

Realis 15: Out of the Burning City Pt. 2

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Recap

[“[Sapryc](#)” by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

Austin: You're all here in this terrible overcrowded city called Krater that is literally built inside of a crater. It is the only spaceport on the northern continent at this point. And it's completely overcrowded for that reason.

Dre: I am the Thaumaturge.

Sylvi: Class is Berserker.

Janine: She is a Pomesse.

Jack: Class is the Struggler.

Austin: You either have to take these long, slow, winding kind of highways that are—and like highways in the ancient sense, not in the contemporary sense, that are carved into the edge of the crater, that go around as a spiral.

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Austin: The other way you can leave is through these also fairly old mechanical elevators that make these like loud clinks and clanks every, you know, hour on the hour. They're big elevators, but it's hard to get access to them, especially now that the church runs this town.

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Austin: I guess actually the intent is that you will all die in a sneak attack. That is what the intent is. Sitting in this room, fictionally, you cannot stop a sneak attack from coming. But one of you might be able to Counter in such a way that lets you live. Because it lets you get moving or whatever. So, can any of you Counter the Sentence, "I always surprise my enemies"?

Dre: I could Counter with "I always know a few showy tricks."

Austin: Mm. Yes.

Dre: I've casted like a watchdog spell or something on the building.

Austin: That's very fun. Yes. Okay.

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Austin: What's the actual casting of it? What's your type of magic like?

Dre: This particular spell, I did it after everyone else went to bed because I didn't want anyone else to see this. I don't know who I can trust in this group.

Austin: Sure.

Dre: I did an equation on the front door of the building.

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Austin: It takes a bit for it to go off because I think that it—so it's like a watchdog spell, right? It's going to tell you when something is wrong, right?

Dre: Yes.

Austin: It tells you that the roof is about to be on fire. Because the thing that is falling is not snow. It is some sort of oil that has been turned into a snow.

Sylvi: Oh, that fucking rules.

Austin: That is covering the entire city of Krater. What do you do?

Sapryc on Fire [03:00]

Dre: Great.

Austin: And then the sentence was, “I always surprise my enemies.” And that is from Zhalika, Queen-Commander of the Empest on Sapryc.

Dre: Oh, that's an impressive name.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: So where is everyone else right now?

Sylvi: I'm close to the attic. I'm in the attic, I guess. But. So I'm about to be on fire.

Dre: Okay. And then the other two of you all are downstairs, like in the dining area?

Janine: Yeah.

Dre: I think, then, I head upstairs quickly and I rap very shartly—shartly. Very sharply, *sharply*, on your door, Gaje. And I say,

Dre (as **Flemming**): Good morning. I hope you are awake. The building is about to be on fire. We should leave.

Dre: And then I walk downstairs to tell the other two.

Sylvi: I think I almost hit you with the door.

Austin: [laughs]

Sylvi: [laughing] When I'm leaving.

Dre (as **Flemming**): I see that you are good to go. That is an excellent, an excellent habit to keep.

Austin: [laughs] Now is the time to give.

Sylvi: Rule one, always be ready to leave.

Austin: Damn, true. And you head downstairs, presumably.

Dre: Sure. Yes. Hurriedly, but I, you know, I'm not in a rush.

Austin: Right, right. Uh. You're not in a rush?! Why are you not in a rush?

Dre: Well, I don't look like I'm in a rush.

Austin: Oh my fucking god.

Dre: I'm in control of the situation, I know what's gonna happen.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: I know I need to hurry, but I'm not panicked.

Austin: Right, I see, of course, you're safe in knowledge. Knowledge can protect you from any danger.

Jack: The more... Yeah, the more relaxed...

Janine: You don't need to rush. You just need to move shartly. It's fine.

Austin: [laughs quietly] Jesus Christ.

Dre: Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah! And then I think very similarly I just kind of like lean over in between the two of you all as you're sitting at the table and say,

Dre (as **Flemming**): Good morning, the building is about to be on fire. I suggest we should leave.

Sylvi: I'm out the door by the time you say that.

Austin: Yeah, you just go right out, you don't even stop.

Sylvi: I like look at them. I like give them a look and I'm like, are you coming? It's like a, are you coming? But I don't really stop. I'm just like, no, I'm getting out. Keep up or don't.

Austin: Mirador is already outside with a donkey and a big cart and is like,

Austin (as **Mirador**): We have to go. Where are your friends?

Austin: Or not your friends. They wouldn't—sorry, this is outside. This is to Gaje who left. So, I'm just saying. Gaje—Mirador was already on this in the same way, Mirador also passes this check, you know? Inside, how do you—

Sylvi: I'm—

Austin: Go ahead. Yes, please.

Sylvi: Do I get to answer, because I was going to be climbing into the cart while being like

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): On the way.

Sylvi: And shrugging.

Austin: The donkey goes like,

Austin (as **Donkey**): [pained donkey noise]

Austin: As you step into the back of the cart. It's a cart filled with like rations and supplies.

Sylvi: Oh, okay it's not that—okay, you know what I do then instead?

Austin: Like, it's a donkey, you could pick up this donkey with your hand.

Sylvi: Yeah, I know! That's why I thought it would be funny!

Austin: [laughs] I mean, it is funny.

Sylvi: I stand next to it instead, but my arm's kind of hanging over it because I have my big metal stake just resting in this thing.

Austin: The donkey gives you a big look and is a little afraid of you. Inside, can—please continue?

Dre: Oh, I just say that and then I spin on my heel and go towards the door. Yeah.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: I have given you the truth. What else do you need?

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: Oh my god. [laughs]

Janine: Sacea just, like, probably, like, has the last, like, I think she got interrupted, like, raising a spoon to her mouth. And she finishes that bite, but then, like, sets the spoon down, takes the napkin off her lap, stands up, goes to the door.

Austin: Were you quiet in saying what you said, Flemming?

Dre: I wouldn't say I whispered it. I didn't yell, but I, yes, if someone was, like, sitting at the table next, yes, they would have heard me say, "hey, the building's about to be on fire."

Austin (as **Townsfolk**): [murmuring] Building's about to be on fire?

Austin: And, like, leaves after you and, like, goes to look at the building and to be like, what's going on with the building? And then begins to piece together the snow being not snow. In fact, I think maybe a big flake falls and, like, hits a torch that hasn't been put out from the night before yet. And it just goes, poof, like up in smoke instantly. And, you know, it doesn't burn anything because it hasn't—it wasn't near anything that could

burn, but they're like, oh shit! And they start running and screaming that everyone's under attack that we're under attack, we're under attack. And, you know, a sleepy city waking up is suddenly in chaos. Jud and Sacea, I'm guessing you both head out to join the rest?

Jack: Yeah, I'm heading out to the cart.

Janine: Yeah.

Dre: Is there like a door to the cart or something?

Austin: No, it's like a low, flat cart. Not flat, but you know.

Sylvi: It's what you use in *Tears of the Kingdom* to transport a Korok.

Austin: Truly, yes.

Jack: Well, no, hold on. I think you'll find that what you use to transport—

Sylvi: Not a Ford F-150.

Jack: —a Korok is four to six wheels, a briefly made catapult.

Janine: A rocket.

Jack: One of those things you don't know what it does.

Dre: The air bike.

Dre: Nah, it's a plank, four wheels, and I stick it on my horse.

Austin: Directly.

Janine: You don't even have to do that. You can just stick him right onto the harness. Just go. Yeah. Yeah.

Sylvi: This is true. I do that sometimes, but also then it makes me feel bad.

Janine: They're strong.

Sylvi: It makes me think of the opening of *Red Steel 2*.

Dre: I think Flemming does offer to help Sacea up onto the cart.

Janine: Mm. I mean, I think she'll take that help. I kind of picture her sitting on the end with her legs hanging over.

Dre: Sure.

Janine: Like, not all the way in, but, like, ready to hop off if necessary.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Janine: But also, more importantly, able to, like, swing something behind the cart.

Austin: Sure.

Janine: A censer, you know?

Austin: Yeah, a little censer.

Janine: Get that going.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's a good thing because as the group begins to make their way towards the—you know, I think Mirador is saying,

Austin (as **Mirador**): It's a good thing we have an elevator ticket. I worked all that out with the church last week. That's what some of the stuff in the wagon is. We don't even really need to deliver it. We just need to get out of here.

Austin: And—but of course, there is a crush of people trying to get to the elevators now that there is word coming that fire will be raining down on them shortly. And, to make matters worse, like, it is naturally getting hotter because the day is progressing. And, again, the humidity is, is kicking up and it just like, it's a miserable—it might not even,

you know, maybe the plan that the Empest has is to completely cover this place in fire. It might just light at some point, you know?

Jack: Yeah. Yeah. This is the securing all the explosive barrels in the video game for your plan and then suddenly going, ah, now shit, hold on.

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Jack: This has gotten a little much.

Out of Sapryc [10:15]

Austin: Uh-huh. But yeah, there's a huge crowd of people between you and the elevators, and the people aren't being let on these elevators. These elevators, again, are massive. They could easily hold your cart and then, like... 10 other carts like it. But they are, people are being denied access. The elevator is, I mean, it's coming down right now, right? Remember, as I said before, they, they move every hour, right? And so, there's one coming down now and maybe there's another one coming, but there's two of them, you know, here. And like one comes down on the half hour, one comes down on the hour and it takes that much time to get up, unload, reload, and come back down. So, this is like a very scary prospect. Some people are saying, fuck that. I'm going to take the weird like highway that's curved into the side of the crater instead.

Jack: Oh, god.

Austin: But that's not a sure—that's also being covered in—

Jack: It's going to turn into a traffic jam as well.

Austin: A hundred percent. And the thing that's actually happening basically instantly is everybody's being denied access to be at the front of the line because there is some church functionary at the top, or at the front, who is waving his own people closer and closer and goods from inside of the church that have already been loaded up and seemed like they were ready to go, in fact. As if they knew that this could be coming,

they just weren't sure when. And they are basically saying no one else is going to get on the elevator. Or, like, word is being kind of passed back.

Austin (as **Townsfolk**): They're saying no one else is getting on! There's no way! They're just loading up—

Austin: You know. And they truly are loading up things like icons from inside of the church. There's, like, a fancy chair is being prepared to be loaded onto the elevator when it gets down. It's, like, you know. We are in this. We are in the world where we get to have the space Catholics be as bad as they fucking can be. What do you do? And you're, you know, you're far away back that you didn't hear the guy say that no one else is getting on. You could only hear the kind of grapevine get passed back to you. What is your plan?

Sylvi: There's a big crowd in front of us, I'm assuming.

Austin: Yes, it's hundreds and hundreds of people.

Sylvi: Like massive?

Austin: Massive. A thousand people? Two thousand people? You know? People are freaking out.

Janine: I want to like calm the crowd.

Sylvi: Way better idea than mine. Please go ahead.

Janine: [laughs] "I always exert my will over the atmosphere with my perfumes." This seems like a thing where there's like a real straightforward like, oh, I, you know, there's like a... I sort of reach under my cloak, and there's that sort of belt with all these, like, big silver baubles, basically, that are, like, have the—god, what's it called when you, like, cut stuff out?

Austin: Cut stuff out?

Janine: When you cut—when you, like, have a piece of metal, and then you cut out little designs, and you have, like, a nice fancy, like, grate.

Austin: Oh, I don't know what this is called.

Jack: Oh, yeah, um... Metal, metalworking...

Janine: Sure. Yeah. Uh-huh! [laughs]

Austin: I know what you mean. What are the smells that are, that do this? Like what are the what are the actual aromas at play?

Janine: I think for me I want—you know, there's an easy thing here which is like it's lavender but magical, but for me I think what I want to capture is a little bit more like, you know, I think about like my favorite childhood smells. And one of them was, like, the grocery store that we went to had a soda fountain thing where you could, like, sample the different sodas. And it smelled very, like, coconut vanilla-y. But also just, like, with this general, like, cola and cherry. And, like, it's a really distinct smell. And, you know, I want things that are like that, that have this, like... "it smells like something that someone can't really place" kind of kind of thing. Like the, you know, oh, the kitchen used to smell like that on my birthday but I don't remember what my mom was making. It's just, it used to smell like that on my birthday. You know?

Austin: Yeah. And, in this case, it does work. People begin to calm down. No one's opposing this. This is a great example of uncertain but not opposed, where it's good that you have the Means to explain how you did this. You couldn't just do it. You know, no one could just do it because they said I want to calm people down. You needed to have a Means to do it. But no one is explicitly opposing you. So, you don't have to Counter anything. You're good to go. And no one Counters you, rather. But it doesn't change the fundamental second problem, which is that certainly hasn't changed the mind of the person you can now see much more clearly. I would say that this guy is 24, 25. White, dark hair that's kind of washed and fluffy. You're not close enough, but, expensive shampoo, you know? This is someone who's been very pampered by the church. Beige

robes, has the diamond of the Venerant See on it, and is the one who is like taking credit for calming the crowd, effectively, and is like

Austin (as **Functionary**): Good, yes. Everyone remain calm. You will be able to take the next elevator.

Austin: And everyone's like, has been calmed down by the aroma that you put in the air, and is no longer crushing against it, and people aren't going to hurt each other at this point, which is good, but it hasn't changed the fundamental fact that they're being denied access to this, and that you are also going to be denied access, and if the fire comes, be caught up in it. And now you can also see that now that people have kind of like settled, and you can kind of like poke your head up—also from the back of the cart you can do this, and also one of you is eight feet tall—this person who's up here, this guy's name is Socratio, Socratio Ketteth. Is also surrounded by four, five guards in like heavy plate armor. So. You're dealing with someone who has some backup. And again, behind them are the carts and carts of wealth from the church that he seems to be trying to escape with.

Jack: I have a proposal.

Austin: Is this Jud speaking or is this Jack?

Jack: This is me, Jack, speaking. I don't know that... I want to start a brawl.

Austin: You're like, let's do the opposite thing.

Dre: Let's go, let's go.

Jack: Well, no, I think that it's specifically... I think that it is coming off of Sacea's action. And I think it speaks to, perhaps, a difference in approach but commonality in interest between Sacea and Jud, which is this realization that these people could be sort of made to move as a unit, but they can't do that had they not already been calm. There needs to be this focus point before that can happen. Because there's five of them and there is a lot of us. And while we can't all fit on the elevator, I think Jud is definitely hoping for a brawl to cause enough chaos and take enough guards off the priest that a

crush of people can push some carts on and that we can get onto this elevator on the way up. I am going to use the Sentence—

Austin: So that's your intent. Your intent there is cause a brawl here that gets you access, gets you and many others access to the elevator.

Jack: Yes. Now, do I describe how I do this in the fiction such that if it fails, we can move forward?

Austin: You do not, you give me the intention and you tell me what Sentence you're using.

Jack: Right, yes, I'm going to use the Sentence "I always fight my way to safety," and I would like to discharge my token at the same time to add a +1 to this Sentence.

Austin: Love this. Okay, this fails, and you should mark this, because Socratio Ketteth Counters you with the +1 Sentence, "I always intimidate those who share my beliefs or loyalties." What's your attempt look like here?

Jack: Let me just write down Ketteth's Sentence there.

Austin: I'll put it over there. I got you.

Jack: Okay, cool. Someone always has to throw the first punch.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And Jud is not the kind of person to say "Fight him!" You know? Jud is not the kind of person to point at the person and say, wouldn't it be great if we fight this? I was banking on support. So, Jud darts from the thing and just launches a punch at one of these—at the priest.

Austin: And you get some support. But there are some who share beliefs and loyalties with Socratio. The church has been here for a hundred years. You know? They're not, not everybody is a big fan, but enough of them are that it turns into an undirected brawl. And so, we now live in a space where the defenders of Socratio—you've hit Socratio.

Socratio is on the ground, you know. And these guards are drawing their swords and pointing—and, you know, I think it's like two people with swords, two people with spears and then someone with a hammer. And the guy with the hammer is like prepping to swing it at you, as we suggested hours ago, that someone with a hammer might do you in. And the crowd breaks into a brawl that is spilling out now into people who don't even know why they're fighting, right? We're in that mode. The Impulse here, to recall, is to "respond to spite with spite." And so, the Impulse is really driving people towards violence in this moment.

Jack: Oh, the crowd gets all their tokens recharged.

Austin: They do! Correct.

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: There's no tokens for NPCs anymore. Another thing we went way back and forth on across the development of this. So. I once sent Jack like a four-page document.

Jack: We had a meeting, an extensive meeting about like two and a half Sentences.

Austin: Yeah. And the playtesters and I also went back and forth for like six months about tokens, so.

Jack: Tokens. The short answer is if you give players tokens, they get really into them.

Austin: Yes. They get really into them. And in this case, I mean, I actually have to look up a thing because now I don't remember a thing here. I think you should mark your token as spent. I believe that's where we ended up coming down on this.

Jack: Because I failed.

Austin: No, because you used it.

Jack: Oh, right. Sorry. As opposed to if I had marked it and failed, do I still discharge my token?

Austin: Yeah, I think at this point, the current rules, if you spend a token, you spend a token.

Jack: Yeah, I think I argued for that. And now I feel—

Austin: I think you did. I think you were the one who was like, yeah, because there's a previous version of this where there were multiple tokens, not just one. I should say really quick for people, again, who are listening into some weird order. Everyone starts with a token, and tokens can be discharged in exchange for one of three uses. You can boost the rank of a Means by +1, you can use an established Moon Sentence, or you can add and use a new Moon Sentence if there is room on the moon sheet. There's plenty of room currently on the moon sheet for more Sentences. And so, you boosted the rank of your Means by 1, bringing it up to 1, which normally would have succeeded, except your opponent was in perfect position to use his Sentence to Counter you. I'll say right now, he's not in a position right now to intimidate those who share his beliefs or loyalties, right? At the time, you swung at him. And then he yelled,

Austin (as **Socratio Ketteth**): Stop this boy!

Austin: Or something, right? You know, you've knocked him on the fucking ground now. He's lost that authority after that, you know? And at this point, couldn't do that exact thing again, right? But, unfortunately...

Jack: A brawl is a brawl.

Austin: A brawl is a brawl, and that's happening. And unfortunately, that +1 did Counter your +1. So. And yeah, I don't see anything remaining here that says, hey, if you failed, don't worry. You didn't get a negative. You don't have to lose your token, which is what it used to say. It doesn't say that now.

Sylvi: Now, my question going forward is, if we're trying to resolve this situation, are we now still replying? Like, would we still be...

Austin: New Sentences.

Sylvi: Would our Sentences go up against the...

Austin: So that Sentence hasn't been Countered, but in this moment, the fiction... I don't think that Ketteth can use that Sentence from the current position. There might be other Sentences that he can use.

Sylvi: Okay.

Austin: Right? But "I always intimidate those who share my beliefs and loyalties," +1, is no longer—he's not in a position to intimidate you from the ground where he's been knocked.

Sylvi: And the guards are coming at us too? Or?

Austin: The guards are coming towards Jud. The guards are gonna hit Jud at this moment.

Sylvi: No, they are not.

Austin: Why is that?

Sylvi: Because I'm gonna hit them.

Austin: Well, how do you do that?

Sylvi: I was looking at both "I always learn through violence" and "I always carry an unstoppable weapon." But I think I would go with the latter because I think my intent is to use it as a club here.

Austin: Okay. Totally. Are you spending a token?

Sylvi: Ah. Yeah, I want to get us to this fucking elevator. I'm going to spend my token.

Jack: Can I help?

Austin: No.

Jack: Fuck.

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: That is not this game. You have a Bond Sentence you can use, certainly. It recognizes friendship's strength, but rewards solitary achievement, in fact.

Jack: Where's my Means for using a Bond?

Austin: It's your Bonds. Your Bonds are Means.

Jack: Oh, I see. So, if I wanted to do something with Gaje, the thing I would use would be "Gaje doesn't think he needs it, but I'll watch his back," right? They're not things that get amended to a Means.

Austin: Correct.

Jack: In the same way that a token gets amended.

Austin: Yes, Realis is not that game. There are—and the other thing you can do is use your Band Sentence, right, you can all use your Band Sentence, which you haven't decided yet. To add +1.

Sylvi: We should, should we actually decide that or should we wait...?

Austin: I think we're in the moment of deciding it in some ways, right? Let's, you're spending your token.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: You're going to succeed on this because what you're up against here are the generic—where did I put them? Venerant See, here we go. The Venerant See Crusaders "always punish non-believers". They are defending, but they are at +0. And so, you overcome them on that. And are able to... What do you do? Your intent was to do what? Sorry, I should have been clear about that.

Sylvi: Sorry, I wasn't. My intent was to not explicitly murder them. Like, they might die from this, but I'm not using the pointy end of my weapon.

Austin: What is the thing you want to achieve in positive terms?

Sylvi: I want them out of our way. I want them to not be a threat.

Austin: All right, tell me what that looks like, because you have succeeded.

Sylvi: I mentioned that the... I'm probably just going to call it the needle at this point. I mentioned that he had that resting in the cart, but I think that there's very noticeable, loud jangling coming from the chain on it when the fight starts. And I think the way we see it is just like the side, holding it by the pointed end, the side with the chain loop in it just like collides with one of these guards' face.

Jack: Whoa.

Austin: Amazing. And then the action continues from there, right, we don't need to go beat by beat in this system, right, you're not rolling to hit. You have achieved your goal of getting them out the way, and so, imagine you're turning the page and then it is a sick action sequence where you just deal with all of them, presumably.

Sylvi: Yeah, not even using the stabby end of my stabby weapon.

Austin: Right, yes. So just as a point of clarity, I have now marked Venerant See Crusaders "always punish non-believers" with a mark that has not realized itself yet, but it does mean that it is working towards that end. I will, again, drop that in on the Factions sheet. Here. There we go. And mark it because you know that it has been marked. I'm keeping a copy of my own sheet, is the thing, with all this stuff, where I already know—this is like a game of *Guess Who*? Is that the name of the board game?

Sylvi: [laughs]

Austin: Is that what it's called?

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Jack: It's actually called Which Guy Are You Looking At?

Austin: Which guy are you looking at? Yeah. Uh-huh. And I just have all this information in front of me. It's very fun. It's very fun to have.

Sylvi: Oh.

Austin: Anyway. So, yes, the path is now clear for your group and for other people. And the elevator kind of click, click, click, click, click, clunk comes down. It's hard old metal. In the black and white that we're seeing, it is like pitch black. It's some sort of, you know, ancient alloy that has been able to withstand years and years of use with very little maintenance done to it somehow. And you're able to load your cart on. There's not enough room for everybody. And I do think that at some point, leaning over the cart and shouting to everybody, Mirador says,

Austin (as **Mirador**): Should we leave the cart behind?

Austin: Which would mean not having food, and needing to provide for yourselves along the way, and maybe some other supplies, camping supplies, things like that. But is deferring to you as a group. Is not making this call. With the note that a handful more people could get on board without this donkey in this cart.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Oh. I don't care about them.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): I also don't care, but in a different way than Flemming, where it's like...

Austin (as **Mirador**): How are you sure?

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): At least I think so. Where it's like, it's your fucking cart. You decide. I just want to get us on the elevator.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Right.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): As opposed to, I have active disdain for these people.

Dre (as **Flemming**): I don't have disdain for these people. I have disdain for starving.

Janine (as **Sacea**): You're worried you won't be able to find food? I thought that would be within your abilities. There's nothing in your book about finding food? Does every sorcerer get followed by a caterer?

Dre (as **Flemming**): The best ones.

Janine (as **Sacea**): How charming.

Sylvi: That gets an in-character chuckle out of Gaje.

Austin: [groaning]

Janine (as **Sacea**): What a wonderful life. What a wonderful life to lead, isn't it?

Dre (as **Flemming**): It would be. And so, we could start, here and now, by saying that we all deserve this life.

Jack: Jud is of two minds here. The first mind is, we'd be fine without. The second thing is, don't make it hard for yourself. Keep the cart. You know, there's an opportunity here to keep the food close. Don't think too hard about what it would be like if you didn't have the food.

Janine: Worst case scenario, eat someone, but that's okay.

Jack: Yeah, I mean, I think that's what he thinks when he thinks we'd be fine.

Austin: He thinks I'll eat another person?

Jack: I think, I tell you whether or not—he is not able to tell where this thought comes from.

Austin: Oh, this could come from someone else. Right. Because here's the thing. You didn't know the rituals to eat someone before, but it's in there somewhere.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: It's not on your sheet yet. It doesn't exist in your sheet yet, but you could pick it up as an Ephemera down the road if you can dig into those memories of yours enough.

Jack: Yeah. And I mean, I hate to say it, but you know, you don't need the ritual to eat someone.

Austin: Right. The food part is free.

Sylvi: [laughs]

Jack: Yeah, and I think it's that first queasy thought is the one that Jud has that is probably coming from some, you know, blood-lipped figure way back in Jud's mind. And then the other thought is, keep the cart. Don't turn your nose, don't look a gift horse in the mouth in the moment.

Austin: Right. All right.

Jack: So, I think what he does is he just grasps like one of the packets of rations to just sort of be like, all right, I'm attaching myself to this thing.

Austin: Perfect. All right. Then you, your group, plus Mirador and the donkey, Scrundle, make your way out of the—

Jack: What?

Janine: I'm sorry?

Sylvi: Scrundle?!

Austin: Yeah, Scrundle.

Dre: Scrundle? And you wanted to leave Scrundle behind. And I'm the monster.

Austin: Scrundle's here. Not here, I guess it's worth saying, is the robot from before, who is left behind, effectively. No offense to, I mean, I don't know if RIP to Ibik, the automaton. Ibik was left behind. Ibik was not part of this journey. Maybe Ibik was just with the lighthouse. Who could say? But it's just Scrundle and Mirador and y'all, and the elevator begins to clink its way back up very slowly. On the way up, and this is a long journey up, this is a 30-minute ride, slowly going up the side of this crater. You know, it has to stop at one point to let—or I guess it doesn't have to stop. I think it's positioned in such a way that the, it's like out in front of wherever the highway is, the highway like dips into a tunnel behind it. But you're like, you go above the highway and can kind of see, just packed with people. And it's the same situation, right. People are being asked to move aside as church officials can leave.

And you're not too far up when the fire begins. You're out of its reach, out of the licks of its flames. But it is really bad down there and is lit by that fire, the white of that fire. Again, black and white. There's no red here. There's no orange here. It is just bright white, blinding. You pass an elevator going down. And on that are more church officials. But these are wearing bright black—or, sorry, dark black, but have helms on that are silvery, that are metal, chrome, that are skulls. And you don't know, I don't know that any of you have encountered this group before directly, but this is the Death Procession. They are a high-ranking official sect of the Venerant See. Some people say they might actually control the whole church. There are lots of rumors about them. Supposedly they worship death.

You know, the whole thing with the Venerant See is that they are ascetic in their ideology, even if in their practices they seem to be hoarding wealth for themselves. What they preach is that you're supposed to give up all sorts of earthly goods so that you could be closer to the Immaterial One who is a sort of god that exists ideally in space or in something even beyond space, whatever the furthest thing away from Thing is, from all things, you know, from physicality.

And so, the Death Procession believe that death is that thing. And that the Immaterial One exists most clearly in death itself. And instead of fleeing from this, that group is

heading towards it, is heading down into the active fire. For what ends, you do not know. But, you know, you do gaze out and see them, and they look in at you and the rest of your mass of people trying desperately to make their way out of the fire and above to the kind of plains above. And it's creepy. I think it's a creepy fucking moment.

And when you get to the top, you can see that they're not the only ones arriving. Waves of Imperial Empest troops are descending from these vessels that hang in the sky, kind of blot out entire sections of the sky like dark clouds, except the ships that they have are these kind of, I mean, many of the ships in the setting are organic in some way. The Orphan Vessels are living things that were birthed and then lost. The thing is that the Imperial Empest has the remains of some ancient Grand Vessels that are, have been, you know—they're not just big, weird living organs that can move through space. They're that, and then also they have, like, the carapaces of bugs, and they have big, you know, flickery wings, and it's like seeing a swarm of gigantic bugs from which humanoid bugs descend into the burning city.

Which, again, was the last place you could easily leave this moon. And so, whether or not you were going to take this job, you are certainly stuck on this moon now, for now at least. But yeah, you make it out of Krater. You make it up to the flatlands.

And I guess we'll have to decide whether you want to move through the Velutines, this forest that runs along the kind of west-northwest of where you are, or go across the empty land, across the strait. Both carry dangers. One of them is a dark forest in a science fantasy game. The other borders the river, the strait that has just been breached where the Imperial Empest is coming, so.

Choosing a Path [37:10]

Austin: And I'll just put this to you in character. I think as Cantata is feeding Scrundle, they're like,

Austin (as **Mirador**): On one hand, we could stay out of the woods, which I like because the woods get dark. They get creepy. I hear these ones get hairy. And I

like to be out in the light. I don't like to get extra hairy. On the other hand, if we go by day or we go by the plains, there's a good chance we run into more Empest. I hear the plague is not so good out here. Ups and downs. You're the experts. What do you think?

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): They're not going to follow us through the forest. It makes the most sense. Besides, you can kill an animal, you can't kill a plague. Or at least not the way I do it.

Austin: Scrundle hears you say that and goes,

Austin (as **Scrundle**): [donkey noise]

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): I don't care.

Janine (as **Sacea**): You can kill some plagues.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Maybe you can.

Dre (as **Flemming**): I am loath to agree with her, but she is correct.

Janine (as **Sacea**): You could too if you learned.

Dre (as **Flemming**): I have.

Janine (as **Sacea**): Not you. I wasn't talking to you. You were agreeing with me. Why would I?

Austin: Oh, the hater energy is just incredible.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): I just think if we make it through, either way is going to be difficult, but if we make it through the forest, they're going to think we died when we went in there. They're not going to follow us that way. We're going to be able to throw them at least for, I don't know, the foreseeable future.

Austin (as **Mirador**): No, it makes sense. It makes sense. I think that's good. I'm a little worried about Scrundle, because the forest gets dense, but hopefully we can find some paths. Kid, you're quiet.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): I'm not averse to clearing some trees.

Austin (as **Mirador**): [laughs] Fair. Fair, fair, fair. Kid, you're quiet.

Jack (as **Jud**): You said the forest is, I guess, hairy. What have you heard?

Austin (as **Mirador**): Well, it's... There's stuff that's not just animals in there, is my understanding.

Jack (as **Jud**): Like what?

Austin (as **Mirador**): Well, I haven't seen them myself. I couldn't do the proper cataloging, could I? But my guess is demon, maybe, or perhaps some sort of... You know, there's a lot of different things.

Austin: And it does, again, as it often does, feel like Cantata is hiding something.

Jack: Yeah! Yeah, I think I'm just going to ask.

Jack (as **Jud**): Have you got a map?

Austin (as **Mirador**): Have I got a map? Of the forest?

Jack (as **Jud**): Well, you set out on a journey. You packed this whole wagon. You didn't bring a map?

Austin (as **Mirador**): I hired people. Did you bring a map?

Jack (as **Jud**): We're here to keep you safe, buddy.

Austin (as **Mirador**): You're here to bring me to my destination.

Jack: Then I guess Jud, put out, with the nose out of joint of a 16-year-old who, you know, thought he had something but doesn't, turns it around and turns to Flemming and says,

Jack (as **Jud**): Well, have any of you got a map?

Dre (as **Flemming**): Of course I have a map.

Jack: Do you? Out of character?

Dre: Yeah, sure. "I always know a few showy tricks."

Austin: Ah!

Jack: Ooh!

Sylvi: Let's go!

Austin: This is what I would say is, I just want to call this out so we know what's happening here is, you have overcome a sort of uncertainty by referring to a Sentence, right? Sometimes you use a Sentence or a Means in general during a conflict, but sometimes it doesn't get all the way to conflict where someone is trying to Counter you, right? A conflict can just be a sort of loose uncertainty. It can just be, hey, do we know where we're going? Does one of us know the direction? You know? And so, this is a great use of relying on one of those to just kind of say, yeah, my character does this sort of thing. This is within my capacity, it's good. Right?

Jack: I do want to ask, though, the Sentence you're using here is "I have a few showy tricks," so how is this showy?

Austin: So, what's that look like, yes.

Dre: I take out my magic wand, because I have one of those.

Jack: What does it look like?

Dre: Oh, that's a great question. It is a stick of wood that has a lot of intricate designs carved into it. It is well-worn, but also well-preserved. It looks like a cutting board that you have had for 20 years, but that you always consistently keep oiled up.

Jack: Wow.

Austin: That's fun.

Sylvi: Sick wand, bro.

Dre: Thanks.

Sylvi: I didn't say that in character.

Dre: No, that's... Hey. Um. I'll say it's made out of purple heartwood. There we go.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Okay.

Janine: I found some cool sticks from vines that I'm going to send. Not this one, not this—

Austin: Not this one that has flames on it that says cool stick.

Sylvi: I don't know. That's pretty good.

Dre: Pretty good! Oh, this is nice. Yeah.

Austin: These are cool. These are cool.

Janine: They're walking sticks made out of vines.

Jack: Yeah. And listen, listener, if you're wondering what these things look like, picture a cool stick in your head and you're most of the way there.

Dre: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Janine: Oh, wait, sorry. This is wood that vines grew on, which is why it's all twisty. Because it grew under vines. Okay.

Jack: Oh, sick.

Austin: That's very sick.

Janine: Yeah.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Does anyone have a spare shirt?

Austin (as **Mirador**): Yeah. Yeah. What type of material?

Dre (as **Flemming**): Oh, that doesn't matter.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Well. Okay.

Austin: And goes in and gives you kind of this kind of rough canvas shirt. Almost gives it to you and is like,

Austin (as **Mirador**): Wait a second. Are you going to ruin it?

Dre (as **Flemming**): No, you'll still be able to wear it just fine.

Austin: Squints at you as if trying to read between the lines and says, does a little shrug and says,

Austin (as **Mirador**): Just going through the forest.

Austin: And gives it to you.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Perfect. Gaje, could you hold this up to the light for me?

Sylvi: I roll my eyes when I do it.

Dre: Okay. And I just start waving my wand back and forth across the shirt. And it's like one of those videos where someone has Photoshop open, and as they're like doing the

eraser over one layer, the second layer shows up. And a map just starts being sketched onto the back of the shirt.

Austin: Oh, amazing.

Sylvi: That rules.

Austin: And this is a map of the routes through the Velutine Forest? Question mark?

Dre: Yes. Oh, also in the bottom right-hand corner of the map is my signature.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: And this is just on the shirt.

Sylvi: [whispering] This fucking guy.

Dre: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Austin (as **Mirador**): All right. Well.

Austin: And Mirador begins to take off his shirt and put this one, takes this off and like shoves it in the little bag. There's like a, basically has like a satchel or bigger than a satchel, like a, like a duffel with his clothes in it. He takes off his current shirt, which is like, you know, kind of a frilly white number, which is sweaty and gross. He should have changed this—the fire—it's not great. He takes that off and he puts this canvas number on so you can. He's like,

Austin (as **Mirador**): All right, you just refer to it. On my back now.

Sylvi: This dude with the all-over print hypebeast shirt.

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Sylvi: Damn, you got the new Flemm drop?!

[laughter]

Austin: Very limited.

Sylvi: Man, I saw those ads on Instagram, but they were sold out before I could get it.

Austin: By the time I got there, yeah.

Jack: You gotta have the alert turned on, and you gotta have the phone in your hand.

Austin: What you gotta do is...

Sylvi: On Grailed looking for, fucking, the Flemm shoes.

Austin: You gotta go to the local subreddit of the fashion player, wherever the city is, and see who's posting about pop-ups being set up around 4 or 5 a.m. Because they're gonna open around 9. You gotta be there in line by 8 at the latest.

Jack: Of course, the Krater fashion subreddit right now says, Ow. Ow. Help.

Austin: Help. Help me. All right.

Sylvi: The fashion scene in Krater is fire.

Jack: [groans]

Austin: Dre, do you want to draw some... Hm. Do you want to draw a map through the Velutines here?

Dre: Oh, sure.

Austin: Or a route that you want to take?

Dre: Yeah. Where is that on this moon that you've drawn for us?

Austin: Oh, it's right to the north of Krater.

Dre: Oh, I see it. Yeah.

Austin: It's this big, weird, you know, charcoal-y place.

Dre: Freehand... What color do I want this route to be...?

Sylvi: We're, like, not in the town anymore, right?

Austin: No, no, no, you followed this—

Sylvi: So, I don't have to like sweat my ass off under my big cloak to hide my identity?

Austin: No, yeah, you're free to, well, yeah.

Sylvi: Cool.

Austin: Yeah, I think that where you are is like the side of a road, or side of a path—like not at the side, that's not true. You're probably like a hundred yards off a path towards the tree line. Well, that's a wild path, Dre.

Dre: Uh-huh!

Austin: This is the path that is on the back of the shirt?

Dre: Yeah!

Austin: Okay! You want to describe for the listener what you've drawn?

Sylvi: Jesus...

Dre: Yeah, so you're just kind of going north for a while. And then you have to do this little spiral number before then heading northwest. And then you make a circle.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Dre: And then you do another bigger circle. And then you just head north out.

Austin: Uh-huh. That's good.

Jack: There is a moment at the north.

Sylvi: Thank you for the signature.

Jack: Where you are essentially—you are very near the exit of the forest here.

Dre: You can't go that way.

Jack: As you cross at the north. But you can't leave at that point.

Dre: Can't go that way.

Jack: You have to double back and head deeper into the forest again. Great.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Why—why—

Austin: Pointing, you know, over his shoulder.

Austin (as **Mirador**): I noticed you drew a big loop.

Jack (as **Jud**): Take it off. Take it off, man.

Austin (as **Mirador**): You can see where my fingers point. Right here, where it looks like we're about to exit. Why don't we just go left then?

Dre (as **Flemming**): Do I have to answer *everything*?

Austin (as **Mirador**): Yeah.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): It's because he's full of shit. Let's get a move on.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Hehe.

Austin: All right. Gives Scrundle a big pat on the back and, you know, on the butt, and Scrundle begins to move towards the woods and towards his path.

Sylvi: I think there's like a tree that's like flimsy enough that I'm able to just like pull it out of the ground.

Into the Forest [47:30]

Austin: Oh, almost certainly. I mean, I think that's part of the thing here, right, is as you begin to move through the Velutines, there's a few things, right? One is the path at this point, at least, is wide enough for you, Scrundle, and the cart to continue for at least a little while. That's going to change. You can feel that's going to change, right? The deeper in you get, the less there is a path, the more you need to clear stuff. How are you clearing space for this? What's your Means for that?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: Because I'm looking at your Means and I'm very curious.

Sylvi: Yeah, no. I mean my Means are fucking smash tree or cut tree somehow, probably. I could use my weapon here, I suppose. It is unstoppable.

Austin: You do. What's that look like? Let's zoom in a little bit, like I think it's probably been a day of travel, right? That conversation we were just having was probably early in the day. You've moved through this place. Some more details about how the Velutines are. One, as a reminder, we are in black and white mode. And so even though this is an autumnal forest, we're in this place where like, oh, it's all crisp. The leaves are, you know, in gray for you, which isn't how you've seen leaves if you're from off-world. You've seen leaves be other colors before. You know you're in an autumnal forest. You've been in a forest like that before. Here you're in black and white mode. Early in the morning is pretty humid. But by the midday, and maybe it's because you're getting deeper, who knows, things start to get a little more cool.

And then the other thing about it is you start to feel that there's something different about these trees, these trees, the flora in general. If you run your hand along, maybe you do this as you try to move some trees out of the way, Gaje. The bark feels like wool. The leaves have a sort of velvety quality. They still snap under your feet or in your hands. They still crack the way that does. But they feel soft. You know, there is just a sort of kind of sleepy vibe in the woods already. And so that plus this velvety, woolen,

terrycloth-like literal sensation as you touch stuff is very calming but also very weird. So that's another thing that you feel. And it's been about let's say five or six hours of this before it becomes pretty clear the path does not have room for a cart anymore.

Sylvi: Yeah. I'm trying to figure out what I'm doing here that isn't just me describing *Minecraft*, but it might just be me doing *Minecraft* with my big spike. Because I can see him trying to use it like an axe when the brush gets too thick, or the way people use machetes to cut through that.

Janine: I don't think it's *Minecraft* until you describe yourself as punching a tree down.

Sylvi: Not yet, but listen, he's the type of guy who would.

Austin: Yeah. Have the rest of you ever seen a feat like this from anybody, let alone someone who you're literally in a group with, a Band with?

Sylvi: Who's eight feet tall.

Austin: Who's eight feet tall.

Jack: There is something about this that is modeling a kind of strength that I never saw from my master. Which is kind of, it's very showy and it's very overwhelming to just be like, oh my God, he can just pull trees apart. But when you're used to just spending miserable winters with this knight who rides around on his big horse and tells me, basically a child, to carry things, seeing this kind of expression of power is very cool.

Austin: Yeah. It's about, so I think this works. What's the Sentence you're using exactly, Gaje?

Sylvi: I was going to use "I always carry an unstoppable weapon," if I'm using that specifically to clear through trees.

Austin: Totally. I don't think that there is, at this point where you're at, you are not being opposed by this.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: Uncertain, but it works.

Sylvi: “I could also make a “I always learn through violence,” as in I am learning the path through violence, but I think we’ve got it already.

Austin: That’s very fun, too. Yeah, I think that could totally work. I wouldn’t push back on that too hard. You make some progress this first long night, this first day of travel rather. And I think the second day goes pretty similarly. You’re not quite at this first spiral. I’m kind of imagining that we can kind of think about the map Dre drew as the kind of initial approach, the spiral, then the loop, the inner loop, then the outer loop, then the final stretch. Does that make sense? There’s kind of like four big stops that you have to get through. If you keep to this path. And I’m going to say you’re like here-ish. You know, this kind of outside of the approach to the first spiral by the time you have to make camp. What’s camp like for you? Let’s do fantasy role-playing game shit. What does it mean to make camp with your group? Do you have a watch? Do you have, who’s cooking dinner? You know, what’s the vibe?

Janine: I’m busting out the citronella, essentially. You know, just sort of doing a perimeter of the camp swinging one of my like pomander things at the end of a chain, like gently back and forth, like a censer basically. Just walking around and like sort of dousing the area in a smoke that smells very, I mean, I kind of like the idea of it still being very lemony. Like a bug turn candle. Maybe not that aggressive. Maybe it’s more like lemon and then there’s some sort of like... a savory spice to it.

Austin: Mm. That’s fun.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: So, you’re handling the bug control. Love that.

Janine: Well, it’s like a general pest. The ideal is like, oh, wolves don’t like how it smells. And also, mosquitoes don’t like how it smells.

Austin: Yeah, all sorts of. That makes sense.

Janine: And also, goblins don't like how, you know.

Jack: Like putting the rope around the camp so that the snakes won't cross it.

Austin: Yeah. Exactly.

Janine: What?

Sylvi: Yeah. Yeah, no.

Austin: You know, classic way to keep snakes away. You just rope up the camp.

Jack: It is a—I don't know if it works, but like it was like a old conventional wisdom that if you leave a rope on the ground in like a circle around a camp the snakes won't want to move across the rope. Which is probably bullshit but I have seen like evoked enough times that it's something people believe.

Janine: Okay. I was wondering like is this a thing that Jack's parents told them to get them to camp or something.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, no, no, that one is real, but I am blessed with the snake blessing, where if I put my left hand on my forehead and my right hand pointing out in front of me, any snakes ahead of me will become visible.

Janine: Oh, sure.

Jack: I think Jud has...

Janine: Like the Undertaker and that shark.

Jack: Yeah, just stared it down. I think Jud has sort of disappeared. I think that Jud has done what he has had to do so many times, in so many worse situations, which is find a little sort of scraped hole in the ground and curl up in it. I have the Sentence "I always find somewhere to rest." And I picture Jud just sort of disappearing themselves safely into the, you know, they are behind a little natural windbreak or something.

Janine: Like a dog?

Jack: Just trying to... I guess like a dog.

Janine: Don't sled dogs do this?

Jack: Oh, do they?

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: They just find themselves like...

Janine: They'll find a little place or they'll like dig a little hole in the snow and then like scoot into it.

Jack: Yeah, I mean, I guess that's kind of it. I've just curled up, gone. Trying to get as much sleep as I can.

Austin: Let's actually, let's come back to you in a second as, let's get Gaje and Flemming. What are you both doing as you're kind of setting up camp tasks.

Sylvi: I think I'm making like the tent situation or like some sort of like, something above us in case of rain.

Austin: Oh, sure, like a big tarp, like a.

Sylvi: Yeah. I think I'm even using my cape, like my cloak as part of it, because it's big enough.

Austin: Kind of giant lean-to type thing.

Sylvi: Yeah, just to like, also like.

Austin: God, have you been collecting some of the like smaller trees and, you know, bushes that you've been pulling aside.

Sylvi: I think it'd be smart to, like I can see us tossing them in the cart, right?

Austin: Yeah, totally.

Sylvi: Like, if there's space because it's also stuff that Scrundle could theoretically eat, right?

Austin: Right, sure, sure.

Sylvi: There's a lot of reasons to keep that stuff.

Austin: Food is an interesting question here. I think you explicitly managed to leave the city with Scrundle, there are rations on Scrundle, you're not running out yet. But it is interesting to start thinking about, eventually Scrundle might not have enough food left in that cart, or you might lose that cart. But tonight.

Sylvi: Which is why we keep Scrundle well fed.

Austin: Mm-hmm. And wait, Flemming, did you say you were doing, what were you doing? Did I ask?

Dre: I was going to say I'm cooking.

Austin: Oh, you're cooking.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: What are you cooking for everybody?

Dre: Um, just probably like a stew. That probably makes sense.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Is this "I always know a few showy tricks" also?

Dre: I mean, what do you consider showy?

Austin: I mean, I'm asking, you know.

Dre: You know, I don't start a fire by hand.

Austin: Sure.

Dre: Maybe, every once in a while, the spoon keeps stirring itself in the pot. But you know I'm not like conjuring onions out of the air.

Austin: Right, okay.

Dre: That would be preposterous.

Austin: Yeah, you would never use your talents for that

Dre: No.

Austin: Of course. Okay, well, as that's happening. Jud, you've already disappeared to find yourself a little hole to lie in. As people are cooking food for you. And I think as you're drifting to sleep, I'm going to ask you, there's kind of two things. [clears throat] Two things happen at once, potentially, mechanically here. The first is, my intent is to put fear in you. Do you have anything that could Counter "I always remind others of what they lost"? And I'll give you what the image is here in terms of how this is being used against you. As you begin to drift into slumber, one of the things that you can see from your hole is out into the woods. And something strange happens. Your vision gets incredibly good, too good. And you can see a little flickering light off in the distance. And you see someone up on a horse, with their squire behind them, walking slowly towards more light, some sort of encampment or something. And you are being, this force is attempting to remind you of what you've lost. The comparative comfort of having a role and having someone who isn't leading you into the woods, into the mysterious dark, trying to make you feel something about that. Can you Counter that in any way? And this is, I think, I would say explicitly, again, an attempt to make you frightened. That would be what their intent is.

Jack: Hm. The closest that...

Austin: Or maybe it's not to make you frightened. It is really just to remind you of what you had and lost. That's really more truly the thing.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You can kind of tell me how you feel about it.

Jack: I mean, a possible deployment here is, my Sentence is “I always find somewhere to rest.” It’s not, “I always...”

Austin: Sure.

Jack: The verb “rest” there is very notable. You know? Like, I always find somewhere... It’s not, “I always find somewhere to stop doing what I’m doing.” It’s like, I can—the thing I thought of when I saw this Sentence first was just this image of someone in a rainstorm crawling into a little hole and somehow managing to get, you know, 20 minutes sleep or 20 minutes rest or something. Now, the thing is, that is a 0 Sentence. “I always find somewhere to rest.” And my suspicion is that what is going on here is a advanced Sentence, and I don’t believe I have any way I can boost this Sentence right now. Is that right, Austin?

Austin: You already spent your token, I’m guessing? It’s discharged currently.

Jack: Yes, my token box is currently discharged. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. It doesn’t mean you shouldn’t—you know, the book is pretty clear. You should always still declare a Sentence if you’re trying to Counter something. Because that’s how, getting failures is how you advance Sentences, right? So, you should always be declaring, if your character intends to stop something from happening, declare the Sentence that they’d be using to try to do it.

Jack: Then yeah, that’s what I’m going to try and do. I’m going to try and turn in this little thing and kind of like rest my head in my hands so I’m not looking out into the forest.

Austin: Okay. That succeeds this is not a—this is a +0 Sentence. It’s as simple as I said it was. It is “I always remind others of what they’ve lost,” so I get to mark that from this mysterious force. I’ll give you a little bit here, which is like as you turn, you feel as if the bark that feels like wool on the trees *is* wool. That it’s kind of like... your eyes replace the bark with the sort of tight, curled textile feeling of the wool, or visual of the

wool. And imagine someone wearing, like, wool socks, and then they begin to pull the wool socks down, revealing just their skin. It's that, but for the tree. The woolen bark begins to pull downwards as you kind of turn your head away and try to find sleep. And successfully find sleep, you've succeeded here. You have not been pulled into this reverie of the past. So. Yeah, the tree is showing feet, Dre, that's definitely, it's definitely nothing worse than that. Don't worry about it.

Dre: Okay, yeah.

Jack: And yeah, I've marked "I always remind others of what they've lost" with one on our little sheet here to keep track of it.

Austin: Yeah, totally. The rest of you, do you set up any sort of watch for the night? Is there any sort of, or are you just counting on the smell keeping animals away? The nice smell for you, but the bad smell for animals.

Sylvi: No, I mean, I would want to set up a watch, even if it's just I have to fucking do it if nobody else wants to.

Janine: I think I would do something in addition to the repellent smoke. That's like not a watch, but like a protective measure?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Janine: I want to basically like make it seem as if there is nothing here of interest. So, like not only is it like "ew, stinky, I don't want to go there," it's like, "why would I even go there? there's nothing."

Austin: There's nothing. Right, all of my senses are telling me there's nothing over there

Janine: Yes. Yeah.

Austin: What are you using?

Janine: I'm using "I always shift the truth with my smoke."

Austin: What's this look like? Is this different than the sort of smell focused stuff? Like, is it smoke versus scent?

Janine: Yeah. So, I think the original thing is kind of like a vapor border, like a rope that you would lay down to keep snakes.

Austin: Oh, right.

Janine: But I think that this part of it is like, different. It is like a much, much thicker smoke. It's like sort of... you know, it kind of like blankets the air as it diffuses. I'm kind of picturing a smoke that's like thick, like when you pull a cotton ball apart. So, it's sort of voluminous, and almost there's like a texture to it. It's almost tangible in that way. And as it spreads, it seems to only get more opaque, but then it hits a point where, like, right when you think, "oh, I can't even see a foot in front of me anymore," it's perfectly clear.

Austin: Amazing. Yeah, that's a very cool visual on that. And so, I think that that's probably enough for tonight, for as shallow as your entry to the Velutines have been. For the more natural concerns at this depth. You're not too worried about, you know, the monsters that are rumored to be deeper in. Here, it is wolves, and it is the occasional wandering brigand, and both stay clear over the night.

Jud, when you wake up, I'm going to give you the second part of the thing I said there were two things of. You immediately hear the sound of someone stepping on those crispy leaves, those morning autumn leaves. They're far away from you. And I guess I don't know that you can see them yet. This is, again, do you have something that can Counter the Sentence "I always campaign with my retinue." This is a member of the person's retinue getting close to you. This person, the person, in question doesn't have to, doesn't have to act herself. Someone else can act for her, and it's her retinue, which is how this is working.

The Retinue [1:07:00]

Jack: "I always campaign with my retinue." So, this is—something interesting about this as a system happens here, right, where it's like, as a player, I feel like my impulse is to

try and Counter “someone is creeping up on you.” You know, like, in another game, I would be thinking, well, what do I have in my toolbox to deal with? Oh, I can hear footsteps and someone’s trying to creep up on me. But that’s not what I’m trying to Counter, right? I’m trying to Counter the Sentence “I always campaign with my retinue”?

Austin: No, you’re trying to Counter the situation.

Jack: Right. Not find a specific hard counter for...

Austin: Yeah, you don’t need to have a Sentence like...

Jack: Exactly as expressed.

Austin: “When someone acts through an intermediary, I always win.”

Jack: “I hate retinues.”

Austin: Yeah. “I always beat retinues” is not what you need. You need a Sentence—you need a Sentence of the same level of reality that you can then narrate an interesting fictional reason for why it Counters the situation I’ve described.

Jack: Yeah. So, I’m going to try and Counter it with the Sentence “I always protect those traveling with me.” And I think that, you know, god, this is me warning Sacea. Like, I think that they do that fake out, like the fake out of thinking a character is somewhere, but the camera actually turning and revealing that they’re somewhere else. And where we thought this shape in the pile of leaves was Jud, the camera turns and we can actually see Jud sort of like just gently tugging on Sacea’s cloak to be like, hey, look, I’m pointing in the direction where I heard these footsteps.

Austin: And the direction that you look off in the distance, you see actually a pair of figures. Both of them are dressed in the kind of garb of a mercenary band. They have, both of them have red—oh, no, they don’t have red, we’re in black and white. They have dark and slightly less dark coloring. And the sigil of, it’s like, it’s a long sword with a single drop of blood coming off the tip that’s kind of at an angle. It’s like the hilt’s to the bottom right, it goes up to the top left, and the single drop of blood is just underneath it.

And one of them is holding a sort of like spyglass telescope, and it's like looking around the woods. And the other one has like a horn of some kind, maybe a ram's horn or something, that they have fashioned into what looks like an instrument, right. But when they blow it, there's like an excised amount of wind that's produced, and it's blowing the leaves around in such a way that would reveal if the leaves were covering something up, right? They're looking for physical, traditional camouflage to dispel, right? They're trying to like uncover someone hiding under a bunch of leaves in the woods. But it is having the effect of blowing your smoke away, too. It's also been a whole night, right? Presumably that smoke doesn't last indefinitely, right? It lasted through the night and any remains of it are leaving now.

But yes, you've now told Sacea. You've not been spotted yet. What do the two of you do now seeing these people? They're far enough away that they have not seen you yet. I would say they're probably, you know, a three-minute, four-minute walk through the woods away. And they're walking slowly because they're looking around, right? So, what do you do?

Jack: I mean, I don't think I say anything. I think this is just a gesture. You know, I think it's like, is Sacea, has Sacea noticed that I'm here, and then a point into the distance at these two figures blowing the leaves. And then kind of looking at Sacea expectantly to be like all right, now what, buddy?

Janine: Are we camped like on the path or just off of the path?

Austin: No, we are, there is no path here. The path is the path you've made at this point. We're deep enough in now that you're on Gaje's path.

Janine: So, they could theoretically walk right past us.

Austin: Easily. And they could turn around and go back. Or they could go north you know they could, who knows, right? You could just quiet it out, you know?

Janine: I think that might be what I do. It's hard to picture Sacea like springing into action. I think, you know, it's a nod of acknowledgement, but I don't think she moves in any way. I think she like turns to watch them but stays still.

Austin: Do you communicate this with Flemm, Gaje, and, um, Mirador also?

Janine: I don't think so.

Austin: Or too, rather?

Sylvi: Smart decision.

Jack: Oh, if you're not—hm. Yeah.

Sylvi: Oh?

Jack: Oh, no, I want to respect Janine's decision there. I think that I—and I can narrativize this. This confuses Jud. Why are we standing still when we need to... We probably can't win this fight, but we should at least try and move. But as we know, Jud is afraid of Sacea.

Janine: Yeah, I think at the sign of this confusion, I sort of raise a really weathered finger to my lips to be like, you know, shh. And then gesture a little bit at the ground, sort of where you're standing. She'd be like, "just, yeah, just, it's fine. Everything's fine." That kind of, that kind of energy.

Austin: And seeing nothing, hearing nothing, the person who has been blowing the wind through this horn kind of turns the horn upside down and then blows in it again. And there is a loud kind of, you know, trumpet call. [trumpet noise] And he says,

[["Sapryc"](#) by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

Austin (as **Retainer**): This land is now commissioned by the forces of Lady Geretrain Gothgeier.¹ If you are here, you are now one of the Wildgrave's subjects.

¹ Later Geretrain Gothgeier.