

Realis 23: Warmth of the Cloister

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Kickstarter Update

Austin: Hey, everybody, it's Austin with a very quick update before the episode. My guess is if you hear this episode, if you're on this feed, you already know this. But just in case you're not, Realis' Kickstarter is now live. [Kickstarter.com/projects/crum/realis](https://kickstarter.com/projects/crum/realis). Just go to Kickstarter and search for Realis. You can go to clockworkworlds.com, my newsletter, where I wrote a little bit about the inspiration for Realis. And there's a link there in that piece, like right away at the very top. All of those places, you can go find links to Realis.

It's on Kickstarter. As of this moment, it has already passed funding, which is very exciting. It's already hit our goal. But we would love even more people to see it and play it. It'll be released in a PDF form in May. The full book will be released or shipped by November. That is kind of the way we wanted to do it. Those are the only two tiers of the Kickstarter. There's no big stretch goals or any sort of additional, you know, plus you can get this, you know, at checkout or try to do it as simply as possible.

There's a hundred different pieces of art in this book. There are 55 classes. There are 29 factions. There are 20 different moons. I have a whole bunch of guidance for GMs,

including new GMs who've never GMed before. It is, you know, for people who don't know, the book is written in character as a member of a group called the Wordwrights, who we have not yet run into as far as we know here in this campaign of Realis, but they're out there.

You know, it's just, it's been a five-year process that has been a joy to do and now it feels real, you know? And so I would love it if you checked out the book, found the version of it that makes sense for you. The campaign will run through all of April. And then later in the year, obviously, you'll be able to make purchases. So if you can't do it right now, it's not the end of the world. But as always, these first few days of a Kickstarter are really important so that you can get like front page support from Kickstarter and get the, you know, the project, you know, in front of people who would not ever hear about it.

So yeah, and if you've already backed it, thank you so much. It's such a relief to have already hit our funding goal. But again, if you want to check it out, please do. I cannot tell you enough how great the art is. Thank you to everyone who's contributed, all 17 artists. Obviously, Tyler, the publisher of the game, has been a huge help with it. Jack and Janine, who did additional writing and design. Thank you to Will Jobst, who was the editor on the game. Shannon Strucci and Delaney Jordan, who put together a really great trailer. Alex Meehan, who did some additional press release and copy for the Kickstarter page itself. And then Tyler got some help from Logan Dean on product management. For a full list of credits, including every single artist on the project, please go to [Kickstarter.com/projects/crum/realis](https://kickstarter.com/projects/crum/realis) and check it out. And thank you for listening and thank you for supporting it.

You know, y'all were the first people in the world who were not part of a playtest group to hear about Realis. You know, by the time the first time we debuted, it was during the National Network of Abortion Funds stream. We read the kind of opening situation, the opening play example that's in the book still to this day, though eagle-eared listeners will hear that there is a difference between that and the way it got finally published. One of the characters' classes changed because we had to change it for the Ashcan release

last year because that class wasn't in the Ashcan release, but it is in the full version. But I think we're just going to keep it changed because that class is very complicated. And it makes more sense to use a simpler class for the play example than the more complicated mech class that I would have used originally. It's fine. I've made that decision. No one else told me to do that. I'm making the good decision to have a clear play example instead of a mech play example.

Anyway. [Kickstarter.com/projects/crum/realis](https://kickstarter.com/projects/crum/realis). Thank you again for all of your support. Please enjoy the episode.

Opening Narration

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

Austin: For one hundred forty years, Sapryc has been colorless and dim.

War with the voracious Imperial Empest ravaged the land. Abandonment by the craven Leo Suzerainty ruined all refuge. And occupation by the covetous Venerant See, by the prideful Venerant See, by the pietistic Venerant See drove all hope, all Dreams, to die.

What do the Moonfolk on Sapryc dare hold onto in this grey world? What wish could survive such a wishless domain? And where would their hope live if it did exist? Where in their souls, which have been filled with despair? where in their bodies, which have been overtaken by hunger? Where in their minds, which rattle with confusion? Where in their hearts, which overflow with the bile? Where is there a place in the moonfolk of Sapryc for anything but survival.

Ah, but perhaps the monks of the north have an answer.

There, behind the walls of the Cloister of the Hollow Heart, they toil. They plow the dirt, and work the kiln. They tend to books and meals. They move the air itself so that they may breathe deep enough to Dream. Where do they find such aspiration? Where do their newly born hopes find the space to live?

The answer is in their name: The Cloister of the Hollow Heart. For, like an animal in the trap, they have cut away at themselves, digging and wriggling like grubs, draining the bile and the blood and anything else in the way until there is new, precious absence, waiting to be filled with hope.

Journeying to the Cloister [7:00]

Austin: You've escaped out from Vortigern's Hollow, this little side adventure, which I did not expect to be a side adventure but turned into a really nice one. And now you are making your way across the—kind of towards the north pole of Sapryc, towards the Cloister of the Hollow Heart, which is technically the first checkpoint on the list of places that Mirador seems to be going. Mirador said, we're going to go to the Cloister of the Hollow Heart. We're going to get transportation and we're going to go to our real destination.

So. Like I said, I've also had an extra day to think about what that trek from the other side of the ruins of the Cathedral Omphalic and Vortigern's Hollow up to the Cloister is like. And the real answer here is: it's cold. You are approaching the north pole of this moon, not a planet, of this moon. And though not true for all moons in Realis, this moon is getting colder the further north you go. It is getting dry. It is getting, you know, this is not pleasant territory to walk through. It's also very quiet here, after being in a place that had a bunch of fallen ruins for sound to bounce off of, after being closer to the south where there was the sound of the Velutines, or the sound of the war to the east of the Cathedral Omphalic or the battle there where the city of Allant was being invaded, or all the way back to Krater which was being, effectively, firebombed. You know, there were sounds in all these other places.

Here, the cold, empty air and the wide expanse of grasslands giving way to kind of like a more polar region is just dead silent, you know? And it's also just so cold. And I think that there's a point at which, because you did retain the cart, because Flemming shrunk it down. There's a point at which Mirador Cantata opens up one of the many big bundles

of stuff on the back of the cart and just produces a really thick, long winter coat for themselves and puts that on. And is like,

Austin (as **Mirador**): It's going to get cold from here on out. I hope you're all ready.

Austin: And there is a Sentence here that I will be asking how you get past here, which is "Sapryc's far north always freezes unprepared travelers alive."

Dre: Mm. Sure.

Austin: Does anyone have a way of addressing that Sentence, of countering "Sapryc's far north always freezes unprepared travelers alive."

Sylvi: Can I kill the cold? That could—I could do that. [laughs]

Dre: Fuck yeah, dude. Well, you're just, you're swinging your stake arm so hard that you can't get cold.

Sylvi: [laughs]

Jack: I mean, on one of the thousand moons, you know, where each weather is represented by, you know, different people living in different houses, you know, you could go and kill the snowstorm house, and that would get rid of it. But I don't think that's the case on Sapryc.

Dre: Man, yeah, shout out to, uh... Which Hieron? Was that Fall? Was that Fall in Hieron?

Austin: Yeah, that was Fall. *Autumn in Hieron*.

Dre: With the word eater, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, totally.

Dre: Okay. I mean, I do "always carry my hand-curated book of grand spells."

Austin: Oh.

Sylvi: Ooh!

Austin: Do you, now?

Dre: I do.

Austin: Okay. Are you trying to counter this with that Sentence?

Dre: Yes.

Austin: Tell me what it looks like. Tell me what your... Because my intention is to freeze you all. To death.

Dre: To death. Yeah, sure. Um. I mean, I could just light us all on fire. It's magic fire, so it won't kill you.

Janine: Also, wait.

Sylvi: Oh, wait. Hold on.

Janine: Reality stuff, right? Like, hang on. What was the Sentence we're countering again?

Austin: Uh-huh. You're countering "Sapryc's far north always freezes unprepared travelers alive."

Jack: That's a pretty real Sentence.

Austin: Read that as alive as in, to death. You know, there's no wordplay here. It freezes them back to life! That's nothing.

Jack: It freezes unprepared travelers, which is, you know, that could be a way that it has been realized, you know, rather than just freezing everybody. It could also have been further realized with Sapryc's far north. This could be +2.

Sylvi: Oh, I love that we're doing like Sentence diagramming to figure out the stats of this now. Wait.

Janine: This could be +3.

Dre: We're fucking gaming.

Austin: Doing the Birdman rubbing my hands together.

Sylvi: Yeah, Austin, you're cooking.

Austin: Whew!

Jack: What are the pedants called in Realis, Austin? The word crafters? No, the like.

Austin: Oh, the word—you mean the people who wrote the book Realis.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: They are, of course, the word...

Jack: Wordwrights?

Austin: Wordwrights, yeah.

Jack: They love this shit.

Austin: They do love this shit. They think this is how the world works. They're wrong, but, you know, it's a good simulation.

Sylvi: I was going to say, I think the plan for... If Flemm wants to do magic, go ahead. I was going to say we could use our Band Sentence to find, like, shelter or something somewhere. Because I wanted to double check how Band Sentences work. They start at +1, right? Am I reading that right in the Realis doc or did that change?

Austin: I believe that is correct. That's part of what makes them very strong, right?

Sylvi: Okay. Because it's marked as 0 on here.

Austin: Oh, no, that should be +1. You should mark that as +1.

Sylvi: Okay, I'm gonna bump that up.

Austin: Thank you. They start at +1 and they begin—because they always have the condition “when we work together, we always.” And you can only use it once per session, but, you know.

Sylvi: Not necessarily something we have to use right this second, especially if, like, I don't want to take Flemming's shine, you know? Got to give that guy some spotlight.

Austin: Yeah, which I think this is a good instance for that, because part of the reasons we're talking about around realization or honing or whatever we want to do there, and the good debate around what level of reality is the Sapryc Sentence “Sapryc's far north always freezes unprepared travelers alive.” So Flemming, what do you want to do?

Dre: I still—yeah, I want to set us on fire.

Austin: Okay, so are you not going to increase the reality of the Sentence? You're not going to realize the Sentence?

Dre: No, it sounds like I probably need to.

Austin: Yeah, so you could realize it, and you could spend the token, or you could spend the token. You could go either way. You don't know what the level of reality this is at this moment.

Dre: Yeah. I'm going to realize the Sentence. So how do I want to...

Austin: Great question. There are some tips on realization in the book at, on page... Well, I guess I'm looking at my version of it. I should look at the one that I think I sent you all, which is... What is the name of that document?

Dre: The one I'm looking at is just called Realis.

Austin: Okay, good. Then you're looking at the right one. It's on page 45, Tips for Realization. For many new players, Realization can be both exciting and scary. You're changing your characters permanently and in an open-ended way. There are more ways to realize any given Sentence than there are moons of Realis. Thankfully, while there are no firm rules for what sort of limitations you can put on a Sentence during realization, there are some best practices. In brief, when you realize a Sentence, they tend to change—or when you realize Sentences, they tend to change in terms of scale or effect, type of target, or prerequisite contexts or circumstances. That may seem limited, but each of those is quite extensive. For instance, if you're realizing the +0 Sentence, I always win in one-on-one combat, it might become the +1 Sentence “I always win when fighting in the sunlight,” “I always win in one-on-one combat against humanoid opponents,” “I always win with my prized saber,” “I always survive one-on-one combat.” And so those are like circumstance, “in the sunlight” or target, “against humanoid opponents” or circumstance, “while wielding my prized saber” or effect, “I always survive,” instead of winning, or effect, “I always impress people when engaged in one-on-one combat,” or, you know, “against enemies of the Venerant See,” which is target. Et cetera, right? So there's a lot of space there. There's also, you know kind of additional stuff here where it's like, It should be a restriction that you feel, but it should not feel like—you don't have to really lay it on, right? You should feel it as a single step of getting worse. An example that I use here is, you don't want to go to +1, “I always win on one-on-one combat against Zhalika, Queen Commander of the Empest.” That's a really limited Sentence, right? That's one person. But you might want “I always win one-on-one in combat against the Empest.” Hit the Chain Bastard button, please.

Jack: [sings the Chain Bastard theme from *Hunter x Hunter*]

Sylvi: [cackles] Thank you.

Austin: But, who knows, so—yeah. But, so other ways you could do it. A place: “in space,” “on my vessel,” “on solid ground,” “in my province.” A time or element or environmental condition: “at night,” “in the dark,” “in the rain.” A motivation or goal: “when trying to save someone's life,” “while following a direct command,” “when it's in

line with my faith's beliefs," "when a friend is in trouble." A type of obstacle or opponent: "when investigating magic," "when fighting the Empest," "when teaching students younger than me." The subtraction of a quality, so something like "an unstoppable weapon" could simply become "a weapon," "a unique vessel" becomes only "a vessel," as long as it's a quality that was additive in that way. Or a change to make something more specific. "I always catch my prey" can become "I always locate my prey." "I always kill my foe" becomes "I always wound my foe," for instance. But a change in quality here.

Dre: Yeah, I'm thinking of changing, basically changing the adjective. So right now it is "grand spells," and I'm thinking of changing that... or adding to it. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Or... Yeah, that's interesting. Is it that the books that we, or sorry, that the spells we thought of as grand before—or rather, is it that you've kind of used the stuff that was grand? Is it that the type of magic you'll be doing going forward is less impressive?

Dre: No. Come on. If anything, it's more.

Austin: Well, then—but then it—then don't get rid of the word grand.

Dre: Right. Well, that's what I'm thinking, maybe it is complicated in grand spells.

Austin: Mm. What's the complication? How do we play that out, is that like it takes longer?

Dre: Yeah, or it takes like specific things. I mean, I'm thinking of like whenever Flemm has done like bigger magic, it has been ritualistic. I'm thinking specifically of like.

Austin: Don't think about how you've been doing stuff, though.

Dre: Yeah. No, that's fair.

Austin: Because you will not be doing it the way you were doing it before, is what's important. Right? So unless what you're saying is like, when I have time to, "when I've had time to gather my reagents, I always," you know, dadadadada.

Dre: Yeah. Yeah. Then maybe it is. So "grand" to me is, I guess, overall, a positive word.

Austin: Yeah. For sure.

Dre: And so, so maybe, then, they are spells that as I'm getting deeper into the book and I'm getting as, as things are, as the going gets tough, they are no longer like good grand, but they are like... "Terrifying" is probably too hard of a word.

Austin: Mm! I don't think it's too hard of a word.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: There are some other things you could do. You could do like... I mean these not in the bad way, not in the they're shitty spells way, but you could do like "terrible" or "awful" in that way.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: You know what I mean? Like where it's like, oh, this is kind of messed up stuff, you know, or this is frightening. "Frightening" is also pretty good, I would say.

Dre: Yeah, I was leaning towards maybe like—I like "terrible." I like "frightening." I like "horrifying."

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Let's go with "terrible." I like "terrible."

Austin: Yeah. I like it. A shift in the way people will see you as you use these spells.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: So that brings my Sentence up to 1. And then...

Austin: Also, I want to be clear. There will be times when you or I might be interested in playing with the other meaning of “terrible” here and offering, for instance...

Dre: Sure.

Austin: Hey, I'll let you recharge your token if you...

Dre: [laughs] Use that shitty spell?

Austin: Tragic succeed on that on that shitty spell, yeah, exactly, or you could frame that to me, you know what I mean? That ambiguity is fun and we shouldn't ignore it, that's kind of what Realis is about. But I'm not saying that that's the default, like I think we are both agreed, the thing that we're talking about here is terrible in the other way. So. All right. Great.

Dre: Okay, so that is now +1.

Austin: Well, and I think it fits the spell that you're describing, which is you're going to set everybody on fire.

Dre: Yeah! Uh-huh!

Austin: Okay. Are you going to also boost this with the token?

Dre: Ooh. Yeah, because I guess I don't know what level the Sentence I'm going against is until we flip the cards over, right?

Austin: That is correct. Yeah, until the heart of the cards is revealed.

Dre: Yeah, fuck it. Let's hit it with the token.

Austin: All right. Boom. You hit it with the token. And I have to tell you, you did not need to hit it with a token. It's just a +1 Sentence.

Dre: That's fine.

Jack: You still lose the token.

Austin: "Sapryc's far north always freezes unprepared travelers alive." The sort of base version of the Sentence would have been "Sapryc's far north always freezes travelers alive." The "unprepared" is the real one here. Generally, Moon Sentences will have like... Not generally. One type of Moon Sentence is already place-located like that, without it necessarily being a +1, so that ambiguity is important and is purposeful. So. But you do it. What does it look like from the outside to be set on fire like this, Flemming, and then also what does it look like for the people who are like this? Is their vision, do they see the flames? Do they feel the flames? Tell me what this terrible spell, what the phenomenological sense of being inside of this spell is like.

Dre: What is the hottest you can be before it becomes painful?

Sylvi: I'm Googling this right now.

Dre: Like, this is uncomfortable. This is like...

Janine: When you notice that you're getting a sunburn?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Sure.

Dre: Yeah, and it's very humid.

Austin: Oh, that's interesting too. Going from being so dry in this environment to suddenly it's very humid, too.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Ugh.

Dre: It probably does... It leaves things crispy. It doesn't, like, burn your clothes off or anything, but, like, if you've ever seen videos of where people take an old sweater that has all the little cotton ball things on it, and you light it on fire to burn them off.

Janine: Why? Don't—

Sylvi: Oh. What?

Janine: No.

Dre: Oh, hold on. Hold on.

Sylvi: Like getting rid of pilling on a sweater?

Dre: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Janine: Just shave it. Oh my god.

Sylvi: Yeah, that. That seems dangerous.

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: I want to see this.

Dre: I didn't say it was a good idea.

Sylvi: No, that's true. You didn't specify that.

Dre: I'm trying to find a video of it. I swear I have seen people do this before, and now I feel like I'm not going to be able to find anything and I'm going to be like...

Sylvi: I believe it. It sounds like a thing that people would do.

Janine: I wonder if this only works on acrylic. Or something.

Austin: Oh, maybe.

Janine: You know?

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Janine: Where you're technically just melting it off.

Austin: I'm searching.

Dre: Yeah, maybe I just made this up in my head, but that's what's happening.

Austin: Okay. Yeah.

Jack: Is this... Does this melt snow around us?

Dre: Yes.

Austin: Ooh, that's fun. And then, you know, I think... You begin to hear from the distance the sound of ringing bells. And, you know, we get the shot from some watchtower at the Cloister of the Hollow Heart, looking down as Scrundle and, you know, five, six walking figures, all covered in fire, are slowly trudging, you know, through the low snow and the ice towards the Cloister. You know, just... Burning figures walking through the snow.

Janine: I have a question.

Austin: Uh-huh?

Janine: Is fire like significantly distinguishable from just like cool magic light in black and white?

Austin: Oh, because of the black and white. I think people recognize the licks of fire.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: And it's obscuring, right? It's not, you can't see through it, you know? And it's like licking the air the way fire does. It's rising up off of you. It's not a glow. It's flames, you know. And they recognize it from fire, you know, it looks like the fire that they keep under the stove or whatever, in the stove. So yeah, bells ringing in the distance, but

you're able to make the rest of this march there. Scrundle doesn't love this, but also Scrundle is Mirador Cantata's donkey and has been through a lot of stuff.

Sylvi: Is Scrundle on fire as well?

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah!

Sylvi: Cool.

Austin: Maybe not, actually. Scrundle might be a prepared traveler. So maybe Mirador was like, eh, Scrundle can...

Jack: By dint of being a donkey.

Sylvi: I mean, Mirador had a coat, right?

Austin: Mirador had a coat. Exactly. Mirador was prepared for themselves, and so maybe...

Dre: I bet Scrundle has a nice blankie.

Austin: That's my guess.

Sylvi: I was gonna, yeah.

Austin: Scrundle has some sort of winter mode clothing.

Janine: But then is it rude? Is it rude to set everyone else on fire and then be like, eh, the donkey's got a blanket. He's fine.

Sylvi: Well, I guess the other question is, since we're radiating heat, I imagine we're helping.

Dre: Hey, hey, I asked.

Austin: Oh, you asked.

Sylvi: That's true.

Janine: Okay, sure, yeah.

Dre: Yeah, I asked Scrundle.

Sylvi: But, like, we're melting the snow, right? So, like, us being around Mirador and Scrundle is probably helping keep them warm, too, right?

Austin: Is probably fine. Yeah, I think Scrundle is okay and doesn't want, Scrundle's like...

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

Sylvi: Yeah.

Dre: If there is one thing I want to be very explicit, is that if Flemming has no respect for anyone else in this party, he has absolute respect for Scrundle.

Austin: Okay.

Sylvi: I love—I love the tone that the Scrundle has made this game take.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: Where it's just the like grimmest shit ever. And then also we have this lovely donkey we're trying to protect forever.

Austin: This little lovable lovely donkey. Yeah.

Dre: But he's like the most reliable party member.

Sylvi: No shade to Scrundle! I just think it's like very good that we have him here to balance us out.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Plus, Austin's going to give us a 150 gamer score if we get Scrundle to the end of the game.

Dre: True.

Austin: [laughing] Complete the Scrundle run.

[someone makes an achievement noise]

Sylvi: If we do it, you need to edit in the achievement noise, whoever's editing this.

Jack: I have a question about the Cloister of the Hollow Heart.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: Because we are now within sight of it, right?

Austin: You are getting—yeah, so, do you want me to describe as you're approaching it?

Jack: Yeah, as as they see, you know, four people on fire and a man and a donkey. What do we see?

Outside the Cloister [27:00]

Austin: The first thing that you see that is evidence that you are nearing the Cloister of the Hollow Heart is windmills, or they seem like windmills at first. They are these big wooden blades spinning on tall wooden stalks, but as you near them, you notice that the air is actually pretty still here. And they are not windmills at all. They're fans, and they're spinning as to draw airflow towards the Cloister. The Cloister itself is built on top of a sort of mound, almost like a burial mound looking thing or like a, you know, it has the shape of the natural pyramid, not natural, but you know, like a pyramid of clay and soil that has been grown over. If you've ever seen those, like pictures of those throughout the Americas.

And then on top of it is the big monastery—or the big cloister, which is a monastery, that is like walled in. Again, big, wooden, like polished wooden fans, pointed inwards, or spinning such that the airflow is going towards the Cloister. And the buildings seem to be made of a mixture of wooden skeletal structure that is visible and then tightly packed baked clay as the bulk of what makes up these structures.

It is a sizable cloister. It is not as big as any of the towns you've been to—I guess it's as big as the Velutine town that you went to, right. There's like a bunch of buildings. There's one big central building. But there's also some, like, outward-facing buildings that you can see as you begin to climb up. I guess, actually, it's hard to see from at the bottom of this little mound of dirt, but as you make your way towards the wall, you can see a few buildings poking up over the outside walls.

You also see that there are other tracks of people coming this way. Presumably, and maybe even you recognize this, around the walls of this place are people in tents, people who fled from Allant, maybe even some people who fled from all the way down from Krater, where the Empest had been attacking. Effectively, refugees looking for a place to stay. Not all of them have made it inside. It's not necessarily clear quickly who decides who gets to go inside or what the rate of entrance is for these people or why they're being told to wait outside. I'm trying to think if there's anything else you can see from the outside.

I think those are the big picture things. This is a Venerant Sea cloister. It's part of the Venerant Sea, which, I believe the only Venerant Sea faction stuff that you have run into is "the Venerant Sea crusaders always punish non-believers." And so...

Jack: Ah, but hopefully these aren't crusaders. These are just nice monks.

Austin: These are just regular good monks. I'm trying to see if there's... Oh, and there's another thing here, which is like, *here*. Now that you are here, now that you're in past the fans and near this part, it's actually, despite the fans theoretically drawing in air, it is really that the air here is very thin. Plus, you know, you're climbing this little mound, I guess, but like, you're going up in elevation, but it really feels like you were in a place

with very thin air that is not comfortable to breathe. So yeah. You make it the rest of the way here. The doors are shut. There are a few dozen people around in tents waiting around these big wooden doors. The walls are also made of this kind of wood and clay combination. They're fairly tall. I'd say they're probably, you know, two or three stories up with kind of occasional watchtowers around them. What do you do?

I guess Mirador says, Mirador says,

Austin (as **Mirador**): I'm going to go check it out. I'm going to go see if I can talk my way in.

Jack: Very much a sort of like, well, okay, you guys wait here. Time for me to go do my bit.

Austin: Right. Correct.

Sylvi: That's the tone. He's not like... If there's any ambiguity, I'm going to go with the guy we're supposed to bodyguard. But if he's—

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: Okay.

Austin: There's not ambiguity. There's not like, I'm a little worried about this. There's like, eh, classic monks, you know.

Dre: I'm going with because I don't trust him.

Austin: Okay, interesting.

Sylvi: [laughs] Part of me wants to be like, I'm going with because I don't trust Flemm.

Dre: That's fair.

Sylvi: But I don't think, I think I, we're still on fire too, yeah?

Austin: Yeah, I guess that's a question. Did you turn your fire off? I assumed you turned your fire off.

Dre: Are we still cold?

Austin: You are not cold. When you get to the Cloister, the chill seems to have left the air.

Dre: Oh, then yeah, I'll turn it off.

Austin: There is something weird about this place.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): I'm just going to wait here.

Dre: Wiping the ash off of my eyebrows.

Austin: Yeah, I guess that's a thing I kind of skipped over here while I was describing the air being thinner here. It's thinner here, but it's also warm here. It's warm here in a way that's kind of like the sun is getting in. Or not the sun. I mean, there is a sun. The Corpse Sun does exist. And even its light hits here more warmly than most places. But the light from Realis itself is like much—it's like hitting the planet more here. If this was visual, it would still be black and white here, but it might be black and white with a cooler or a more blue tint than, because the light from Realis is this bright blue, right? And it would have a little bit more in that direction than the sort of dim black and white that we had before.

Dre: Like the ink is fresher on the page?

Austin: Sure, yeah. There is something about this that it's like... It is like unfiltered, you know, in some way. So yeah, so Flemming, you're going with Mirador. What are other people getting up to? And wait, sorry, Gaje, are you going with them now too?

Sylvi: No, the fact that we've got another person escorting Mirador makes me be like, okay, I'll stay with the cart, I think.

Austin: Okay, cool. Cart folks, then. What are y'all getting up to? You just hanging out here with Scrundle? You chatting up anybody local?

Jud [33:35]

Jack: I want to go get like some porridge or something. I want to like, the vibe I want very much is Jud hanging out with the other squires and serving men.

Austin: That's funny, because no one wants to stand near you.

Jack: Oh!

Austin: Everyone is giving way as you and this strange knight with a hole in their chest approach. And are whispering to one another very scared things.

Sylvi: [laughs] Yeah, you do have, you do have your undead friend when you're like, I'm just gonna go hang out with the people.

Jack: Well, I would like to, you know, enact a Sentence. I have the, hmm. I have the primed Sentence "I always find somewhere to rest."

Austin: You do.

Jack: And I want to increase the value of this Sentence in such a way that that restfulness doesn't have to be solitary. Let me see. I am going to increase this to a +1 Sentence and...

Austin: It's funny because it's like, if what you're trying to do is make it more restricted but also social.

Jack: I know.

Austin: What you're actually doing is saying "when I'm around people, I always find somewhere to rest." Or.

Janine: Yeah, I was gonna say, like, if you added, like, among something something.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. But what that's preventing you from doing is doing it alone, right? And that's the game.

Jack: I know, I know. It's a, it's a, yeah. Ugh.

Austin: Big change for Jud. The one who slept in the dirt.

Jack: It is a big change, and I think it might be, I think it is hasty. I don't actually think it is the right call. So I will pass on that. And I am prepared to...

Austin: Big rip, Jud.

Jack: I don't know. You know... It makes more sense as a piece of character writing to have offered your own flesh to the undead tree knight, who then has a hole blasted through him, and then, you know, we journey together. I think it would be cheap to then say, but I'm going to write a Sentence so that I can be cozy and have a nice porridge with someone, you know?

Austin: Sure. Well, like, the irony of it, though, is like you now have this bodyguard who's following you around, who is someone who could help, who would be someone you would rest among people. You know what I mean? Like, you've given yourself a connection that you actually like having.

Jack: Yes, it is sort of, I sold my hair to buy you the watch strap, and I sold the watch to buy you a hair comb. So yeah, Jud, looking for a peas pottage, some sort of awful monk meal. That's unfair to monks. Monks, historically, in real life and in fiction, have amazing meals.

Austin: Yeah. I know what this meal is, even. So.

Jack: Unfortunately, as I smell these delicious smells, I just, you know, sit down with my back to the outward-facing wall of this thing, and the Knight Cicatrix, I guess, just stands next to me?

Austin: Yeah, just stands, like, behind you, or, you know, kind of facing away from you so that the two of you can kind of see in every direction around you, you know? Between the two of you, you can... Keeping watch in 360 degrees. Kind of like the way the Cicatrix sarcophagus was at the feet of the Gorthgeier, Vortigern sarcophagus, you know?

Jack: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So yeah, you just plop down. You're just resting alone instead of talking to people?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Giving up on this as they begin to pull away? Okay.

Jack: I mean, that was an attempt, but... It didn't go well.

Austin: This is uncertainty you've decided not to address with a Sentence, basically.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Okay. Sacea or Gaje, what are y'all getting up to, if anything? Just hanging with Scrundle?

Janine: Um.

Sylvi: Eh. If you have something, go ahead.

Sacea [37:50]

Janine: I do have something. I wanted to scope the situation out a little bit. I... So after the last session, I said I was—I had picked one, you know, I had a couple points to put in. So I kind of piled them into one thing. And then I realized afterwards, like, oh, actually, I want to realize this other one instead. So I shifted one of the points that I had elected to put in, which I hope is fine.

Austin: Yeah. The end of session things. Yeah.

Janine: To the other one. Yeah. And I realized my second class Sentence to “I always shift the truth of my form with my smoke.”

Austin: Ah. That’s fun.

Janine: I would like to be...

Austin: Big, big downgrade, which is interesting. Not downgrade, but like “the truth” is so wide. “The truth of my form” is still very powerful, but that’s an interesting refocus.

Janine: I mean, listen, that’s the game.

Austin: That’s the game. No, no, no. I’m not saying don’t do it. I’m saying I like it and I wanted to call more attention to it.

Janine: [chuckles] So I imagine Sacea in that stiff way just like, ugh, getting out of the back of the cart and like dusting herself off and sort of doing a little stretch and pulling out a censer and sort of swinging it around and just like maybe saying like

Janine (as **Sacea**): I’ll be back in a bit.

Jack: [laughs]

Janine: And then just sort of wandering off. And I think it is, there’s probably like a moment of like her appearance flickering. I’ve described before her, I think like really early on, a thing where she was swirling the smoke around and like taking a lot of different forms all at once kind of thing. She would be like a young man one second and then like, you know, a crone again. And then like an old guy, you know, like a whole bunch of different forms. And I think sort of a version of that happens here, but I imagine the camera kind of losing her behind like a building or something or, or.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You pass like a big tent or like someone else’s big cart of stuff.

Janine: Yeah. And then on the other side, Sacea’s gone, and then it’s just, like, a rat.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: Oh, you're just a little rat running around.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: You've done some druid stuff, except via cool smoke.

Janine: Smoke druid. I mean, they're all smoke druids, but you know what I mean.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Sylvi: Sacea's the giant rat that makes all of the rules.

Austin: Ohhh!

Sylvi: That's what I'm hearing.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Jerma, play Realis.

Austin: Jerma, play Realis. Jerma Realis stream when?

Sylvi: [giggles]

Austin: So where, what you doing as a little rat?

Janine: I want to like get into a building and then like scootle along the rafters and like overhear stuff.

Austin: Oh, you're like getting into the... You're like going to like go into the monastery.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: You're not staying on the outside of this place. You're going in.

Janine: No, I want to, I want to get in. I want to hear stuff. I want to see stuff. I want to chew stuff.

Austin: Yeah. I think that this, this, there is no like explicit door—well, I guess there actually is. You are, in doing this, overcoming a Sentence you did not know that you were necessarily going to need to—I guess actually the thing that’s happening here is... I guess, are they even trying to...? Have you just overcome the circumstance by which they could even try to counter you? I think that you kind of have. You kind of sidestepped it altogether. I think you would have succeeded here anyway, because this *is* “Venerant See crusaders always punish nonbelievers.” The thing that’s being punished is these people who are stuck out here did not, like, recite the words correctly. They did not recite the prayer correctly to get inside, and so they’ve been punished by basically needing to serve penance for a week waiting outside until they’re let into the Cloister. But as a little rat, you’re able to sneak past them all together. They don’t get to... They don’t get to try to “punish the non-believers” with you. And let me tell you, I’m looking at their Sentences. They don’t explicitly have anything that’s like, “the Venerant See clergy always catch a little rat in the act.” That’s not one of their Sentences.

Janine: That’s on them.

Austin: So you’re able to sneak up the side of the wall or through a little crack in it and into the interior. You get a better, you know, kind of vision of what this cloister is like. It’s like most, you know, I—actually, I’m kind of guessing. Sacea, have you spent time inside of religious places like this? Religious facilities?

Janine: Oh, almost certainly, right?

Austin: That’s what I imagine, yeah.

Janine: Like, I’m specifically based on—in real life, the person who swings the censer isn’t exactly not church-affiliated. I don’t think her role is specifically religious necessarily, but I’m sure there’s been overlap.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, that makes sense. Then, yeah, at first blush, there’s nothing here too dissimilar from other similar cloisters. It’s quiet. There are some monks tending a garden. You know, you see a place that’s probably some sort of large kitchen, or could be a distillery, or could be some sort of, you know, the place where the

agricultural work of the Cloister happens, whatever their export is, is happening there. Then there's obviously the central kind of structure that includes the church itself, and then probably the residence halls are all there too.

You do notice that the monks seem to be divided by, I guess, I'm trying to think of what you would notice immediately. Some of the monks have on blindfolds. Some of them have on gloves. A handful of them have on gloves. In short—or I should actually say it this way. Some of the novices have on blindfolds or gloves or have their ears covered. The novices are the ones who have not taken the vows fully yet. And then the ones who are monks, some of them also have blindfolds on, but instead of white or light blindfolds, they are dark or black blindfolds. There are people who, I don't know how you would—I don't think you can necessarily see this, but you can tell that the people here have done, are engaged with some sort of vows around the senses. They're diminishing their senses, right? This is a thing that's hard to learn as a little rat. But. [laughs] Is the thing here, right. You know, maybe what you actually do is you overhear part of the prayer that is being, you know, asked to—maybe you literally overhear Mirador giving them the prayer, you know, to the gate guard, so that you can all be let in. And you hear him say, you know.

Austin (as **Mirador**): I need not smell; the truth emanates in the air. I need not hear; the truth speaks in sight. I need not see; the truth exhibits on the skin. I need not feel...

Austin: And et cetera, right. And effectively proving that he is a believer, which I think we all know he is not, but doing the proper song and dance to get inside for everybody. But yeah, so these are monks who, and maybe you've even heard of this type of Venerant See monk before, right? The Venerant See's whole thing, on paper, is that they preach a sort of austerity, not just in wealth, but in kind of physical pleasure and in sensuality. Sensuous desire is a temptation to become the worst version of yourself. You should be ascetic. You should cut yourself off from physical joy and from material pleasure. And most of the ways that we've shown folks from the Venerant See before so far have been really hypocritical about this. These folks seem to take it a little more

seriously, at least. Again, maybe you of the party, you and Mirador and, you know, maybe, *maybe* Flemming have heard of these folks. At the highest level, they, you know, basically some of them remove their own sense of smell, some remove their own sense of taste, some remove their own sense of touch, you know, permanently. And maybe you see this one, right? The kind of abbot of this place, a monk named Ketero, who I picture as the wrestler Minoru Suzuki.

Sylvi: Oh, let's go!

Dre: Oh!

Austin: Has his whole body tattooed where his nerves are. It's almost like you're seeing a tattoo inside of his body of his nerves that have been given a glowing black that you can see through his skin. And he's kind of cut himself off from all physical sensation.

Dre: Oh, fuck yeah! I want to know what spell that guy cast on himself.

Austin: There was no spell cast. It is a process by which you literally tattoo your nerves with a magical tattoo ink that settles down into your nerves throughout your body.

Dre: Fuck. Okay, so literally you're saying...

Janine: Oh, I love *Dragon Age* Thunderous.

Austin: Ah, yeah, uh-huh.

Dre: You're saying it's not you are tattooing a diagram of your nerves.

Austin: No. The nerves.

Dre: It's literally you are getting inked in your nerves.

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Dre: Sick. Love it.

Austin: And because of that, you know, he cannot taste either. He cannot... There's all sorts of like knock on effects to this. And he is, I think, speaking to a group of other monks, speaking both with his words and also with his hands. He's doing sign language with them because some set of them are also deaf or have deafened themselves in some way. Some of the novices, again, temporarily, but those who've stayed and taken the vows permanently. And is lecturing on this, right? Is lecturing on, and I think maybe specifically is giving this sermon on those outside the gate, and how if they had had the strength to give up the pleasures of the earth already, the pleasures of the material world already, they would have been able to fend off the Empest, but that now that they are here it is our duty to help them develop that strength. So, you know, very dismissive and shitty, but also then imposing a sort of duty on the other monks to try to "improve" these people, quote unquote, you know. So that's the gist of it up here.

Sylvi: Austin, I find it, like, I used to think there's no way Minoru Suzuki can become a scarier person.

Austin: [laughs]

Sylvi: And then you were like, oh, yeah, he's, like, tattooed his entire nervous system and is also, like, running this monastery with, like, you know, he runs a tight ship.

Austin: Strange idolatry. Oh, yeah. 100%. 100%. Yes. And you get the impression, Sacea, that this is someone who's very hard to impress, is what I would say. And maybe carry that in your back in your back pocket for now. So yeah, that's the gist of what's going on here. You know, some more like high level stuff that I can give you as you're doing your little "what if *Hitman* but you play a rat" version of the game. The little area where it's like oh, what are they making in there? It seems like they are making soap, they are making some sort of like... You maybe see someone packing these little soap cubes, these little soap bars, into paper and piling them into crates. This is their big export, some sort of soap. They also do some essential oil type stuff. And the front door to that building and all of the easy to access places are all have like big mushroom icons. So you assume maybe they're doing some sort of mushroom soap? I don't know. The interior, the deep interior of that building is a little harder to get into, has been more

reinforced than just sticks and clay. And you can't quite get into the heart of the kind of manufactory here in the Cloister. Trying to think if there's other big picture stuff here. There are other major figures, you know, there's a head librarian, there's other people, but we can get to them as we get to them in ways where you can...

Jack: Are there other rats?

Austin: Great question. Yes, but they, there are other rats. I think that they came with the refugees from Allant, which is a big city, right.

Jack: Oh, the city where the massive space elevator fell.

Austin: Yeah, 100%. These are refugees from there, and again, all the way from Krater. So, you know, rats who'd gotten into the big barrel of food, you know, or the big barrel of supplies or whatever and have snuck around here. They are— [laughs] Sacea, you see someone setting up rat traps, and they're talking to themselves, being like,

Austin (as **Monk**): Oh, another test. Another test from the Immaterial One. Simply a small test.

Austin: And the rats are having a field day. They are happy to be running around. None of them come up to you, because I don't know that I want to commit to rat speech in this world.

Janine: No, I'm probably not going out of my way to socialize with the rats either.

Austin: Okay, yeah. I always... Jud, that's your new Sentence. "I always find somewhere to rest with rats."

Jack: Yeah, I mean, it goes unsaid. I know that's not really how Realis works, but in this instance.

Austin: Yes. All right. So yes, and let me pop back over here, then, Flemming. The other side of that conversation is that you are there as Mirador has approached the front gate, you know, has knocked. The little window door inside of the big door opens so that

the monk on the other side can administer the questions, can administer the test to see if you were devout enough to enter. Not only does Mirador repeat the kind of vow of immateriality, but also holds up some sort of symbol and places it away and then nods over to you and is like,

Austin (as **Mirador**): It's me and then it's my bodyguards. The abbot should know we're coming, if you want to go ahead and let him know. It's me and then four—*five* others, and Scrundle, of course.

Austin: And the monk on the other side goes,

Austin (as **Monk**): Of course.

Austin: And then closes the little window door and, you know, Mirador says,

Austin (as **Mirador**): All right, let's go get everybody else.

Austin: And comes back over towards Scrundle and the rest. Gaje, are you the only one who's near Scrundle at this point?

Gaje [53:20]

Sylvi: Yeah, I feel—so, like, my—I had an idea of something that Gaje might try and do, which is, like, try and find a, like, casual card game going on.

Austin: Oh, that's fun.

Jack: Oh, hell yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Dre: False True War. [laughs]

Austin: That's right, different game than this one.

Sylvi: Some—you know.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: Just something to pass the time. We're at a monastery, so he's not going up and being like, do you want to play for money or anything.

Austin: No, but the people outside are not super... The people out here are not necessarily gonna not play cards with you because of devotions. They were locked out of here because they didn't know the prayer, you know?

Sylvi: Right. Yeah, I definitely, I think Gaje hanging out around these people is actually like, I think he is more comfortable being around the people that are shut out of this place than he would be inside it.

Austin: Yeah, sure.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: Yeah, so yeah. I think it takes, you know, there's definitely a moment of like,

Austin (as **Card Player**): Oh, damn. You're a big fella.

Austin: You know, like,

Austin (as **Card Player**): I'll deal you in. You good to play with the...

Sylvi: It's been a minute since I've mentioned that Gaje is eight feet tall.

Sylvi: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Gaje is gigantic.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: And yeah, they... I think that your big spike arm gets some looks too.

Sylvi: Yeah. It's gonna.

Austin: That's a feature you don't see that often. Are you trying to chat people up while playing? Or is this just a fun little vignette?

Sylvi: I think it's more of a vignette. I don't think I'm looking for information. I think it's one of the things where it's like I get talking to a guy who used to run like a forge or something before they moved out here.

Austin: Oh, I love that. Yeah.

Sylvi: And he's like, we're like talking about like... I don't think he made weapons or anything, it was more mundane, like horseshoes and like stuff like that.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Sylvi: But just like enough similarities between like what Gaje has been around before in his past like with like forges and stuff to be just like, oh yeah, I can carry a conversation about this. And probably so—I think the way the conversation starts is he jokes about the metal sticking out of my arm.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sylvi: And then, yeah.

Austin (as **Blacksmith**): Good piece of steel you got there.

Austin: You know, that type of...

Sylvi: Exactly, exactly. Like, little half smile from Gaje being like,

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Ah, yeah. I think it might need some work but it's definitely done me right.

Sylvi: Just like rusty ass fucking nasty spike.

Austin (as **Blacksmith**): We could, if I had my shop, we could treat it and bring it back to the sheen I'm sure it used to have.

Austin: And such.

Sylvi: And such, yeah, it's like,

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): I don't even remember what that looked like.

Austin: Yeah, you end up learning a little bit of what I've kind of painted the picture of here, too. Oh, we're stuck outside. We didn't recite the prayer. We were so cold. We were so cold. We know the prayer. We just didn't recite it right the first time. And now we're stuck out here for a week. And like, you know, they're giving us the mushroom stew. But it's—so we're not you know, it's not as cold as it was on the way. So that's good. But it's a pain. But hey, you know, at least we didn't die to the weird bug aliens, you know?

So, all said, the vibe here is not as miserable as you might think it could be, you know? At least here at the card table. I'm sure there are people here who are like, I need medical help for my children, and they're being locked out, and they are less positive, right? But, again, they did escape the alien Roman Empire, the bug Roman Empire coming for them, you know? So, all said, you could do worse. So yeah, Mirador comes back to you with Flemming and is like,

Austin (as **Mirador**): Oh, where did Sacea and Jud go?

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): I mean, you know how Jud is. Sacea, I assumed, just had something to deal with. I think the kid's getting some food, maybe.

Sylvi: Jud, did you mention that to me, actually? Would I know that?

Jack: Oh, yeah, I think, you know.

Austin (as **Mirador**): All right, well, let's gather up. I have a feeling Sacea will meet up with us when it's her purview.

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): She's a reliable one.

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

Austin: And gathers everybody up and begins to head inside. And there are some calls from people, you know, watching being like, “hey, why do they get to go in?” You know, etc. “They just got here!” And Mirador’s like, I am sorry, you know, whatever. And then you’re led inside. And Scrundle is brought to a little stable and is immediately being brushed down by some novices and given water and given food. And the rest of you are brought inside, led inside by a... Let’s see, who’s gonna lead you inside? I think that this is the Mason, one of the kind of five leaders of this place, whose name is Amari. He, like, picks up some of the bags and stuff and begins to—and packages and stuff and begins to move them inside and is like,

Austin (as **Amari**): All right, come with me. We have some rooms prepared for you lot.

Austin: And brings you each inside.

Inside the Cloister [58:40]

Austin: You’re each being given your own room with a bed.

Dre: Ooh!

Jack: Wow!

Austin: With a little old radiator connected to, you know, a steam, some sort of steam system for steamed heat. And you’re each being given, you know, a little, maybe you share a single washroom, but that’s incredible. And you’re told that there’s going to be dinner, or supper, in an hour. And to please ask, you know, for any questions you need, et cetera. And Mirador says,

Austin (as **Mirador**): Yeah, I’m going to hit the shower. But you know, get yourself settled. We’re going to be here for, I don’t know, a day or two. I just need to get their permission to use the—you know, the transport stuff. But that’s all. That should all happen. No big deal. And, you know, avail yourselves, as they say, you

know, the Cloister has a good library. I've been here a couple of times and the food is pretty good. So, whatever you need... All right, bye.

Austin: And goes into the shower. What do y'all get up to with your free time?

Gaje [59:50]

Sylvi: Oh, I'm going to go eat.

Austin: Okay.

Sylvi: This is the first time we've stayed at a place with, like, a kitchen. Right?

Austin: Yeah, this is, yes, 100%. Yeah. Well, and, like, the kitchen, supper is in an hour, but when you come in—do you go, like, find the kitchen?

Sylvi: Yeah, I think so. I'm just, like... It might be partially, like, I didn't know supper was in an hour, and then, like, heard and was like, oh. And is just like,

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): Can I wait here?

Austin: Yeah.

Austin (as **Mirador**): (as **Exuberant Voice**): Oh!

Austin: Says Lanz, who is the head chef here, the cook, the head of the kitchen. There's a bunch of novices around him. I think he is a fairly scruffy man who is, you know, big, big beard, hands, you know, covered in calluses. And says,

Austin (as **Lanz**): Oh!

Austin: At your size, and then signs something at you, which, I don't know if you know sign language.

Sylvi: I don't know sign language and also I feel like it'd be hard for... I mean I'm sure there is like one-handed sign language, now that I think about it.

Austin: There has to be,

Sylvi: There has to be, literally has to be.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: That was a thought I had and then realized how dumb it was when it was coming out of my mouth.

Austin: It looks like you could always fingerspell, right?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: At least. There is not, it looks like for ASL, there is no dedicated one-handed sign language, which is interesting.

Sylvi: I don't think Gaje would know how to understand signing or would know how to speak it. I think he would just, like... Give kind of like a apologetic shrug at not being able to understand.

Austin (as **Lanz**): You're a visitor. It's okay. I will speak.

Austin: This is Lanz. Lanz, again, is the head cook here. Lanz has given up his hearing. That doesn't mean that—he has not taken a vow of silence. I think he explains normally it's a quiet kitchen, but that is, you know, you're a visitor. It's okay. Right? And then says,

Austin (as **Lanz**): Big! You're... You're big!

Sylvi (as **Gaje**): And you're observant.

Dre: Man.

Austin (as **Lanz**): And you're hungry, I bet.

Sylvi: Another like, shrug, but this one's got a bit more of a like, oh, yeah, kind of tone to it.

Austin: Uh-huh. And again, you have the sense that he's keeping you in view. He's reading your lips. He's trying to make sure he doesn't miss anything. You're very tall, which actually might make that a little hard. So you have to do a good job of looking at him for him to catch everything. We don't have to zoom in. We don't have to mime out someone trying to read your lips here. But that's what's happening.

Sylvi: No. I do think it's worth mentioning, though, that once Gaje, like, figures out how he's understanding him, is that Gaje would pr—maybe even, like, bend his knees a little so it's not, he doesn't have to, like, crane his neck quite as much while he's, like, looking directly at him.

Like, I don't think this is the first time Gaje has interacted with a deaf person. I just don't think it's, like, the first—I just don't think that he has the skills to, like, communicate with them, like, in the preferred way, you know?

Austin: There is a novice nearby who is getting increasingly annoyed by you talking and by Lanz talking and that Lanz is making an exception for you. I think that novice is like,

Austin (as **Novice**): Master Lanz, supper isn't for an hour. Certainly we can't feed this man now.

Austin: And actually, is signing that probably, right? Is not whispering that. Is signing that to Lanz. You don't know what's being said. And Lanz just, like, you know, slaps that novice on the back in a really hard, like, you know, jubilant way, but kind of a, like, "shut the fuck up" jubilation.

[laughter]

Sylvi: You're being rude to our guests type of way, yeah.

Austin: And then, you know, says out loud,

Austin (as **Lanz**): Hospitality.

Austin: Right? Points for you to go into the pantry and, like, points at a big crate of something to bring over, basically. Is like, bring that over here, you know? And is going to, like, okay, I'm going to make you cook with me if you want to eat some food before suppertime, you know?

Sylvi: Oh, I am absolutely on board for this.

Austin: I love it. Great.

Sylvi: I think when Gaje brings it over, he's like, do you need me to get anything else that's heavy?

Austin: Sure.

Sylvi: Might as well take, like, while I'm here, right?

Austin: Yeah. Mm-hm. And begins to put you to work as such.

Sylvi: Hell yeah. I love this. Yes, chef!

Austin: Ah... Dre says "grill a kebab on your big stake arm."

Sylvi: That is so unsanitary, Dre!

Dre: No, it's very gross.

Austin: It's very gross.

Sylvi: The last thing that went through was a corpse.

Austin: That's true.

Dre: That's fine.

Sylvi: I should probably wash my hands.

Austin: You should!

Dre: Hey. You were on fire. That burned away all those germs.

Sylvi: That's true! It's fine now.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They got all this mushroom soap, so. Easy to clean up with. All right, what else is anybody doing during this little free time before dinner?

Flemming [1:05:10]

Dre: I'm in this big fancy library I was told about.

Austin: Oh, yeah, absolutely. The librarian here, along with some of the other librarians—the head librarian, the head scribe, Gerennia, she is blind. She has a kind of black blindfold on here. But hears you come in and hears an unfamiliar gait and knows that there are visitors throughout anyway and says,

Austin (as **Gerennia**): [near-whisper] Welcome, visitor. How may I direct you?

Dre (as **Flemming**): Hello. I am primarily interested in books on traditional spellcraft.

Dre: I'm trying to think of how to phrase this, because I'm both looking for like, okay, any more cool spells, but really I want to see if I can dig any more information up on where we're going. Because Mirador continues to like be less evasive as we go but still more evasive than I would like. I think that's the big primary thing here.

Austin: Yeah. So what are you asking for, given that? Is it books of magic, books of Sapryc-related rituals? What is the...

Dre: Yeah, I think that, I mean, I'm trying. This is where, like, the gameplay part of my memory is, like, letting me down. But I'm trying to, like, you know, if we were doing the 90s library computer keyword search, what are the keywords that I would be plugging in to look for this, you know? Like, what's... What is the name of where we're going? I'm trying to remember if I know.

Austin: You have not been told.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Yeah, the only name you've been told is this place, the Cloister of the Hollow Heart. Yeah, Mirador has kept this, even to you, fairly close to the chest.

Jack: You could look into maybe, like...

Janine: Points of interest. A tourism brochure.

Dre: I was thinking like an atlas or something, almost.

Jack: I was going to say, it might also be worth looking into what transport is unique to this place.

Austin: There we go. Yeah.

Dre: Yeah, I like that.

Jack: You know, why come here.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: So is it like—

Dre: And we've heard Mirador talking about like, the transport won't be ready till blah blah blah.

Austin: Uh-huh, that is, yeah. Or like we need to get access to it, we need to... So you just ask that directly?

Dre: Yeah, sure.

Austin: Or do you ask for books on transport or—tell me what you do.

Dre: I probably ask for books... Of course, books on spells and books on transport but then also like you know, maybe she, right?

Austin: She.

Dre: Did you say she?

Austin: She/her.

Dre: Like maybe while she's like pulling stuff from, do they got a card catalog here?

Austin: God, they probably have something more complex than a card catalog.

Dre: Hell yeah. Love it.

Austin: Or just a card catalog where the, the catalog and the categories aren't super obvious.

Dre: Gosh. Also would need a catalog that works regardless of whatever sense that person has foregone.

Austin: Yep. Mm-hm. 100%.

Jack: I mean, part of this, and this is also me just doing *Name of the Rose*, is it's the librarian, you know?

Austin: The librarian is that.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Yeah, is the catalog in that way. Yeah.

Dre: Yeah. But yeah, so I think while I like ask for that I also, you know, I just also bluntly say like

Dre (as **Flemming**): Is there anything that you would feel comfortable sharing with me?

Austin (as **Gerennia**): Regarding?

Dre (as **Flemming**): So, we, my band and I are here on the request of a merchant who we are protecting. And he has mentioned that there is a unique form of transportation in this region. I'd like to learn more about it.

Austin (as **Gerennia**): [with distaste] Oh, Cantata. Yes.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin (as **Gerennia**): He has not told you about the Wound Way?

Dre (as **Flemming**): No, I would remember that word for certain.

Austin (as **Gerennia**): I see. Well, the lift is still returning. Once we have it, you'll be able to descend.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Is it a long ride?

Austin (as **Gerennia**): The longest on Sapryc.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Hm. Are there any journals or records of traveling upon this lift?

Austin (as **Gerennia**): Oh, yes. We have the expedition records of the founder of this cloister, who was the first to descend to the depths.

Dre (as **Flemming**): Oh! Fascinating.

Austin (as **Gerennia**): Would you like to read it?

Dre (as **Flemming**): Yes, please. Thank you.

Austin (as **Gerennia**): Novice Ryle, please bring our guest to the special collection, and observe as he reads.

Austin: And you're led to this kind of special collections area. And you know you are being given some extra, there is a sort of like, fuck Mirador, but Mirador has certain

allowances and Mirador's group has certain allowances here. And so you're being led to the special area where you can read about what the Wound Way is.

Dre: I love to read the Realis equivalent to *Into Thin Air*.

Austin: [laughs] This is... So. Some long time ago. We keep getting deep Sapryc lore. We got Vortigern Gothgeier. We got the establishment of the Cathedral Omphalic. We've talked about how this was once a Leo Suzerainty place. Then it was a Church of the Venerant See place.

The folks who lived here first stopped living here at one point because of the arrival of a being that began to devour them, to devour them en masse. It was a massive, twisting, hungry worm. And that worm eventually delved deep from its north pole and ate out the entire core of the world, digging a long pit from pole to pole. And the Wound Way is the path that runs from here, the Cloister of the Hollow Heart, down to the south pole, from the Trunk, the northern continent, to the Root, the southern continent, the one that is totally taken over by the Empest, and popping out at something on the southern end.

That is the beginning of what you learn here before the supper bell rings and I reveal a Sentence that interrupts you, which is "the Library of the Cloister of the Heart always has answers for those who spend at least a day in its books." So you don't get the full answer. You get the very beginning of an answer here. You don't know more than a big worm ate a hole through the moon, and you're going down into it, buddy. But you don't know what's down there. You don't know what made it special. The beginning of this, the record that you're reading, the memoir, the diary, whatever it is. I guess it is more like a memoir because it opens with a sort of like, you know, the thing that I saw there, the thing that I was brought to, the thing that made me decide to make this cloister and to protect the Wound Way and to control it was the most magnificent thing I've ever seen in my life. Was seeing the Immaterial One, if such a thing could be. And it's why I've given up my senses. Right? I saw God and the result is I've given up all of my senses and I built this cloister.

Dre: Man. Can I? So I guess I'm not really resisting that Sentence per se.

Austin: You could, you could counter it.

Dre: Yeah. And I'm, I guess it's, I'm not countering it per se where like, I mean, basically the thing I'm countering is like, I'm not going to go to dinner. I'm going to sit here and read this.

Austin: Yeah. You could, you could let it win. Yeah, totally. Yes.

Dre: Yeah. Yeah. Let's do it.

Austin: Okay. So you're not going to show up to dinner.

Dre: No. And I guess I'm not going to show up to anything for a while. [laughs]

Austin: So then we got, we got. We need to know what's up with Jud and Sacea. What's up with y'all? Sacea, are you still a rat? Have you come back from being a rat? Have you found your way to your room?

Janine: I'm still a rat. I found my way to my room, but as a rat.

Austin: Oh, okay.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: That's fun.

Janine: But I think I'm still roaming around. I kind of want to see what Jud's doing before I do anything.

Jud [1:14:15]

Austin: Jud, what are you up to?

Jack: You know, I think that I have an extremely fraught power nap on my own room. I think that the—

Austin: The Cicatrix Knight standing at the foot of your bed looking outward.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah. And then, God. I think I'm hungry. I think that, hmm. I have the Finger of Gothgeier, which I think I'm going to hold off eating.

Sylvi: [laughs]

Austin: Sure.

Jack: Because I think that that is a Rubicon in some respect. I think Jud might not necessarily view it as that, but feels a kind of apprehension about this.

Janine: Does that process satisfy hunger?

Sylvi: I was going to ask, because the way you're talking about it makes it sound like it's like the bag of beef jerky you brought for the rest of the trip.

Janine: The granola bar, yeah.

Jack: I mean, there is really... Jud is beginning to get the sense that maybe whatever the monks are serving is not going to suffice for dinner.

Janine: Yeah, I don't think they're good—why would they be good cooks?

Dre: Why wouldn't they be?

Janine: No, they have no reason. Because they are people who believe that you should deny your senses. Why would they be good cooks?

Dre: Only one.

Jack: Well, and their head chef seems pretty good. What was that guy's name?

Janine: He's a nice guy, maybe.

Austin: Lonz. He's a nice guy.

Janine: Yeah. Nice guys can make bad dinners.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: Damn!

Dre: Damn!

Jack: That's true.

[laughter]

Austin: Lessons learned hard.

Sylvi: Nice guys finish last? No. Nice guys make bad dinners.

Jack: The Cicatrix Knight cannot come to dinner. That is important.

Austin: You will not let him.

Jack: No. Also, I mean, because he becomes... He can die once he eats.

Austin: So simply don't eat, buddy.

Jack: But he's also undead. So, you know, it's... It's probably fine. But yeah, I am going to go and make sure that I am, you know, I'm going to take a shower. I'm going to make sure that I'm ready for dinner to try and, you know, get whatever food comes my way.

Austin: The Cicatrix Knight does try to follow you out into the hallway when it is dinner time. What do you say?

Jack: You know,

Jack (as **Jud**): No, you stay in there. Stay in my room. You'll scare them. We don't want to overstep our hospitality. I'll be fine. You know, you stay in there. Don't get up to trouble.

Austin: I don't think we'd seen the Cicatrix Knight speak. Had we? What did he say?

Jack: He has spoken briefly.

Austin: Yes, because he says...

Jack: He speaks in this awful low...

Austin: Yeah. And said that he hadn't shared food with you before. He hadn't shared a meal of you before. Something like that. Right, Jud?

Jack: And he spoke to Gage?

Austin: Yeah, when was that?

Sylvi: He said I was like a peculiar knight or something.

Austin: Oh, right, yes, that was when you first—okay.

Sylvi: After I blasted through him.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. Was that after or was that before?

Jack: It was after, it was the response...

Sylvi: Because I believe the way it went was like I didn't realize that the Cicatrix was with Jud. And then afterwards I was like, oh, he's with you? Sorry about that. And then he said I'm a weirdo.

Austin: Let me tell you, I don't know what the mechanics of speaking are without a chest, without, you know, lungs and breath, but I guess it's magic, so.

Sylvi: I guess it's raspier.

Austin: Yeah, just raspier, just raspier. Then, yeah, I think that they say

Austin (as **Cicatrix Knight**): Very well. Give me a sign to listen for that I may come to your side if you need me.

Jack: Oh gosh. I think Jud is, Jud is unused to sort of like making a, making a noticeable, you know, make yourself as quiet as possible. So I think, you know, with a kind of sheepishness, Jub—Jud—Jub.

Austin: Jub!

Dre: JubJub.

Austin: JubJub.

Sylvi: Yeah, from Neopets.

Jack: With a kind of sheepiss—Jesus Christ.

Austin: Welcome to the recording at noon, Jack!

Sylvi: Yeah!

Austin: Now whose shoe is on the other foot!?

Dre: Now who's excited about it!?

Jack: No, this is good for me! This is how I speak and think when I'm feeling good to go! No.

Dre: Yeah. What a mood. [laughs]

Jack: Jud kind of just claps his hands with that kind of awkwardness of like making a loud sound and kind of looks at the Cicatrix and is like,

Jack (as **Jud**): Will this do?

Austin (as **Cicatrix Knight**): Yes. Very well.

Janine: God, I hope it's not dinner and a show.

Dre: Don't applaud any good jokes at dinner. [laughs]

Sylvi: They don't seem like a dinner theater crowd here.

Austin: No, no.

Janine: Maybe that's part of their denying the senses, is they put on a bad show.

Austin: They put on a bad show and you're not allowed to laugh.

Sylvi: They put on a different denial of taste.

Janine: You have to tune it out really hard. You have to just like... there's attempted audience interaction, and if you actually interact with the performers, they kick you out.

Sylvi: They have Carrot Top here, and he's up doing his whole thing.

Austin: Okay, sure.

Sylvi: It makes it really easy not to respond. Prop comedy.

Jack: Going down to dinner, turning the finger of Vortigern Gothgeier over and over in my pocket like a talisman.

Dre: Making a fidget spinner out of that finger.

Dinner [1:19:50]

Austin: Yeah, you're going to get served this big mushroom stew that everybody's getting served generally here. There are some other veggies from the garden there. You are probably seated together on a kind of table off to the side. The monks are not like, the monks are not divided. They give up their senses, but that doesn't like put them in a division. You know what I mean? Like the fact that the head scribe has given up sight does not mean all scribes give up sight. You know, you're allowed to differ from that. It's not a codification in that way. And again, there are novices who have temporarily given things up, right? So like an example here is the novices who've given up taste have like let a bacteria live on their tongues that eats for them or that kind of like prevents the taste from reaching their tongue, their tongue nerves... Their taste buds. That's the word. Tongue nerves?

Sylvi: I mean, what is a taste bud other than a tongue nerve?

Austin: But a tongue nerve? This is what I'm saying.

Sylvi: I'm with you. I'm rocking with tongue nerves.

Austin: I'm rocking with tongue nerves, too. Thank you. And et cetera, right? So there's sort of like temporary versions of this that are maintained for the novices and then a more permanent dedicated vow and a sort of ritual removal of the others, of the full-on brothers and sisters and other clergy. And so, yeah, you're served this meal. Is anybody—I guess, Flemming you don't show up. The Sapryc Knight or the Cicatrix Knight doesn't show up. Sacea, you're a little rat.

Janine: I think I show up for dinner. I just wanted to make sure no one was getting into trouble. That's probably what Sacea was even doing, was just like, in the background of every scene, there's just like a little rat in the corner.

Sylvi: [laughs] Oh, that was Sacea at the end of *The Departed*.

Austin: That was Sacea at the end of *The Departed*. Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah, it makes you think the whole movie is different at that point, because Sacea has been there the whole time. Yeah.

Janine: Appears for dinner though.

Sylvi: The planet—on the moon of Boston.

Austin: [laughs] Sorry, did you say something else before that, Janine?

Janine: Oh, that just Sacea appears for dinner. Normally. Not ratty.

Austin: Not ratty.

Sylvi: Um.

Austin: Yeah?

Sylvi: I was just going to say, I think I'm helping with, like, prep for dinner up until it's actually, like, served. Like, Gaje is bringing out plates.

Austin: Love it.

Jack: Oh, my God.

Austin: Incredible. You're part of the service. This is great. Yeah.

Sylvi: Well, I have a feeling that, like, I don't know. The way Lanz treated Gaje really warmed my heart. So I'm rolling with it, you know?

Austin: Yeah, absolutely. I think there's a point at which Lanz gives you, you know, at the end of your service here, Lanz presents you with a, what is the token? It's a little clay token that's been fired that has like a symbol of a knife on it, like a chef's knife on it. And places this in your hand and closes your big fingers around this token and says,

Austin (as **Lanz**): For the toll.

Austin: Which, you've not been told what that is.

Sylvi: Yeah, I don't... It's a polite nod and a thank you, because to me right now, this is just a sentimental gift.

Austin: Totally, 100%.

Jack: Wait, the implication being that, like, a majority of the people here know about the worm-carved hole beneath the monastery?

Austin: Well, this is one of the five leads of this church.

Jack: Oh, that's true. Right.

Austin: But.

Jack: I didn't know if Mirador was doing, like, a really odd move here, right? Where it's like, I'm going to take you to the city that connects to the worm tunnels, and everybody knows it but you.

Austin: I mean, it is called the Cloister of the Hollow Heart.

Jack: It is called the Cloister of the Hollow Heart.

Austin: The thing, the heart that is hollow is the moon of Sapryc.

Jack: And also the hearts of these ascetic monks. Robbing themselves of...

Austin: Sure. Yes. It's a little double, a little double, uh-huh. Yeah.

Jack: Who is sitting next to Jud? Jud is just eating and eating and eating. And is not feeling full. The mushroom soup is not doing it.

Austin: Are you not feeling full because it's not human? It's not people?

Jack: Possibly.

Austin: No, I need to know this.

Jack: Oh, God, yeah. I think so, yes.

Austin: Have you eaten other sapient things before?

Jack: [pauses]

Austin: That aren't people?

Jack: Sapient?

Austin: Yeah, like weird, I know, we have like Orphan Vessels in this world, like living spaceships. I'm guessing you haven't eaten a living spaceship.

Jack: No, no, I've eaten cows and pigs and chickens and sheep.

Austin: Sentient things, but not things with human, quote unquote, "human-like intelligence," which let's bracket that and not be, you know, we all know that these are contested areas and not exactly clean and simple.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Okay. So you've never eaten one of the Worms of the Blister.

Jack: I have not eaten knowingly. No, the worms—you would know if you were eating a Worm of the Blister, probably.

Austin: No, but would you?

Sylvi: Would we?!

Dre: Yeah, I don't know!

Austin: [pleased] Or would you think it was mushroom stew? Because, Jud, just as always when you eat of living, you know, beings, conscious beings.

Jack: Oh, god.

Austin: You begin to get some visions, except this time it is like, I still think you might be eating and eating and eating, because the visions you're getting are of eating and eating and eating. It's just the feeling of worming through the ground. Little grub-like, little round, thick worms going through the soil, looking for more things to devour. Tiny little baby worms, hungry, hungry, hungry.

Jack: Oh, dear.

Austin: "Worm hatchlings always consume whenever they are born near."

Sylvi: I'm, like, picturing Jud just, like, zoning out having this vision while Gaje is, like, across the table from him. Just, like, staring. [laughs]

Jack: Yeah. Bad.

Austin: This mushroom stew has a bunch of worms in it, man!

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And not just any worms. For the listener, I'm going to read from Realis, Worms of the Blister. The ninth moon has not yet been lanced. "From the raised flesh at the edge of the ninth moon's great dome, the worms emerged. They coiled in the bellies of pigs and the ears of diplomats. By the time they bore through the walls of the Ochre

Capital, who could say it wasn't theirs?" And they, at some point, have tried to spread across Realis' many moons and mostly failed. But there are still, you know, there are still nests of them here and there. And I know that they are people in some ways, because the example characters I wrote two years ago here were Rilla'rilla'rilla, [rilla-rilla-rilla] Our Mother—or maybe it's Rilla'rilla'rilla, [rilla-rilla-RYE-la] Our Mother; Prjh, kinworm; and Hezik, Word-Speaker and prophet of the Longfleshe. So they got some sort of culture. I don't know that these baby worms have that culture necessarily. They are being farmed. They are being farmed by these Hollow Heart monks and turned into soup and soap and sent across Sapryc.

Jack: Oh, God. Do they—that's not good.

Austin: Iunno. Seems like people like it. Good soap.

Jack: Good soap. There is something weird here about this getting folded into the cannibal thing.

Austin: Yeah. Not a thing I planned on when I made this monastery, you know?

Jack: Well, you know, we have humans being like, it is meet and right to eat and learn of each other. And then folding in, what if we get the worms that never stop eating and want to infiltrate everywhere?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, God. So I think Jud is just taking meal after meal after meal of this because the vision is that of consumption, is that of, you know... Ceaseless, overwhelming, you know, desire.

Austin: And there's nothing cursed, like, they know how to prepare this worm. I want to be clear. They're not like, this isn't "they're trying to get worms in you." This is not a, like, what's the cat thing? The cat and the bugs and the, not the bugs.

Dre: Oh.

Janine: Toxoplasmosis?

Austin: This isn't toxoplasmosis. These monks, as far as we know, have not been toxoplasmosized by the worms. They are growing worms in an agricultural sense. And feeding them to you.

Jack: Now, right, but the worms!

Austin: Now, again, they are worms that if they—huh?

Jack: But the worms' culture.

Austin: But the worms' culture. Right.

Jack: You know, the monks might have a different goal here than the worms.

Austin: This is true. And also, this is a classic. You let, you fuck up here. Those worms are going to come back. You know, you let these worms grow more than they should. They're going to eat the world. You know? That's what they do.

Jack: Do these monks see any sort of irony in living above a worm tunnel and also... No, they're like, this is the byproduct of the big worm.

Austin: This is the byproduct of the big worm.

Jack: Where else are you going to get your worms?

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh. And look, they grow underground. They make the soil nutritious.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You know? What's the problem?

Jack: Yum. Fetch me another bowl.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Janine: People eat worms now.

Austin: Yeah, it's not that big of a deal.

Janine: That's the thing. Eh.

Austin: Again, the big deal is the worms we eat don't have Sentences like "worm falselings always hide in plain sight."

Janine: Yes. I just want to put it out there that the existence of worm farms for food is true.

Austin: It's real. Yeah, yeah, yeah, totally. It's really only these worms are people who grow to try to take over planets or moons. That's the worrying bit.

Janine: We don't really know that normal worms wouldn't do that. But.

Dre: You're right.

Janine: Jud is in a position to know.

Austin: Okay, but here's the difference. We live in a... In Realis, they did do it, already, once. And now we're eating them.

Janine: We don't know. Maybe we just don't know. Maybe they have.

Austin: Maybe we missed the worm era. The great era of worm supremacy, I guess.

Dre: Maybe the worms just have us all plugged into a giant computer. Do you ever think about that?

Austin: That's true. Man, we're living in the worm *Matrix*.

Dre: The Wormtrix, please.

Austin: The Wormtrix, yeah. Uh, the Wormatrix. All right. You're eating these worms. It sounds like dinner's going great.

Dre: New Realis class just dropped. The Wormatrix.

Austin: God. Wormancer. Um, what—any other conversation happening here as Jud goes to town on the soup? Sacea, you catching people up on anything you saw or is that just for you? That's just Sacea knowledge.

Janine: Um, good question. I kind of feel like it might just be Sacea knowledge unless someone asks specifically like, hey, where's Flemm? I think she would volunteer.

Sylvi: I think I would ask politely how you're finding the monastery. I don't necessarily know if I'd ask if you'd seen Flemm.

Dre: That's fair.

Sylvi: Flemm and Gaje have a contentious, well, not a contentious relationship in the way where it's like, oh, I hate that guy. But it is like, oh, this guy was really pushy about me maybe being magical, if I'm remembering the early parts of this campaign, right?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. God, I'd forgotten about that a little bit, because that is what Flemming's Bond with you is, right?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: "They may not know it, but Gaje has a natural aptitude for the magical."

Sylvi: Mm-hmm. And we had a moment of that in the forest, too, remember?

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Yeah, I think Sacea is enjoying dinner, not necessarily volunteering a ton of, you know, she didn't get any, like, good intel. She just kind of got a lay the land.

Austin: Yeah. I think Mirador is not sitting over here and in fact is not sitting much at all, is carrying a bowl of soup from table to table to like check in, in this quiet meal, a fairly quiet meal, right? This is not a loud talk-y meal. With the various monks that that he has

had previous contact with. Is also like sliding them, like, is like delivering little gifts, basically. You know.

Austin (as **Mirador**): Oh yeah, I picked that up for you last time I was off-planet, you know, off-moon.

Austin: Et cetera. And is just being a kind of like a weird social butterfly.

Jack: This is a—who is sitting to my left? Who not in the party am I sitting next to?

Austin: You are off on your own table.

Jack: Ah, shit.

Austin: You've not been allowed to sit with the regular monks. So, you know, maybe there are other visitors who did make it, refugees who did make it inside, right? So someone else from Allant is sitting to your left, let's say.

Jack: I want to see if I can get... That's not useful to me. I want to see if I can get some information on Mirador, you know? Mirador has visited here before. You know, maybe I make an excuse. You know, maybe I say, you know, I finish a bowl and I'm like, you know,

Jack (as **Jud**): I'll go and get the next one.

Jack: Rather than Gaje, you know, bringing it to me. And I want to chat with like a scullery monk, like a novice, you know, someone about my age.

Austin: Yeah, sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, this is Carmine, a monk, also waiting in line for a second helping of soup. Stew.

Jack (as **Jud**): What do they put in this?

Austin (as **Carmine**): Uh... The garden provides.

Jack (as **Jud**): It's good stuff. It's really good stuff.

Jack: Jud, thinking, does he know it's worms?

Sylvi: [bursts into laughter]

Austin: Does he know?

Jack: Does he know?

Dre: He freaking knows. [laughs]

Jack: In the corner of the party, "they don't know it's worms." Everybody else at the party is thinking "we love the worms."

Austin: We love the worms! Ah...

Jack: Yeah, yeah, good garden. I'm Jud.

Austin (as **Carmine**): Carmine.

Jack (as **Jud**): Yeah. Uh-huh.

Austin (as **Carmine**): Are you from Allant, then?

Jack (as **Jud**): No, no, no. No, I'm from all over. Off-world.

Austin (as **Carmine**): Off-world?

Jack (as **Jud**): Master came here for the war, you know.

Austin (as **Carmine**): Is your master with us, then?

Jack (as **Jud**): In a way.

Sylvi: [laughs] Does he know?

Austin: Does he know?

Austin (as **Carmine**): Ah, you carry him still in your heart.

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

Austin (as **Carmin**): Uh-huh.

Jack (as **Jud**): And other places.

Dre: [laughs]

Sylvi: Rubbing his tummy!

Dre: Yum, yum, yum.

Jack: This is very funny to Jud. Jud is not usually the sort of person who is allowed to have a little laugh. Jud has discovered cannibal humor. A key part of the 1990s.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sylvi: Oh, he's Hannibal-ing.

Austin: He's Hannibal-ing, he is.

Sylvi: He'd love to have you for dinner, et cetera.

Jack (as **Jud**): So, I gotta talk with you, sort of, you know. We've come here with that guy.

Jack: Points at Mirador.

Austin (as **Carmin**): The merchant.

Jack (as **Jud**): Yeah, yeah, the merchant. And the thing is, he's real cagey, you know. He's paying us. We're working people, but he's paying us when we reach our destination. You know what I mean?

Austin (as **Carmin**): I suppose.

Jack (as **Jud**): And he keeps himself to himself about his business. I was wondering if, you know, if you could clear anything up for me. Seems like he comes by here with trinkets. Monks seem to know who he is.

Austin (as **Carmin**): [diffident] Yes, he comes by here sometimes with trinkets and gifts...

Jack: What is this guy's deal? I'm the cannibal and I'm the normal one!

Austin: You know, this is not a person who is particularly... You did not come to the social capital of Sapryc. You came to the monastery where no one's allowed to have fun.

Jack: Yeah, that's true.

Austin: Voluntarily. They decided to come here. They're living a life here.

Jack: Worm monastery, brackets, (two reasons).

Austin: Uh-huh.

Austin (as **Carmin**): Mirador is a reliable assistant to the Cloister in some ways. When we have a need to acquire something or to find a buyer. They have served in those roles or have connected us as such.

Jack (as **Jud**): They're like the outside man.

Austin (as **Carmin**): Exactly.

Jack (as **Jud**): Ah.

Austin (as **Carmin**): None of us truly believe in their faith, but a useful heathen is useful.

Jack (as **Jud**): Well, what's their faith? What do they believe?

Austin (as **Carmin**): That's just it. They seem to believe nothing at all.

Jack (as **Jud**): Oh. Hmm. I can see how that would be difficult for you.

Austin (as **Carmine**): It is no trial. It is no difficulty.

Jack (as **Jud**): Oh, well, okay then. Okay, in that case. Um...

Jack: That's not terribly useful to me.

Jack (as **Jud**): I don't, uh... What do you give him in return? For his services.

Austin (as **Carmine**): Access to the library, to the Wound Way.

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

Austin (as **Carmine**): To the hall that runs down Sapryc's spine.

Jack: Oh. This makes several soup images that I have had make sense.

Austin: Click into place. Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. Because like those images occasionally are, you're just in the soil and other times you're like in a long, dark tunnel, you know, and that goes down endlessly. But sometimes also just seems to go like, sometimes it's a hole and sometimes it's a tunnel, you know, sometimes it's falling and other times it's stretching out in front and behind you.

Jack (as **Jud**): But you don't know, you couldn't, you can't give me any guidance on like why he wants to use the Wound Way other than to get down to the south, right?

Austin (as **Carmine**): There's no access to the south through the Wound Way.

Jack (as **Jud**): It doesn't go to the south?

Austin (as **Carmine**): We've blocked that route. Too dangerous with the Empest, isn't it? But you can travel to the core. You can walk the path of our founder. You can relive the reaching, if not the touch.

Jack (as **Jud**): If the blockage were to be broken, it would spell disaster for you, right?

Austin (as **Carmine**): Oh. Do you suspect Mirador aims to remove the barricade?

Jack (as **Jud**): Ah, well, you didn't hear it from me.

Sylvi: Oof!

Austin (as **Carmine**): That seems unlikely. He would need a stronger wizard than he for something like that.

Dre: Hm.

Austin (as **Carmine**): And strong and devious arms for traveling further south.

Dre: Huh.

Jack (as **Jud**): Oh no, no, he can't, no. I mean, it's, the rest of our party's sort of pretty much like me, sort of.

Dre: [laughs]

Austin (as **Carmine**): Mm. Normal fellows, you.

Jack (as **Jud**): Normal, yeah, yeah, yeah, normal fellas. Normal fellas.

Austin (as **Carmine**): And Mirador, of course, would never lead normal fellows to their doom.

Jack (as **Jud**): Oh, no, he doesn't do that. He doesn't do that. Has he come through here with people before, actually?

Austin (as **Carmine**): No.

Sylvi: Oh, my God.

Austin (as **Carmine**): Mirador works alone, normally. But.

Austin: And leaning closer.

Austin (as **Carmin**): He is very reliable. I hope you enjoy the stew.

Austin: And walks away.

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

Jack: [groans] Yeah, we’ve been fucking Danny Ocean team assembled.

Austin: [laughs] Mm-hm.