

Realis 16: Out of the Burning City Pt. 3

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Recap	1
The Velutines	3
A Place to Rest [14:20]	11
The Tunnels Below [26:35]	18
Sacea [40:00]	25
Flemming [50:30]	31
Gaje [53:30]	34
The Spoon of the Exhale [1:00:00]	38
Back to Camp [1:16:30]	50
Morning in Sapryc [1:27:35]	55
End of Session [1:41:00]	62

Recap

Austin: Realis is a science fiction and dark fantasy series that contains discussion of violence, injury, slavery, cannibalism, and disease. This campaign never depicts sexual violence, always shows you where the sword goes, but never what it does, and always errs on the side of maximalism.

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

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.

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

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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?

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

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

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Austin (as **Mirador**): 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.

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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,

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

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Austin: And turns to the person next to them. And they unfurl a little banner that has the same symbol on it. And has kind of a sharp, you know, kind of pole. And they slam it down into the ground and kind of twist it to kind of stick it there. And put this banner up for this Wildgrave who seems to have decided that this is her territory.

Sylvi: Rude as fuck, they just woke me up.

Austin: Uh-huh, it definitely wakes you up. Jack, you've heard the name Gothgeier before.

Jack: Have I?

Austin: Jud. Yeah, you're pretty sure you heard it from what's his face.

Jack: Sir Roderick.

Austin: Sir Roderick. Yeah, I don't know if it came up more than, you know, they were acquaintances.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So.

The Velutines

Jack: Well, Sir Roderick is not from this moon.

Austin: Correct. Neither is this woman.

Jack: What's her name? Gothgeier? Lady Gothgeier?

Austin: Gothgeier. Lady Geretrain Gothgeier.

Jack: Great. Have you put an entry in here for her?

Austin: I don't think I have. I mean, I have on my side, but not on your side, I don't think.

Jack: Okay. I will put this in, and I will take a crack at the spelling, and that's part of the game.

Austin: I got it. Boom. There it is.

Jack: Oh, okay. G-E-R-E.

Austin: I said Geretrain or Geretain? I said Geretrain, didn't I?

Jack: Wow, Gorthgyre is spelled G-O-R-T-H, not Gothgeier.

Austin: Oh, it is R. It is Gorth. I've written this, and then I've stumbled in my own pronunciation. Gorthgeier is right.

Sylvi: [intrigued] Oh.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Oh, my God. Fucking knights showing up.

Austin: Let me bold these so that we can see them.

Jack: I don't think that I communicate this, but just a real sinking feeling of, like, these chivalric fucks.

Dre: [laughs]

Jack: There's no joy down this road.

Janine: I reassuringly pat your knee.

Jack: Shake it off. Weird, weird feeling. Don't like that. [laughs] Don't care for that.

Austin: All right. After they leave, y'all continue north around this big spiral?

Sylvi: Yeah, right?

Dre (as **Flemming**): Are we not gonna talk about the fact that there's just other people in the forest?

Janine (as **Sacea**): They're doing some bullshit. I don't know. It doesn't affect us.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Do we need to be concerned?

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): They're not coming in any deeper, are they?

Austin (as **Mirador**): Great question. It seems like no, and it seems like the two who were here didn't even really want to be this deep into the forest.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Yeah. Then I think we're fine.

Janine (as **Sacea**): You're not someone's subject just because they say it's so. They wouldn't even know us to look upon us. Let's just keep going.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Two morons with a trumpet aren't going to be any problem. We can just keep going, get a move on.

Janine (as **Sacea**): Bingo.

Dre (as **Flemming**): I don't know, Gaje. I feel like if you had a trumpet, you could cause a lot of problems.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Yeah, but I wouldn't be using it as a trumpet.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Well, I know. That's implied.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Hey, Jud, were they as tall as I was?

Dre (as **Flemming**): Smaller.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Hey, Flemming, I think we're fine.

Sylvi: And then starts walking.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Excellent.

Austin: [small laugh] All right. As you continue forward this day, you get into this spiral part of the map that Flemming drew. And you know you're supposed to spiral. You know that you are, you know, trying to follow this map, but it is just not easy to do without feeling like you've made a wrong turn. Who's taking the lead on this? How do you actually manage to stay on this ridiculous path that has been drawn in front of you without, you know.

Dre: Wow, wow.

Austin: This map is truly just, I mean, listen, Flemming, look at the map you drew.

Dre: Yeah. You're welcome to go off of it.

Austin: There's no landmarks here. You know what I mean? It's not like, oh, and then you found a stone cairn that you know this is where you make your next left turn at. It's just a bunch of wild spirals.

Sylvi: This might be a way for us to use our, like, do we want to figure out what we're doing together as a group and see if it works for our Band Sentence at all? Because like when you say leading, I think that I'm upfront clearing things, but I don't think I'm navigating.

Austin: You're not deciding when to turn and stuff like that.

Sylvi: Yeah, you know what I mean? So. Either that or it's just like someone else could take it on.

Dre: Oh! Hey, what if, though? What if you are deciding when we turn? Because I have sensed the magic in you?

Sylvi: Oh!

Austin: Oh, that's fun.

Sylvi: I actually dig that a lot, yeah.

Austin: What's that look like and what's that feel like, Gaje?

Sylvi: I don't think it actually feels like much of anything other than being like, no, I know that we turn here. Gaje rationalizes it as like, oh, I saw something that way that makes me know that's the wrong way. But I think that there is probably... I like the idea of it being something tangible.

Austin: It's instinct more than it—oh, you think it is tangible?

Sylvi: Well, I like the—there's a gl—It always feels like he's chasing something out of the corner of his eye, and that's what's pulling him in the right direction.

Austin: I can tell you exactly what it is.

Sylvi: Cool.

Austin: You see a deer, or something like a deer, right? Maybe bigger than a deer, an elk, or something. Or just a really big deer. That is running, let's say on this map, it's going northwest, right? But then you see it appear again out of the corner of your eye as if it has been teleported, right? And you're like, oh, if I keep going the way that that deer is going, it's going to send me backwards. Now is the time to turn left, right?

Sylvi: Okay, cool.

Austin: We are doing some like *Stalker* shit at this point, right? You're avoiding the anomalies. You know what I mean? You are like testing out what's in front of you to make sure that you don't stumble into something that will irrevocably change the direction you're going in and end up just back where you started, you know?

Sylvi: I like that a lot because then it's like I'm attuned to a magic thing but my instinct is still a character trait as opposed to being like, I know the Force.

Austin: Right, exactly.

Sylvi: It's like oh, I was able to read this properly. And, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, and, you know, maybe someone who doesn't have this magical whatever would not have understood what they saw, or maybe they wouldn't have seen the teleporting at all, maybe they would have just, you know. Who knows.

Sylvi: Or that thing knows where it's... Oh, there's something alive here. I bet that it knows a way somewhere safe. And then, I've seen Annihilation. I don't know what's going on out there.

Austin: Oh, yeah, that's the other space that we're definitely in, right?

Sylvi: Oh, yeah.

Austin: The wool, as it is on the trees, has been getting thicker and thicker the deeper you go in. And I think Mirador is like,

Austin (as **Mirador**): I guess it's too far in for people to come harvesting it. Could make a nice shirt.

Austin: And he begins to feel various trees.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Don't.

Austin (as **Mirador**): What do you mean don't?

Dre (as **Flemming**): Don't.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Hm. It could make a nice shirt, though.

Jack (as **Jud**): Don't.

Austin (as **Mirador**): I'm just saying.

Dre: Someone else say don't. It's a good bit.

Sylvi: Do you, does Flemming say that? [laughs]

Austin: [laughing] Is Flemming big on bits?

Dre: [laughing] No. No.

Sylvi: Okay.

Dre: I think at some point, too, probably, Mirador starts to grumble about questioning Gaje and Flemming very sharply rebukes him for that as well.

Jack: Oh, being like, it's important to sort of allow this to play out.

Jack: Huh.

Sylvi: Very confused as to why he feels this strongly about it, but I'm not going to—just shrug and keep doing what I'm doing.

Austin: All right. You make it past the spiral, this strange like tightening spiral around where you literally have to walk next to where you walked earlier this morning. And you're like, you know, 40 feet away from where you were this morning. And that means you're doing the right thing. But it feels very weird and wrong. And you start to pick up on... As you kind of do this, one, you have found another natural path, or not a natural path. You found, you know, there are footprints here, or the ground has been, the brush, the underbrush has been stepped on, which is to say other people have moved down these paths before. The shape of the prints does not look, it looks big and flat. Like, there's no arch to the foot. There's no, like, the ball of the foot and then the heel. It's completely flat, and it's completely, like, oval in shape. What's this, ovaline? I don't know what the adjective form of oval is. There's just oval. As if it was, like, a carving.

Jack: Ovoid.

Austin: Ovoid, yes, thank you. It's completely ovoid. As if someone was, like, stamping an oval into the ground over and over again, versus like a proper foot of an animal or something. And, you know, it's heavier in certain places than others. But it looks like someone was walking at a kind of comfortable pace at first. And then it seems like they've begun to run further and further and faster and faster. And that's going the direction you are all headed now towards this next big loop. And I think it's probably somewhere in here that you have to make another night of, another camp. Another night of camp. Anything else that y'all want to do during this day of travel deeper into the Velutines before we get to a second camp night? What was conversation like? Was there conversation?

Sylvi: Oh I think at one point I talked to Jud being like,

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Listen, kid, I don't mind you disappearing when it's time to camp, but give us a heads up.

Jack: Oh, blushing. But like blushing out of anger, like angry, like, you know.

Sylvi: I do wonder if I follow it up, like, not intentionally. Like, I don't think I'm, I don't think Gaje looks at Jud while saying this. I think he's, this is while we're walking through the brush and stuff. I'm like, still looking straight ahead. It's like,

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): We have a better chance of making it out of here when we all stick together. And it's hard to do that when we're not on the same page.

Jack (as **Jud**): Yeah, yeah.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): It's basic survival instincts. Come on.

Jack (as **Jud**): Yeah, yeah, you're right. You're right. I'll do better. I'll do better next time. But, you know, you could have... I'm sure that if, you could have handled it.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): I know I could have.

Jack (as **Jud**): And Sacea's magic, and, you know.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): I get paid for getting him to the end of the road. I don't get paid for the amount of heads I bash on the way there.

Jack: I think I would like to try and... I think out of this discomfort, I would like to try and find a place for everybody to rest. I would like to put extra effort into being like, I'm going to try and do what I did for myself for everybody. Is there something I can find here?

Austin: Interesting. What are you, what type of, what are you, how are you doing it and what are you looking for? And what's your intent?

A Place to Rest [14:20]

Jack: Oh, you're not going to like it, unfortunately, Gaje, because I do disappear.

Sylvi: God damn it.

Jack: I've gone off-piste to find, you know, I want to find, God, the dream would be like an abandoned building or like a ruined, an abandoned building that we can go in would be great. A ruined building that has some coverage would be fine. At the very least, I'd like to find like some fallen, like a deadfall or something that we could bolt something onto the side of.

Austin: So you find a building. Well, what did Sir Roderick's estate look like?

Jack: Oh, my God. It was called Kathmire. It was a, it was like a 14th century manor house. So it was several buildings kind of arranged in a compound. There were stables, and then there was a servant's quarters, and then there was a sort of a house. Smaller than we would associate with, like, a Victorian manor or something. You know, we're picturing, like, a, a large medieval house that would have had the house staff in. I think something that I'm imagining is, do you remember that quest in *The Witcher 3* where a woman sends you to get her house back from monsters and you get there and find that another Witcher is camped out in the house? It's just this sort of like, it's a mansion split into three or four separate buildings.

Austin: Yeah. The buildings here are made of wood. You know, this is like log cabin stuff, but it's like if someone built a log cabin ma—like one-to-one recreation of the estate, in terms of where—so, you're in the middle of it before you understand what it is, before you're kind of like, oh, I know where the pantry would be, you know? Maybe not inside, right? But you know where the back door is in a sort of muscle memory way. What do you do?

Jack: I'm going to go to Sir Roderick's room.

Austin: The inside is similarly, and I want to be clear, like this is not, these are not logs that have been, you know, felled and—felled in an industrial way and then, you know, debarked and sanded down and turned into good building materials. This feels like someone knocked these, it feels like Gaje knocked these trees over and laid them on top of one another. It doesn't necessarily feel safe to move through. It is holding together, but it is like, it is like a force, or it's like a child, a gigantic child stacked trees as if they were, you know, snapping legos together, indifferently in the shape of this thing from your memory. And—what floor is Sir Roderick's room on?

Jack: It's like up one flight of stairs. It's the second floor.

Austin: Okay. From the outside we see a shot and smoke begins to billow out of the windows as if the building's on fire. Inside, the building's not on fire, but these fallen logs on the second floor, the same thing happens that you saw the night before. The wool begins to move, begins to pull and curl and coalesce into a shape, a shadow of a person. Do you have anything that can Counter “at night, I always make others fear for their life?” Or fear for their lives, I guess? The intent is to strike you with a fear that draws you further from your companions.

Jack: Yeah, I'm going to try and Counter this with “I always fight my way to safety.”

Austin: That is a +0, I'm guessing?

Jack: It is, and I don't like the “at night” part of “at night.”

Austin: Uh-huh. You fail this. What does failing this and being... I mean, again, the intent is to make you run further away from your friends. Make sure to mark your Sentence.

Jack: Yep, I have marked it and I've put it in brackets. Sorry, Gaje! Gaje, I was just looking for a house, Gaje, in the middle of the forest!

Sylvi: Uh-huh.

Jack: Yeah, like you do.

Sylvi: It's not like I said it would be fine to go looking for things if you gave us a heads up first. It's not like I literally just said that.

Jack: But you don't understand. You're 16 years old and you want to impress the people you're traveling with. So what if I just do it and then I surprise you all with this beautiful house? There were a series of tunnels below Sir Roderick's mansion, Austin.

Austin: Oh, okay.

Jack: A warren, I'm thinking of that great description of the tunnels in the early part of *Shadow of the Torturer*, when Severian goes looking for Triskele and gets, has a problem.

Austin: Just absolutely lost down there.

Jack: Horribly lost in these tunnels. Or rather, I don't want to say that that's what happens to you. Here's what I will say. The tunnels below Sir Roderick's mansion were similarly lost, and Jud has been lost in those in the past, but in a blind, choking fear... God, what is it that makes me run? What do I see?

Austin: It's the figure I just told you about, right?

Jack: Oh, okay. It is this figure.

Austin: This figure is coming for you. This figure is reaching for you. This figure of strange wool and shadow and smoke.

Jack: So down the steps as quickly as possible. I keep trying to characterize Jud's movements as constantly at a low level of panic. So I think that Jud vaults the banister at the top and just, like, drops, like, a small flight of stairs and makes for this trapdoor down into the tunnels below the house.

Austin: Okay. Let's come back to the camp. Hey, Jud's gone. Again.

Sylvi: Motherfucker.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Anybody see the kid?

Sylvi: I'm rubbing my face very, uh, out of just, like, exasperation.

Austin (as **Mirador**): No? No one's seen the kid? Is it gonna happen every night?

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): No. Last I saw, he was right behind us.

Austin (as **Mirador**): All right, well, I guess... He showed up the next morning last time. He showed up this morning.

Janine (as **Sacea**): He was fine last night.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Mm.

Austin: Okay.

Sylvi: Can I use my Bond with Jud here to go looking for him?

Austin: What's your Bond?

Sylvi: "Jud's weakness is clear as day. They'll die without me to protect them."

Austin: Well, you sure can.

Jack: Well, I don't know if that's true.

Austin: [laughs] You absolutely can.

Dre: That's a bit intense!

Austin: Do you tell everybody else you're going to go look for them?

Sylvi: I do. I do tell them that I'm going to go find them.

Dre (as **Flemming**): [annoyed] I'll come too...

Janine: Can I also come?

Austin: Sure. You can all come if you want to.

Janine: My Bond is also...

Sylvi: Gaje was getting ready to say, "you don't have to," before Sacea said she would come too.

Janine: Sacea's already standing up. Her knees are creaking. She's like,

Janine (as **Sacea**): Okay, hang on.

Austin: A question I didn't ask before, but should now is, where's your light coming from here as you move through the dark, away now from the campfire that you've set up?

Sylvi: Do either of the magic-y folks have a solution for this? I'm not saying it has to be magic, but...

Janine: I'm technically, well...

Austin: It's complicated.

Sylvi: You're technically science.

Dre: Yes, but I am interested to hear if Sacea has magic light.

Janine: No.

Dre: Okay. Yeah. Gaje, what is the weapon you carry?

Sylvi: Oh, I'm glad you asked. It's a giant steel spike that's attached to my wrist by manacles. It's sort of shaped like a needle that you would sew with, like a sewing needle.

Dre: Sure.

Sylvi: Yeah. It's big and rusty.

Dre: Yeah. Yeah, I tap my wand on the tip of your spike and it has a big orb of light on it now.

Sylvi: This isn't permanent, right?

Dre: Do you want it to be?

Austin: This is "I always know a few showy tricks" again? Or is this a grand spell?

Dre: This is probably a grand spell.

Austin: Okay. Yeah, this is more important than that. Yeah, I agree.

Sylvi: This is something you gotta bust the book out for.

Dre: Yeah. Probably, and to cast enough light to pierce through this forest, yeah, it's a grand spell.

Austin: Yeah. The... You know, the forest lit up by this by this is this really striking... And, you know, I would be scared out of my fucking skin here because all at night, all in black and white, the light is like, you know, revealing the long shadows of all these trees. It's kind of hard to judge distance, and gauge distance here. And even as bright as this is, there is this like point at which all of the light falls out and it's just darkness. And that means that the building that seems like the smoke is kind of piling out of it or pouring out of it. I say piling because it is this woolen smoke, so it actually does feel like cloth, also, or textile to see. You know, it's like claymation almost, right, but with wool

pouring out of this second floor still. Jud is, of course, not there anymore. You don't know that. But you see the sort of strange wool and smoke pouring out of the second floor of this log building. You can imagine, perhaps, that Jud came this way. In fact, Jud, did you leave any sort of, you know, you probably didn't Hansel and Gretel your way here, but like... You left some marks on the way, as a person—you weren't being careful to hide your steps.

Janine: Teardrops on the ground, or?

Austin: Yeah, were you crying? Was there any blood?

Dre: Yeah, were you crying? Big baby boy?

Jack: No, hold on. Prior to arriving at the house, I was having a great time. I thought I was being very helpful to my friends. Even when I was in the house, my plan had been to return and say, look, this is a little upsetting to me, because this house reminds me of this place, but, you know, maybe it's a place to sleep. So, I think, you know, I was running. I was trying to be quick. I think that anybody could probably track me. I do have the Sentence "I am always under threat," which I do think implies that even my friends could probably figure out where I'd gone.

Austin: Yeah, in a weird way, you could use that to give them a path here, right? So, yes, you see the footprints come, go inside this building that has the weird smoke coming out of it, and then also coming back out and headed towards some sort of, almost like a shed that has the stairway. Or wait, were the ways in, was the way down in the tunnels from the inside of the estate house?

Jack: It's inside, I'm afraid.

Austin: Oh, okay. So then, yeah, you have to go inside. And at that point, actually, there probably aren't footprints. Ah, I guess there are, because there's no ground here. There's no, like, wooden floorboards here. It's just the dirt, you know? So, yeah, you can still trace Jud's feet going up the stairs or going to the stairs and then coming back from the stairs.

Jack: There's a big mark from where I jumped over the banister and hit the floor because I didn't go back down the stairs.

Austin: Perfect. Right. You just absolutely ran. Sure. What do you do, having seen these prints? Are you following Jud's footprints? Are you exploring the rest of this place?

Sylvi: Oh. We're here to get Jud. I feel like we should follow the footprints, right?

Austin: Yeah. That makes sense.

Jack: Can I get a "well done for finding a house, Jud"?

Austin: It's always, "why'd you run away, Jud"? Never "great job bringing us to this cursed approximation of the guy you ate's house."

Dre: This very cool, normal house.

The Tunnels Below [26:35]

Austin: Jud, as your friends approach above, you're moving through the tunnels. And it's not too long before you hear the sound, the clacking sound of bone against bone. And wearing what is now dilapidated Leo Suzerainty uniforms, a pair of skeletal soldiers emerge in the dark. Actually can you see in these tunnels at all? Do you only hear them?

Jack: I can see—

Austin: Can you just hear the bone in the metal?

Jack: Yeah, this is Realis. I hear the—or rather this is black and white Realis. I hear them and I can see my hand as a white shape in front of my face.

Austin: From what light?

Jack: My eyes adjusting to the dark, right?

Austin: There's no light down here. You're in the tunnel.

Jack: God! So I can't see shit. I can't see my hand in front of my face. Yeah, it's just sounds. I've got my hand on a tunnel wall, and that's it.

Austin: And then a hand on yours.

Jack: A bone hand!

Austin: A bone hand on yours.

Jack: Do you have anything that can Counter "killed by skeletons"?

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: Well, no. It's interesting, right? Because the skeletons are an extension. I will... Do any of you have things... I'm going to bracket this current conflict, because it's about to be a conflict. Do any of you upstairs have things that would let you know what you're dealing with, seeing all this weird smoke and wool?

Jack: Like a discern realities type thing?

Austin: Yeah, discern...

Sylvi: I don't.

Austin: Yeah, like you know about weird magic shit or people or whatever?

Janine: I mean, I can "exert my will over atmospheres" or, you know, "shifting truth." Like, some of that feels like there's a bit of it there.

Austin: You could shift truth, but if you did a sort of ritual, it might come into... You know, actually, what it might be is your—I wouldn't say you would spend this, but "I will purge the miasma which corrupts," actually makes me think that you might be knowledgeable about various miasmas, which I think this is, right? And then I think maybe between that and Flemming, you definitely...

Dre: The rejecting of unorthodox magic.

Austin: Unorthodox magic means you know what you believe unorthodox magic to be, right?

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: With you two here now seeing—you are seeing the same thing I described before, of the wool. And in fact, it's moving in the direction you're all going. It's like, you know how a caterpillar moves?

Jack: Yeah, it scrunches!

Austin: Front to back to front, it scrunches. The wool bark on these logs is scrunching and then extending and then scrunching and then extending, down towards this underground tunnel where Jud has fled, as if it's trying to get closer and closer. This is, I'll just read the description first.

"The Lyceum's scholars say that fear of death is a most natural thing, unifying all those who live across time and distance. And yet it too can feel an alien thing, especially contrasted against the courage of others. In these moments, it," the Exhale, Unspoken Death, one of the Unspoken, which I'll define in a second, "reveals itself, a deep shadow of fear, a retching figure of smoke and wool."

And so the thing I was going to say before, Jud, is the thing that has you is not just the skeletons, it's the thing for which the skeletons are its arms, or are its, you know, extension, right? It has brought them, they work for it. The Unspoken are definitely both unorthodox magic and a miasma across the moons, which I do also think speaks to the sort of ebb and flow of the miasma that you talked about, Janine, last time. The idea that, like, hey, sometimes, it's really bad. You know, sometimes things are not good on the moons of Realis.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: Right. We are at a high Unspoken, you know, quotient right now.

Jack: Fervor in Crusader Kings.

Austin: Right. So. There's a thing called the Drift, and the Drift is a realm between realms. I've written "life, death, pain, pleasure, wisdom, innocence. The Drifting are living absences caught between worlds, yet drawing them and those in them together. Those that pass through the Drift are freed from their excessive attributes, which are exiled back to the physical world in uncanny bodies. Soon, say sages, the whole of Realis will be adrift."

The Drift, already kind of creepy, not great. You know what I mean? But people go into the Drift to explore this weird space between spaces, this liminal space between emotions and physical states and et cetera.

The Unspoken, I've written. "Desires given form strong enough to begin taking. Inside of the Drift, there is a niche so hostile and unpredictable that it deserves its own entry, the realm of the Unspoken, disavowed monsters of the psyche. The Unspoken arise not from traitorous ambition or a pining heart, but from the stubborn refusal to confront such aspects of the self. No wish is as frightful as the one disowned."

And so this is Exhale, Unspoken Death. This is, you know, the fear of death, felt so strongly and then bottled and ignored. Who was fearing death this much in this place to have summoned this thing into the Velutines? I don't know. You don't know. I mean, I guess you have a little bit of evidence in the skeletal soldiers that I've mentioned below from the Leo Suzerainty who used to live on this planet and were driven off by the Empest, you know, 140 years ago. Perhaps it was them. Perhaps we'll learn more about what happened there through skeletal world building and environmental storytelling, a classic way of telling stories with skeletons.

But yeah, so this is a sort of interdimensional death demon or like fear of death demon, is what you're dealing with. Not great. Jud, it has its hands on you. Do you have anything that can prevent the Sentence "whenever I take someone in my hold, I always curse them to weeks of withering from the inside out."

Sylvi: Not touching that one.

Jack: My Sentence “I always fight my way to safety” is... locked off to me right now.

Austin: It sure is. We’re still in that scene.

Jack: Yeah, so... My token is discharged.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: I have the Sentence “I always find somewhere to rest.” Oh my god. That’s probably the way to go. However, the Sentence Austin described sounds like at least a +1 Sentence. When you can hear commas in Sentences, that’s generally...

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah. Feels like it’s been realized at least once.

Jack: Yeah, you’ve got to be really careful when you can feel a semicolon. But I also, so I have “I always find somewhere to rest” and “I am always under threat.” I have the Bonds... [laughs] I have the Bond “Gaje doesn’t think he needs it, but I’ll watch his back.”

Dre: I can’t die. He needs me.

Sylvi: Damn.

Jack: “Sacea’s methods are otherworldly and I am afraid of her. I need to stay in her good books,” and “I will get revenge on whoever initiated the hunt.” But as you said earlier, Austin. I don’t think there is any way I can succeed here. But it is always in your best interest to try and move a Sentence towards realization. Because that is how you, I don’t want to say improve, that’s how you progress.

Austin: Yeah, that’s how the character, the broad archetypical character slowly gets drawn into more, better relief, more specificity. So.

Jack: So, I am going to try... Now, there’s a way that I could metagame this, right, Austin? Because I could try and use the Sentence “I always protect those traveling with

me” in order to get an additional mark on that, bringing it up to two marks. Whereas, “I always find somewhere to rest,” which seems like the more obvious thing, doesn’t have anything checked right now.

Austin: Mm-hm. But you’d have to just describe to me what you’re doing to try to do this, as long as you can frame it with the Sentence.

Jack: Justify it, yes. [pauses] And I don’t think I can. I think if I’m being honest, the impulse that Jud is feeling right now is “you are going to get pulled apart by skeletons,” not “better clear this basement of skeletons so that my friends can rest here when they eventually arrive and they’re proud of me.” So that’s what I’m going to try and Counter it with. I’m going to try and Counter it with “I always find somewhere to rest.” I try and shake myself free.

Austin: It does not work.

Jack: It does not work.

Austin: Go ahead and mark it. Yeah, this is a +2 Sentence. You were not wrong about that. Again, “whenever I take someone in my hold, I always curse them to weeks of withering from the inside out.”

Jack: Is this Exhale?

Austin: This is the Exhale. Yeah, I will add it to the sheet for you. And I think we just, you know, the vision of this in my mind is that the screen goes dark here. And then the party sees you, or, sorry the party—we get the shot of the rest of the party with the light of the big spike. Also you have to like duck to walk down here, Gaje, this is not a tall tunnel. You have to like, you know, bend over pretty badly. It’s not comfortable to walk down here. And we get the thing of the light, you know, creeping further and further into the tunnel, right, revealing a little turn here, you know, you can see how poorly it’s been made, how it feels like it could all fall apart at any moment. The kind of, you know, cross beams of the logs where actual good woodworking and stoneworking would be used to hold up this tunnel normally.

And then the light slowly moves across a body, and in fact, three bodies. There's a skeleton on each side of young Jud, holding, each one holding one of his arms up, standing on the backs of his legs so that he's up on his knees and can't move. And the figure, the Exhale, this retching, so it's, ugh, eugh, you can hear it. You can hear it in the dark. Smoke and wool with a big spoon, dipping it into itself, pulling the wool and smoke out and shoving it into Jud's mouth and making him swallow.

Jack: Oh my god.

Sylvi: Wow.

Austin: What do you do?

Sylvi: [laughs]

Austin: I love to have a little cannibal boy who's my friend.

Dre: Mm. Do I have to cast a magic missile at the darkness?

Sylvi: Oh, fuck off.

Dre: [laughs quietly]

Sylvi: Um. Hm.

Jack: Oh my god. Sacea's Bond, "without my attentions, Jud will die on the vine."
Gaje's Bond, "Jud's weakness is clear as day. They'll die without me to protect them."
Jud's Bond, "Gaje doesn't think he needs it, but I'll watch his back." Eating awful death wool from...

Austin: Being fed it to you like a baby in manacles.

Jack: Coming back to our imagery of eating again here with young Jud.

Austin: Uh-huh. Oh yeah. Anyone? Anyone have any thoughts here?

Sylvi: I'm...

Janine: So how, what's the distance like here?

Austin: I think it's pretty far at this point because the light, I don't want to undersell how cool Flemming's light magic is. You know, it might be so far away that it's hard. You know, I think if I was actually shooting this for real, it would be far enough away that the first time you watch it, you're not sure you understand what you're looking at. You know? But you can close that distance, right? It's very clear Jud is being restrained and something is happening.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Something that he does not necessarily like.

Sacea [40:00]

Janine: I, okay. I think I have an image. I think Sacea sort of breaks away from the group, like breaks forward.

Austin: This is like, is this with speed? Because we've mostly seen you in a sort of...

Janine: Yeah. So, I'm thinking, like, I don't think she's like sprinting but I think she does like move fast enough that it like kind of puts her into the middle distance—not the middle distance, but like the mid space between...

Austin: Between the two, yeah.

Janine: The main part of the light and then it reflecting on Jud and the skeletons and stuff. And I think she's like moving forward at a decent clip and there's sort of, at first she's slow. At first she's, because she's kind of doing multiple things. She's moving forward, but she's also, like, getting her chain out. She's sort of pushing her cloak to one side and, like, fumbling with all the, like, silver, ornate sort of pomanders at her belt. So, there's, like, some jingling and stuff there. But she eventually finds the right one, and this wisp of smoke comes out, and then she's... She sort of... She starts swinging it and the smoke is quite thick. And like the image I want to call on is the image of like a

zoetrope, where like the effect of the smoke and the light is such that like you get these sort of still frames that are in motion.

Except pretty quickly, it's not what is recognizably Sacea anymore. Sometimes it's Sacea and sometimes it's like a beautiful young man with like curly hair. And then sometimes it's like a little girl. Um, and then sometimes it's kind of like a middle-aged woman. And then it's Sacea again. And it's just like, a few of these forms are more common than others, but it is just sort of like a weird cycling of like, just people in this sort of smoke and light illusion.

And the thing I want to do... So I have this one called "I always strike with the hidden edges of my pomander." And I was thinking about how to make that interesting, because I think there's a way where it's just like, oh, there's a blade in it. And you can hit with it. You can do the yo-yo attack or you smack someone with it.

Austin: You're doing Gogo Yubari stuff from *Kill Bill*.

Janine: Yeah, and I don't super want to do... I'm fine doing that, but I want something better than just like, it's sharp.

Austin: Yeah. You want sharp to mean something more playful. You want to be clever with the ambiguity of that.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: That's Realis. Listen, lean in.

Janine: So I think what this actually is, is more like a *Naruto* thing. [laughs]

Austin: [laughs in delight]

Sylvi: Let's go. Let's fucking go.

Jack: I know who he is.

Austin: Of just like splitting.

Janine: There's just like, just splitting. Just like, there's just, there are just more people here now. And it's smoke and light. And those people have pomanders. And they're the ones who are going to...

Austin: They're the hidden edges.

Janine: Yeah. It's like, what if you could get hit by a cat o' nine tails, but from like three different directions or whatever, from nine different directions.

Austin: Sure. Uh-huh. Are you using a token here, since you're the actor?

Janine: Yes.

Austin: Probably a good idea, discharging your token.

Janine: I would like to use a token. This is such a fucking move that like, I gotta use it.

Austin: Uh-huh. Can you go ahead and tick your token to discharge it? And what's your intent? What do you want to happen here?

Janine: Perfect world intent is that this skeleton guy gets extremely fucked up. And Jud...

Austin: Can be free.

Janine: Rejoin the group. Yeah.

Austin: Okay. As a reminder...

Janine: It's an intent to do severe harm.

Austin: Well, I think it's important because it's like, if your goal is to free Jud, that's one intent. If your goal is to kill this thing, that's a different intent. And success means you get your intent. Failure means you don't. But different—you know, failure means you don't. But that means, depending on what your intent is, you might still get the other thing. You know what I mean? But in a way you didn't anticipate.

Janine: Yeah, the intention is definitely directed at the Exhale. Was that the word?

Austin: Yeah, Exhale. Okay. So not about freeing Jud necessarily, then.

Janine: No.

Austin: Yep. Okay. With that +1, I think it's going to try to count. So that's a +1 Sentence. It's going to try to Counter with... I guess it's feeding. So it can't, it's not even looking at you, right? The skeletons are going to try to Counter you with, well, they can't do this one because it starts in the dark and it's not the dark. You've gotten rid of their dark bonus, so that's one they can't use. I'm not reading it yet because you haven't seen it. "I always startle with the sights and sounds of my bones," a +0 Sentence, which is going to lose. And I think that they just like... They begin to come at you. One of them drops Jud's arm, and the other one kind of picks it up to keep Jud in place. In fact, they start to try to drag Jud away, along with the Exhale, at first. You're going to succeed, so they're not going to get away, actually. But you're just not scared, right? You are not startled by the sights and sounds of their bones.

Janine: Mm-hm.

Austin: And so, yeah, you manage to hit not just this thing, this one skeleton, but the Exhale. What does it look like as your pomander whips, your nine pomander whips from various forms of various Naruto clones who are also different versions of you, question mark, are hitting it? Are you, like, dispelling the wool and smoke? Are you, like, visually, how's that read?

Janine: My knee-jerk is very confusing gender reveal party because it's black and white.

Austin: Because it's black and white, yeah.

Janine: I think there's a lot of, like, there are a lot of, like, smoke puffs.

Austin: Also, you keep revealing different genders. Over and over.

Janine: Yeah, that's true. Yep. I think it is, it is, like, I think it's so obscuring that it's hard to describe. I want to say there's like, I mean a thing I think is cool, I don't know if it happens now, but a thing I think is cool for a wool monster in terms of getting injured is the effect of like kinetic sand or like cloud slime?

Jack: Oh, yeah!

Janine: That kind of like dissolves?

Austin: Cloud slime? I don't know cloud slime.

Janine: Cloud slime. You could probably, I could probably get a video.

Austin: I'll look it up.

Dre: Did you say cloud?

Janine: Cloud slime. They do like, they call it like a drizzle, the way it falls apart.

Austin: Ohhh. Sure.

Janine: Something, I think something like that would be a cool way for a wool thing o get fucked up. I don't, again, I don't know that that happens right now, but I just like that image

Austin: Well, I think it happens to this part—oh wow, that's really cool.

Janine: Right?

Austin: Holy shit!

Janine: It's so cool!

Austin: I'm going to timestamp drop this in the, this is a video called...

Janine: It's so satisfying.

Austin: "How to drizzle cloud slime."

Janine: [laughs] Yeah.

Austin: You might actually want to go a little bit further than this. Go to 45 seconds or 40 or 50 seconds maybe. Yeah. Here it comes. That's wild. The way it's like, it starts really, it eventually becomes almost like a cobweb or cotton candy or something.

Janine: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, that's very cool.

Dre: Oh, wow.

Janine: You can get a similar effect with kinetic sand, but it's not as, like, stringy and bindy.

Austin: Yeah, it gets so stringy and windy. It almost looks like, you know, a Halloween fake webbing. You know what I mean?

Dre: Yeah!

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: But it starts really thick, the way that I'm describing the Exhale's wool body.

Janine: Exactly. And it does look like, it looks like yarn roving in this video in particular. It looks like yarn roving.

Austin: Yeah, this totally... Oh, you get a close-up of it at, like, 1:30 in this video. It's great. Yeah, this is what it's made out of. You found, this is the stuff. That's good. I'm glad we know how to make this now for when we get our big movie budget. It goes, you know, you do just—this happens to it there. But remember, it's all along the—so, one: one of the skeletons is still trying to drag Jud away, trying desperately to reach the dark of the edge of your light. I keep wanting to say Finnegan. That is not your name. It is Flemming, right?

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Yeah, okay. We had a Finnegan once. That's, so, it's in my brain.

Sylvi: Yeah. That was...

Dre: That was Michael Finnegan.

Sylvi: From the first Bluff City, right?

Austin: First Bluff City. Wait, is there, who's Michael, is that...?

Dre: There was a man named Michael Finnegan.

Jack: Yeah, he grew whiskers on his chinnegan, Austin.

Dre: Come on. [laughs]

Austin: I don't know this. This is not a thing I know.

Sylvi: I have no idea what you're doing, guys.

Austin: I don't know either. Anyway. One of the skeletons, the one remaining skeleton is trying to drag Jud back into the darkness desperately, because it knows that it is more powerful there in the dark, which is quite literally true. But while you've dispelled this one part of the Exhale, remember, it's all along the walls, too.

Jack: Oof.

Austin: And the walls, like the wall caterpillar, smoke-wool, cloud slime body begins to reach out to the rest of you, I guess to Flemming and Gaje, with these like long cloud-like hands to try to grab you much like it eventually grabbed Jud. Do either of you, its hope is to scare you into staying still so that it can grab you. Do either of you have something that can Counter "at night I always make others fear for their lives."

Flemming [50:30]

Dre: Yeah. I got a couple things.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: I guess, I mean, either “I always reject the use of unorthodox magic” or “I always project an image of unerring wisdom.”

Austin: Pick one and tell me what it looks like and let me know if you’re discharging your token.

Dre: I’m going to say “unerring wisdom” because I think this is just like, I’m not scared. I have seen fucked up shit before. This doesn’t scare me.

Austin: Mm-hm. So you’re able to, you’re using that wisdom and that surety to not be frozen into fear such that you could be grabbed easily by this stuff. You’re able to step away from it without being, is your hope.

Dre: Well, I don’t think I step away from it. I think basically like I... I am casting a spell, and if this ends up working, we describe what it looks like. But I am confident just to stay where I am to focus on casting the spell.

Austin: That’s very fun. Are you discharging your token?

Dre: I assume I’m going to need to.

Austin: Let me know.

Dre: Yeah, sure.

Austin: Okay. So that becomes a +1 Sentence, which, because you are defending, wins. Not defending, but you’re Countering, does win against this “at night, I always make others fear for their lives,” which was a +1 Sentence, but because you increased yours to +1 and you were Countering, you succeed. So, yeah, I will add that to its sheet for you also, on your side. And I will also, you know—oh, it is already on there? It’s already on there.

Dre: Yes.

Austin: Go ahead and mark that.

Dre: I grip my wand like a knife and I start drawing symbols in the dirt at our feet.

Austin: Ooh. Love it.

Dre: And then right as the hand is about to reach me, I snap my wand in half and the hands go flying back.

Jack: Whoa!

Austin: Love it. Incredible.

Sylvi: Sick.

Austin: Rip to your wand, I guess.

Dre: It's fine. I got more.

Austin: Oh, okay. It's like that.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: You're like shooting them and then dropping the gun on the ground. And then, you know, you know what I mean? Like in mafia movies.

Sylvi: doing John Wick reload moves, but snapping wands in half.

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh. It's kind of sick. Someone make that movie, thank you. I guess it's kind of *Tactical Breach Wizards* in some way.

Dre: Yeah. That's what's the, what's the *Call of Duty* wizards game. It'll be in there.

Austin: God. Yeah.

Sylvi: Oh my god.

Austin: All right, yeah. It, you know, what's the sound that happens when you finish the spell? Is it like a boom, is it like a, is it just the crack of the wand?

Dre: I think it's the inverse. It's this, all sound like gets sucked into the wand as it snaps.

Austin: [sighs] That's so good. And that's like from the whole area, you know, like I think this is happening while Sacea is also doing the, you know, the whipping or, you know, finishing off one of these skeletons and even the sound drops out of that for a second. Gaje, Jud is about to vanish into the darkness. While Flemming was dealing with the remains of the Exhalate and Sacea was dealing with the first part of the Exhalate and one of the skeletons, this last skeleton is pulling away.

Sylvi: I'm gonna deal with another skeleton.

Austin: What do you do?

Gaje [53:30]

Sylvi: Yeah, so I was thinking... Okay, so here's... We're going to talk a little bit about mechanics here, because I don't have my token.

Austin: You don't.

Sylvi: And I'm looking at token charge methods. And one of them is "trigger a Tragic Success."

Austin: Uh-huh. So, a Tragic Success, again, this is at any point a player can recharge their token. For you, Sylvi, you can go to page 28 of the book just so you can see this. At any point, a player can recharge their token through an act of Tragic Success, using one of their Means to lead the Band deeper into chaos. When you do this, describe something consequential and undesirable caused by one of your Sentences, then recharge your token. As the name suggests, Tragic Success is about one of your character's Means seemingly succeeding, but in a way that causes you trouble.

And so, the examples, again, that are used here, there's a Curioist who uses "I'm always drawn to the unknown" in order to lead themselves towards a derelict tower that has some ancient artifacts and also some undead knights. There's a Fantasist, who puts on a good show, entertaining everybody, but also drawing the attention of a cruel countess, et cetera.

Sylvi: So I have an idea for one using "I always hurt those close to me," but I want to run this by people before, because it involves Jud specifically. I don't want to injure Jack's character without permission, but I was thinking that it's like, this is a confined space. I am a big dude. I've described Gaje as tall. Gaje is also very wide. He's not like... I don't want people thinking he's a chiseled bodybuilder. He's a big dude. And so, I think that trying to move enough to both hit this skeleton with enough force to neutralize it... Kill is hard to say because it's already dead.

Austin: I know what you mean.

Sylvi: But like. In doing that, I think that it's pretty easy for Jud to catch a stray here and end up with a broken rib or two.

Jack: I... I agree. I think this is great. Now I'm just thinking of what is a good image for the violence done to Jud here in the dark. How would you feel about a broken nose? Does that feel like a lateral move or does that feel like a...

Sylvi: No, that's fine.

Austin: I don't think that's enough. That's not a tragic success.

Jack: [laughs] No, that's not tragic.

Sylvi: Yeah. Do you want me to describe—?

Austin: Do you want to mention the broken nose again today? Because ideally what happens is this is enough that it snowballs future—the key is not a bad thing goes down on a character sheet. It's that whatever it is is undesirable and consequential enough that we can bounce off of it going forward.

Sylvi: I could... There is some... Okay, so here are my two things. I was thinking one, and again, because this involves someone else's character, I'm happy to have it vetoed, where it's like Jud's hurt while we travel through the rest of the forest and has to be in the cart or something. I could also cause a cave-in here, is another thing that just occurred to me.

Austin: I think hurt enough needs to be put in the cart or have some other sort of mode of conveyance or cave-in are both consequential. Both of those feel good.

Janine: I know we do hand stuff a lot, but you could crush his hand.

Sylvi: I was going to say snap his arm, honestly. Because that's where the skeleton's holding him by, right?

Austin: Yeah, that's true.

Jack: Oh my god...

Sylvi: I think it's just one of those things where I'm...

Austin: And we haven't fucked up a hand in quite some time, honestly.

Jack: How do we feel about doing a season where a character has a broken arm?

Austin: I think it's pretty good.

Jack: Because that is, there is no way we are going to go, oh, well, we'll just toss that in 10 minutes and forget about that. And I think it is consistent.

Austin: Wait, wait, wait. It's broken arm, and as a reminder, it's also withering from the inside out.

Jack: I am also withering from the inside out.

Sylvi: Fucking hell. Okay.

Austin: Because of how death fed itself to you. Or the fear of death fed itself—the embodied, demonic, but deeply human fear of death fed itself to you, the cannibal.

Jack: Yeah, let's do it.

Sylvi: Okay. I think it happens the—I think the reason it feels like it happens so quick when this happens is because of the light on my weapon. I think it almost acts like, it feels like there's a flash just because of the movement of it like from Jud's perspective because it's just coming closer and closer until it's swinging through the skeleton that's got you captive. Yeah, we don't really need to get into the details, but it's a nasty break, I think. I don't think it's, like, this isn't just, like, I grazed you or something.

Jack: Yeah, and, like, coughing and spluttering.

Sylvi: We've covered how strong Gaje is.

Jack: The wool, the death wool. Ooh, dear. Yeah, I think just Jud crying out in the dark as I get free from the skeletons and some other stuff.

Austin: In the light, because the thing hitting you is projecting an intense amount of light. It's, like, I think that it's blown out. Visually.

Jack: Yes, absolutely. This is high contrast stuff.

Austin: In high resolution. We can see the pores in your face. You know what I mean?

Sylvi: Is the black and whites negative right now? Is it inverted because of the way the light? I'm just picturing, yeah, a print version of what we've been talking about.

Dre: Is there still no sound?

Austin: Sure. Yeah, oh, just a shot of Jud screaming, but you can't hear anything because of the spell?

Jack: Oh my god, that's great.

Sylvi: I'm going to try and pick him up with my free hand if I'm able.

Austin: Yeah, I mean, and the skeleton, you know, falls apart from this hit, right?
Scatters across the ground. The bones are all gone. [half-heartedly hums victory music]

Sylvi: I got my token back!

Austin: You get your token back. Jud's saved.

Jack: Oh, my God.

Austin: Sound returns.

Jack: Hey, Austin, I have a question.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: That thing was trying to feed me death with a spoon, right?

Austin: Yeah.

The Spoon of the Exhale [1:00:00]

Jack: Can I get it? Can I get the spoon as I'm like...

Austin: So Gaje is like carrying you and you're like, spoon, give me the spoon, the death spoon?

Jack: I think that I'm like, it's like this panic in the dark, right? It's this, well, no, because we have this—I'm picturing this in slow motion. I'm picturing this very 80s black and white slow-mo of Jud getting his arm broken. It's like a John Carpenter shot. Who didn't shoot in black and white, but you know what I mean. Howard Horne. So no, I'm going to pass. The thought of getting a spoon from the death entity—

Austin: Oh, it's good. I'm not telling you not to do it. I think this is a fun idea.

Jack: Gave me... But why would Judge—I nearly said Judge—why would Jud go for it?

Austin: Why would the weird cannibal, the person who just ate a guy, go for the death spoon?

Jack: It's reaching out in the moment. It is panic in the moment. We know, in terms of working through the broader themes of this story, why Jud would go for the death spoon. In the moment, one arm broken, being dragged back from the skeletons by his comrade, he reaches out to get this thing that was being used to feed the spirit of death into him.

Austin: The spirit of the fear of death into him.

Jack: The spirit of the fear of death, yeah.

Austin: It's grounded in emotion, fundamentally. Yeah. This is a piece of Ephemera, undeniably. Quote: From time to time, when the story naturally allows it, characters may find or be rewarded with Ephemera. Ephemera might be a renowned piece of equipment, a temporary and powerful mode of being, or a passing allegiance that the characters can call on in a crisis. Ephemera are represented on your sheet as a temporary Sentence representing some new but impermanent aspect of the character in question. While the GM may know what the Ephemera in question might represent, a sword, a temporary alliance, a cursed but powerful idea, how it's represented as a Sentence should be discussed as a group with the GM and player who is receiving the Ephemera agreeing on a particular phrasing. Like regular Sentences, each Ephemera carries a rank of reality, ranging from +0 to +4, and determined by the GM when they are awarded to you. A +4 Ephemera allows for characters to achieve the truly fantastic. Only dreams open up the opportunity for greater feats. There are two major differences between Ephemera and other sorts of Sentences. First, Ephemera do not need additional limitations to be more real. A +3 Sentence on an Ephemera may be as simple as, "the Index Key always opens any lock." At the same time, a lower rank Sentence may have additional restrictions appropriate to the fiction. For instance the +1 Sentence "when held by living hands, the Living Razor is always lethal against the ancient undead." So, you know, normal rank, the commas don't always add up with Ephemera, right?

Second, as their name suggests, Ephemera have limited uses and cannot be realized. When you gain an Ephemera, write its Sentence down on your sheet and draw three empty circles next to it. Each time you successfully use a piece of Ephemera, put an X in one of the circles. Using an Ephemera as a Means to overcome even unopposed uncertainty counts as a successful use. Once all three circles are filled, it can no longer be called on as a Sentence. This doesn't necessarily represent the destruction or loss of the Ephemera in question. Instead, it means that whatever special advantage the Ephemera once gave you has been accounted for by the ever-fluctuating narrasoullic equilibrium of Realis. What was once a dramatic new development to the narrative weave of the Thousand Moons is now simply another part of the quilt. You may continue to wield your ancient runic blade, but its shine simply does not impress as it once did.

And then there's some rules for like handing Ephemera around to make sure that someone doesn't go like, well now you have it, so you get three more uses of it, because the story changed. But that's the gist. So I think this is probably a +2. This is some sort of death spoon. That's a +2 Ephemera, you know? I can't, I feel like I'd be lying to say it was less than a +2. I don't think it's a +3.

Jack: Wielded by an Unspoken.

Austin: Right, exactly. Yes. So like, that's a big deal. I don't know what it does. Anyone have thoughts on what this spoon, I mean, we know what it was doing when it was feeding death to Jud.

Jack: The feeling of the fear of death.

Austin: Sorry, the fear, right, the fear was—yeah, of course, the spirit of the fear of death to Jud. But I don't know what it does if you put, like, cereal in it, if you put the unfairly maligned...

Janine: I have an awful suggestion.

Austin: Please!

Janine: What if it's like a thing that like, you yourself can't eat with it, but you can feed yourself to someone else with it.

Dre: Ha!

Janine: Like, in...

Austin: [laughs] Oh, Dre, that laugh was so pure and good.

Janine: Like, in, you know, not necessarily, like, you don't have to necessarily, like—I mean, no, maybe you could scoop out a chunk of flesh, but the, like, flesh would come back. But, like, and then it's, it's, there's some sort of effect attached to that. Is that good? I don't know.

Jack: It's fucking something. I would like to continue to talk through this.

Austin: Uh-huh. Those, uh, those, uh, content warnings we put in the episodes are real, folks.

Janine: I was just thinking about the coolest thing in *Divinity: Original Sin II* is if you are playing an elf character like Seville, who is one of the companions, they can eat body parts that you find—or make. You know, very, if you kill someone, sometimes they'll have a body part on, or you just, you'll just find one, and you'll get either, like, a little—sometimes you'll just get, like, a little bit of lore, just a little memory from that person. Sometimes you get, like, a fucking spell. You'll just learn a bunch of spells that way, and, like, maybe you can use them, maybe you can't, it depends on other stuff, but, like, it's a neat little thing.

Jack: Yeah. But you're saying that it would be the inverse of that.

Janine: Yeah. It would be like you...

Jack: I would feed myself to...

Janine: You are imbuing someone with something.

Austin: Yeah. Some sort of good feeling. Or something— [laughs] I'm thinking about this being like the inverse also of what the death, the fear that the Exhale was trying to produce in you, Jud, is like, what if you feed others of yourself, you are giving them courage, you are giving them...

Janine: You eat a spoonful of human and you're like, life is great.

Austin: Your life is great. You feel invigorated.

Jack: Well, what if it instills the kind of... The Struggler is a class that goes, that perseveres. That is the defining thing about the Struggler. It is someone who is in the hole, but is trying very hard to get out of the hole. And I wonder if it is an empowering thing. It would be to give somebody this, yeah, like impetus or... Is that too straightforward, though?

Janine: Like perseverance, yeah.

Jack: Because does this just turn me into a stamina potion?

Austin: No, because you can use this three times and that's it.

Janine: Also, you have to feed someone you. That's probably not a thing you're just going to do casually.

Jack: Yes, I guess what I'm saying is...

Austin: Also...

Jack: The outcome needs to be commensurate to it. I'm not saying... You know, this is something that I can only, maybe it needs to be more than just give someone impetus.

Austin: I have two thoughts there. One is we could make it very material, right? Any who eats of your flesh need not sleep for a day, a week. "When you feed someone, you know, your own flesh with the spoon of the Exhale..."

Jack: I wouldn't sleep, if someone had just fed me some of themselves with a spoon.

Austin: And I think we could say right now that like, three uses would be three full party meals thereof, not three people. You know what I mean? Not, okay, we don't even have enough for the whole party, the whole Band to eat, you know? "When you prepare a meal of your flesh, or, you know, including your flesh, with the spoon of the Exhale."

Jack: Oh, this is what it is. That is the, we found the first part of the Sentence.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Now, the question is, what is the second part of the Sentence? How the worm turns vis-a-vis cannibalism.

Austin: Uh-huh. Well, this is the other thing I was going to say, Jack, is the people you're feeding don't know.

Jack: Yep. No. They don't know that they're in an *It Follows* situation.

Austin: Well, and also—okay, first of all, this is a thing the spoon does. Everyone hasn't agreed to eat you yet.

Jack: No.

Austin: Also, you know that...

Jack: It needs to be compelling enough.

Austin: Yeah. I can't believe I have been fucking hoisted on Catholicism again. This fucking... Unbelievable. Do you know the Gene Wolfe quote about Severian in *Book of the New Sun*?

Jack: No.

Austin: I'm just going to read it because it's so good. He compares Severian's profession as a torturer to Jesus' profession as a carpenter in one of his books about...

Jack: This sounds like Gene Wolfe.

Austin: Uh-huh. “It’s been remarked thousands of times that Christ died under torture. Many of us have read so often that he was ‘a humble carpenter’ that we feel a little surge of nausea at seeing the words yet again. But no one ever seems to notice that the instruments of torture were wood, nails, and a hammer; that the man who built the cross was undoubtedly a carpenter too; that the man who hammered in the nails was as much a carpenter as a soldier, as much a carpenter as a torturer. Very few even have seemed to notice that although Christ was a ‘humble carpenter,’ the only object we are specifically told he made was not a table or a chair, but a whip.” And it’s like, yeah, I’m hoisted.

Jack: Whoa!

Sylvi: Fucks pretty hard.

Austin: I’m doing the same shit but with eat of my flesh, you know what I mean?

Jack: Yeah!

Austin: We have made Catholicism about cannibalism over here.

Jack: Oh my god.

Sylvi: Always has been.

Austin: Always has been!

Jack: Always has been. Okay, so let’s figure this out. The first part of the Sentence is “when you prepare...”

Sylvi: [claps hands]

Jack: [laughs] Rubbing your hands together as we...

Sylvi: You can fucking hear it.

Jack: “When you prepare a meal.”

Austin: “When I prepare a meal.”

Jack: Oh, yes, sorry. Is it also when one? Would someone... Oh, here’s a good question, Austin.

Austin: No, because whoever has it, it’s the same Sentence, “when I.” If they take the Ephemera, they are taking—

Jack: Would it work the same way for someone else?

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: Yes. I believe that that’s true. I have to look at the rules. You know.

Jack: “When I prepare a meal of my own flesh.” Look, *Yellowjackets*, I love you. I’m looking dead in your eyes and I’m saying you are cowards, *Yellowjackets*.

Austin: [laughs]

Jack: “When I prepare a meal of my own flesh using this spoon.”

Austin: Using the Spoon of the Exhale, please. We’re in fucking fantasy mode, you know?

Jack: Claw of the Conciliator. Spoon of the Exhale.

Austin: Yep, mm-hm.

Jack: Okay. “Any who eat...” So here’s the thing. If we say “any who eat will not need to sleep for a week,” we need to make sleep deeply consequential.

Austin: Yeah, you’re 100% right.

Jack: Which is worth saying because in *Friends at the Table*, we don’t tend to.

Austin: We’re not that type of...

Jack: We have scenes in which...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Tiredness and sleep are important, but we're not the kind of show that is saying, well, you haven't slept, so you are at a hard disadvantage here. You know, unless that's, you know, really sick.

Janine: I think you can get there by not having it be, they don't need to sleep. And instead you have it they can't sleep. Or they will not sleep. Because then, to me, that's language that Austin is going to look at and be like, "ahaha, hohoho, heeheehee, I am Austin."

Austin: But then why would you use the spoon?

Jack: Yeah, we want it to be good.

Austin: I think the answer is you need food.

Janine: Yeah...

Jack: This is also quote-unquote "scarier" if the thing that—obviously the thing you get out of it is going to be a mixed blessing, but you should want the outcome.

Austin: I mean, is this, is this, are we going wrong with sleep? Is it, will not hunger? Because we already talked about finding food on this journey is going to be a problem. And it is, right? You're going to run out.

Jack: And in episode one, Jud did think to himself, this won't be a problem. And what he thought there was, well, we can, we can eat people. [laughs]

Janine: What if, sorry, go ahead.

Jack: But it is especially funny if it does turn out that that means we can eat Jud.

Janine: What if the words that we pursue here are like satiation? Because like you can be sated by food and also be like sated in rest. Like you're not, you know? So if you're experiencing satiety, you're content, you're complacent to a degree.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Um, yes. That is worth thinking about. I do just, we are in Realis. And, you know, when we were talking about how tall is Gaje, you know, we sort of stumbled on a rule here.

Austin: Push it. Yeah.

Jack: I do just want to say, what if you eat of the spoon, you can't die for a short period. You cannot be killed. Now, I'm not saying for a week, you know. But.

Austin: For a day.

Jack: There is something going on here with the way that the cannibal cult sees eternal life through eating the bodies. You know, Roderick is kind of still around, as are four or five or six other people. But also death, the fear of death fed the spoon. And Jud is a Struggler, someone who is able to kind of keep persevering. Is there a thing where if you eat when you... What have I written down? "When I prepare a meal of my own flesh using the Spoon of the Exhalate, any who eat of it are unable to die" for like one sunrise.

Austin: Until their next meal.

Jack: Until their next meal? God, that's great, because then you can start getting really hungry.

Austin: You get real hungry, but you won't die. You'll just suffer.

Dre: Hey, what if you eat from the spoon as your next meal?

Jack: It resets itself. Keeps going.

Dre: All right, okay.

Jack: What did we say?

Austin: But you can only do it three times.

Jack: Yeah, would I die of starvation, Austin, or would I become a sort of horrible, endlessly starving husk?

Austin: No, you would not die if you—what do you mean?

Jack: Say I eat.

Austin: And then you never eat again.

Dre: No, you can't die.

Austin: You can't die. But all the effects of not gaining nourishment. You would stay alive.

Jack: I become an endlessly suffering starvation. Oh my god, yeah. Yeah, I would eventually just be weak. I wouldn't be able to move.

Austin: But you'd be alive.

Jack: This is my proposal. The Sentence is "when I prepare a meal of my own flesh using the Spoon of the Exhale, any who eat are unable to die until their next meal." How do we feel about this?

Sylvi: I think that's good.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Yeah, I think that rules. I'm going to word wrap that so we can see it clearly. Boom. "When I prepare a meal of my own flesh using the Spoon of the Exhale, any who eat are unable to die until their next meal." Mm. Realis! I just have to say that the way, like, Jay-Z will sometimes be like, "ho!" You know, like, Realis!

Sylvi: Realis!

Austin: Turn my headphones up.

Dre: You crazy for this one, Rick.

Austin: Exactly.

Jack: Cut to somebody feeding somebody else their own foot.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: Okay, well, thank you for taking the time to figure that out.

Austin: Cannibal, King Kong, Godzilla, Loch Ness.

Jack: [laughs] Okay.

Austin: I don't know, "Exhale with no conscience" kind of goes.

Jack: It doesn't, the unknown don't have consciences.

Austin: Janine in the chat says, "why do they call it eat of the spoon when you of eat the spoon... [laughing] When you of eat the spoon out Jud."

Janine: [laughs evilly]

Sylvi: Oh my god.

Austin: Y'all go back to camp?

Sylvi: We kind of have to. I feel like we need to get Jud's arm taken care of. And it probably is better to do that at the...

Janine: Yeah, maybe.

Sylvi: I mean, listen, if y'all want to do something, go ahead. I am pulling this kid out of the tunnels, though.

Janine: Yeah, we should go.

Back to Camp [1:16:30]

Austin: All right. You make it back. And I think when you get back, you know, you can hear Mirador talking in the dark to... Scrundle. Whew. Close one. I almost forgot Scrundle's name. Very, very important not to do that.

Austin (as **Mirador**): [whispering] I don't know. I don't know, Scrundle. I feel like... I feel like... We just don't, we didn't have time. We didn't have... Yeah, I would have picked... I would have picked different people if we had time, but they're pretty good. They're gonna get us there. I know. I know.

Austin (as **Mirador**): [louder] Ah—is the kid all right? Hey!

Austin: And, like, sees you approaching.

Sylvi: Uh, Jud, how are you doing?

Jack: Uh, in and out of consciousness.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Well, he's alive.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Bring him. Bring him over here. Once...

Austin: And he begins to reach into that duffel again to produce some sort of like, you know, I think produces like another, just like a long towel, but the towel is of a really nice material that'll feel comfortable on your skin, and lays it out near the fire.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Ah, his arm.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Yeah, he got attacked by something. We took care of it.

Austin (as **Mirador**): What sort of something? *What sort of something?*

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): There were skeletons.

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

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): And some other thing... It was kind of hard to tell what it was.
Ask one of them.

Sylvi: And gestures at Sacea and Flemming.

Austin: Looks at you.

Janine (as **Sacea**): Don't ask questions you don't want the answer to.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Was it dealt with? *Dealt with*, dealt with? Or is it still out there?

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): It seemed like Flemming handled it. I don't know how permanent that was.

Dre (as **Flemming**): [sighs] Neither do I. But this is what happens when you go off the map!

Janine (as **Sacea**): He's not even conscious. He can't hear.

Austin: Jud, can you hear him?

Dre: Oh, I wasn't saying that to.

Janine: Oh.

Austin: That was to everybody else.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Yeah, yeah, yeah. Your map. Let me.

Austin: Begins to attend to Jud with what I would call, you know, fairly practiced, you know, manner. I wouldn't say that Mirador is moving like a doctor, necessarily. But he's moving with—I would say that, you know, Mirador is—I mean, Mirador is obviously

presenting as someone who knows more than they're letting on. But also, Mirador is someone who... maybe presents as being a trader or a merchant or a collector but is moving with the precision and pace of a practitioner. What type of practitioner, who could say, you know, but is not just, is not simply a, you know, an average person trying to set a bone or something, right. Is moving as if they're comfortable with, you know, the wound here and the damage that was caused, as if they've been through some shit a little bit. And they do the best job that they can to give you a, you know, a sling or I guess it's just broken, right? So like, God.

Jack: Like a splint?

Austin: A splint, I would say. Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, and I think just like in and out of consciousness, you know, apologizing, thanking Mirador, but not terribly clear, clutching the spoon tight in a left fist, and then just sleeping. Fitful sleep.

Austin: Yeah.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Thanks for bringing him back.

Austin: To the rest of you.

Austin (as **Mirador**): I know it seems—

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Can't exactly leave him alone, right?

Austin (as **Mirador**): Yeah. I think by the end of it, he's going to have pulled his weight. I can feel it, you know? But sometimes it takes a little bit to spin up.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Hm. So I suppose you picked the right people?

Austin (as **Mirador**): I better have.

Dre (as **Flemming**): The shirt told me.

Austin: He just nods and laughs a little under his breath. All right.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Also, the donkey disagrees.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Don't worry about what Scrundle thinks, okay? Scrundle's a... Scrundle's a cynic.

Dre (as **Flemming**): I think Scrundle is an excellent judge of character.

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

Dre (as **Flemming**): Based on what I heard from the shirt.

Austin: I think you have amused Mirador here. And I think that that's like lowered his own guard a little bit, and he says,

Austin (as **Mirador**): All right. Flemming, if you have questions about what you're doing here, if you have any doubt, I know it comes from a different place than my old donkey. So, if I can relieve you of that doubt, I will. What do you need to know to be bought in?

Dre (as **Flemming**): What specifically are you giving me at the end of this?

Austin (as **Mirador**): An opportunity to make something real. An opportunity to change Realis.

Austin: And there's no doubt. He believes what he is saying with intensity and clarity, even as he seems almost a little scared of what he's talking about.

Austin (as **Mirador**): I'm from a... [clears throat] I've spent time in a lot of churches, a lot of different types. I've been around the block, you could say. I've learned something. I'm not the only one who knows it, but I think I'm the one who knows it best, or who believes it the most, maybe. You see, every thing, everything is every other thing. You just have to push it a little to get it there. Do you get what I mean?

Dre: Nodding.

Austin (as **Mirador**): I know a place. It's hard to get to. We're on our way. It's hard to do the pushing. But this place has leverage. It lets you push harder. I'm going to bring us to the sort of lever that lets you move moons. Now, try to get some rest with that in your mind. Because I sure as fuck haven't been able to.

Austin: And goes back over to Scrundle and says,

Austin (as **Mirador**): Yeah, I told him. I told him. You get some rest too, you fucking donkey.

Sylvi: Wow, he isn't happy with any part of his team.

Austin: [laughs] I'm not going to make anybody reapply, you know, smoke or whatever. That stuff worked. I'm going to let that stand. Letting Sentences stand is an important part of the system. And nothing has changed—I mean, the stuff that changed was dealt with, right? The Exhale has been dealt with, at least for now, and will not be threatening you tonight. So, the old, the methods that you already did will continue to sustain them yourselves. The next morning, I'm guessing no one else does anything over the night. Leave it open. Just in case. Any other conversations...?

Jack: Oh, do we hear any sounds in the forest? What is the sound? Jud wakes up for 16 minutes in the middle of the night in the Velutines. I had to double check what the name of this forest was because there's a map scrawled over it.

Austin: It is drawn over neath where it says the Velutines, yeah.

Jack: Yeah, what is the sort of like audio soundscape of being awake for a short period of time at night in the heart of the Velutines?

Austin: So, first of all, everything is muffled, because you're in a carpeted place, in a sense, right? The bark, what would be... this kind of big echoey space with these trees. You know, the trees would cut the sound a little bit, right? But the hard wood would bounce it around too. That hard wood is soft here, right? So everything is a little quieter. Everything has this sort of like, the sound is swallowed by the forest. And so when something flutters, it's like cat's paws across a carpet versus across hardwood. You

know what I mean? But there are the sounds of insects. There are the sounds of owls. And in the distance, if you're awake in the middle of the night, you can hear the sound of pipes playing to the north, the direction you're going. It's a sort of upbeat, you know, I wouldn't go so far as joyous, maybe, but it's almost like, you know, folk music or something. You know what I mean? Not folk music, the contemporary genre, but, you know, historical folk tunes, you know, being played somewhere in the distance. And, you know, this map doesn't have any villages on it, you know, but it sounds like it's coming from something like that. And it's so off in the distance to the degree that you're like, am I still dreaming? Am I hearing a bird that sounds like—it's a bird call that sounds like a song, you know? But you can almost picture the sound, or you can almost picture the bright bonfire around which people might dance, you know?

Jack: But thankfully, eventually, sleep takes me again because you don't want to be the only one awake.

Morning in Sapryc [1:27:35]

Austin: Yeah. But let's get a little bit further here because I think the day awakes and whoever wakes up, I mean, you all probably wake up to the sound of, on the sort of canvas roof that Gaje set up, being hit over and over again with big drops of rain. It's pouring. And I'm going to reveal another Moon Sentence here. "Sapryc mornings are always gray and muddy." The thing about Moon Sentences is sometimes they're just, you know, truths about the place. And if you can make that work for you, you can spend a token. As a reminder, tokens can be spent to do three things. It's worth saying this. Tokens can give you the plus, the bonus to your... level of reality by one. You can use an established Moon Sentence as a Means. If you have to do something that one of your Sentences can't do, but you can creatively use a Moon Sentence, you can do that. And you can also create a new Moon Sentence with a token expenditure and use it. So you could tell me something about Sapryc that I don't know that is true about Sapryc. But Moon Sentences tend not to be as directed or, you know, instrumental in the way that character or faction Sentences are. And so there are things like descriptions about the way things work on the moon. In fact, I'll give you one more that you would know by

now, which is that “Sapryc’s money is always named for its shape.” Right? So, you know, I don’t know that you’re going shopping anytime soon, but those of you who’ve been on this moon for long enough know that, like, you know, first there’s the squares, then there’s the rounds. You know, the most expensive one are the... They’re probably not called triangles. What’s a good word for triangle that’s not quite the word triangle? Trignons? Trignons are kind of fun. But, you know, that type of thing, right? So, you know that also, right?

Austin: So, these are just Sentences about things, but this morning, this one is happening to you. It is pouring rain. “Sapryc’s mornings are always gray and muddy.” I mean, Sapryc’s always gray in general, but, you know, it’s especially gray and muddy.

Jack: Yeah, I didn’t want to say anything, but...

Austin: Yeah, but there’s a difference, I think, between the gray morning and the clear morning, even in black and white, you know? There are clouds above, there is... it’s gross out, you know.

Janine: The other thing I didn’t want to say before was when you were talking about the colored uniforms, red appears very light in black and white.

Austin: Oh, does it? Not dark?

Janine: Yeah

Austin: Oh, well, that’s fine because, yeah, they had one light and one dark, so the other one was still dark.

Janine: Yeah, yeah, it still worked, but I was sitting there biting my tongue being like I don’t want to be the worst person, but... Because it’s the whole thing with like silent movie makeup was like wild-ass colors because of the way that colors appear.

Austin: Because red does not show up nicely.

Janine: Yeah, it’s like blue and green and shit.

Austin: It does not show up as dark. Yeah, that makes sense. Sure. How do you move through the morning in this mud? How do you power through that? Because this is different, right? Whatever path you were able to create before, it's just like that much harder. I would see you're probably coming to a point where it's, the woods are increasingly dense and you're moving very slowly, if what you're doing is having Gaje literally build you a path. You're moving, you know, less than a mile an hour, at this point.

Jack: I'm probably in the cart. I'm like propped up. Like, I'm probably conscious, but not doing super great, and sitting in the back of the cart, kind of like holding the splint, the splinted arm.

Sylvi: I think I'm moving slowly. I'm not really complaining, but I'm clearly not happy about dealing with all the mud.

Janine: I'm also probably sitting in the back of the wagon unless I physically can't because of Jud.

Austin: Right. I bet you could both sit there at this point. It's probably not as comfortable as it would have been, you know?

Janine: Well, before I had, I was sort of picturing her like sitting on the very back with her legs hanging over the edge, so I'm still kind of picturing that.

Austin: Yeah, that makes sense still. Jack, you can un-Counter those Sentences, by the way, we're out of that scene for sure.

Jack: Oh, thank god.

Austin: You know, we've had probably two scenes since then. So yeah, I think that this is an uncertainty for me. Actually, I think it's actually the moon working on you. "Sapryc's mornings are always gray and muddy." You can't move at any meaningful rate down this—you're at this long path going to the spiral, the second big loop, right? And I just—I feel like we are—it is at the point now where that mud and the density of the woods is so much that like you're going to need a new strategy here. I don't know what that

strategy looks like, but you, you plus the cart, all that stuff. It's like, there is no path at this point.

Sylvi: There might even be like a moment where I am like saying that, like exhausted, like holding my giant needle and just being like,

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): We got to figure something else out. This is—by the time I—if we try and do this the whole way, I'm, it's going to take us weeks, maybe.

Austin (as **Mirador**): We don't have enough food for weeks.

Janine: My out of character thought is like if I did something that like made it cold so the mud would harden up?

Austin: Huh.

Janine: You know? Because I could do that, but I want to know if that seems like a good idea.

Austin: That's fun.

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: Okay, then I think while they're, while the griping sort of begins. Sacea makes a sort of grunting sound and sort of hops off the end of the wagon and makes another little grunting sound as her boots squish into the mud. Displeased. But in that displeasure is doing the thing, right? Pulling out the little chain, going through her belt, jingle, jingle, clatter, clatter. Then finding the right one, clipping it on the chain, pulling her cloak back into place to sort of cover up, and then start sort of squelching her way around the cart. And I think just starts walking up along the road while swinging this, not road but path, just walking like a little bit ahead, swinging this censer. And it starts to get, the smoke, I think, becomes that sort of like frosty mist.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: I think that's the first sign. And like you sort of see it and recognize it right before you start to feel it.

Austin: This is very cool. This succeeds. This is a classic, like, sometimes you wind up in a conflict without realizing you're in a conflict because it's just conversational. This happens in games and happens in Realis. The moon was working on you, was trying to ruin your traditional—this is a case where the moon itself was the actor. “Sapryc mornings are always gray and muddy” was trying to, the intent was to, you know, overturn your progress forward. It can be kind of hard to decide who's the actor and who's the Counteractor sometimes in Realis. As always, or, you know, my go-to is what's the status quo? If someone's trying to change the status quo as established in the fiction, they are the actor. And in this case, the status quo was you're making good progress through the Velutines. You have a system for it. So the moon was trying to act on you. You have Countered that successfully. You're a +0 Sentence, but so is it. And Counters go to the, or wins go to the Counter. Or ties go to the Counter, rather. Wins go to the Counter would be a system that doesn't work. The ties go to the Counter. You're able to overcome this. And, you know, I think, Gaje, it's still a little bit of a pain in the ass, right? And you're cold now. Everyone's a little chilly. Mirador goes,

Austin (as **Mirador**): All right, I got, one second.

Austin: And goes into the duffel and produces coats for everybody.

Jack: Huh.

Austin: Or at least cloaks, like heavy cloaks, probably. They're not sized, right? Though there's a really big one for you, Gaje.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Wow, you've got everything in that bag.

Austin (as **Mirador**): You know, you've got to bring a little, you've got to have what you need, right? You've got to have what you need.

Austin: And you make progress and the day goes. And I'd say it's probably about a little after noon when you come to what at first seems like a familiar sight. And then

there's kind of a key distinction that lets you know it's not quite where you were before. You find more log homes, more buildings from the raw, you know, unworked logs of this forest. But they're not, they don't have the slapshod quality that the other estate that you'd seen has. This is a village. You're certain, Jud, this is the village you heard the, you know, the flutes or whatever was being played, played. It is empty. There are no people here. There are lots of little like tree stumps that are set up around a bonfire that is just kind of, you know, smoke and ash in the rain.

And, you know, kind of in front of or behind, depending on your perspective, where this burnt out bonfire is or this kind of rained out bonfire, there is a big statue, or, you know, totemic figure of a almost like a per—like it's a humanoid figure. The thing that I have in mind is like, do you know Mokujin from *Tekken*?

Dre: [laughs]

Sylvi: Of course.

Austin: It's sort of like that but like 15 feet—taller than you, Gaje, like twice your height. And instead of it being like just raw, like just like a cut tree, it's actually more like tree plus, I mean, I'll send you the pictures where it's like, oh, this is what this looks like. The head is like, it's tree root mixed with dirt, kind of molded into, again, a vaguely humanoid shape, right? Like, not even, like, this would be the head. Do you see what I'm saying, right? You can kind of see, like, oh, yeah.

Sylvi: Ooh.

Austin: So this is, like, lots of little tree roots in soil that have a sort of cylindrical shape. Mokujin, by the way, is M-O-K-U-J-I-N.

Janine: He's a training dummy.

Austin: He's like a wooden training dummy. Yeah. This is not a training dummy. This is some sort of soil wood person, you know?

Janine: Rustic Pinocchio.

Austin: Yeah, what this literally is, is like the inside, the image I'm showing you is like the soil and roots of a plant that have been pulled out of a pot, right? Like a big, 20-inch big pot filled with soil and a root system.

Jack: Is there something of the statue of the Wicker Man, the Wicker Man itself here?

Austin: Yes, there's a little bit of that vibe.

Jack: Like a solid, almost like a barrel-shaped head.

Austin: Yep, yeah.

Jack: Totemic figure. Except instead of being made of wicker, made of earth and roots. Tekken fight between this training dummy and the Wicker Man.

Austin: Yeah, please. Tekken, can you add the Wicker Man as a playable character in the next Tekken? I know a new Tekken's dropping. They always have guest characters.

Jack: It's special move, the chest opens and a bunch of animals come out.

Austin: Right, yeah, yeah, yeah. Last time they had Negan from *Walking Dead*. This time they're going to have The Wicker Man from *The Wicker Man*. So yeah, I think this is a creepy, weird village. No one seems to be here. The rain is starting to subside as the afternoon progresses. It doesn't seem like the rain has shaken the sturdiness, the solidity of this big statue of a training dummy made of wood and soil. It's not literally a training dummy, but it looks like that sort of shape, those sorts of cylindrical shapes stuck together somehow. And it's here that we'll end for the day.

Jack: Not out of the forest yet.

Austin: Not quite. About halfway through, in fact.

Jack: But there's upkeep to do. There's a little bit of upkeep to do?

End of Session [1:41:00]

Austin: There is. So we should do that quickly. Because it's not that much. I need to, I should bookmark this here. This is on page... That's ending your story. End of session. Page 33, 34. All right. Did you work towards achieving your dream? If so, mark a dot next to one of your Means of your choice. Be generous with yourself. Characters don't need to move the world in order to have worked towards their dream. The path is long and even stumbling steps move you further.

Sylvi: I think hurting someone I'm close to is part of becoming my truest self.

Austin: [laughs] What are you marking?

Sylvi: I'm not entirely sure. I'm still thinking.

Jack: I can mark anything?

Austin: You can mark anything.

Dre: Okay.

Jack: My dream is "I will get revenge on whoever initiated the hunt," and I have gotten a cannibal's flatware.

Austin: You sure have.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Jack: So I am—

Austin: I don't know that it's a—I guess it is a cannibal. Well, if you feed other people yourself, you're not a cannibal. But you're—for you, as a cannibal.

Jack: No. But cannibalism...

Janine: But if you... Mm. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, the Exhale isn't feeding other—it doesn't matter. Yes, I think you're working toward your dream, Jud.

Jack: I'm going to mark "I always fight my way to safety," priming that Sentence for realization.

Austin: Let's go. You don't have to... Now, you don't have to realize it right now. You can sit with it until you want to, and anytime up until the next... Anytime you want to, you can realize it. Adding a qualifier to it, raising its level of reality to +1, you just can't do it at the moment of comparison between two Sentences. You can't be like, oh no, actually, I've lost this.

Jack: No, but, correct me if I'm wrong, am I able to use I always fight my way to safety as a Means and then realize, not in the same instance, but then realize it, making it active again?

Austin: Do you mean if it was Countered?

Jack: If it was Countered, yeah.

Austin: Correct. If you'd been Countered, you can un-Counter it by realizing it.

Jack: By realizing it, yeah.

Austin: Totally. Anybody else saying yes to this one?

Dre: I think I will. I've just been told that I'm going to find a magical power strong enough to move moons.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: That sounds like something that'd be pretty good to put in the great spellbooks.

Austin: I think so. What are you marking? You're marking your spellbook one?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: So it's up to two. All right. Two marks, not +2.

Janine: I'm, I would say I made some steps towards purging the miasma or purging miasma.

Austin: Uh-huh, you pretty explicitly made that.

Janine: Uh-huh, so I checked "I always strike with the hidden edges of my pomander."

Austin: Perfect, it's what you did to do it, too.

Janine: Yep. Bingo.

Austin: So, I think that all adds up to me. All right, choose one of your Means that shaped how you played your character but which you did not mark during play and mark it. As a reminder this can include Bonds. This can include the Band Sentence if it wasn't used, though I do think it was? Was it used? Did Jud use it? I forget. Yeah, you did. To find Jud, you used it.

Jack: No. Did they?

Austin: No? Yeah.

Jack: I don't think they did.

Austin: Did they not? Okay.

Sylvi: I think we thought about using it and then we ended up doing something different for...

Austin: Okay.

Janine: Did we determine that Bonds don't apply for this?

Austin: Everything applies.

Janine: Oh, okay.

Sylvi: I remember what it was. We talked about using the Band Sentence and then instead we used Flemming's Bond with me.

Austin: Flemming's Bond, right. Yes, yes, yes.

Dre: Oh, okay. So that means I can't mark that Bond.

Austin: Because you used it, correct.

Dre: Yeah. Okay.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Oh, I...

Austin: Oh, no, you can because it's not what you didn't use in play. It's that you didn't mark in play. So you could have succeeded with it.

Dre: Oh, okay. Okay.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Wait.

Sylvi: That's... So...

Dre: Can I mark my "grand spells" Sentence again?

Austin: Did you never use it? No. Oh, you never marked it until just now.

Dre: I never marked it during play until just now.

Austin: During play. Good question, Dre. I feel like no. I feel like you shouldn't. I think if you've marked it in the previous option, you shouldn't double down.

Dre: That sounds fair. Okay.

Sylvi: Cool. Okay, then I'm going to pass on that. Or?

Dre: Doing the Kombucha Girl face.

Jack: I think no.

Austin: My thought is no. My thought is...

Dre: That's fine.

Sylvi: I'm fine with no.

Austin: Yeah, I think it's too quick. I think the point of this is...

Dre: Sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh-huh. Yes.

Dre: Okay. What happens when you fill up a Bond?

Austin: Great question. You have a choice to make. Actually, that's not true at all. Once it's marked with its third dot, erase it, write a new one, still at +0, and recharge your token if discharged. Your new Bond can be with the same player or—player character, or with a new one. So it's like, hey, it's a new time. Your impression of the person has changed or has come to some sort of resolution, and, you know, boom. But also, a thing that I guess we haven't been doing. We have not been doing this, we've been playing this wrong because it's not right in front of us. Who has used their Bonds?

Sylvi: I kind of used mine to go look for Jud. I used it as at least as the motivation, I don't know if that...

Janine: Yeah, I want to check one of my Bonds for this whole like, what shaped your thing because that I think that shaped my thing.

Austin: Yeah, that makes sense. It totally did. Yeah it shaped it, but you didn't use it. An important thing is Bonds get marked when you use them, not when they fail. Even if you succeed, you mark your Bond because you've used it in that way. So I think, Flemm, your "they may not know it, but Gaje has natural aptitude for the magical." I just marked

it because it succeeded, but you used it, you know? So likewise, Gaje, did you use “Jud’s weakness is clear. They’ll die without me to protect them”? You kind of did to know that they were in trouble, right?

Sylvi: I kind of did. Yeah, to go get them. So.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: Should I mark it. then?

Austin: Yeah, you can... Well, no, because that did mark it. Did I... I think I just marked it early, a second ago.

Sylvi: Oh, did you?

Austin: Maybe I did.

Sylvi: I came into the session with a mark on it.

Austin: Oh, then I did not. Don’t worry about it. Go ahead and do it.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: Like, go ahead and mark it if you...

Sylvi: I just did, yeah.

Austin: The third thing here is just make sure that your stuff is up to date, you know? Make sure that if you...

Jack: Oh, I am marking a thing that I haven’t marked this time around.

Austin: Which is?

Jack: Which is, “I always protect those traveling with me.” I marked that in the first session, didn’t mark it this time.

Austin: Go for it. Yeah. Uh-huh.

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

Jack: As a reflection of this whole charade being, or the fiasco being like, “I’m going to go and find a place for them to stay so that I can pull my weight.”

Austin: Yep. Great.