

Sangfielle 02: The Curse of Eastern Folly Pt. 2

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[RECAP]

[MUSIC INTRO - [“Sangfielle” by Jack de Quidt](#)]

JACK: Mines are always good, because there's lots of things you can mine. And it's always exciting to think about that.

DRE: A little crescent lake.

KEITH: Mines are bad for everything.

JACK: We are mining words from the mountain.

AUSTIN: Is that true? Is that what we're mining from the mountain?

JACK: [CHUCKLING] I don't know if that's sustainable.

AUSTIN: What if it is, though? What if it is—what if part of the thing we're finding is not words, but is *stuff*, in some way? Where it's like, 'yeah, I went up there and I came back down with a bag of hammers, and picture frames,' and what you're finding is both things from the past and a potential future?

JACK: What if they're not pine trees, they're, like, massive redwoods? And there's like six of them?

AUSTIN: Ooh.

JACK: Just like, six huge trees.

AUSTIN: Maybe there's a mayor, maybe there's a council, but what really shapes the direction of this town is whether it's a nice day out or not.

JACK: This might have been like a low-key holy place. I'm thinking of it as being like a—an abbey, almost. And they worshipped the beast in the caves. There is a beast and its mother.

DRE: My pitch is that the thing that has been here the longest is the giant skeleton of some large beast—

AUSTIN: Ooh.

DRE: —and that's actually what the abbey was built around?

JACK: Yo!

JANINE: No trace of them whatsoever—like, people try and follow their tracks, and it's just—there's just nothing. And that is what I am saying is [CHUCKLING] the greatest moment of this place, when an empress and her entire coterie vanished.

AUSTIN: 'And on certain nights if you look east to the lake, people say you can still see the light of the empress's boat.'

KEITH: The miners have a short view of the future here, and the inhabitants have a long view.

AUSTIN: Sometimes, things and people walk out of the cave that didn't go in. Sometimes someone digs up a person.

SYLVI: One day fire shot out of the cave for like twelve hours straight, and it did not stop.

AUSTIN: Jesus christ.

ART: Could I make my first pitch for a name for this place? Eastern Folley.

[RECAP ENDS]

[2:32 - MUSIC INTRO - [“Sangfielle” by Jack de Quidt](#) ENDS]

AUSTIN: Okay, so, we are now moving onto the next stage, which will—again, may have a hack here. The main gameplay says: “During our four cycles of gameplay, players draw cards from the numerical pile. Each type of card is associated with a set of questions, which are answered in any order. For example—” sorry, which are answered *in* order, not any order. “For example, the first time a player draws an ace of any suit, they would answer the first question listed under the aces.” Which is: “What are the plants like in our place? The rocks? The soil?”

“The second time an ace is drawn, the player would answer the second question,” which is, “It's time to plant the seedlings. What are the seedlings, and where are they planted? What is the harvest that is hoped for?” And so forth. “Read the question out loud, narrate your answer to the group, and then discard the card in the discard pile, optionally making note of which card it was. The group may ask follow-up or clarifying questions, but may not contradict what you've already said. The player may also discard the card before addressing the question, and enter a focused situation, choosing to: tell a story, throw a party, discover something, see an omen, leave the frame, or move on, skipping this turn. These focused situations allow us to skip certain questions instead of spending more time on a single moment. Choosing to enter a focused situation still counts as the *n*th instance of the card,” which is to say, if it was the second ace you

drew, then the next time you draw an ace, that would be the third ace. “You may enter the same focused situation multiple times. The specific rules of these situations are detailed in a later section. If the drawn card is a ten, the cycle ends, moving us forward in time. See the following section after every cycle for more details about these gaps.”

So we again have a choice in terms of how we want to hack this, or if we want to hack this. This is a game that we could draw four tens in a row and be done, and that would probably not be—I mean, we might have enough—now that we’ve done the set-up, I feel more confident about not needing to make sure that we do, like, 25 turns or whatever, because I feel like we have some juice at this point. But originally we were talking about, like, maybe we only do three cycles, but you go through all of them, you don’t like—you don’t automatically advance on the ten, or you make sure everyone gets one turn per cycle and then we advance. I don’t know how people feel about that, though. Or we just play it as is.

ART: We do have a lot.

AUSTIN: Yeah, right?

ART: But like, should we sort of just, do it and see how it—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: I mean, obviously if we, like—if all the tens are in the top eight cards, [CHUCKLING] it’s not enough.

AUSTIN: Correct.

ART: But like assuming a generally good shuffle, it might feel fine.

AUSTIN: You’re totally right.

KEITH: Play them as they lie? Is that a thing?

AUSTIN: Yeah, play them as they lie.

ART: Yeah. It’s a golf thing, but it’s a thing.

AUSTIN: Play it as it lies. So, who would like to draw the first card? I think there’s a rule for this, but I don’t remember what it is. It’s up in the top and I skipped over it, I want to say. God, what was it?

KEITH: Is there a rule?

AUSTIN: I guess there isn’t. Maybe I’m thinking of something else. I’m thinking of something

else. You're right, there is not a rule.

KEITH: Is it the rule for rerolling antagonistic timeframes?

AUSTIN: No, I'm thinking of a different game, is what I'm doing.

KEITH: Oh.

[DRE CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Boy, I wish I could reroll some antagonistic timeframes in my life.

[SYLVI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: I'll go first if no one else is jumping at it.

ART: Yeah, you should go first, and we should go in whatever the people are lined up on the bottom of your screen.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm good with that. Alright. Drawing.

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] I thought he was gonna get ten right off the bat.

AUSTIN: A five. A five of spades. And spades doesn't mean anything, it's just numbers, right?

ART: First five.

AUSTIN: Ooh, this is a good one. "What are the stars like in our place? The sky? The weather?" We already know the weather. We haven't talked about skies yet. I'm gonna make sure there's not any other like, note on how we should be framing this stuff.

JACK: Oh—

AUSTIN: What's up? Jack?

JACK: We also don't know what the weather is right now, is the other thing.

AUSTIN: Correct. Right.

JACK: This is a game about days, so you should probably take this as an opportunity to be like—

AUSTIN: To paint some things. So, I think that we are in a dry—we're in the dry season, currently. There has not been a dust storm in quite some time, the monsoons haven't hit, the

skies have been clear with some cloud cover. I think I do want to evoke the kind of—the painted skies, that style of like, the sky is clear, and sometimes it gets this beautiful pink, you know, pink-yellow blend, like pink-orange-yellow—but there are also days where what happens is the sky just gets a color. And it's one color, and it's that all day without change. Just for twelve hours or whatever, of just yellow, of just red.

And on a good day—and it's been good days lately—you instead get the rise and fall of the sun, which again separates us from the Heart, right? There is a sky here, there is not a vast city above us as in the game Heart, there is the kind of open sky. Two notes—

ART: Is it sort of like the Arctic? Is that where you're like—

AUSTIN: No. I'm just talking about like, sunsets and sunrises. What do you mean by Arctic? Do you mean—

ART: Like an Arctic summer, where it's light 24 hours a day. Like for 20 hours a day—

AUSTIN: [CROSSTALK] No, I'm just saying it's a regular day, but instead of there being variation in the sky, it is as if someone set the color of the sky to red today.

ART: Got it.

KEITH: Is it always—

AUSTIN: [CROSSTALK] And maybe that proceeds a storm. Maybe that's one of the ways in which you're like, 'ah, shit, a storm might be coming soon, I don't like the way this looks.' You know? I'm sure people associate meanings to stuff like that. What were you gonna ask, Keith?

KEITH: Is it always—when it's stuck as a color, is it always what we would consider a normal sky color? Or is it sometimes like, a green?

AUSTIN: Purple. Or green. I think it can be purple or green, right?

KEITH: I think so.

ART: [CROSSTALK] I think I've seen purple and green skies.

ALI: [CROSSTALK] Yeah, purple is a sky color.

AUSTIN: Yeah, sure. Yeah. You're right. I said purple, I should have said a different—

KEITH: Green, the only color that is not a sky color, almost.

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: I feel you can see a green sky. Aurora borealis and shit.

KEITH: I've never seen a green sky in my life.

ART: Blue and yellow make green and those are the sky colors, so it's gotta be green sometimes.

AUSTIN: Hm. Interesting. Anyway, two other things. One is, I don't know what's up with the stars this season. There's gotta be stars and constellations and stuff. I just haven't thought through them yet. I think maybe it's like—maybe there aren't constellations here, maybe that's a thing—or maybe they—hmm. Do I want there to be constellations so that they can be a thing that you work—okay, here's my thought on constellations.

Constellations are always the same shape, or seem to always be the same shape, but are not the same size. And so finding a constellation, which can help you navigate, often means being like, 'okay, I know that there is a constellation of a bull somewhere up there, and if I can find the first star, I know what directions the other ones tend to be in', but it's almost as if it's scaled up or down—sometimes those stars seem close together, and sometimes they're very far apart with other stars in the way, or in between them. But you can still find them if you know where to look for. So that's stars.

And then the moon—let me pitch you this. The moon is always full. Whenever it's out, it's full. What changes over the course of a cycle of the moon is how big it is, and how close to the ground it seems.

[10:31]

SYLVI: Okay, hell yeah.

AUSTIN: And so by the end of a month, the moon just dominates the entire sky. And it feels like it's about to fucking land on your head. It never does, or it hasn't yet, but that's what it looks like. And that's—

JACK: Then does it visibly shrink over the next 15 days or whatever?

AUSTIN: Yeah, so it's like the middle of the arc, I guess, right? Is it gets—yeah. At the biggest, it's—

KEITH: God's yo-yo.

AUSTIN: It's God's yo-yo, it's getting closer to us. What if God lets go?

JACK: Keith pointing wisely at the sky: 'God's yo-yo.'

[KEITH LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Perfect. So I think that's what's going on. I think right now, we are on the uptick—the moon is getting bigger. We're getting towards a full moon, and maybe we're getting towards a green—I think the first greens are entering the sky in a way that—

KEITH: I remembered when there's a green sky. I was wrong that I haven't seen one, because they have them—like, the sky seems really green before tornadoes and thunderstorms sometimes. Everything just sort of seems green.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That sort of *Matrix* green, with like—sickly?

KEITH: Yeah. It's like pale, horrible green.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And we're getting there right now.

ART: [CROSSTALK] Don't talk about my friend *The Matrix* like that.

[AUSTIN AND JACK CHUCKLE]

SYLVI: Can I ask something really quick—

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] Not all the greens of *The Matrix* are pale and horrible, just some of them.

AUSTIN: Sylvi, what were you saying?

SYLVI: I was just gonna ask, like, is there any noticeable difference when looking at the sky in the Heartland versus when you're in Concentus?

AUSTIN: I think in Concentus—I think the sky's fucked up there too.

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: But I think beyond Concentus, we get to other skies. Skies that people think of as 'normal skies,' right?

JACK: Oh, I love this so much. This idea's a—

AUSTIN: [CROSSTALK] But also Concentus—go ahead, Jack.

JACK: Well, it's just that, like, whatever is happening in the Heartland is so bizarre and cursed that light-years away, perhaps up in space, stars are behaving differently above it—is so weird.

AUSTIN: You know, fuckin'—the world is unpredictable at its core. That is what we've said about this universe that we're in. Um... There was something else. What else was I about to say? I don't know what I was—oh, I think that's an example of—people in Concentus, they really feel bad when the sky gets especially weird, because it makes them feel like all of the wards, and all of the rituals they've done, and all of the, like, architectural magics they've woven through the actual stonework and layout of the Ringed City—like, 'oh shit, is it not working? Oh no,' like, 'is it slipping?' And it's been doing it for hundreds of years, it's probably fine. But it never feels comfortable when the moon is giant above your head and the entire sky turns a dark, sickly yellow. You know? In the morning, or whatever. So—

KEITH: And this is happening, like, every month? Like, it's not like, every once in a while the sky turns green, and everyone's nervous, this is constantly happening.

AUSTIN: [CROSSTALK] There's not a special time for this. These are regular things, yeah. I mean, not every day, I do think that the like, 'someone turned the slider to green' is a rarer thing than that. But it is not rare in the—it's rare in the way a thunderstorm is rare, which is like, they're not *rare*, it's—you know.

KEITH: Right. But a close moon, that is a lunar cycle.

AUSTIN: That is a lunar cycle, that's happening every month. Correct. Yes. Yes, that's—whatever that lunar—and maybe the lunar cycle is like, you know, 48 days, and on day 24 is when it's really big and on day 48 is when it's back to its small size. You know?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: I think that's me. And so I think that's the situation today. It's—

KEITH: Does that fuck with water?

AUSTIN: Almost certainly, right? Almost certainly—it has to. Maybe there'll be another question that talks about water.

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] The lake has like, a dent in it when the moon is—maybe it's like, convex.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

JANINE: I was thinking about this when you said maybe there's a sea that's too big for this space or whatever, my thought was like, 'oh, does it arch up or something?'

AUSTIN: Ooh, that's sick.

JANINE: And if the moon's big the idea that the sea gets, like, tall—like, thick, I don't know—

AUSTIN: Like above other things? Yeah, yeah, yeah. I love that.

JANINE: Like curves upward and you can't see over it?

ART: [CROSSTALK] The bulbous sea.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Alright, new sport, ready?

AUSTIN: I'm ready.

KEITH: Trying to launch stuff up so that it lands on the moon.

AUSTIN: Janine, if you want to add that fucked-up tall ocean somewhere on this map, you go for it.

JANINE: [LAUGHING] How?

AUSTIN: No? You don't want to do that?

JANINE: I'll try.

AUSTIN: Okay. That's my turn. Who's—oh, I guess, Keith, you are up next.

KEITH: Hello.

AUSTIN: You want me to draw these cards so that it's just, bop, and then you can look at it?

KEITH: Is it the bottom thing?

AUSTIN: It's the bottom thing.

KEITH: The bottom—yeah, I could draw that. Oh, I tried it and it didn't work, so nevermind.

AUSTIN: [CROSSTALK] Actually, no, wait, wait, wait, fuck, I fucked up, I fucked up—well, good, it worked out. Here's a five of diamonds. So another—wait, is it a second five? That's the second five immediately.

KEITH: That's the second five. Okay. Alright. And then I have—oh, I have it on the other page.

AUSTIN: That's on page 21.

KEITH: Five number two. "What secrets are kept in our place? Why are they kept? By who and

from whom?”

[AUSTIN HUMS]

KEITH: And we’re talking like, days? Like right now, days?

AUSTIN: Yeah, in this moment. Yeah, like, this week.

KEITH: We’re not talking about nuns, we’re not talking about—

AUSTIN: So I do think there’s one nun in town who’s running—I decided this while I was getting this coffee. I think there is one tun—one tun. One nun, one goat nun in town—

ART: [AWAY FROM MIC] One ton o’ nuns.

[GROUP CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: One ton o’ nuns, that’s—always one ton, never a pound less or more. There’s one nun who is part of the conclave, the group of the vast... pantheon, kind of the vast pantheon, who did register the cave beast, whatever that thing’s called, to the Boundless Conclave to get the benefits of being part of that. And she just runs this little chapel to it in the town, and that’s it. So there is one nun.

JACK: Unrelated to the beast-worshipping nuns?

AUSTIN: No, no, that’s what I’m saying. It’s one of those. It’s one remaining one of those. It’s the beast-nuns. It’s—there’s one here, and—or, maybe it’s not from that grouping, but it’s someone who believes the same shit, and who folded that old faith into this vast conclave. Anyway. You have a secret, Keith?

KEITH: Let’s flesh out the secret. Here’s my—this is where my gut went on secret, right? We talked about the—it feels like there’s something that the residents of our town keep from the miners.

AUSTIN: Ooh.

KEITH: And I feel like it probably has to do—like, I feel like there’s not just, you know, not just boom and bust cycles of like, the miners come in and they leave—I think that there’s some big thing that keeps people away for long stretches of time in between mining cycles.

AUSTIN: And is that coming up, whatever that thing is?

KEITH: It’s due. It’s past due.

AUSTIN: Ooh, it's past due. What if it's like—what if it's like the equivalent of—again, needing to let soil regenerate over cycles, right? What if it's like, 'oh yeah, everyone who's in there at a certain point just doesn't get to come out anymore.' Once every however many years, the mine closes and that's it. And then it opens again and those people are just gone.

JACK: Yeah, I like this a lot. It's a good kind of—it's got that folk horror-y vibe to it as well, of like—on one level it could be interpreted as 'oh, this is a sacrifice for the bounty of the mine,' but on another hand it could just be like, 'eh, cave eats you.'

KEITH: A thought that I had earlier—and I'm sorry that this is my thought that I already had, but I'm being honest—is, if you've played *KotOR*—

[AUSTIN SNICKERS]

KEITH: —they introduce the Czerka sandcrawler that thousands of years in the future the Jawas are just using because—and they introduce this sort of backstory of like, 'yeah, people keep coming here and trying to colonize the planet, but it's always a disaster, and they always have to leave or they all die.'

AUSTIN: Totally.

KEITH: And that was what I had already been thinking, so this is why I'm bringing it up now for this.

AUSTIN: Does this make this haven that we're going to be part of kind of fucking evil, to let this happen? And, are we chill with that?

KEITH: How many cycles does this have to repeat before you stop trying to warn the miners?

AUSTIN: Right. I don't know.

JACK: That's a good point. There's a good point about, like, if the foundation of this place is... This is a—it feels like there should be an old man at a gas station down the road saying 'don't go near that town', and if we're setting this up as a haven, is that—you know.

AUSTIN: Right. Or have we made *Salem's Lot* by mistake?

[DRE CHUCKLES]

JACK: Yeah. Which, I want to get towns like this in this season, I just—is this the—

AUSTIN: Yes. Oh, a thousand percent.

[20 : 02]

KEITH: And the flip-side of it is, do you have to warn every fly that you see about the venus fly trap that's in the forest?

AUSTIN: Well, no, but I do suspect—

JACK: Miners are people.

AUSTIN: That mi—yeah, that's—yeah. Uh-huh.

KEITH: Well, the question was 'are these people evil.' I'm just—I'm introducing if that's what it is. Are they evil?

AUSTIN: No, my question was not if these people are evil, it was, do we want to play a haven that is willing to do this to people? That was my question. Which I think is distinct.

KEITH: Okay.

JACK: And I mean, to be fair, also—

JANINE: I—

JACK: Oh, go on, Janine.

JANINE: I was gonna say I feel like, you know, if we're framing it as a haven we should kind of be true to that. But also, maybe, is there some truth here of like—is this like a rose at the mouth situation, where the closer you get to the mine the harder it is to warn people? Like physically, it's hard to say the thing? So you could absolutely get people who just, by circumstance, show up there and don't know, and then get kind of fucked over because people can't tell them.

KEITH: It's also variable how bad this thing is. We haven't said what it is, really. How bad is it?

AUSTIN: I mean, the thing that I suggested was that like, people go in and don't come out anymore. But that might—

KEITH: Right.

JACK: God. [WHEEZES]

AUSTIN: —if it's less than that, than that's not—that makes it much less bad.

KEITH: If it's less than that.

JACK: [SMILING] Janine, you made it scarier to me.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: The fact that it's now this town where nobody can speak the horror, but the horror is also still happen—I suppose it makes us less evil.

JANINE: Well—

AUSTIN: 'Janine, you've made it scarier for me.' Welcome to Friends at the Table.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

JANINE: I mean, also, it's—to me, I think it's more interesting if, instead of being an all or nothing, it's a thing that you really struggle to do, and then—because then it becomes a thing of like, how hard do you try?

AUSTIN: Right. And then they're gonna fuckin' disregard it anyway. Like you said. Right? 'How many times have we told this to—'

JANINE: But to be like, they had to really struggle to get this out. 'That seems like a lie. I don't know, they looked really shifty while they were saying it. I bet they're just trying to keep all the good stuff for themselves.'

KEITH: Yeah. Which is still fucked up, because you should give each group of miners the chance to disregard your warnings.

JACK: Put up a fucking sign!

[SYLVI LAUGHS]

KEITH: But they need the miners sometimes.

AUSTIN: Your hand won't make the words.

JACK: Well, make it... over there!

AUSTIN: Or the words you can write are like, 'this mine is dangerous'. Right?

ALI: Well you walk a mile away and then write it down and then— [WHEEZES]

KEITH: Maybe that's what they say. Maybe there's always telling people, like, 'careful, the mines are dangerous.'

AUSTIN: But then maybe it's not about current proximity, it's about time spent nearby. Right? And it's like after you've been here for a week, you can't talk about what the—or maybe after you've lived through this cycle once, you can't talk about what the cycle does.

ART: That's what 'hello' and 'goodbye' are here, is 'the mine is dangerous.'

JACK: [CHUCKLES] I love it.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh.

JANINE: I like that idea because then the story becomes, like, from the people that you'll hear it from—or hear it from the most frequently—the story becomes 'yes, some people disappeared last week.' Versus 'people disappear there every week.' You know?

AUSTIN: Right, right.

KEITH: Um... [PAUSE] What was I gonna say? Oh, maybe it's not like—maybe it's not like a physical curse, but like, something material keeping people from not, like—like a blackmail.

AUSTIN: Like the cost of telling them is higher than the sacrifice.

KEITH: Is too high, yeah.

AUSTIN: I think that still might get us into that space where we're like fucking cowards. And maybe—again, if that's the town we want to defend for the rest of the season, we can do that. That's like, made this utilitarian sacrifice. But I want to go into it with clarity.

KEITH: Hey, I'm just asking questions.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

[GROUP CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: I think I like—I like the curse, I think. Because it lets us put a curse on the table, and then we can have "the Curse of Eastern Folley."

JANINE: A curse is also fundamentally sympathetic, right? Like, it's a situation where people who are party to this, you know—the answer to it becomes like 'well you should move, then' or something and it's like, well, that's not really an option for most people.

JACK: Yeah.

JANINE: So it's—you know, it puts them in a situation where they're part of something that is bad, but from a position where they're also victims of it.

JACK: I think, also, like—

AUSTIN: [CROSSTALK] Also maybe they can break it. Go ahead, Jack.

JACK: So, yeah, this is—I mean, we could try and break it today, if we wanted.

AUSTIN: You're right. We could. You're right.

JACK: Like, this could give us some focus. On the other hand, I was thinking about your immediate concern, Austin, which I think is the right concern, which is like—does this make the place evil and do we want to play an evil place? I think it is very in-character for this series to pick a cursed place.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally.

JACK: Like, our home is cursed. It's almost like the chalice is poisoned from the start. What are we gonna do with this chalice?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that. I think that that's good. And then I think that even with the curse, I think it would be—if someone said 'this isn't just a cursed city, this is a fucking cowardly, evil city', that person would be in their rights to be upset about this.

JACK: I'm sure people say that.

AUSTIN: Exactly. Exactly. So I do like that, and I do like making this part of the focus of what we're doing here to some degree. Maybe that is something that characters have to decide, 'hey, we should address this finally,' or 'after so many generations we're in a position to maybe try and address this.' We'll see how the game goes. I love that.

JACK: I'm writing this down and I want to be clear—"The townsfolk are keeping a secret from the miners. Every 'cycle'"—I'm putting that in inverted commas—"the mine eats all the miners, and they never return. Townsfolk—"

AUSTIN: How long is a cycle?

JACK: Keith?

AUSTIN: Is a cycle a few years? Is it—

SYLVI: Is it the moon cycle?

[GROUP ERUPTS INTO CROSSTALK]

AUSTIN: I think that's too soon, right?

SYLVI: That's definitely too soon, but it was just—

ALI: [CROSSTALK] Every three weeks— [LAUGHS]

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] I was thinking years. I was thinking years or decades. Like, every 20, 30 years.

AUSTIN: Generational feels right.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That feels like the way—

KEITH: Like, 'cause it has to be long enough where people have forgotten. That's the—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: "Every generation, the mine eats all the miners and they never return. Townsfolk are prevented from warning miners by a curse placed on the town..."

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: "...that prohibits them speaking of it."

AUSTIN: Games are good.

KEITH: You know, I do wanna bring—I just wanna make extra sure about the curse thing. Because the thing about the curse to me is that, if we're talking about an evil, cowardly choice that people are making but extending it over 30 years where, like—it starts to feel not real, versus like, if there's a curse keeping you from saying something, everyone is sure about it forever in the town.

AUSTIN: Right, whereas you're saying, if it's not a curse—

KEITH: If it's not a curse—

AUSTIN: If the—sorry, if there's no curse preventing people from talking about it, then people over time go 'that didn't happen. People get lost in the mines all the time.'

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] It can become less real over time, right.

AUSTIN: I think that that has to depend on how many people we're talking about losing. If it's

seven—if it's 20, then I think that's easy to forget that over 30 years or 20 years. If it's 300, then I think that's harder to—forget that size of death, because you have families who remember that they lost people.

KEITH: Yeah. I totally agree.

AUSTIN: Right? And so that's a thing we have to—I don't know, how do people feel? And also this is Keith's card, so Keith does get the—like, does have that authority, but I am curious how the table feels on curses. On this part of the curse.

KEITH: I'm not against the curse, but I sort of feel like I'm feeling about the curse the way that you, Austin, were feeling about the not-curse. That it almost makes it worse that everyone is constantly aware of it because they're aware that they're being prevented from saying something.

AUSTIN: What if it's—

ART: [CROSSTALK] And we should be—

AUSTIN: Go ahead, Art.

ART: And we should be mindful that this place has to feel like a haven, right? We still have to—it still has to feel safe at the end.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Sure. Well, for 30 years in a row, it does.

[ALI LAUGHS]

ART: Fair enough.

DRE: I mean, listen. I'm not playing a miner, so it's safe for me.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN: My compromise suggestion was going to be—what if the curse is on the people who are alive when it happens and in town? And then anyone born in between those generations does not have that restriction—

KEITH: They can say whatever they want.

AUSTIN: They can say whatever they want, and—

KEITH: The curse is applied at the time of the eating.

AUSTIN: Right. And so you get this kind of—and we are really in Stephen King town right now, where you have this younger generation who can—

KEITH: I *live* in Stephen King town.

AUSTIN: —yeah, true—who can kind of see things for what they are, and speak to it, and try to take it on, generationally, and talk about it with each other. If they can figure out that it happens, if they can look through the records and be like, ‘why were there 300 funerals this year?’

KEITH: Right. I like this. This is a good—

AUSTIN: ‘Hey, did you notice this repeats? I found this old book in the abbey and it was happening even then?’ You know, like that style of thing.

JACK: And the adults just like, turn ashen-faced and say ‘you shouldn’t read that.’

KEITH: This is also—

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: This is Stephen King town, this is also that really early *X-Files* episode with Victor Tooms. [PAUSE] Does anyone remember this?

AUSTIN: I have—I cannot do these kind of deep *X-Files* pulls, unfortunately.

ART: [DISTANT] Ohh, shit.

SYLVI: I was like, *just* watching this.

KEITH: Sorry, it is the guy who kills and eats the livers of like five people every 50 years—

SYLVI: Yes!

AUSTIN: Oh, right.

KEITH: —and then goes and lives in like a spit cave that he makes out of mucus and newspaper?

SYLVI: Yeah, that episode rules.

KEITH: Yeah. It’s the best—it’s great. And it’s in season one.

[30:07]

ART: As soon as you say 'spit cave,' Sylvi's *there*.

SYLVI: Fuck off!

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

ART: 'Yeah! Spit cave!'

SYLVI: I like that it's like *The Fly*!

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] I think it's like the second episode.

SYLVI: I'm leaving!

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

ALI: Aww.

AUSTIN: Bye. It was so nice to have you, you're such an important part.

[SYLVI LAUGHS]

KEITH: One of the very few characters to get like, a sequel episode a couple seasons later. Which was also very good.

AUSTIN: Wild.

KEITH: It was like, they got him in custody and they go like, 'oh, we're gonna let him out for good behavior' and Mulder has to be like 'what are you talking about? This is a liver-eating monster.'

AUSTIN: Alright. That seems like a turn to me. Let's do another one. Sylvi. [CHUCKLES] You're up next.

[ART LAUGHS]

SYLVI: Yeah, okay, my turn, great.

AUSTIN: Do you want to draw the card?

SYLVI: Sure. From the 1-10 deck, right?

AUSTIN: Yep.

[PAUSE]

SYLVI: Okay. I got a nine. Nine of spades, to be specific. But that doesn't matter.

AUSTIN: That's the first nine.

SYLVI: Oh!

KEITH: Should we move the fives together so we don't lose track of these cards?

SYLVI: "What do people eat and drink here? What is considered traditional?" Okay. Who labeled the sea, by the way, as a "thick sea" in the middle there?

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

JANINE: Yes, hello.

SYLVI: I just wanted to ask, because I wanted to make sure you were credited for your work.
[PAUSE] I feel like one of the things that sort of happens around this type of community is like, they sort of figure out how to—over time, at least, figure out how to domesticate the wildlife of the area? And so I'm trying to think of like, mountain stuff, and goats would be [SMILING] real fucked up in this universe, so... I don't know.

I think that there's like—I think with the little lake there, there's probably like a—there's probably people who manage fishing in that in some way? 'Cause I'm assuming—this lake is bigger than I think it is just 'cause it's little on the map, right?

KEITH: Yeah, compare it to the size of the mountains.

SYLVI: Yeah, exactly.

AUSTIN: Yeah. These are—we have not talked about how big this space is, but like, I don't know—I think it's pretty fuckin' big. Like, I think that the whole land—

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] It's probably bigger than my state.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think it's definitely—we're talking about bigger than a state. I think it's like, bigger than Texas, probably.

KEITH: Oh, okay, that's huge.

SYLVI: I just wanted to make sure that this is like—that this lake could be plausibly fished

without being devoid of fish within, you know, a couple weeks.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent, yes. You know, maybe they're weird fish, or gross, or, you know, I don't know.

SYLVI: Well, I think like—

AUSTIN: Maybe there are parts of the lake that get sick? I don't know.

KEITH: Jelly belly fish, it's a bunch of different flavors, some of them rule, some of them suck.

SYLVI: We have talked a little—I mean, I don't think we're gonna hit actual—I mean, someone probably has hit a ham vein in the mountain, but I don't think that that's part of the traditional food. I wonder if there's some sort of vegeta—we've mentioned those big trees actually. And this is something that I've just remembered. We mentioned like, six really big trees, right?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVI: What if one of the traditional things is like, the fruit that comes from that is considered, like—

JACK: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: I love that.

SYLVI: —kind of a delicacy, or like something kind of sacred to the area?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Bark soup?

AUSTIN: But there's like a particular fruit that only—that takes forever to grow—

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —and then it's associated with like, a harvest festival or something similar to that.

SYLVI: Absolutely. And it's like one of the few things that is predictable, in a way, around here.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Things take so long to grow most of the time.

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] Are they big fruit?

SYLVI: Uh... I think they're probably like—

KEITH: Like they are big trees?

SYLVI: Yeah, I think they have to be. I think it's like—not specifically this, I don't think it would specifically be the apple the size of a melon, but that's like what jumps in my head is that sort of like, scale to what you'd actually think it—the size it was, you know?

AUSTIN: Yeah. That makes sense.

SYLVI: Yeah. Or like, really big pomegranates or something. I'm trying to think of what's a cool fruit.

AUSTIN: Ooh, I love that. I love that texture. I love that idea.

KEITH: What about a pomegranate so big that those little pomegranates are the size of, like, oranges or whatever?

ALI: Like a kumquat?

AUSTIN: Like the little interior.

KEITH: Right, the actual, edible bit of the pomegranate.

SYLVI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I like this.

SYLVI: And the whole thing is like, you break that open and share it with your family and stuff.

AUSTIN: I also just love it because it's like this deep, bloody red.

SYLVI: Oh, yeah. I mean, that's where I got it from, let's be honest. [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Of course. I love it. And that's like a festive treat.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's a tradition—it's like a thing that makes you from this place, is to have an opinion about this stuff.

SYLVI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Whether you love the tradition or not.

KEITH: [SARCASTICALLY] 'I hate our rare town fruit!'

[ALI AND DRE CHUCKLE]

AUSTIN: Alright. Any other thoughts here? Is this festival coming up—or, sorry, is this moment—is this tradition coming to bear soon?

SYLVI: Oh, um... I think that maybe where we are in things is like, the fruit has started to like—you can see them, but they're not ripe yet?

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVI: And then maybe when we do scenes and stuff, we could lead up to that or something.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That makes sense.

SYLVI: But I think it's still a little too early.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I even like it as—

KEITH: Forage the forest for unripened fallen fruit and use them as bowls.

AUSTIN: [CHUCKLES] I even like it being far away in the sense of like—there's a fun poetics to that, of like looking up at the trees and seeing that the fruit is far from being ready to be eaten, and that feeling like a certain part of your life, even. You know what I mean? Or part of the year, where it's like 'ah, we're not even close to the fuckin' fruit yet.' So. That's what you say.

[ALI, SYLVI, AND ART CHUCKLE]

SYLVI: Yeah, no.

JACK: And then like, a pomegranate—

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] 'Close to the fruit is the *worst* part of the year!'

JACK: And then a pomegranate the size of your head falls 100 feet and kills your uncle or something. Is there a danger in these things falling? Or do they kind of cling on there until—

AUSTIN: The other branches soften the fall.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: It falls through the branches. And it rolls down gently. I don't know.

SYLVI: I was thinking like, maybe they've got nets set up—

AUSTIN: There you go.

JACK: Oh, yeah.

ALI: Ohh.

SYLVI: —like, early on someone had to climb up, and then eventually they were like 'let's do nets instead because then people don't fall out of the tree or have the fruit fall on them.'

AUSTIN: Yeah. So the moment—almost like, the shot of this today is people checking on the nets, making sure everything's good, you've got someone whose job it is to make sure of that. Love it.

KEITH: It's a huge system of nets.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. But there's only six trees, so, you know. Art, do you want to draw a card?

ART: Sure. I have a four. "What is the primary building or natural material of our place?" Huh. There's only six trees, huh?

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Six big trees.

ALI: Yeah.

ART: So we're not just living in giant pomegranate husk houses?

AUSTIN: I don't think so.

KEITH: I feel like that's extremely opulent.

[ALI CHUCKLES]

ART: That's too opulent?

JACK: Also—

KEITH: If you have the precious rinds of our town fruit?

[ART CHUCKLES]

JACK: Also, everyone here is four inches tall, [LAUGHING] and we're—

[ALI GIGGLES]

JACK: It's the first twist, they're all tiny.

AUSTIN: Is it a stone from the wetlands—

ART: [CROSSTALK] You're not talking me out of it.

AUSTIN: Is there—

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] A clay from the clay.

ART: [CROSSTALK] Yeah, stone makes—the clay rains—the stone coming out of the mine, right? To dig into the mountain, you have to displace some stone, right?

AUSTIN: What coloration are we talking about?

ART: [CROSSTALK] And because of the nature of the mountain, it would be like radically different kinds of stone, right? It's like—

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: —I'm not gonna embarrass anyone by listing kinds of stone, and exposing that some people don't know a lot of them—

AUSTIN: [HUMOROUSLY] Yeah, I appreciate it.

KEITH: I would hate that for me.

ART: Yeah. I'm looking out for y'all here when I say that, just imagine some stones that you've seen, and it's some of those.

AUSTIN: Can we get a color? Like, a collection of colors?

KEITH: Even that would embarrass me.

JANIN: [CROSSTALK] A type, even? Like is it layered, is it volcanic?

ART: [CROSSTALK] You know, earthy.

DRE: Signeous.

ART: I think there's definitely some volcanic stones coming out of there, [LAUGHING] which is weird because none of these mountains are volcanoes.

AUSTIN: Well, we do get that burst of fire however many fuckin' years ago that caused a tragedy, so who knows what's in there.

ART: Yeah. But yeah, I think that there's like—yeah, sometimes it's like 'oh, there's a lot of marble, this person's house is made of marble, it looks like a giant bathroom or whatever.' And then sometimes you get just like, yeah, it's just black, jet, smooth rock, and people built that for four years. And then—

AUSTIN: So is it then that each—that there isn't a common makeup of houses and buildings at large? Or are you also getting the thing of like—this looks like it was put together—almost like a potpourri. Every house a combination of different types of rock and material.

ART: I think there's a very solid architectural theme.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: But a very different makeup in terms of like, color. Because of differing rocks.

AUSTIN: Over—sorry, but it is a thing where like, 'this house is made of this brown stone, and this next one has the kind of darker black, and then this next one is sandy'—it's not 'here is a building made of sandy rockstone, and then also some blackstone, and then also some—' do you know what I'm saying the difference is?

ART: Well, I mean, there's probably some that are combinations, right?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Because sometimes more than one thing is coming out. Right?

AUSTIN: Right. Okay. Yes.

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ART: I don't think it's like—yeah, I don't think it's monochromatic in that way.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

ART: But I think it's like—it reflects the output as it was and it's unpredictable, and because of that, some houses are very sturdy, and some houses look like they'd blow over, but they don't.

AUSTIN: That's good to know.

ART: I'm not here to destroy people's houses.

AUSTIN: I getcha.

ALI: I appreciate that.

KEITH: You're not.

AUSTIN: What's the material coming out now? What's the—again, we just talked about color, we can talk about density—I don't want anyone like me who doesn't understand anything about stones, which is true, to be left out.

ART: I think we're getting a really, like—a really sedimentary stone, like we're getting thick veins of fossils right now. Fossils of animals that no one really can identify.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: People care about fossils here?

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: I think everyone cares about fossils. Fossils are cool.

AUSTIN: [CROSSTALK] You can learn stuff about things, yeah.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Also, what if they're fossils from things that haven't died yet? Lots to learn.

KEITH: But there's also like—they also are fine with making them into houses.

ART: I mean, people gotta live somewhere.

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] You can still study them even if they're a house.

AUSTIN: Apparently.

ART: I mean, maybe if there's a really big fossil, you like, pluck it out or something.

AUSTIN: Alright. Wait, that's not where that goes, that goes in its own pile. Alright.

ART: I'm gonna get some letters from people who know more about fossils than me.

[AUSTIN CHUCKLES]

KEITH: Impossible.

[ART AND SYLVI CHUCKLE]

AUSTIN: Jack, you are up.

JACK: It's a three of diamonds.

ART: Oh!

DRE: Ooh.

JACK: And the three is "What do people listen to and perform here? What is considered the folk art?" Oh boy.

AUSTIN: Oops. Did not mean to move the sea. My bad. There we go.

JACK: There are multiple bars or saloons. I think there are maybe two or three big saloons down in the sort of mining area. One of them is for the townsfolk, traditionally, and one of them is for the miners, and one is a sort of, you know. Kind of a free-for-all. And in there, people are playing, you know, traditional music on like, a honky-tonk piano, they've got like a fiddle, someone has got like a washboard or a banjo, or something. And I think also there is—what do—so the music is just sort of standard mining music, or traveler's music, people bringing songs in from where they were from, from the cantons they were from. And then I think that every year, every harvest, to coincide with the fruit harvest, there is a harvest play. Like a mummers' play, almost, that is put on.

And it is put on when the nets are strung up, but—so, all the fruit falls into the nets. And then before the fruit is taken out of the nets, that's when they put on this play. So they're surrounded by this bounty of fruit that is sort of suspended above them. And the locals are the ones who put on the play, who put on the—is the word I'm looking for "play"? It's sort of like a—it's like a performance. And there are roles in the performance for miners. And I realize that on some level there's this sinister, *Midsommar*-y, *Wicker Man*-y like, 'the outsider is given a role in the performance', but no one gets murdered and it's not—it's not even like a kind of hazing ritual vibe. There is definitely this sense of strangeness in the involvement of miners, and I think the miners think like, 'wow, the play's come around and we've been picked this time' or whatever. But their involvement is not a malicious one, and I don't think it's felt to be malicious by the miners either.

KEITH: I haven't seen either of the things that you mentioned—

JACK: They both die.

KEITH: —that this might sound like a reference to. But there is a sort of ‘the miners do die’ in this story that we’re already doing.

SYLVI: Well, like—

JACK: Can’t talk about that, I don’t know what you’re talking about.

SYLVI: Is that part of why this is kind of a nice thing? Like, ‘well, these guys might die, we should include them in our ritual in a friendly way.’

KEITH: Okay. So there’s no effort to sort of covertly warn them with themes of—

JACK: Oh my god.

KEITH: [LAUGHING] —of it being quite dangerous to be here.

AUSTIN: Oh, that’s very funny.

JACK: Oh my *god*. Yes, Janine, this is absolutely the vibe.

JANINE: Just—I searched duckduckgo for mummers’ plan and scrolled past all of the blackface ones, of which there were more than I was expecting, and eventually it’s—so there’s like a person with a goat mask and an accordion—or a sheep mask? Probably a sheep mask, actually—and then like a rooster mask, and then like a spooky person mask, and they all have instruments and they’re all wearing kind of like, sackcloth suits, and the masks are all made out of woven straw. It’s from—it says “Your Place and Mine” from BBC—the BBC did some sort of something about that. So for people who are looking for that, that’s all the advice I can give you.

KEITH: What is this kind of play?

AUSTIN: Like, what is a mummers’ play?

KEITH: Yeah. I don’t—I was gonna ask, but we sort of moved past it.

JACK: It’s a pseudo-folk-religious—or often, actively religious play, performed by like, lay-people or traveling actors, right? Am I getting this right?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: I believe that that’s right.

KEITH: I don't know, you're introducing this to me.

JANINE: [CROSSTALK] There's a lot of Saint George and the Dragon represented in here.

JACK: Like, the idea of a folk play.

AUSTIN: I'm trying to think of a contemporary—

KEITH: Is this sort of like a pantomime thing?

JACK: No, not really, no.

AUSTIN: No. It's like—

JACK: Okay. I mean, let's just describe it, right?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Okay, so. I think—Keith, you are absolutely right, and I think that this *is* some sort of gesture at the curse, it might not be its primary purpose, but—

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] Right. So it's actively—it's the opposite of malicious, it's trying to be helpful.

JACK: I don't know if that's its primary purpose. I think they are celebrating the harvest, so like—the townsfolk put on costume, and they put up a stage of some kind, at one end of the town, just built out of wood, they don't bring in like a theatre company. And then on the day itself, musicians—there is some sort of a ritual, you know, they maybe—I'm trying to think of what does a play like this look like in a sort of Bloodborne-y world. They go down to the lake—

JANINE: Is this like protective? If the miners are involved, is it actually the villagers trying to be like 'hey, weird force that takes miners sometimes, these guys are cool, okay?' Like, is it—

JACK: Yeah.

JANINE: —instead of trying to warn them, it's trying to preserve them? It's like the sort of opposite of—

AUSTIN: Incorporate them in a way that's like 'don't eat these people.'

JANINE: Like, 'hey, they're part of the community, we like these guys, it's all good.'

AUSTIN: It just doesn't work, is the thing. Or does it work for 30 years? Who could say.

JACK: Yeah, maybe it does. So it's like, a woman holding a horse's skull leads a procession at midnight when the moon is really, really massive down to the water, and in the water they—there is like a baptism of water, and then they go up and there is a baptism of fire where they all... eat something charred? It's to do with the fire that came out of the cave.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: It's like fire-swallowers, or something.

AUSTIN: But all of it has this—the thing that I think is important to—there's a degree of... These rituals are rituals and understood as rituals, but when you talk about a mummers' play there's also a sort of performative, like—it's low art in a way, not in a way I mean to take away from it, but it's not aspiring to be, like, 'and this is my delve into the field of guilt' or something.

JACK: Yeah, totally.

AUSTIN: It's like traditional cultural presentation. Right? In some way?

JACK: And I think fundamentally it speaks to this community's relationship with the miners, right? Where like, we have always been this community that is—people who come here and people who live here.

KEITH: This giant horse-head thing is terrible. And awesome.

AUSTIN: Well like, the thing that happened in America, when there are mummers'—Mummers' Day is a thing in like Philadelphia still. Right? But our parades became increasingly nationalistic in a different way, tied to military forces, largely, and police and fire-fighters and stuff like that, but then also corporatized. Right? So like, to some degree it's like, imagine the Macy's Day Parade, except instead of being about Garfield and Aflac, it was about local myths of New York. And was about Batman, and also there was no copyright. It was about Paul Bunyan, not that Paul Bunyan's a New Yorker. I'm not claiming Paul Bunyan.

[50 : 21]

KEITH: This has nothing to do with what we're doing now, but can you imagine the aesthetics of the mummers' play stuff that Janine linked but also it said like, Chase Bank.

[KEITH LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Yeah. A hundred percent. Uh-huh.

ART: I mean, it already shows the corporatization, which is the Thanksgiving Day Parade is the Macy's Day Parade now.

AUSTIN: Is the Macy's Day parade. Yeah, totally. Exactly this, right?

ART: No one says Thanksgiving parade.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: So I think just to put a capstone on it, it's like, you know, it's like—people wearing vast outlandish put-together costumes of animals or of deities, and then it's like, people gathered on a stage—too many people, crammed onto a stage, under huge redwoods with nets slung in it, teeming with fruit, and they're singing a local song or something. With also this massive thing of like, 'we don't want the caves to eat you. Caves, maybe these miners are okay.' And that's the performance. And I think if Sylvi said we're looking up at the fruit and it's starting to think about coming down, that's—it's gotta be coming soon.

AUSTIN: Yeah. People are getting their costumes ready, and tuning their instruments, getting the strings replaced on their guitars or whatever, right?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's fun. Alright.

JACK: Children are getting excited about it, adults are fairly jaded about it, you know.

KEITH: Do you know what I love about these deck of card games? Like this game explicitly references *The Quiet Year*, which it is similar to? The entire game—like, we could have not pulled the secrets card until the second-to-last card instead of the second card.

AUSTIN: Yep.

KEITH: That's fun.

AUSTIN: And instead, it's shaping so much.

KEITH: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Alright. Ali, draw a card.

ALI: Um, yeah. And that's a seven of spades. Oh... um. [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: That's a nice one.

ALI: "What is the most beautiful thing in or about our place?" Wow, what a loaded question. [LAUGHS] I think it's the trees in bloom, right?

AUSTIN: Ooh.

ALI: Like there's—it's like, you get the really hot dry season. And then you have the leaves and the pines and everything fall off the trees, and it's like this sort of reverse Fall-Summer situation. But then once the temperatures start to cool again, and once there's moisture in the air again, it's like, 'oh, the trees are growing back,' and they're flowering, and they're about to start getting fruit. And it's like 'oh, a new year,' essentially. Right?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ALI: So, yeah. I think that's my answer.

AUSTIN: Where are we at—are we past that beautiful moment today, or are we near it?

ALI: What did we say timeline-wise? I think you—had we said that trees are in the—

AUSTIN: Trees are—I guess we're not at the harvest—we're pre-harvest still, per Sylvi.

ALI: Right. So there are fruit in the trees but they're not ripe yet, right?

AUSTIN: Right. They're not ripe yet, yeah.

ALI: So I think there's that sort of like—it's that thing of 'oh, we're gonna get the fruit' and then the trees are gonna be bare for a little bit. So it's like—it's not—this is the end of what the start of that cycle would be.

AUSTIN: Gotcha, gotcha.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So people are looking forward to those days, but not in the near future looking forward to it, in the 'ugh, I can't believe we're that many months away from'—from the—whatever looks really nice.

ALI: Yeah, exactly. Well like, people are busy preparing for this big harvest festival because they're expecting to get the fruit down, but then like, shadowed by this idea of like, 'oh, we're gonna have this harvest festival,' and everything that's gonna happen, it's like—months after that are hard months, because it's dry and it's hot and the trees are falling.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Not literally falling, but like, you know. When leaves fall.

AUSTIN: No, I get you. Yeah, yeah, yeah, that makes sense.

ALI: Okay, yeah.

JACK: What do the flowers look and smell like?

ALI: Sure. [GIGGLES] I... hm. The fruit is huge, right? But it's like... I guess how do... I don't know enough about the flower-to-fruit etymology in real life, so I don't know if there's, like, predictable situations there. I feel like it's like—like they're really small flowers, they're like bundled together. And... maybe they are a really dark red, with like yellow stems that come out? I think they probably have a sweet smell, these are fruit trees. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Nice. Yeah. Alright.

ALI: Oh, thank you Janine. [LAUGHS] For sharing the flower-to-fruit life cycle.

AUSTIN: Oh, good. Yeah, that adds up then. So then, we are in that third stage, not yet in the fourth stage. Right?

ALI: Yeah, no, it's almost like the—it's the 'top-of-the-hour, bottom-of-the-hour' situation where the harvest is the top of the hour and the bottom of the hour is like, 'oh, the leaves are coming back.' And that's gorgeous.

AUSTIN: Right, yes. Gotcha.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And we're at like 50 minutes, or 45 minutes or something. So we're past the nice beautiful part, by the way.

ALI: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: But we're—yeah. Gotcha. Alright, Dre.

DRE: Yeah. [PAUSE] Okay. Two of hearts. Is this our—this is our first two, right?

AUSTIN: First two, yeah.

DRE: Okay. "Name a monument, marker, statue, or other physicalized memory that exists in our place. What does it mark?" Hmm. [PAUSE] I'm trying to think if I want to make this be building on something we've already talked about, or a whole new thing.

AUSTIN: Right. Because that's totally viable, it does not have to be a connection to past stuff or anything.

DRE: Yeah. I'm trying to think of—and maybe this doesn't work with the curse, but is there something that marks the number of times the mines have eaten everybody inside of it?

AUSTIN: I think that that could still work with the curse.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: In the sense that like, it might be the case that people don't necessarily know what it means if they're not—if they don't know what it means. Do you know what I mean?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think that that's a great moment of realization. Of like, 'oh, shit. *That's* what that means?'

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: It's fun, you know?

KEITH: I—hm.

AUSTIN: No? Keith?

KEITH: I don't want to, like, bring—I don't want to close things off and, like, make everything a little bit too convenient, but my—and also it's Dre's card, but the thought that I had was the number of the giant redwoods, or whatever they are.

AUSTIN: Oh.

DRE: Oh, like every time—

AUSTIN: That's fun.

DRE: Yeah, so like every time the mine eats somebody, a new one starts growing in?

KEITH: Pretty much, yeah. Or—

AUSTIN: And it takes a cycle for it to grow—and that's fast. That grows fast.

KEITH: Grows fast.

AUSTIN: But also that's kind of—

KEITH: Maybe it's even faster. Maybe it's like, the like—instead of the whole 30 years, it's like

the last five. Or something.

AUSTIN: Maybe, but here's, let me tell you this—

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] Or the fall—the post-eating five.

AUSTIN: Right. If it's been—if it's been six cycles, then it's been 180 years of this happening. Which maps very neatly to our 200—

KEITH: Yeah. I did the math, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's fun.

JACK: [CROSSTALK] That's perfect.

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] That's part of where it came from. I thought of that, I thought of tying it into the harvest thing and how that makes things even a little bit like—it ties the miners even more closely with the town and the harvest stuff—

AUSTIN: Well, and also, the thing that's interesting there is—

KEITH: —and they're directly benefiting also now from these disappearances, maybe?

[DRE CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Yeah. But also what's interesting is presumably 180 years ago it was not this vast number of miners who went into the caves and went missing. Right? It was probably—you know, it was not however many people—

KEITH: No, it was a bunch of nuns.

[ALI GIGGLES]

AUSTIN: It's always a bunch of nuns, we know that. Yeah, damn. Damn. Yeah, I like that a lot. So—I'm trying to think if there's a way to tie this to today in a way we haven't already. But I feel like we may have. I feel like we've already kind of done that work. Right?

KEITH: Yeah, talking about the harvest and other—yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we know a lot about these trees, so.

[ALI CHUCKLES]

[1:00:00]

AUSTIN: Any other questions on this one? Also Dre, are you good with that? That's actually what we should—

DRE: No, yeah, I fuckin' love that. [LAUGHS]

KEITH: Yeah, Dre, as soon as you were like 'is there something with the miners,' the—just, boom, right away. Love it.

AUSTIN: Alright. Janine?

JANINE: Mhm. [PAUSE] I got a three of clubs.

AUSTIN: Our second three.

KEITH: It depends—

JANINE: "What do people in our place argue about for fun, whether at the bar, in the square, or in other social spaces?" Uh... This might be like weirdly specific—knifework? I think knives work.

AUSTIN: No, that works for me.

JANINE: Because knives work in terms of, like, how are you gutting and deboning your fish? Or, how are you, like, seeding your fruit?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Just—everyone has their own family knife techniques, and they are constantly weighing the merits of their own techniques against other people for different tasks. I think that's also—that also is, like, to me—

KEITH: Dinner parties where everyone's in the kitchen watching the preparation. [CHUCKLES]

JANINE: I mean, yeah, I think to me that's a thing that like, transfers really well between the bar and the town square, and things like that, is like—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: Everyone's got a pocket knife and—I can just very easily imagine people in the town square just having that talk, or in the bar being like, 'no no no no no, Suzanne, bring some fruit over here. We'll—I'll show you. I'll show *you*.' And then they all just like have their knives out—

AUSTIN: 'You lose too much of the fruit when you cut it. You lose the juice. You let the juice out.'

JANINE: Yeah.

KEITH: Have you seen—there's like these youtube videos, and I'm thinking of a much more refined version of this, these are like—really, kind of weird events, but—those like videos of guys with knives who do like twelve different things with the knife as fast as possible?

JACK: Yes!

KEITH: Have you seen this?

JANINE: Yeah, it's like the—courses?

AUSTIN: [CROSSTALK] It's like a race.

JANINE: Yeah. They have to like, chop five bits of wood off—

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] It's like a knife obstacle course.

JANINE: —and then hack a rope in half, and—yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Hey, Ali?

ALI: Hi.

AUSTIN: I and—maybe we can run this by Janine, but I can think of a thing that's happening currently tied to this, that's tied to your story, your background—

ALI: Sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you want to set them up?

[ALI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: I guess it's worth saying, we're doing a lot of customization of Heart to the degree that, in some cases, the classes are transforming thematically in a huge way. So the Hounds are like—they're like the remnants of a military regiment that turned into wandering cops, is how they're written? That's not how we're playing them.

ALI: Uh-huh. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Instead, Ali has done something.

ALI: Sure, yeah, do I—do I just go into it?

AUSTIN: I think so. And then we can frame—I think this is a good point to introduce that group, and then to frame them like—

ALI: Okay, sure, yeah, so—

AUSTIN: —in terms of maybe what's happening here.

ALI: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, I've chosen that I'm playing a Hound. And part of the adaption of what this organization of people is—like, a society of old toolmakers and, like, knife-sharpeners. [LAUGHING] The way that I've pitched it to Austin is that there's—or, we've come up with this together at this point—that it's like, you know, there were people pushed to this barren land. And they couldn't live off of that land because they couldn't eat from it. So you have to choose other skills, which is like 'I'm gonna butcher animals, I'm gonna have to break rocks or nuts' or things of that nature really interestingly, and through developing that skill you get really good at them. This is me watching a documentary about butchers and hearing somebody say 'oh, people thought they were mystics' and being like 'oh, that's a character.' [LAUGHS] So.

KEITH: Are we talking about those Italian butchers? Sorry, I'm—

AUSTIN: Yes. Uh-huh.

ALI: Yeah, yeah.

ALI: So, then it was like 'oh, there's this big organization,' they're expected for community service because they have these skills and you might as well be using them, yadda yadda yadda, and then I guess the thing that I ended up doing is dividing it into four sections and then what the "Hounds" are—quote unquote—are the people who, like, have a mastery in all four. So.

AUSTIN: Or, do you think that those people's old base, or like their old—the old culture, or, sorry, not the culture, but the old settlement they were pushed to—these are people who once—the way that we talked about it was like, a lot of people lived in the Heartland, and then Aldomina came and was like 'nah, this is ours, and we're gonna take it from you,' and there was conflict, obviously, people tried to fight them back, they did not win that fight, and many of them from different groups were pushed into various places, and your group emerges from this kind of mixed bag of various peoples and nations that used to be in the Heartland, and that were now all driven to like, the mountains somewhere. And here we are in the mountains somewhere—

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: —so like, how far off from here are we to your knife-people?

ALI: Yeah, I don't know, that seems like a weird thing—you know, the way of defining that is by defining it, but it wouldn't be like, 'well, here's the flag,' but there's certainly overlap. I... yeah, I don't know.

AUSTIN: But would this have been—is it close enough that this would have been an early place where you came to sharpen—like, did an ancestor of—not an ancestor of yours, necessarily, but someone in this group 150 years ago come to sharpen the knives of the nuns?

ALI: Sure. I mean, I believe so. The idea that like, you know, these are people who travel from haven to haven offering this sort of service.

AUSTIN: Right, right. And that—the thing that that brings up to me is this idea that like, now could be a moment where like—'hey, one of these Hounds is here to sharpen—' or, we're not calling them Hounds, right? We're calling them something else, but. They're here to sharpen these knives as people argue about them—

[ALI CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: —like you get someone in town in this moment who is like—

ALI: Yeah, it just—that's really funny because the idea of this town where people are culturally like, 'well, I cut fruit really well,' and then having someone pull down their big hat and be like 'well, I went to knife school, buddy.'

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

ALI: [LAUGHING] Seems a little intense.

AUSTIN: I didn't mean to come stun on 'em, I meant that like—when you're in a town of people who are—when you're a mechanic in a town that loves cars, you're doing well by yourself. You know what I mean?

ALI: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Right. And, you know, the culture of caring about your tools or being able to use them well doesn't come from nowhere, and is also part of that society. So there's definitely like, overlap.

AUSTIN: I love the overlap. I think that's fun.

[ALI GIGGLES]

AUSTIN: I think that's fun and it's a good way to introduce that there is one of these characters here at the moment if that's cool with Janine. You know?

JANINE: Yeah, totally.

AUSTIN: Awesome. Any other stuff on people arguing about knives in the street?

[ALI GIGGLES]

AUSTIN: Knife technique, not knives. They're not like 'this is a better knife.' Well, they might be like 'this is a better knife', but.

JANINE: This is a better knife for the task that you're gonna... blah blah blah.

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] 'You gotta use like, steel. If it's too soft, you'll be sharpening it all the time, if it's too hard, it's gonna be hard to sharpen.'

AUSTIN: Alright, it comes back around to me. An ace, our first one. I feel like we've answered this already. "What are the plants like in our place, the rocks, the soil?" And so I'm gonna do the thing that I'm allowed to do, and do a focus instead. A focused situation. There are a bunch of things you can do. You can tell a story, in which you adopt or invent a storytelling character in-game, and then they—this may be—briefly describe them, their name and what they sound like; this may be an old bard, an entertainer on TV, a parent with a bedtime book, or something more abstract like a bird cawing at the morning. Other players may enter the sequence as listeners who may choose to interrupt to ask questions, roleplay or narrate the story, et cetera. The story that is told is known as a fiction or a legend, not an actual course of in-game events, however the stories we tell about our world are important as the things that happen in them.

"Throw a party: the player describes the situation of the party; a birthday, a ball, a festival in the street, the spring when the flowers are all in bloom, and every player picks or invents a character that attends. Roleplay or narrate as these characters chatting idly, dancing, having cake, or merely existing in splendor. Topics of the larger story or situation may come up in these conversations, but do not act on the big things in any tangible way at a party; they are just a topic of gossip for a very good day.

"Discover something: this is a chance to name a fact that enters the world wholecloth. Maybe a teenager unearths some strange old artifact, or a chemist synthesizes a new periodic element, or a water main breaks in the street. Do not add details to past events; this is a discovery that is happening right now. Narrate what is discovered and why it is important.

"See an omen: here the player may gesture at a future possibility. An omen may be the classic type; a comet or a spell gone awry, or something that points at the materiality of the world. A hungry animal in from a famine in the countryside, or an heir to the throne that sickens ahead of a coup. This is a chance to set things in motion; the player narrates what is seen, by who, and how it is perceived by those that hear the news.

"Leave the frame: just for a second, the window widens and you're able to see a little bit more of our world. You may ask, what is the mountain like to the north of our house? Are there massing

armies on the sea? What type of dogs do the neighbors have? Or anything else that you wish to know. You get one question, and the table collectively answers and the world snaps back.

“Or move on: the player skips this turn, merely discarding the card, and letting the action rest elsewhere.”

[1:10:37]

And I think I'm gonna give us a discovery. I think... I think that one—this day, today, the day that we've been describing for the last eight turns, some teenagers—maybe they're older than teenagers. Let's say that they're in their young 20s, their low 20s. Some local inhabitants who have been arguing about their knife techniques and probably, you know, gettin' up to youthful hijinks, end up daring each other to climb into the old ribcage in the neutral zone, the place you're not allowed to go to. And as they continue their kind of exploration, one of them uncovers—and maybe it's—maybe they find it not near where the abbey is, like, the remnants of the abbey are. They kind of wander off into the woods nearby, but they find a hatch that leads to a lower level of the abbey. An inverted abbey underneath, where the ribcage that kind of grows up around where there was once—the whole—like, all the structures of where the nuns once lived and worked, it actually continues down the other way. So it's almost as if we've only seen half of the ribcage. And down here, the rest of that ribcage is covered in fur and flesh, and the under-version of this creature yet lives. And it is a—I mean, Dre, did you have an idea in mind for what this beast looked like? Dre, was this your—were the bones yours? Who introduced the bones?

DRE: Yes.

KEITH: Dre was bones.

DRE: So yeah, do you have more details on what this creature was?

DRE: Oh, um... Definitely in terms of like—you know, in terms of it being a big ribcage and then a long neck you can build a bell tower around, the first thing that comes to mind is dragon, but I think we can probably make a dragon that is pretty fucked-up-looking.

AUSTIN: Sure. How? What sort of fucked up is it? Who's got fucked up dragon ideas?

DRE: I'm gonna say it has seven legs.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Something about it having an odd number of legs seems fucked up.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally.

KEITH: Is it odd on one side, or is it sort of a center-leg in the front or the back or the middle somewhere?

DRE: I think it's odd on one side.

AUSTIN: And maybe like, the wings are structured in a strange way, right? And—

DRE: Ooh, hey, Austin.

AUSTIN: Yeah? I'm listening.

DRE: And Keith, I guess. How many redwoods do we think have grown in at this point?

AUSTIN: Six, I think we had said.

KEITH: [CROSSTALK] There's six, right?

DRE: Okay. Then yeah, seven legs sounds good.

AUSTIN: Wait, why? What's up? What's your connection?

DRE: I don't know.

KEITH: Get a leg for each tree?

DRE: Yeah, we're one tree away from the number of legs.

AUSTIN: It's been growing, yeah. Interesting. Hmm. Well, it is clear that there—so it's down here in like—

[1:13:51 - MUSIC - [“In the Depths by the Altar” by Jack de Quidt](#)]

AUSTIN: —again, it's almost as if it's inside of a cathedral building that has been flipped upside down. And it's one of those great moments of walking down the stairs, and then you're walking down the stairs, but then you're walking up the stairs, and you've kind of flipped vertically and you're walking—if you could dissect—if you could do like the Wes Anderson diorama shot, they would now be walking on the ceiling, except the ceiling is an upside-down floor. Right?

And this beast is literally just kind of like—across the broken pews, is scraping away at the edges of the church, the walls of the church. There are stained glass windows here that it's cracked and broken, and it's kind of looking down at them from the kind of high ceiling above the altar at the front of this old church, and on the altar is—god, what is it? What's grosser than an egg? What's the like, 'we found a fuckin' baby one of these things'?

[1:15:00 - MUSIC ENDS]

KEITH: Like a frog—like one of those frog egg sacs, the like, jelly eggs.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And it's pulsing.

JACK: Is—is this big one down here—you say it's scraping at the walls and has broken stuff, is it alive? Did you mean like, scraped in the past tense, or?

AUSTIN: I—it's hard to tell for these 20 year olds—

JACK: In the dark. Yeah.

AUSTIN: —who are out of their fucking minds in terror. You don't—but actually, since you asked, I think maybe we can give a little more detail and say like, one of the—one of the group of people who's here now is also trying to investigate that, and is trying to understand like, is this thing breathing and is that causing some of its arms to move around? Is it trying to defend itself? Is it in its death throes? And we get one of these people—I'm gonna say it's one of the Drakkan, which are like the seahorse/dragon-folk—nears it, nears one of the seven arms and one of the claws, and realizes that the scrapes that have been left in the walls of the cathedral are actually—they seem to be language. They seem to be old ancient runes of some sort that this person can't read, but recognizes as Drakkanic or, maybe not Drakkanic, maybe it's a language that has nothing to do with dragons, I'm not sure, but yeah.

So that's one element that I think we should add. It's been *writing* something down here. And I think, you know, this character—his eyes go from looking at this kind of ancient script, to one of the broken windows, and looks outside, and we can hear coming from outside—which is weird because it's outside underground, or in this other realm, wherever the hell we are at this point—there is the sound of chanting. And I think we get him going to the window to kind of go to peek, but by then one of the other people in this group, you know, calls him over, and he steps back away from the window so we don't get to see what is causing that chanting. And the group goes over to this egg sac on this altar.

KEITH: Sorry to jump back real quick, but—

AUSTIN: Please.

KEITH: The reason we're doing this—this is a focused thing based on you pulled a card that we had basically already answered? Is that what it was?

AUSTIN: Yeah, so I decided to do a focused situation and chose “discover something”.

ART: Which you can do no matter how you feel about your prompt.

KEITH: Right, right. But I thought that that was why.

AUSTIN: [CROSSTALK] Totally. You can love your prompt and be like, 'fuck it, I don't care, I'm gonna ask this thing right now anyway.'

JACK: It does count as a number though, which is really interesting.

AUSTIN: It does. Yes.

JACK: Even though we've used it—

AUSTIN: We have drawn the first one, yes. Correct.

JACK: So I love that we're playing solitaire.

KEITH: Oh no, I always lose at solitaire. [CHUCKLES]

ALI: Get ready.

AUSTIN: And so, yeah, I think that they realize—and I think... Does the—you described this thing as—you were asking if it was alive or not. But I do think that this is going to be tied in some way to an effort to stop the curse. And I don't know if it's that this beast says something that encourages these, you know, kids, basically, to be like 'we gotta take this thing into the cave,' and then someone says, like, 'no, the curse is soon. We can't. We read about that, remember? We can't go in there. We could get lost in there forever.' But they debate that, and they take the egg sac, and who knows what they'll do with it? We can detail these people a little bit more at some point, but I think that's their discovery. But for tonight, someone, you know, covers it in straw and puts it in the corner of their room near the fire to keep it warm, because the altar had like, some sort of, you know, heating element underneath it. They touched the altar and the stone felt warm and so they were like 'I gotta hold onto this, this seems like it has to be—I gotta make sure this thing stays warm.' So that's my discovery. Keith, do you want to draw a card?

KEITH: I would love to. I got a two. Our second two. "What is produced in our place right now and how does it make its way into the wider world? Is this export a physical good, knowledge, something else?" This is another one I sort of feel like we've gone over.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: We've just done worldbuilding so many times at this point that we just hit a lot of things. We've talked about the fruit, the wood, the clay, the stone, the mining—we started with the mining. So I might do another focused thing.

AUSTIN: Okay. What do you want to do?

KEITH: Jeepers. What page is that on? Oh, here it is, it was right above where I was. "Tell a story, throw a party, discover something, see an omen". Austin, I feel like you discovered something and saw an omen at the same time. [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's fair.

KEITH: How about we leave the frame?

AUSTIN: Sure. So, where do you want to go? How far do you want to zoom out? Where do you want to show us?

[1:20:20]

KEITH: I want to go... Let's see. I just wanna read leave the frame. "Just for a second, the window widens and we are able to see a little bit more of our world. You may ask, 'what is the mountain like to the north of our house? Are there amassing armies on the sea? What type of dogs do the neighbors have?' Or anything else you wish to know. You get one question and the table collectively answers, then the world snaps back." Okay. So I'm going to be asking a question. [PAUSE] Okay. So we just had this horrible thing with the egg and the dragon thing with the legs in the church.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: What is happening on the closest haven on the other side of the mountain range?

AUSTIN: Good question. What is happening, Keith? Wait, this is a group answer, right?

KEITH: "The table collectively answers."

AUSTIN: The table collectively answers.

KEITH: So me and everyone.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. You're collectively. Huh. What's a vastly different place?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or if not vastly, then, you know. Still mountains, but like...

KEITH: Right. Are they mining, are they not mining?

AUSTIN: I guess maybe, are they even—the nearest one might not be—

KEITH: Across the—

AUSTIN: —on the mountains, it could be west of the mountains a little bit more. You know what I mean? It could be on the flatlands, but still be the nearest across the mountains from us.

KEITH: Right.

ALI: Yeah, is it like a river town that has just woken up and like, there are just fish floating on the—[LAUGHS] the top of the water, just like, everybody wakes up and is like, 'wha?'

AUSTIN: 'What the fuck is happening?' Yeah.

KEITH: Do they have like a—what's it called when you have an earthquake and then there's somewhere else the earthquake hits, because it just like—shockwaves going through the earth? Does anybody know what that's called?

DRE: Aftershock.

KEITH: Are they having that for—no, not aftershock. But it's a similar idea. It's basically like, there's a—because of the way that the plates are, if there's an earthquake in Massachusetts they also for some reason feel it just a little bit in one of the Virginias or something. I think that's a thing. I'm thinking that I'm not just making it up.

AUSTIN: That sounds like it could be a thing.

JACK: Did I miss something? Have we caused these people's fish hell, or is this an unrelated fish hell?

KEITH: That's what I'm asking. Is this—Ali introduced the dead fish, and I'm saying, is this like the rippling waves of a bad omen?

ALI: There's beasts, there's curses afoot. Who could say?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I freaking love that like, they're talking—

ALI: There's life and there's—sorry. I was just going to say there's life and there's death, but you go on.

JACK: It's like—the book is asking for what's happening right now, right? So I really like the description of people waking up in this town just to see a weird sight.

AUSTIN: The cut from one of these people puts the egg underneath the egg sac underneath some straw to hide it and turns off the lights or whatever, and then the next morning it's just like—you know, 150 miles away, and it's people looking out at the river and being like, 'what the fuck is happening?'

KEITH: I like this 'cause it brings me back to the, you know, people not having any ideas of why things are happening. No one would ever guess.

[ALI LAUGHS]

KEITH: No one will ever know that the reason why those fish died was because of an egg 150 miles away.

[SYLVI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Because someone moved the eggs. Yeah.

KEITH: And maybe someone remembers that some fish died at some other time, and they have—now this whole world that they're trying to construct for why are the fish dying, there will never be an answer to this.

AUSTIN: Incredible. Alright. I like that a lot.

SYLVI: We're gonna meet the guy trying to figure that out.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN: Oh, definitely. A hundred percent.

KEITH: Someone's doing research on this. Like, in libraries.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent.

ALI: Just a person with a bunch of fish jerky.

[SYLVI LAUGHS]

ALI: 'Where were you on the night of [INDISTINCT MURMURING]?'

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

KEITH: 'I can't let the fish go to waste.' [LAUGHS] 'They're dead, they're not ruined. They were gonna die anyway before...'

AUSTIN: 'Yeah, go get the nets.'

KEITH: 'Good news, everyone, it's fish jerky for 90 days.'

[AUSTIN AND ALI CHUCKLE]

AUSTIN: 'Bad news, everybody, it's fish jerky for 90 days.'

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. Sylvi, draw a card.

SYLVI: Okay. I got a ten. Have we gotten any tens before?

AUSTIN: This is the first ten. We're introducing our first cycle. Our first gap.

ALI: Yay!

AUSTIN: You've got some choices to make here.

SYLVI: Yeah, so, the list is: "The 'gardens'," in quote, "are planted, work has been done, and now we wait. What was planted and what are we waiting for? There's a great victory that enables the inhabitants of our place to build towards a new future. What is this future they wish for? How will they set to work on it? There is a great loss; one that sets new burdens on the inhabitants of our place. How do they cope, and what have they lost forever? Someone important, socially, political, or emotionally, in our place dies. Who were they and how were they killed? How are they remembered after? There's a resting day and a suspicion of problems just across the horizon. What is believed to be coming and how do the inhabitants of our place set these problems aside just for one day?" Or, "It is a resting day and the knowledge of a secure future. What is taken as a given and how do the inhabitants of our place spend a lazy day?" I'm kind of, like, after reading those, I think I'm kind of flip-flopping between the bottom two. I actually think the 'knowledge of a secure future' one is good because nothing—it doesn't mean that knowledge is actually right.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVI: And I kind of like the idea of people just, like—it isn't the actual festival yet, but people are like, 'well, it's almost the holidays, you can kind of just take it easy today. There's not much work to do.'

AUSTIN: Little do they know.

SYLVI: Yeah. And I think a lot of people spend time with their families hanging out under the trees and stuff, and like, there's probably some sort of festival or game shit that they do, that

like, they're trying to teach them and stuff. But yeah.

ALI: Oh, it's like, dress rehearsals for the weird—yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah. Like there's little kids who have never been to the festival before or whatever. And it's like, 'okay, we're gonna teach you these games that we play during this,' or like, different songs that people sing. Stuff like that.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Mhm. I like that a lot.

ALI: When the horse-masked person comes over to you, you have to hold out your hand, but it has to be your left hand.

SYLVI: Yeah, exactly, exactly.

AUSTIN: God.

JACK: Do the teens who took the egg—what are they doing?

AUSTIN: They're 20s. I did want to make them in their 20s, not their teens, because I want them to be—I want them to have made it to 20, because I bet adventurous teens in this world often meet bad ends, and I want these people to be at least—to have gotten through that period successfully.

JACK: To speak to their success.

AUSTIN: Which grants them a potential success. Who knows if it falls apart? But anyway, what were you saying?

JACK: Oh, what are they up to today?

AUSTIN: I don't know. What are they up to today? Are they—is today still the day of rest for them also? In the sense of like, 'we don't know what to do yet. We got to look at some books, and talk to some people who have been here for multiple generations,' or are they being secret about it?

ALI: 'A friend of mine was telling me about an egg sac. Do you know anything about egg sacs?'

AUSTIN: Right. 'Have you heard about egg sacs?'

KEITH: Boy, do I.

JACK: Fish Benoire Blanc on the other side of town perks his ears up.

AUSTIN: 'Now, did you say something about egg sacs?' Yeah. I think that that's probably—I think it's probably that style of like, they aren't jumping into action, they're trying to figure out what the fuck this thing is. Alright, the second part of drawing a ten, Sylvi.

SYLVI: Oh, crap. There's two parts to this. Man.

AUSTIN: There is.

SYLVI: "After answering this question, you will roll the die and move in time, then collectively decide: do our characters/civilizations still live here? If not, who lives here now? Does anyone? What does the place physically look like now? Has anything visually changed? How does it smell now? How does it feel here?" And then, "Does this place still use the name? If not, what is it called now and who calls it that?"

AUSTIN: Insectopolis.

SYLVI: And so am I just rolling a d6 here, or?

AUSTIN: Roll a six, yep. You're gonna roll a d6. And we're in days, right? So.

SYLVI: One day!

[ALI LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Wow. Well, I bet it's still named the same thing.

SYLVI: Everybody left, though. Really weird.

AUSTIN: It—well, okay, but wait—

KEITH: If we had gone backwards by six days, we would have known that they had just voted to change their name—the switchover takes place today.

[1:30:05]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I guess we could go back one day if that was a thing we were interested in doing.

SYLVI: Oh, god.

AUSTIN: Just fuck up our timeline.

JANINE: Back one day, someone's putting the egg sac on the pedestal like, 'this will do it. This will fix everything.'

AUSTIN: Oh my god. That's extremely funny. 'How does it smell here now?' It smells like there's someone making fish jerky in the distance. Lots of it. Coming down through the hills. Everyone is a little distraught.

KEITH: 'They usually don't make fish jerky this time of year.'

AUSTIN: Our characters still live here, right? One day just does not give us a lot to play with here.

KEITH: We could just zoom in closer for the next few cards, I guess.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. What if the green is here? How does this place physically look now? The green is here. We wake up the next morning, someone—I almost said 'feeds the egg sac,' which, I don't know what that looks like. That's not—eugh. And then looks out the window—

ART: 'Why won't it ever let me feed it?'

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN: —looks out the window and it is that pale green across the entire sky.

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

AUSTIN: Uh oh. That feels bad. It's supposed to be harvest time, people are supposed to feel good. And instead this kind of ominous color has descended.