive?

Art (as Duvall): No, I think I'm a regular amount.

Art (as Duvall): I won't be the Duvall in the manor. I don't have any prospects there. This, out here, looking for these things with these people, this is my life now.

Art (as Duvall): But is it— if you're not the same person you were when you did the thing, is your memory of it real?

Art (as Duvall): Oh, I can't believe that I was right about everything the whole time.

[song finishes]

Austin: All right. It's very simple. We are going to go on a Delve, using the Delve Draw system of *ICHOR-DROWNED*, a fan supplement to *Heart: The City Beneath* in which there's kind of a tarot-like oracle that you can use with regular playing cards. I'm going to ask you where you're going, and there are going to be three steps on the Delve and a total of five cards drawn.

Art: Okay.

Austin: The first two cards that we draw are going to be a card above and a card below. The card above will flavor that which is fortunate, positive, and hopeful. The lights at the end of the 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 that the Delve will consist of. So both of those things will be understood very metaphorically, if necessary.

Art: Sure.

Austin: Or very literally, sometimes both. As an example, Ali got one that was like the boon was like, um...basically like a former lover or something like that, and it was much more... [sighs] I forget the exact phrasing on it, but it was one of those things that was like a version of herself that Marn used to be, you know?

Art: Mm.

Austin: A version of who Marn once was that was speaking to, you know, who she would like to become again, basically, right? So you can— we can— does not literally have to be the thing. Then, we will one by one go through each three draws that relate to a particular— that will be a place, a stop on the journey, positive or negative. And you will...I mean, there will be a challenge associated with each of them, and you will give me either a skill, a domain, or an ability to get past it. We're not gonna roll dice to see if you do it. That's not the point of this. It's just kind of flavor and color. You can only give me one skill, one domain, and one ability over the course of the journey.

Art: Okay.

Austin: So, does that make sense?

Art: I think so.

Austin: All right, that's pretty straightforward. All right, I'm gonna shuffle this deck. I have reshuffled in the cards that came for Ali, so it's possible that we get a double. But the idea of getting a double and then also rolling the dice and getting a double— each card also has a D6 roll associated with it, so it's 52 cards plus two jokers, 'cause the jokers can do things, and then— so 54 cards, and then each of the 52 have a D6 of different variations. So, it's a lot of

possibilities. The idea of getting even one duplicate across all of these is wild. I'm sure someone could run the numbers on that and we could see, but.

Art: I'm calling my shot. We're gonna get a duplicate right now.

Austin: Right now. Well, this is—

Art: This session.

Austin: This session, okay.

Art: We're gonna duplicate something from Ali, yeah.

Austin: All right. Do you want your above card or your below card first?

Art: Uh, above card first, I think is the...

Austin: All right. Above card. Here. I'm going to draw this below card and put it below, and then we're gonna flip these over. Uh, yeah, it's, oh, queen of spades. All right. Give me a D6, as I look up the queen of spades. You've rolled a two.

Art: Two.

Austin: All right. The queen of spades, okay. The queen of spades—this is the thing that's going to look positively over your journey—is the seamstress who can tailor beyond fabric. And your two on that is Madame, an arachnid master of many who can make ties of many kinds that truly bind. So, some sort of, uh, arachnid influence here that is about mending things, which I think is pretty appropriate given your makeup as a bug person, not that—

Art: Sure, but very treacherous, right? What do spiders do? They eat bugs.

Austin: Mm, they eat bugs. They do.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: But this is a positive influence for you, which is an interesting thing.

Art: Yeah, this is a positive influence though.

Austin: Especially given some of the context. We haven't talked about where you're going yet, but we do know you're leaving Blackwick with It, the creature that you've inherited from Chine.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And so that's a fun— there's already some things that could be bound together here. But yeah, you're walking a treacherous path here.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: All right, let's see what your negative influence here could be. [laughs softly]

Art: The joker.

Austin: The joker. Huh.

Art: It's the Joker. It's just the Joker, right?

Austin: It's just the Joker. The Joker shows up.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: [imitating Joker] "It's me, batty boy!" he says.

Art: [cackles like the Joker] Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. [reading] "When you draw a joker, invoke the power of the Heart itself. Depending on your game, your players, and all 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. A Complication: set up a Delve obstacle as normal, but invoke something else at the same time, invoke a kind of big change in the world state. Confrontation: something that a delver or delvers have been putting off, avoiding, or have otherwise been anxious about is made physically manifest in front of them. [laughs softly] 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 this the real thing? Just a meaty illusion? Does it matter? Or an 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. 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' interest into account, but consider what you might do to make this particular moment truly different." Those are all fun examples here.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Do you have any strong thoughts on how the Heart itself, for us the Heartland itself, the truth of the Heartland, the Course, the Shape, the Structure, the blood. Any thoughts on how those might manifest here?

Art: I mean, the thought that I had, before it introduced things like play a different game, which really like...

Austin: [laughs] Which we're already doing, in a sense.

Art: Yeah. Yeah, it's like, uh, want to do some...you know, I don't know. What do you got on Steam?

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Art: The idea I had before that—

Austin: [laughs] You want to stack some dice, Art?

Art: Yeah. [laughs] Stack some dice for a while.

Austin: Oh, more than anything, I want to stack some dice.

Art: Well, this says we can do it.

Austin: I know.

Art: I think it makes...

Austin: Yeah.

Art: A bad podcast, but uh...

Austin: It does. This is already gonna be longer than it's supposed to be as it is, so.

Art: The idea— and we're good at dice stacking.

Austin: Uh huh.

Art: The idea I had before it suggested that was like, you know, we could have one of the people who's not with us anymore, right?

Austin: Oh.

Art: We could introduce like Virtue or Chine.

Austin: Or Chine.

Art: But it's hard to like draw on another player character, because uh, they're not here. I don't know if I'm giving away how this is being recorded.

Austin: Uh, no, I think it's very clear we're recording these alone.

Art: Yeah. So that leads me to like other...

Austin: I mean, the thing of like Duvall haunted by Chine...

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Is extremely fun to me.

Art: I think so too.

Austin: I think I'm too enamored by the idea of you being literally haunted by Chine.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Not permanently necessarily, right? And like, is it a projection from It? Is it the Course taunting you? Is it your—

[0:10:03]

Art: Yeah. And obviously it can't— it either can't be permanent, or we have to like get Dre to write us a little Chine bible and...

Austin: Right, and I'll have to internalize Chine. I have a pretty— this is the thing, is like, I think I could play Chine well enough in the way that I've had to do sometimes. But I would rather have...I will tell you this right now, for real for real. Dre was going to be completely absent from this.

Art: Mm.

Austin: Like, there was just going to be an absence because of Chine's death. And we wanted to like emphasize that sense, that sense of quiet and the missing voice, right? But the game just said no. [laughs softly] The game insisted we not do that. So, I think let's pause here for a second, listeners, and then we'll come back with Dre.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Hi, Dre.

Dre: Hey.

Austin: Sorry to break our plans. I know you and I had kind of talked through you not being part of the finale in order to—or the epilogue, these vignettes—

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: To kind of make Chine's absence feel, you know, weighty, you know?

Dre: Yeah. And then, I guess, Duvall went and fucked it all up.

Austin: Duvall didn't, like, truly has done nothing yet.

Dre: Okay. All right.

Austin: I would not put this on Duvall. I would put this on the Course. You know?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Or the Structure or the Shape. I don't know who's in charge of card draws. I think it's probably the truth of the Heartland, you know? To get you caught up, Art drew the joker.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And the joker has a bunch of things it could be, but the one that spoke to us, the one that Art suggested, there's this one here that's Confrontation: "Something that a delver or delvers have been putting off, 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 Art thought, "You know? Could be Duvall." Or, fuck! I did it backwards! [Dre laughs] Could be Chine! So it could be Chine, and we thought, why not have Chine haunt Duvall on this final trek across the Heartland?

Dre: Ooh, okay.

Austin: You down for that?

Dre: Sure, I'll be a ghost.

Austin: All right. And we should— I want to reiterate: Chine is dead.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Right? Like, we're fully agreed on that. This is not...I mean, the Course is doing something.

Art: I mean, why don't we see where we're going, but.

Austin: I guess so, right? Where are you going, Duvall? We haven't gotten to even one of your card draws. What is your destination on this Delve?

Art: I think Duvall is working their way toward the First Canton, towards Aldomina.

Austin: Interesting. Okay.

Art: Sort of like, sort of going home and bringing a monster baby.

Austin: On the way.

Art: Along for the ride, yeah.

Austin: Is this related to where Duvall is emotionally, in terms of answering some core questions about selfhood or about the future of who he is? Or is this just it's time to visit home? What is this?

Art: Um, I think it's primarily the latter.

Austin: Okay.

Art: I think it is just like, a lot of fucked up stuff just happened, and maybe it's time to just get like a brief reset. I think that's what I said I would do.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: When we ran into, uh, what's her name?

Austin: Your cousin, uh...

Art: My cousin.

Austin: Teresa, Reese.

Art: Reese, yeah.

Austin: I think that's right.

Art: I said I would come and visit when this all settled down, and it's all settled down. And Duvall, no matter what you may think of it as in terms of the greater question, is a man of his word.

Austin: Mm.

Art: And is gonna go home for a hot minute.

Austin: Awesome. So, I think I'm gonna say that this spider, this mender who is whispering in your ear, is quite literally a little spider of some sort who has integrated herself into your body.

Art: Great.

Austin: You know, we're like in a *Charlotte's Web* type vibe. Do you know what I mean?

Art: Yeah. Some pig.

Austin: Some pig. Exactly. It's mean to call Chine a pig, but I guess I can kind of see some of the features.

Dre: Wow.

Austin: You know, you got a big snout. You eat a bunch of different type of stuff.

Dre: Yeah, all right.

Austin: But "Some pig" is a compliment, right? So.

Art: Yeah, it's a...

Austin: All right.

Art: It's to save, uh...

Austin: [laughs] Yes.

Art: Wilbur?

Austin: Wilbur. Wilbur, right? Wilbur's the pig in *Charlotte's Web*, I think.

Dre: Yeah, that sounds right. [imitating character] "Wilbur." Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, that's... [laughs] That's *Charlotte's Web*. Nope, nope.

Art: *Charlotte's Web*.

Austin: Yep. Mm-hmm.

Dre: No, it's how the old...is it the cow that talks like that?

Art: No, you're doing Mister Ed right now.

Austin: You're doing Mister Ed, Dre.

Dre: No...

Art: The human in which is named Wilbur.

Dre: Oh! Well, fuck me, I guess. [Austin and Art laugh]

Austin: I mean, maybe that's also a thing in *Charlotte's Web*. I don't know.

Art: Maybe it's the same.

Austin: Maybe it was a reference. I'm gonna flip this first card, and we're gonna find out what the first encounter you get here is on the way. [Dre laughs softly] It is the five of hearts. Art, can you roll me a D6?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Mm. A two.

Art: Wow, that's three twos in a row. I rolled a two when I thought the joker would have a number too.

Austin: That's very interesting. That's very interesting. Two. Five of hearts is a dead foundry of a dead world, untouched. The two there is the massive hammer of an old god, still red hot from its last use. So as you move northeast across the Heartland, I think you find yourself slipping into— or maybe I should ask this to you, Chine. Chine, do you appear and somehow lead Duvall into this? Into this strange realm where there is some sort of dead god's forge, massive red hot forge? I cannot believe we got the fucking forge with you, Art. [Dre laughs] Unbelievable the shit that's happening.

Art: Yeah. It really makes me believe in tarot.

Austin: I mean...whew. We don't know, there's unknown knowns.

Dre: Are we gonna have this conversation? [laughs]

Austin: No, we're not. 'Cause I don't...I don't...I don't. But I do believe in the mind's ability to find meaning and in coincidence being a powerful narrative tool.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So yeah, Chine, in this something that you pull Duvall towards?

Dre: No, I think it would be much more of Chine to like show up after Duvall has led themselves there.

Austin: Ah. Yeah. So then, Duvall, how do you wind up in this strange old forge?

Art: Maybe it's like trying to—

Austin: A dead foundry of a dead world untouched. It's so funny to me.

Art: Yeah. I mean, I don't even know what to say about this. I don't want to get us in trouble.

Austin: Uh huh, yeah.

Art: I think it might just be as simple as it's getting late. Maybe it's raining.

Austin: Oh, sure.

Art: And Duvall wants to be out of the rain and the cold at night, so finds this...I'm sure it looks like a cave from the outside.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Art: And just like dips in, and...is it really bright and hot in there?

Austin: Yeah, I think so, right? I mean, it's one of those—

Art: Yeah, and sort of like follows the heat.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Who knows, you know? It could be a fire breathing dragon.

Austin: Or it could be like a, you know, a little party. Maybe people are camped out in here and, you know.

Art: Yeah, maybe it's uh, some old— some miners leaving town, having a mine party.

Austin: I think as you start to head down that way, you...this...the spider who speaks to you in your ear is like, you know:

Austin (as spider): Warmth is always a good thing, even when it burns you.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah.

Austin: No, uh, you know, nothing further from that. No clarification on that. Maybe treating you more like a moth than a person at this point. I don't know.

Art: Sure.

Austin: Maybe treating you like a spider treats insects. And then, yeah, you emerge into a forge that is like...it's one of those things where it's like, this would be a giant's forge. The scale is off for you in some way.

Art: Sure.

Austin: And everything is still hot, but it's...it's one of those things that's like, you know how lava can seem completely still? And it's like, well, this must be old. But actually, if you touched it, you would still just instantly catch fire, and your whole body would just be dissolved?

Art: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: It's that, right? It's like—

Art: Jessica loves lava TikToks.

Austin: I can't. It's scary to me.

Art: I think it's scary to her, but it's like a horror movie.

Austin: Mm, but it's...yeah, I gotcha.

Art: It's like the liking being scared.

Austin: Right. But like, Jason isn't real, and lava is. Lava could get me still in my life.

Dre: Sure.

Art: I think you're more likely to come across Jason than lava in New York.

Austin: I will say that in my—

Dre: But not like the real Jason.

Austin: Exactly. Home invasion movies: scarier than lava. Lava: scarier than Jason.

Art: All right.

Dre: Yeah, I can get behind that power ranking.

Austin: Thank you. Yeah, my tier list. [all laugh]

Art: Already I'm being antagonized by the ghost of Chine.

Austin: But yeah, and I think that the thing is...it has not been used in so long.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And there are things built here that you can't quite make sense of, shapes kind of rent into existence, as if...as if to be an insult to the lack of a thing existing. As if to be like, I want there to be stuff so fucking bad I'm going to make wild shit. Shapes that don't have function, just form. You know, this is an artist's forge in some way, or at least maybe...or you just don't know how to use the tools you're seeing. They're so alien to you that you couldn't begin to recognize what their function might be here. But there's something about them that seem like, here are fucking things goddammit. Chine, do you have any thoughts about this as you slink in from behind a giant anvil or something?

[0:20:40]

Dre: [laughs] I think it would be more appropriate, it would be more Chine personality-wise appropriate to just kind of like pop up behind Duvall and like say over— at this point, are we using he or they for Duvall, because of their like multiplicity existence?

Austin: We have still been using he.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: But I don't know. Art?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: That's an Art question, not a me question.

Art: It really depends on how you're feeling about Duvall, I think.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Art: But I...I'm rooting for Duvall to be he.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Not from like a gender perspective but from like a...

Art: Not from a gender perspective but from a plurality perspective.

Austin: Right.

Dre: Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Which is not, I don't think— we have another pluralistic, you know, adjacent character in Es.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And there are elements of plurality in Duvall, but Duvall is currently— one of the big questions for Duvall has been: how does Devall recognize himself in terms of, you know, where does the agency get located here? So.

Art: Right.

Austin: Yeah. So, what do you say?

Dre (as Chine): Well, this looks weird.

Art: Is this the first time this has happened or has this happened...?

Austin: Eh, it has to be the first time, right?

Art: Okay. So I think it's like...I think it's a full jump, right? Like, Duvall jumps forward and like has to catch himself on, you know, on nothing to not fall into the lava, right?

Art (as Duvall): [shocked, excited] Chine! Lyke said... [softer] Lyke said...

Dre (as Chine): Uh huh?

Art (as Duvall): [happiness fading] Lyke said he killed you.

Dre (as Chine): Oh, he did.

Art (as Duvall): So you're...you're back?

Dre (as Chine): Uh...no.

Art (as Duvall): Hmm.

Art: The thing specifically mentioned that you're fleshy though, right? So you have substance.

Austin: No, it's— I mean, yeah, you do— uh. It doesn't say that. It says it might be that, right? Are you just a— because the way that Heart is written is very interested in meat as a medium. We can decide if this is—

Art: As they say, medium is the message.

Austin: That's what they say.

Dre: Oh, man. Can I pitch something?

Austin: Always, Dre.

Dre: Uh, shrew skeleton Chine.

Austin: Oh, just completely the skeleton.

Dre: Yeah. Still like humanoid.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Like, you know, on two feet. But yeah, nah, I just want to be a skeleton.

Austin: Love it. I also love you coming to life here in this forge of strange things built without function but with a sort of aggressive form.

Art: Yeah, and I had the idea too late, but you also could have climbed up out of the lava.

Austin: That's also pretty fucking good.

Dre: I don't know.

Austin: Think it's too much?

Dre: Bones would melt in there.

Austin: No, they wouldn't. It's the Heartland.

Dre: Eh, I guess.

Austin: You know? You could have done that behind Duvall. That way we get both.

Art: Yeah, the camera could have seen you climb up out of the lava.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. [Dre laughs] Without Duvall having seen it, yeah. Anyway, I'm not gonna get in the way of this conversation.

Art: Yeah.

Art (as Duvall): I'm sorry it happened that way.

Dre (as Chine): Eh.

Art (as Duvall): And I guess this is down the road.

Dre (as Chine): I just...you know, it seemed like this was a place where I just didn't fit anymore.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah, I hear that. I'm going back to where I didn't fit.

Dre (as Chine): Like, are we talking like, literally? Are you gonna go sleep in like your childhood bed and your legs are gonna hang off the end? Or...?

Art (as Duvall): I mean, maybe, but no, I was speaking, uh...

Art: What's the opposite of literally? What's the matter with me?

Austin: Metaphorically.

Art: Metaphorically, yeah.

Austin: Says the spider.

Art: [laughs] The spider.

Austin: Binding your words together.

Art: It's been a long day, and I'm very surprised.

Dre: Oh, can I hear the spider?

Austin: Yeah. It's a literal spider crawling around inside and on Duvall.

Dre: Oh.

Art: It's the queen of spades when you roll a two.

Dre: Oh. Oh.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre (as Chine): Hey, you got something on you.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah, I know. I'm picking up a lot of passengers right now.

Dre (as Chine): Oh, I...I think I was here first. I think.

Art (as Duvall): It's hard to say.

Austin (as spider): Come closer, little shrew. I'll web you together.

Dre (as Chine): No, I'm good.

Austin (as spider): Hm.

Art (as Duvall): I think that's a good call. I'm really not sure about that.

Austin: As you continue walking here, you quickly find that you've lost the way in. It turns out that this whole place is built in that same, towards that same end of form without function. Towards, you know, a sort of insistence that something exist instead of nothing. But without this...without maybe a good layout, for instance. It's like something...it's almost like you're walking through, you know, tunnels left behind by something...something organic, whether that's like an animal that has like crawled holes through here, or like the roots of a massive plant or something. Where there's like, not no form or function, but I would say that it feels like...there's not a clear hierarchy to the spaces here. It doesn't feel like you can find a trunk to get to. It just kind of feels like a bunch of loose tunnels. You're not finding like the main thoroughfare here. So I'm gonna need either a skill, a domain, or an ability to help find your way through this space. Also, there's lava everywhere, which is weird. And you come across like a different forge that's smaller and then one that's like made of different stuff. And you just like keep finding these different variations on the theme, and it's very like, [sighs] are we walking in fucking circles? So you don't have to roll anything, but I do need to know which of a skill, an ability, or a domain you're using to find your way through.

Art: Uh, is Delve too on the nose?

Austin: No, it's perfectly on the nose. It's a Delve.

Art: All right. Oh, does the creature see Chine?

Austin: Does the creature see Chine? The creature?

Dre: Oh!

Art: The, It, the...

Austin: Oh!

Dre: Oh, you— yeah. Yeah, I guess you do have It with you.

Austin: Great question. Yes. 'Cause you're real. You're here. You know. And I think it... [sighs] We should have gotten to there way quicker, right? I think that It is cautious. How long has it been since you left Blackwick?

Art: Uh, days?

Austin: Yeah, sure.

Art: Couple days.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Three days.

Austin: I think even with that much time, there is a like...it doesn't want to get its heart broken, maybe?

Dre: Sure.

Austin: And at this point, you haven't quite...it's not sure if you're really Chine. You know? You're a big skeleton person.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You know? But it sniffs at you. At one point, it just puts its mouth around one of your femurs. [Dre laughs] It doesn't bite you. It just goes like, *omm*, you know?

Dre: Yeah, uh huh.

Austin: And then like, *hmm*, and then walks away. Good catch, Art. People would have been furious if we didn't fucking talk about that.

Dre: Yeah.

Dre (as Chine): Has it told you a name yet?

Art (as Duvall): No.

Dre (as Chine): [disappointed] Oh.

Art (as Duvall): We're not really talking. I think...I think it's still feeling me out.

Dre (as Chine): Did you try?

Art (as Duvall): Yeah. I...I've sort of been just narrating my whole little journey.

Dre (as Chine): Well...I mean, no offense, but like maybe it wasn't exciting enough for it to want to contribute to the conversation.

Art (as Duvall): I mean, this is the first exciting thing that happened.

Dre (as Chine): Well, so, you know. [Austin laughs softly]

Art (as Duvall): I'm doing my best right now. A lot's going on.

Dre (as Chine): No, that's fair. Hey, uh, did anybody try to kill Lyke or anything like that?

Art (as Duvall): No.

Dre (as Chine): Okay. That's good.

Art (as Duvall): Um...yeah.

Dre (as Chine): I mean, there's probably things to try to kill Lyke over, but what happened in the tunnel isn't one of them.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah, I think we've all thought about killing Lyke.

Dre (as Chine): Well, that's messed up. I haven't thought about it.

Art (as Duvall): Not once?

Dre (as Chine): No.

Art (as Duvall): Not even like an idle— not like seriously, but like, as an idle thought?

Dre (as Chine): What do you think I think about all the time?

Art (as Duvall): I don't know. I'm saying I've done it.

Dre (as Chine): Oh.

Art (as Duvall): I spent a lot more time with Lyke. I think it's a...

Dre (as Chine): Yeah, no, that's fair.

Art (as Duvall): To know him is to know what it might think like— think it might be like to kill him.

[0:30:00]

Dre (as Chine): It's very confusing name.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah, uh huh.

Dre (as Chine): To use in a sentence.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah. Maybe Lye? No, Lye's bad too. And Lychen sounds very formal.

Dre (as Chine): Mm. Or mossy.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah. That's a good one.

Austin: As you pass through the end of this cavernous forge, this series of forges set in labyrinthine tunnels, you find your way out. I need another D6. You rolled the seven of spades, an ancient lodge with signs of rebirth.

Art: I didn't even think to try to take that hammer.

Austin: That's true, you didn't.

Art: I guess it was a giant's hammer.

Austin: You could have touched it. I mean, there are other smaller forges. Do you want to try to take one of these hammers?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: You find one that's the right size, but the shape again is strange. In fact, you don't even recognize it as a hammer when you first see it, right? It takes you a second to realize like, oh, okay, it bends around this way, and then I hit with this part, right? I know I'm like describing like a wacky straw or something. [all laugh] But that is like, kinda, your hand fits inside of it in a way that's like a...

Art: Like a rapier or something?

Austin: Like a rapier. I was gonna say a plasma weapon from *Halo*. [laughs]

Art: Mm.

Austin: So yes, like a rapier. You know, but yeah, totally, like that. And it kind of like twists around your hand in that way, in a strange way, and then comes to a kind of a head at one point, where you hammer from a different angle. I have a question. When you put your hand in there, does it twist further into new strange shapes or does it straighten out into a regular hammer?

Art: Mm. I think it twists further. I think it's...it's trying to get me to bend to its shape.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Art: I think it senses that Duvall is a little malleable now.

Austin: Mm-hmm. As it's doing that, the spider kind of swings down and webs it in place to keep it from going further.

Art: Sure.

Austin: You find your arm starting to twist in strange ways, which it can do at this point, and the spider stops that from happening.

Austin (as spider): We wouldn't want that.

Art (as Duvall): No.

Austin (as spider): Two arms, two legs. A perfectly reasonable body.

Austin: And then like dips inside your shirt sleeve. This spider is, you know, has a very particular view on what a person is supposed to look alike, apparently.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: I need that D6. Is that...you didn't get another two. That's an— okay, you did not.

Art: Five.

Austin: That's a five. [typing] I have no idea what this is referencing, so I'll have to quickly do a search to learn some stuff about the setting of this game. Uh, let's see. Sometimes they reference stuff in the world of *Spire*, which is not one that I— which is not like a thing that I know to make a quick comparison to. But give me one second, and I'll be able to do it. Here we go. This says a House Gryndel hunting blind with guns still hot on the racks. And House Gryndel in the *Heart* book reference is, "The moneyed hunters of House Gryndel believe Briar to be one of the finest places in the world to bag a trophy, and the trees are strung with corpses," da da da da da. So they're like some sort of hunting house, some sort of powerful house. I suspect it's from *Spire*. Yes, House Gryndel. Oh, yes, House Gryndel is one of the noble families of the dark elves that rule the distant western nation of Ys, and they adore a hunt. So this is some sort of, for us, you know, we are not lifting that from *Heart*. But I think it's probably fair to say that we have some sort— oh. You know what it is for us? You know what it is for us, right, Dre? This is a Cleaver hunting lodge.

Dre: Ooh.

Art: Mm.

Austin: We know that a thing that Cleavers do is they group up as they get older or they go completely alone. If they are completely alone, there is the risk that they turn into an angel, which we saw from Katonya, kind of giving into their base instincts and their desire for blood and the hunt and, you know, broader things than that. Their connection to the Course turns them into an expression of both themselves in the Course that is monstrous and powerful and beautiful and strange. And so, to resist that, sometimes they get together, and they share notes about creatures, and they help write new fable books, and they try to emphasize collaboration and camaraderie. This is not the version of Cleavers that Chine was, right? Unfortunately, Dre, can you remind me what happens when too many Cleavers get together?

Dre: Oh, man. It has been a long time since we had that conversation.

Austin: I'll remind you. They turn into an angel.

Dre: Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: [laughs softly] A form beautiful and monstrous and terrible. They adhere together. There is no escaping the Course in this way. Maybe they're less this kind of single individual strong vision of what a Cleaver is, or what an angel is, quote unquote, according to the term we use. But instead it is this kind of amalgam, this legion-bodied thing. And, you know, I don't know. You see, you find yourself at this lodge. Again, there's a warmth coming from it. You can hear the sound of many voices speaking inside. You can see the eyes of people peering out the windows. And I think the spider whispers to you in your ear again, Duvall.

Austin (as spider): You could find comfort here.

Dre (as Chine): Nope!

Austin (as spider): They could be the friends you didn't have with Blackwick.

Dre (as Chine): Uh-uh.

Austin: It runs ahead towards the lodge, smelling Cleavers.

Art: Oh, sure. So I guess Duvall has to run after...

Dre (as Chine): Nope.

Austin: Ooh, really?

Art (as Duvall): Well, I have to.

Dre (as Chine): Wait, why?

Art (as Duvall): To save it.

Dre (as Chine): It seems like it wants you to go in there to probably also die.

Art (as Duvall): No.

Dre (as Chine): Yeah.

Art (as Duvall): I don't think that's right.

Dre (as Chine): What, that it wants you to or that you will die if you go in there?

Art (as Duvall): Either. Both.

Dre (as Chine): Okay. I guess I cannot guarantee the first one. I mean, I guess I cannot guarantee the second one, but that is the most probable outcome.

Austin (as spider): If you go in and they're a risk, I'll tie you all together, and you'll be a risk together.

Dre (as Chine): See, that doesn't sound good.

Austin (as spider): Oh, but he's so loose now.

Art: I don't know. She was on the card that said good thing. This is the help card.

Austin: Uh huh. You said you wanted to be a single individual, right? So.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And you're falling apart, so what if you just get with a bunch of other individuals, and then she can help bind you to them? No big deal.

Art: Mm.

Austin: And then that'll help. You know, you're already so many little bugs that you need more people in you to kind of even it out.

Art: Oh, that's a terrible idea.

Austin: Well, we'll have to play to find out. Maybe it'll be good for you.

Art: Well, I've gotta...I've gotta stop it from getting in the lodge.

Austin: All right. Well, what do you— what are you trying to do with that? What's your...what's your skill that you feel like you could use here?

Art: Oh, I can use another skill?

Austin: Sorry, not a skill. Sorry, a domain. You've already used one skill, right? So you have domains and abilities left. I would...I mean, you tell me what you think works here.

Art: What would...what would a spell called UNCHAOS do to a Cleaver lodge?

Austin: Phew. That's a wild question. That's the one...we've only seen you do that like once, right?

Art: Yeah, I took it late in the season.

Austin: This is: "The Heart is a chaotic place, and you seek to undo that with ancient magic. Roll Mend plus Occult to cast the spell. On a success, for the remainder of the situation, you or one ally nearby treats Risky actions as Standard actions. Keep the highest rolled die, as probability coalesces around you and crystallizes at your feet." I think it would...I mean, what, you know. We've talked a lot and seen a lot through Chine of Cleavers being representatives of the Course, the kind of wild possibility of life, the absolute expression of what might be, what could be, contradiction, expressivity, all of it. Which is beautiful and terrible, just like the angels are. And then through the Structure and you, Duvall, we've often seen the power of kind of this

very carefully constructed, almost industrial power, even if that industry is made up of organic beings, like many thousands of bugs. But it's not many thousands of bugs off doing their own thing. It's many thousands of bugs working in careful concert, so perfectly that a person appears instead of a hive, right? And we've talked about the Sleeping City as this place that feels almost utopian in its vision of a potential modernity, not the oppressive version of things that like Alway wanted to build, but this like Harlem Renaissance version of society where there is the, again, this— there's kind of like a horseshoe theory but not terrible here. [laughs]

[0:40:29]

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Where like, both the Course and the Structure are about ending in a place of dramatic expressivity and selfhood. It's just that they get there in radically different ways. And so I think this would be about restructuring and bringing some sort of order. You know, the Structure is kind of the argument that like, you actually need a great deal of order in order to allow yourself the safety and security to be expressive, right? Anybody who has lived on the margins or who has lived in precarity knows you don't have a lot of fucking time to like make good art when you don't know where your next fucking rent check or meal is coming from. And likewise, you know, from the Course's side of things, when you give yourself so wholeheartedly to the structures of, you know, contemporary society and the job market and your nine to five grind and when you're so structured and so ordered, you often crush the part of you that is unique and expressive. And so, here, I don't know what the end result of these two forces coming together would be. But we have not really seen...you two didn't come into conflict much, it turns out, despite being from opposite ends of the spectrum, you know? So yeah, what would happen?

Art: Sure, we're sort of just on opposite ends of the game.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. Somehow. [laughs softly] Despite being friends before this started, or coworkers at least.

Art: Scheduling.

Austin: Scheduling.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: Scheduling and plot, you know? Sometimes it just winds up that way. So yeah, I think it would...would it prevent them from falling into angel status? Would it...would it produce something new?

Art: Yeah, I don't...I don't know. Um...

Austin: Would it simply be a sort of, um...would there just be a physical expression of all of this, right?

Art: Sure.

Austin: Would we see something blossom? You know, this move talks about crystallization.

Art: Yeah. I mean, this...I think UNCHAOS is part of the...is that in the...no.

Austin: No, it's its own thing.

Art: It's its own move?

Austin: Yeah. Oh, it's its own major move, in fact. Yes.

Art: Okay.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: So it's not part of the larger...it's not part of a larger tree that would give us some more there.

Austin: No. It has sub things that are like, uh, it affects people nearby to protect them, right? Which, you know, that's a good way of maybe protecting it from falling into the Course's, you know, reach here. It has a sub thing that is "Once per situation, a target under the effect can treat Dangerous as Standard," and it has one that is "Once per situation, when you cast UNCHAOS, all those affected by the spell remove D4 Stress from Fortune." So it's like a way of healing people whose fortune is falling apart, you know, who have too much Fortune Stress. So like, I think you could theoretically, like if we talk about this as a place where these people are about to become angelic, right? They're about to cohere into this new, you know, monstrous form, this form of many heads and many limbs, whatever this version of an angel is. It wouldn't look like Katonya. It would look like something else. You could prevent that from happening.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: But I don't know if that's— is that what you want to— is that a...

Art: I mean, the other way for this to go...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: Is we sort of see the other Duvall for a minute, right? The Duvall that rolls like crazy and does a ton of damage, right?

Austin: Right, right.

Art: We just do Annihilation Duvall. [Dre chuckles]

Austin: Right.

Art: Have Duvall just sort of like walk through and...

Austin: Just kill a bunch of Cleavers?

Art: And just kill a bunch of Cleavers, yeah. [laughs softly]

Austin: I think it's a big meaning difference, right? Like, are you...is this the Duvall who, on his way home, has decided these Cleavers are too— are so dangerous that I have to kill them before they become an angel. Or—

Art: Well, I mean, it sort of sounds like that's what Chine was telling me to do.

Dre: I didn't say to kill them. I just said don't go in there.

Art: Well, because it's dangerous.

Austin: Yeah, but Chine's always liked dangerous things existing.

Art: Yeah. I think—

Austin: They just want to protect their buds.

Art: I guess it's: in what way am I trying to win the affections of my new ward, right?

Austin: Mm.

Art: Is it through like some sort of massive display of power? Is that what I think It saw in Chine?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: Or is it by like showing what a safe place I can generate? Is that what it is looking for? You know?

Austin: That's a great way of asking that question. Yeah.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Or framing this dilemma.

Art: And I think it's the second one.

Austin: Which was the second one, again? Safe place?

Art: Safe place.

Austin: Yeah, okay.

Art: Just because there are a lot of— we ran into a lot of weird powerful stuff.

Austin: Yeah. So what's this—

Art: So I've gotta do— I think it's gonna be UNCHAOS, and I think it's gonna look like a little, like almost...it's like a bubble, right? Maybe it even like...that they become an angel...

Austin: Oh.

Art: And like, as they approach this area, 'cause it says that it's like you and a nearby ally.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: And as it like pounces or whatever— I guess pounce isn't a good word for an angel. But as it tries to do harm, the UNCHAOS splits it apart, you know?

Austin: Mm.

Art: Stuns it, you know?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: Keeps it at bay.

Austin: Does it return the Cleavers to their previous state? Or is it shifting this into a different direction altogether?

Art: I think...I think it starts by turning them into their previous state, and if...and if they don't sort of like leave the vicinity, it might start turning them into their previous previous state.

Austin: Interesting. Okay.

Art: And I think that the probability crystal situation [**Austin:** uh huh] becomes intense, you know? I think it's...by the end of it, it looks like they're standing in a massive geode or something.

Austin: Right. We're in like *Final Fantasy* territory.

Art: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Crystal shit just everywhere.

Art: Crystal shit everywhere.

Austin: Yeah. And like—

Art: Also everyone's wearing weird outfits now.

Austin: Lots of buckles.

Art: Lots of buckles.

Austin: Very fashionable.

Art: Big pockets.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. Chine, how do you feel about this as this happens?

Dre: Hmm. So what is the end result of this?

Austin: It's that these Cleavers who were going to become an angel now have split back apart and have become— not just an angel, but an angel that was going to kill It and Duvall.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Instead, split back into their pre-unified form and are just kind of dazed and confused as the entire area becomes covered with these kind of probability crystals.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: Which may even revert them to pre Course-touched Cleaver status, you know?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Pre, you know, shrew skeleton, for whatever their version of the shrew skeleton, you know, elements is for them.

Dre: Mm-hmm. I mean, I am glad that my friend and It are okay.

Austin: All right. Art, I need you to roll one more die, as you near the border of Concentus. Six of hearts. You've rolled a four. The six of hearts is a rot. R-O-T, a rot. And with a four: a meticulous doctor insists on analyzing your humors. You come towards Concentus, right? You come towards the First Canton. And we see an echo of something we saw before. It turns out that some of the Glim Macula, who I think we all thought you wiped out, had of course franchised, right? They had their roots in the First Canton, in Aldomina the Throne of Dominion, as it was. And I think we see that they've set up shop here at the entryway to Concentus, the entryway you're on at least. And it happens so quickly. That stunning bright flash of blue light that renders you stunned and open in this way, to be analyzed. And here, we don't get the 20 questions. We don't get the Voight-Kampff test, the *Inhuman Conditions* test. We get something that's much more of this kind of terrible, you know, biological security apparatus, right? This sort of like, the violence of inspection, of looking you over, of studying you. And not just you, because of course, you know, you've been contained because, you know, so close to you— I guess, Chine, have you hidden as this has happened? Are you nearby but not seen? Or are you just walking around as a big shrew person skeleton?

[0:50:22]

Dre: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Okay. Then I think that they are like literally closing in around you, Duvall. You have been stunned by this light. Chine's presence, you know, really signals that you are a strange one. They're just not sure if you're so strange that they need to kill you or if they need to dissect you or what. And again, the spider whispers to you, you know:

Austin (as spider): Quick, quick! Let me in deeper. I can sew you up, so they'll think you're a regular one.

Dre: How many are there?

Austin: Eh, five or six, maybe?

Dre: Huh. Okay, we asked the question of how corporeal am I.

Austin: Uh huh.

Dre: Am I corporeal enough to punch one of these guys?

Austin: Probably.

Dre: 'Cause I would much rather fight them than make Duvall think that a weird spider has to go inside of him.

Art: I mean, we can try both things. [Dre laughs softly]

Austin: They are certainly going to try to capture you, Chine, and destroy you.

Dre: Oh, that's fine.

Austin: The question really here is: are they, uh— and my presumption is you will try to fight them back and et cetera, and like, that's...

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: We don't need to bust out full *Heart* rules for this. We can talk about what happens. The question really ends up being like: do they suspect Duvall so much that he gets caught up in this in a way that is— and also maybe part of this is like, Duvall, is this a...this is a moment where you can choose to be on team Chine or team Aldomina, in a way, right? Not team, but you know, are you presenting yourself as a monster who stands behind— or, you know, stands side by side with Chine? Or are you stepping away safely into their care where you will pass easily, you know, using the spider's help, you know, through whatever tests they're going to put you through? And seem like just a regular Aldominan, a regular human.

Art: Oh. No, it can't be that, because I really have a good ending in mind for Chine. I'm gonna save Chine at the end of this.

Austin: [surprised] Oh. Okay. What's this— what domain are you using here? And how are you helping Chine here? Short term help, then we can talk about what long term saving looks like, 'cause I'm curious.

Art: Yeah. Uh, it's gonna be great. You're gonna love it. Everyone's gonna love it. It's not bad at all.

Austin: Oh, okay, okay. Sure.

Art: And no one thinks it could be.

Austin: Oh. Huh. Very optimistic.

Art: I have a sort of like...this is a big swing.

Austin: Let's hear it. Now's the time. If not now, then when?

Art: What about Cursed?

Austin: Mm.

Art: And what if we sort of take the idea that Duvall has been cursed this whole time?

Austin: Mm.

Art: And that's what the fascination with luck was.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: And that was what that one in a thousand set of rolls or whatever it was.

Austin: Uh huh. Yeah.

Art: And what if that sort of just like, what if it at this, in the shadows of the walls, Duvall finds a way to just like sort of push that curse off of himself, understanding that he is in fact cursed, and like gives the curse to these...to these fine people. And by fine people, I mean horrible. Horrible...

Austin: Horrible shitheads. Yeah.

Art: Shitheads, yeah.

Austin: Causing them to suddenly get all those misses?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: All of those... [laughs softly]

Art: Causing them to like miss. And I think that there's—

Austin: But what happens if one of them gets the 66 damage or whatever, 33 damage that you did that time?

Art: Um, that was actually before.

Austin: Oh, you're right. That was part of what led you to take Fascination: luck.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Sure. But you were saying it was part of the curse, right?

Art: Yeah. Um, I think I'm just sort of counting on that not going on. And then I think we could have like a fun like *Drunken Master* sort of fight scene as, you know, they sort of clatter all over themselves, and Chine and Duvall, like, minimal effort, put them down.

Austin: It was 33 damage? Is that what it was that time?

Art: Yeah, but it was also...or, yeah, and then it was also along like eight people or something? Or however many, like a...

Austin: Yeah, it was some absurd amount of...yeah, it was something, it was something absurd. I'm gonna— I'm gonna give you a...here's what I'm gonna say. If we're doing this—and I love it—I'm gonna roll a D100 five times. You said there were five of them.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: If it comes up 33 any of those five times, this breaks bad for you. That's a low—

Art: Okay, great.

Austin: That's low probability, right?

Art: Yeah, I'll take it.

Austin: I'm pretty sure it was 33. Maybe it wasn't 33. Let me just...

Art: Do you want to check the transcript?

Austin: I'm gonna check the transcript. [Dre laughs] Shoutouts to the transcript team, as always. Let me just scroll down here. That was Roseroot Hall. That was probably episode three? Maybe episode two. Episode two or three, right? Search for the word damage, here. The thing has seven resistance. Let's see here. This is, da da da, five. Six, da da da da da. Twice. 44. You did 44 damage.

Dre: Jesus.

Austin: [laughs] All right. I've checked the transcript. It's 44 damage. I'm gonna roll D100 five times.

Art: All right, great.

Austin: 83.

Art: Oh, you're not just gonna do five...

Austin: Oh, no. What? And so, tell me how you deal with that one in your fun *Drunken Master* fight scene.

Art: Um...

Austin: Between the two of you. Plus It.

Art: Yeah. Well, I mean, It has to get the last one.

Austin: Ah, sure, of course.

Art: That's the tempo of the fight scene, I think.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Art: I think you have just like, you know, what kind of weapons do these...?

Austin: One of them has a big glaive. One of them has a sword. One of them has like a little like musket shotgun thing. One of them has like one of those like, you know, big long man catchers that you see in, you know, like ancient Chinese, uh...

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You know what I mean?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: That style like, almost like a grasp, a claspy claw type thing.

Art: I think we start with the...you said there was a sword one, right? You said a sword.

Austin: Yeah, a sword. Yeah, sure.

Art: Like the sword, and like Duvall like ducking down to like pick up It, doesn't see the sword, the sword comes in and hits like a tree.

Austin: Uh huh.

Art: And as as he's standing up, he like pushes him, and he, you know, falls down a flight of stairs. You know, it's one of those.

Austin: Love it. Yeah, of course. Boom.

Art: Maybe I'm a little closer to *Three Stooges* than I am *Drunken Master*, but uh...

Austin: [laughs] 13. Chine, how do you take out this person, a second one of these five fine figures?

Dre: Uh, I break off my left arm and hold it in my right arm as a club and just hit him over the head.

Austin: Hit him over the head with it. Great. We got a real, a real comedy bang up job here. Three: only a 10. That's not 44.

Art: Sure, I mean...

Austin: Go for it.

Art: Uh, I think the one with the gun...

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Is like aiming to shoot Duvall and has like a, like the loud noise of Chine hitting them with the club causes them to like wildly swing, not like they were probably trained to do at all, and shoots the one with the man catcher.

Austin: Love it. Great. Four: 39.

Art: Wow, that was close.

Austin: Ooh.

Art: I mean, I know it doesn't matter, but.

Austin: No, it doesn't. But. Uh, Chine, one more here.

Dre: Which ones are left?

Austin: We got gun and we got glaive, we got big glaive.

Dre: Mm. I think the one with the glaive hits Chine like square in the head.

Austin: Ooh.

Dre: And now his glaive is just stuck in Chine's skull.

Austin: Stuck in Chine's skull!

Dre: And Chine's like:

Dre (as Chine): Oh!

Austin: Yeah.

Dre (as Chine): Oh yeah, I guess I'm already dead, so this doesn't work.

Dre: And then Chine just clubs him too.

Austin: Great. Perfect. All right, last one. [chuckles] 69. [Art laughs]

Dre: Nice. Nice, nice, nice, nice, nice, nice, nice, nice.

Austin: Nice, nice, nice. What's It do to wrap this up?

Art: I think one of them has Duvall dead to rights. The gun one has reloaded. He's not gonna miss this time. He's pointing the gun. He's got his shot all lined up. And It comes around and just bites the end of the gun.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: And it backfires.

Austin: Oh! Very dangerous, from It here. But yeah.

[1:00:01]

Art: I mean, only if you know it's dangerous.

Austin: I guess that's true.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Right. Right, yeah.

Dre: Yeah, thankfully...

Austin: And that's also a real...

Dre: All the *Looney Tunes* that Chine's showed It paying off here. [laughs]

Austin: [laughing] Paying off, yes.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: I mean, that is the most bad roll outcome in a tabletop roleplaying game. That's the most like, we've house ruled that a one means that you fall on your own fucking gun or whatever

type of shit, critical miss shit. It's like, oh yeah, a dog bit your gun, and it backfired and shoots you instead. Yeah, uh huh. But that's what happens, and now it's the three of you, plus the spider on your shoulder being like:

Austin (as spider): [sighs] You dealt with them all so quickly. I'd have liked to have seen it extended a little longer.

Art (as Duvall): I've always been lucky. In the "if it wasn't for bad luck, I wouldn't have no luck at all" sense of the word, I guess.

Austin: And that's your last obstacle, so I don't know. This is in your hands now.

Art: Yeah, I think...I think I have an offer for Chine. Which is that:

Art (as Duvall): I think you could...you could live on the *Red Zephyr* if you want.

Dre (as Chine): The what?

Art (as Duvall): It's a train. A friend of mine works there.

Dre (as Chine): Um...

Art (as Duvall): They're dead too.

Dre (as Chine): Okay, but...I don't think so.

Art (as Duvall): All right.

Dre (as Chine): I appreciate the offer, but there's—

Art (as Duvall): Well, it's just, then you could come and we could see you again.

Dre (as Chine): [sighs] I think it would just end up the same.

Art (as Duvall): All right. Thanks for the help.

Dre (as Chine): Hey, it was my pleasure. Maybe you should try talking to It now that something exciting has happened.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah. But I hope it doesn't bite more guns. It's probably gonna end up bad.

Dre (as Chine): Yeah. Um, I mean...

Dre: [laughing] Chine holds out their arm to...

Dre (as Chine): I don't know, would this keep it busy?

Art (as Duvall): Couldn't hurt.

Austin: It has been chewing on the body of someone, the gun explosion one.

Dre: Oh, sure.

Austin: And just like, [imitating creature chewing] *mraw-mraw-mraw*. And then, you know, I think, having now seen you fight, it recognizes you. And it goes:

Austin (as It): [rasping excitedly] Chine. Chine! Chine!

Austin: And then it leaps up at you, as if like, "Catch me!"

Dre: Um, I think I try.

Austin: Uh huh. Yep.

Dre: But...

Austin: And what happens?

Dre: I fall over, 'cause I'm just a skeleton.

Austin: And the bones go everywhere. And Chine is gone. And it grabs one of the bones in its mouth and then comes back over to you, Duvall, as if nothing had happened.

Art (as Duvall): Great work, buddy! You were awesome there!

Austin (as It): [pleased noise]

Art (as Duvall): But you can't—

Austin: Mouth on this bone.

Art (as Duvall): You can't— you gotta be more careful with guns. You can't bite guns. It worked this time, but...but one of those times, it'll shoot you in the mouth, and that'll be bad.

Austin: Walks past you as if not listening.

Art (as Duvall): I know you can hear me!

Austin: It stops and looks back at you. And like— does it have a tail? I don't remember if it has a—

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: It has like a little stub tail or something, right?

Dre: Yeah, it's got a tail.

Austin: Yeah. Tail starts to wag, and it runs back at you and like runs a little circle around you and then lifts up Chine's forearm, the bone, as if like, let's play fetch with Chine's arm. [laughs softly]

Art (as Duvall): All right. Just a little bit.

[music plays: **“Six Travelers”**]