

Perpetua 31: A Picture of the Hills 04

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Recap

Ali (as **Veile**): Okay, everyone. So, which one do you think we could be most, like, efficient-slash-impressive at?

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Well, I mean, I think if we want to build our reputation, I think helping old Waylon might be the best way to do it. He's...particular, but if you get on his good side, he'll talk about you.

Ali (as **Veile**): Hmm.

Jack (as **Elena**): But you don't get as much. You don't get as much for if you help out the livestock. That's a 400 job. The old man's a 300 job.

Art (as **Nicky**): We don't know anything about livestock.

Ali (as **Veile**): Well... [Austin and Ali laugh]

Jack (as **Elena**): Well, but we don't need to know about livestock. We need to know about mysteries, and we know about mysteries.

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

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Wait, wait, wait, wait. Nicky, you had a gem?

Art (as **Nicky**): [sadly] Ohh. Yeah...

Dre (as **Jonathan**): They got people in 'em, Nicky!

Art (as **Nicky**): I didn't know that then! I didn't know that! I was the *last* to know that.

...

Dre (as **Jonathan**): He advised us to seek out a friend beneath the shining star.

Austin (as **Thelonious**): [chuckles] Ah. Sunny days always warm the spirit, don't they?

Dre (as **Jonathan**): [hushed] Is this a...are we talking in code still?

Art (as **Nicky**): Yeah, do they?

Austin (as **Thelonious**): I see. All right. Well, that's a shame. If you don't know how to respond to that, you must not know a lot.

Ali (as **Veile**): We're quite eager to learn, you see.

...

Jack (as **Elena**): Mr. Waylon. My name's Elena. It's nice to meet you. We're going to be helping you up the mountain today.

Austin (as **Waylon**): That's right.

Jack (as **Elena**): I'm sure you've got it all in hand, [**Waylon**: Nope.] but we're just here— [pause, laughter] No?

Austin (as **Waylon**): Why would we be paying you?

Jack (as **Elena**): Oh, I just figured you've been up here a lot, you know, all your life and stuff. But no, that's a fair point, when you put it like that. We're going to—

Austin (as **Waylon**): Don't presume.

Jack (as **Elena**): Oh, I didn't mean to— No, I didn't mean to presume.

Jack: Looks back over her shoulder at everyone else, like, “Damn.” [laughs quietly]

[song plays out]

Catching Up and Leveling

Austin: Where were we? We were outside of Spillaway Peaks. We were up in the early hills of Clayridge. You were—

Jack: We took every side quest simultaneously.

Austin: You took every side quest. Can you name them? Do you remember what they were?

Jack: Uh, okay. We have kind of three side quests, two of which seem pretty straightforward, and one is a little more complex.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: We have to figure out what's going on with the sick cows. Classic side quest.

Austin: That's right.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Jack: We have to escort a kind of rude old man [cross] to the top of a mountain.

Austin: [offended] Okay.

Dre: Yeah, I don't like that characterization.

Jack: [chuckles] He's cantankerous. I said *kind of* rude.

Ali: I mean, look who's talking.

Jack: Oh, come on. [laughter]

Dre: We forced him to take a pit stop when we said we wouldn't, so. [laughs]

Jack: In any case.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: He takes the yearly photograph of the town, and we're sending him up or we're helping him up there to do it. The third side quest is we're trying to create an elaborate human interest story about the people of Spillaway Peaks. Is that right?

Austin: And you chose a subject, remember?

Dre: The photographer.

Austin: The photographer, Waylon.

Jack: The old man.

Austin: The old man, yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, that quest was split into multiple phases, which was coming up with a story idea, doing an interview, writing it out—like the prose, the actual quality of the prose—and then an attached photo or sketch to really bring it to life in the paper. You've gone through— and the way that that system works is you can kind of pick your own difficulty. You're kind of, like, making a bet on how good you're going to do, whether or not you'll be able to succeed at the Check. It has gone mixed, I'd say, so far. You've gone through two of the four possible steps. The max you could get is 16 successes or 16 kind of levels of difficulty across all four. Right now, you have three successes. You're at 3 of 16. You're going to get 25 asta per each tick of that clock, so to speak. You only have two more chances to tick that clock, but presumably you'll be doing that not out on the road, because that'll be the writing the story. I guess maybe the photo or sketch you could do on the road, but presumably you're not going to try to keysmash it out, out

here, you know?

Jack: I also remember that Veile got into a conversation about what a photo is, [Ali laughs] about how a photo can not only be a kind of metaphor but about how things that aren't photographs can be photographs.

Ali: Well, Veile is approaching this challenge with a very specific goal in mind, which is to do it sincerely.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Yes. With her heart. [Ali and Jack laugh quietly]

Ali: She said, "If I'm going to be a part of having, like, a writeup about this person, I want to reach the emotional depth of what he's doing."

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: And in attempt to ask him about his work, was like, "Oh, well, I get portraits of people all the time through my faith, so."

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm.

Jack: Right. I see.

Dre: Yes, and I think he was like, "Oh, you take pictures." [Ali laughs] And as soon as he realized that answer was essentially no...

Ali: I succeeded at that roll.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ali: I think we got to a place somewhere.

Dre: No, listen, you got it. [Ali laughs] I'm just, that's the gist of the conversation that I remember.

Austin: I think that's right. And I believe the last thing you were, you'd arrived at Beula's ranch, right?

Jack: We split— did we choose to split up, or did we dissuade the old—?

Austin: I thought you chose not to split up.

Dre: Uh...

Jack: Okay, we're—

Austin: You did split up, or you didn't? I thought you didn't, in the end. I have to check the tape.

Dre: No, we stayed together, but I think it was, like, myself and I can't remember who else, like, went to go let the person know we were there, but we weren't, like, *splitting up* splitting up.

Jack: I think you and I went.

Dre: That sounds right.

Jack: Or maybe Veile. I think Austin wants to check the tape.

Austin: Importantly, though, you didn't, like— I remember Waylon coming with you, effectively.

Dre: Yes.

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: He was grumbling about it.

Ali: Right. Yeah.

Jack: Yes, you're right.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Dre: I think Ali had to, like, use a move, like a move specifically to get him to be okay with it.

Jack: Yes.

Ali: Yeah. There was a question of, like, we're going to keep going up the hill like we told this guy that we would, [laughs] instead of misrepresenting our goals here.

Austin: Uh huh. [Dre laughs]

Ali: But then we didn't want to split up, so I had to be like, "Hey, do mind if we just kind of take a breather while my friend asks this guy about cows?"

Austin: Yep.

Ali: But I think I promised I'd get him lunch or something?

Dre: Yes.

Austin: Oh, I think you did do that. I think that did happen. Yeah.

Ali: So I think that's the split up. I think I stayed back, and we're eating a thing while Elena is in full investigator mode.

Austin: All right. That makes sense to me.

Jack: Also we leveled.

Austin: You did.

Dre: We did.

Austin: Yep.

Ali: We did.

Austin: Good. I'm glad. Maybe it'll all come in handy.

Jack: Can we say what we got? Because I'm very happy with what I got.

Austin: You can say what— I don't control you. [Jack laughs]

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Hmm.

Jack: Tremble in fear, enemies of Perpetua, because I have gotten the spell Aura. Up to three creatures; scene; 5x target multiplier. “You project your soul outside your body and direct it to surround the targets, shielding them from dangerous magic. Until this spell ends, each target may treat their Magic Defense [**Austin:** Mm.] as being equal to 12 against any effects that target it.” This is Barrier Two.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: Well, yeah, except it's magic Barrier, right?

Jack: Yes.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Yes. This patches the gap that Barrier leaves, which is that Barrier only buffs your Defense.

Austin: Right, I see. I see.

Ali: Ohh.

Jack: Whereas this also buffs your M. Defense.

Austin: Yeah. This is...

Dre: Nice.

Austin: I believe it might— Is it the other way in *Final Fantasy*? Is Barrier the magic one

in *Final Fantasy*? Dre, I feel like you would know this.

Art: No.

Austin: No?

Dre: Yes, and then Shell is the physical defense.

Art: Shell?

Austin: Yeah, Shell is physical, right? I think so.

Dre: Yeah, and then Barrier is magic.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: I'm pretty sure that's it.

Austin: That sounds right to me. In any case, nice job. Does anyone else want to share what they've gotten on their level up?

Dre: Yeah. I took the Tinkerer skill Emergency Item, [**Austin:** Mm.] which lets me, once per Conflict Scene, if I'm in Crisis, I can perform an additional... I can basically do the Inventory action for free.

Austin: Great.

Jack: Oh, nice.

Austin: That's really good.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Given all the Inventory Points you always have. So.

Dre: Yeah, it's the emergency heal button. [laughs quietly]

Austin: Love it. Nicky or Veile?

Art: I took a second level of Shadow Strike. I'm sure I'll start using those skills eventually.

Austin: Okay! [Austin and Jack laugh quietly]

Ali: I have a pair of new spells here. There was a point at which people...

Austin: Because you had not leveled up last time?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: People leveled mid combat or something, and in the middle of the combat, I was like, "I don't want to think about this right now."

Austin: Mm.

Ali: So, I'm not going to read the effects. I'm just going to read what the spells do, and you're going to see these pairs go together perfectly. One, I will be altering the very nature of my target.

Austin: Oh.

Ali: And then, with the other one, I will be invigorating my companions, soothing their pain, and healing their fatigue. So.

Austin: Great. I love it. Getting more fun toys in the toy box.

Ali: An all-rounder here.

Austin: Yes. [Ali laughs quietly]

Investigate the Livestock Deaths [0:10:26]

Austin: I guess we'll come in on where we left, which was Beula being like, "I didn't know you were working for the paper now, Jonathan." I guess this is how I know that

Waylon was with you, because Beula references seeing Waylon and assumes that you're part of some sort of newspaper thing. And then I think you've explained, at this point, you're here to maybe check out the cows—the oxen, actually—and you are led over to them, and, you know, maybe we open back at you looking at these oxen. Beula—who I described as being, like, from the clutch or cohort after you but still kind of similar in age—has given you the down low. As far as she can tell—and she's been doing this for a while—they just started getting sick, and they have some wounds on them, and, you know, it's gotten— there's a strange smell with some of them. She can't figure out what happened, where this came from, and would love a little help, you know?

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Yeah. God, that sounds terrible.

Austin: And when she says all this, she then also adds,

(as **Beula**): Of course, you're just here to write about it, so hopefully someone who actually knows how to do something will see the story.

Jack (as **Elena**): Well, we're going to do whatever we can.

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Yeah, I would much prefer to fix this than not.

Austin (as **Beula**): Mm.

Jack (as **Elena**): Than write about it.

Austin (as **Beula**): All right.

Jack (as **Elena**): We might have arrived in capacity as journalists, but we're here to help.

Austin (as **Beula**): Well, you better help quick, because it's just about time to dredge up the new rice fields, so. Let's take a look at 'em.

Austin: And leads you out to the stables.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: And you can see there are some other oxen out in the pasture, separated from the sick ones, and they seem, in the distance, like they're doing okay, but the ones in the stable— Like, you know, there's basically been a quarantine stable set up just for the sick ones.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And I'd say it's probably four or five of them, and as soon as you're kind of led to it, there's a pall in the air here. Something feels off about this place or about the air here or certainly about what they look like. They all look weak. They all look pale, somehow.

Investigating [0:12:47]

Dre: Mm. Yeah. I mean, ultimately, I think mechanically what I'm doing here is setting up for a Study roll, but I think, like, that would be the first thing that Jonathan wants to do is just, like, you know, what do the wounds look like?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: What is that strange smell? Does it smell like anything I've smelled before? Is there anything else I can notice? But just trying to do, like, a visual inspection.

Austin: Yeah. That does sound like a Study roll to me, which is Insight + Insight, I believe.

Dre: Mm-hmm. I'm double checking...

Austin: This is an open-ended roll, in case anyone has any abilities. I don't think anyone on this side does. I think, over on the other side, Antistrophe has, like, a Study bonus on open-ended rolls, but I don't think you have that.

Dre: Yeah. I have a bonus if I roll high enough, [**Austin:** Gotcha.] but I don't think I have anything like that, yeah.

Austin: Okay. And you're rolling... Look at that, 13. 10 and a 3.

Dre: 13. Hey, I think that's just what I need for my thing. Yeah, Flash of Insight.

Austin: Ooh.

Dre: "When you roll a 13 or higher on a Check performed to investigate a creature, item, or location, [**Austin:** Yeah.] you may ask the Game Master up to Skill Level—so, one—question concerning the subject of your investigation."

Jack: Oh, neat.

Dre: "You may ask these questions immediately or save them for later."

Austin: I'm going to give you what you get just from doing the Study Check to begin with, [**Dre:** Mm.] and then if you want to follow up or save your question after that, go for it.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: But I don't want to, like— I don't want you to ask a question I was going to answer for you for free or for the success anyway, you know?

Dre: Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: So, the first thing that you notice is, yes, they are bleeding. The bleeding is coming from a pest. There's some sort of gadfly or similar sort of, you know, flying insect that's feeding on them and leaving little wounds, and so that's the cause of the blood. So this isn't a "they are bleeding from something, and also that has drawn some flies." Though, you know, that's probably also happening.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You can see signs that Beula tried some kind of traditional rancher-slash-veterinarian healing, you know, poultices and treatments, and it seems like— you know, I think Beula points out as you're looking at it, notices you looking at

one particular wound on the ox that's the deepest in, and she's like,

(as **Beula**): Yeah, that was the first one. You can see there where we tried to treat it like we would normally treat one of these things, and it just hasn't taken.

Austin: It seems like the wound won't heal. You know, I don't want to get too in the muck here, in terms of I don't want to zoom the camera lens in too much, but it is pretty—

Dre: Right, this isn't Sangfielle. [laughs quietly]

Austin: This is not Sangfielle. This is not the second half of Realis. But it is, there's nothing poisonous or toxic happening here or venomous. There's something— The wound is fighting being healed, right? And then, at 13...I don't know, maybe you get really close? Give me a little bit of the physical story of you investigating this. Tell me what this looks like a little bit.

Dre: Yeah. I definitely think, like, especially once Jonathan sees the flying pest part, [Austin: Mm-hmm.] I just imagine him rummaging through his...rumpsack? His backpack. And pulling out, like, fantasy PPE, I guess, like a mask or something at the very least. No, it's a big beekeeper hood. It's not the rest of the suit, but it's a big beekeeper hood.

Jack: Sick.

Austin: Oh, that's fun. That's fun.

Jack: *We are* in Sangfielle.

Austin: That's right.

Dre: [laughs quietly] God. Oh, it's Art. Hey, Art, we're here. We did it. [Austin chuckles]

Art: Surprise!

Dre: Surprise! [laughs]

Austin: The people long for the bugs! The bugs are back, baby!

Dre: They do. [Jack laugh quietly] But I think, like, that allows Jonathan to feel safe about, like, getting closer. And maybe, like... [sighs] Maybe I am putting my hand on one, and something just feels off [**Austin:** Yeah, yep.] or there's something I notice when I, like, put my hand up on its hide.

Austin: Yeah. I mean, I think you put on the beekeeper hood. You put your hand on it. And I was going to say this the other way, but I think it's grosser to go this way and more interesting, [Dre snorts] even though it's still Perpetua. You feel blood where there is none. And you're like, "Whoa, wait! That looks like dry skin to me."

Dre: Mm.

Austin: And you realize this isn't blood. It's something else. Something magical is happening here. It's like they are being desanguinated of something that isn't liquid blood but might be magic in nature, spiritual in nature? Life force or essence or something?

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And so, at 13, that is what you get.

Dre: Um...boy. Having just the one question makes it feel very loaded.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: I'm going to save it for now.

Austin: Totally.

Dre: And ask this in character. Mabel, is that her name, right?

Austin: Beula.

Dre: Beula.

Austin: Maebela is your sister's name.

Dre: Sure. I'm just thinking of, like—

Austin: And Mabel is Art's dog.

Dre: Yeah! Okay. There we go. Bringing it full circle.

Art: And those are basically the same name. [Austin laughs] Mabel and Beula are.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

(as **Jonathan**): [sighs] Beula, you got any reason to think there's a person who'd try to, like, do this on purpose?

Austin (as **Beula**): Do this on purpose? The whole town eats our rice. Any enemy of me is an enemy of a full tummy.

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Yeah, no. No, I agree. It's hard to imagine anyone from here doing this. Has there been...?

Austin (as **Beula**): Doing what? What'd you find?

Dre (as **Jonathan**): [sighs]

Austin (as **Beula**): You think this is a sabotage?

Dre (as **Jonathan**): It's... Something has been done intentionally. It's magic. I don't know what. I don't know how. I mean, I think I could figure that out.

Austin (as **Beula**): The clock runs short.

Dre (as **Jonathan**): No, you're right. So has there been anyone not from around here been around your farm recently?

Austin: Let me give you a little context here real quick. "The clock runs short," is a thing

that a subset of people on this continent say.

Dre: Oh, fuck.

Austin: She is, like... She doesn't believe the calendar is right. This is what saying this reveals to you.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: She thinks that everyone is wrong about how far away the end of days is.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: She's like an adventist, effectively, right?

Dre: Okay.

Jack: But, like, yeah.

Austin: And so, you tell her something magical is happening here—

Dre: She thinks it's coming sooner?

Austin: Yes, 100%.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Yeah. The clock runs short.

Jack: Because she thinks there's been, like, a calculation error.

Austin: Not just her, but there is some sort of [**Jack:** Yeah.] ongoing belief that, yes, there's been a calculation error. There's been— The dates are wrong, you know? We think that it's 400 years away. It's not.

Jack: Well, this is like when there's that theory that the value of a crotchet in music, like a single note has changed over time, [**Austin:** Right, sure.] and in fact, music is played much slower than we actually think it's supposed to be played.

Austin: Oh, that's fun.

Art: Oh.

Jack: Which I don't stand by. People hear Chopin's music being played very quickly, and they're like, "No one could have intended for it to be played that fast," which is...that's its own thing.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Art: Well, there's also people who think that the calendar is wrong.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: There are people who think that, like, we skipped several hundred years.

Jack: Oh, yes. They're also wrong about that.

Austin: There are many people who believe many things, and Beula is someone who believes we are wrong about— that the great Perpetuan Clock that hangs in Grande Sonnerie has been misaligned or tinkered with or—

Jack: Losing seconds or something.

Austin: Or losing seconds. Exactly that. Yes.

Jack: Wow.

Austin: And has now voiced, you know, "the clock runs short," about this, that oh, this is— and, you know, there's a little bit of it's just a saying, but it does line up with a thing she believes.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And someone who doesn't believe it doesn't say it, doesn't use that phrase, you know? So.

Jack: That's so cool. I mean, not for her. It's probably terrifying. But in Perpetua.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Hmm.

Austin (as **Beula**): But no, I have no enemies. Not a one.

Jack (as **Elena**): Have you changed anything up in your routine recently? The feed the animals eat, the water they drink? Any strange discoveries in the hills around here? You know, mysterious lights seen around the farm?

Austin (as **Beula**): Oh...

Jack (as **Elena**): Have you brought any strange antiques or objects into your house?

Austin (as **Beula**): It's funny you say that. You know, we did run out of the normal feed, and we had to bring some in from a merchant recently.

Jack: Glances at Jonathan. [Dre chuckles]

(as **Elena**): Hmm.

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Okay. Somebody from outside of town, it sounds like.

Austin (as **Beula**): Yeah. Fellow with a hat.

Jack (as **Elena**): What sort of hat?

Austin (as **Beula**): Wide gray brim.

Jack (as **Elena**): Okay. Did he drive a wagon? Did his—

Austin (as **Beula**): Sure did. Wagon with a covering on it. Inside was all sorts of different type of food. [sighs] You don't think the food was bad? It's just supplemental. You know, they graze mostly.

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Do you still have any of that food laying around?

Austin (as **Beula**): Of course, of course. Come take a look.

Austin: And leads you around back to, you know, around the side of a different stable—not keeping the food in the quarantine zone—and, you know, uncovers some big canvas sacks with what looks like alfalfa, maybe? Something like that.

Jack: Hmm.

Dre: Mm.

Jack: Can I, like, sort of grab a trowel or a scoop or something to dig through it, try to see if there's something, you know, like wormy in the food or something?

Austin: Yeah. You give me a Study like what Jonathan just did.

Jack: Mm. I'd like to Fabula Point that.

Austin: Sorry, my Perpetua— I was looking at notes. My Roll20 got messed up. What did you roll?

Jack: I rolled a 7.

Austin: Mm, okay. Again, open ended. 7 is a success; it's just the lowest possible success.

Jack: Yeah. I would prefer to do a little better than that.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: I can scoop through food better.

Austin: Because of what trait?

Jack: Because I used to work in a kitchen. I was dealing with big bins of, you know, like, pulses or quinoa or, like, couscous and stuff, and sometimes it goes bad.

Art: Elena, you still work in a kitchen. [quiet laughter]

Austin: But this is your megadungeon—

Art: We still do this. [Jack laughs]

Austin: Your megadungeon hostess.

Jack: Yes, I was a hostess in, like, a *big* kitchen.

Austin: Right, right, right, right.

Jack: The Snail... No disrespect to the Snail, but, you know.

Dre: Nah. None taken.

Art: All right. Fine. I'm taking the couscous special off the menu. [Austin and Jack laugh quietly]

Austin: Are you rerolling both of these or just one of them?

Jack: Um, let's see. What did I roll on the first one? I rolled a 6, and my dice is a 10.

Austin: Your dice is Insight.

Jack: I think I'm going to reroll both of them.

Austin: Okay. That is a 19!

Jack: Now, that's how you do it.

Dre: Let's go!

Austin: That is a 19. Phew! All right. You begin digging through, and, you know, I'll do it this way. At a 7, this seems to be alfalfa. Maybe it's a little... The color and the feel are off from one another. You know what it's supposed to feel like when it's this, you know, dried out or whatever, right? And it feels... Like before, the feel is actually wetter and fresher than it actually should feel. It looks like it should be like dried out alfalfa hay, you

know?

Jack: Right.

Austin: And instead, it feels like it's a little more alive than it should. And then, you know, at a 10, you feel that there is some movement in there. And at a 13, it is exactly the thing that you thought. At the very bottom of this or at maybe the middle of— they're a big stack, or they're big bales, right? And so you're, like, digging into the bale. I guess I said they were in canvas, so they cannot be— unless they're canvassed bale, which is a weird way to store bales of alfalfa. But in the midst of it, in the deepest part, in the heart of it, there is motion, and you pull out a big handful of little leaves of alfalfa, and they're moving around in your hand like maggots.

Jack: The leaves are moving?

Austin: Yeah. As if they're maggots.

Jack: Whoa.

Austin: And they just look like—

Jack: I drop it to the floor and wipe my hand on my apron.

Austin: Yeah. Uh huh. Yeah, totally. And there's like a little...on the apron, there's a little goo, as if you were holding something sticky or icky. And then, yeah, at what would have been a 16, I think you're able to magically sense that there is something... The instinct that this was done on purpose is potentially right. This is not something— The person who was selling this knew that there was something wrong with it, presumably, you know?

Jack: Mm.

Austin: This feels like it was a— maybe not a trap, but was, you know, part of a plan. You don't mistakenly carry this stuff around, you know? Then at a 19—a 19 is so, so, so high—I want to give you something really good, because that's the highest it could go,

basically, you know? Outside of a crit.

Jack: Bar one, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, and I said it was open-ended. So, I think at a 19, you realize something about the story that was told, which is a merchant came by and sold this. Where else has the merchant gone? You make the click that is: oh, it's not that this person has an enemy. It's that someone might be poisoning oxen generally.

Jack: Hmm.

Austin: You know, it's one thing to poison someone's water. It's another thing to poison the water supply. And...

Jack: Yeah. And if you're going around in a cart selling animal feed to...you know.

Austin: That's right. Yeah.

Jack: Yeah. You could even manufacture a shortage of the other animal feed. Beula said she'd, like, run out of the other kind so had to pick it up from the merchant.

Austin: That's right. Yeah.

Jack (as **Elena**): This food is very bad. You have to stop feeding it to them immediately. Obviously, we'll take a look at the rest of the cows and see what can be done about the ones that have already fallen ill, but...

Jack: Gestures back at the thing.

(as **Elena**): This is bad business. Some sort of dark magic at work. I'd appreciate any more information you can give me about the merchant. Do you have a receipt? Do you have the direction that he traveled in?

Austin (as **Beula**): North. He went north, but I think I might have a card back home. Let me go back to the house.

Jack (as **Elena**): Thank you. We'll take a look at your cows.

Veile and Waylon [0:28:43]

Austin: Veile, you were hanging out with Waylon this whole time, right? I believe?

Ali: Yeah, I believe so.

Austin: How's that going? What are you getting from Waylon right now? What's the vibe with you and Waylon eating lunch?

Ali: What is the vibe with me and Waylon eating lunch? [laughs] Probably, like, politely quiet?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: I think letting him talk [**Austin:** Mm.] as much as he wants to and engaging with that.

Austin: What is lunch? Did we decide what lunch was? I'm trying to remember if we'd figured this out.

Dre: Ah, I can't remember what, but I feel like there was, like, something that he was kind of stodgy and particular about. Or at least, like, maybe Art, maybe you proposed a meal, and he was like, "Well, by my stars, I never heard of that before, but I'll..."

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. That sounds like him. [Dre laughs]

Art: Yeah, that happened. I don't remember what it was.

Dre: "But I guess if I have to." [Ali laughs]

Austin: Okay. Fair enough.

Ali: What are your ingredients on hand? Do we know? I don't think it was, like, a roll. Would cooking him a good lunch be a roll?

Austin: No.

Art: I don't think I used any ingredients, because the ingredients are a little tight right now.

Austin: I see. What are the ingredients, though, that you could peel off a little bit of, you know? Without spending them.

Art: Oh, this definitely happened.

Austin: It did. I'm 90% sure it did.

Art: I think that's what happened to my second jellyfish.

Austin: Oh, it was some sort of weird jellyfish thing.

Ali: Oh, yeah.

Dre: Oh, yeah!

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: I take it back. It makes sense for him to feel that way. [Ali and Austin laugh]

Austin: Well, he's eating, and I think he's just kind of staring out at the mountains to the north. And, you know, after a few minutes of just quietly eating, he's like,

(as **Waylon**): Sure is a lot of time that we are spending eating and sitting. Sure are only so many daylight hours, and they're fading away.

Ali (as **Veile**): Is there a particular time you prefer to take your photo, sir?

Austin (as **Waylon**): Well, sooner the better, 'cause we gotta come back, don't we?

Ali (as **Veile**): Well, yes, but do you take it on the same day every time?

Austin (as **Waylon**): Well, no, but my hope was not to be out in the wilderness for too many days in a row, otherwise I would live in the wilderness.

Ali (as **Veile**): Well. Yeah. [Ali laughs] I do understand your concern in that regard.

Ali: Hmm. What time is it, do we think?

Austin: Afternoon? You know, y'all went to the place in the morning. You got the jobs. You had the meeting with Thelonious.

Ali: Yeah, true. True.

Austin: And now you're up in the mountains, you know what I mean? You're up in the hills.

Ali: We're at, yeah, like a 3:00.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And sun sets at, I don't know. [laughs]

Art: Look, I understand this guy is right, but he's really starting to bother me. [Austin and Dre laugh]

Austin: Many such cases. [Jack laughs quietly]

Ali (as **Veile**): Well, if it's a concern with safety in the wilderness, we're very capable in that regard. And if it's an issue with comfort, I mean, these people are entertainers. Their whole life is hospitality. So, while I realize this is quite the inconvenience, I think that we'll get up there at a timely time. We'll be able to settle in for the night. And then, when we wake up, you know, you'll be able to set up your whole, you know, endeavor.

Austin (as **Waylon**): [still grumbling] Mm-hmm. All right. We'll see how it goes. We'll do it your way.

Ali (as **Veile**): I suppose the alternative is staying here for the night and then setting off in the morning, but that...

Austin (as **Waylon**): I see you want me to get sick like one of the oxes.

Ali (as **Veile**): I beg your pardon?

Austin (as **Waylon**): You want me to get sick like one of them oxes out in the field.

Austin: And he nods out at one of the oxes, the ones that are away from the quarantined ones, and it has dropped down to its front knees.

Ali: Wait, an oxen just did this?

Austin: Mm-hmm. And he's nodding out to it with his head. He's like, "You want me to get sick like one of them." He has noticed that whatever has made the other oxes sick is making this one sick too.

Art: Oh. That's annoying that he noticed this. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Very observant old guy.

Art: And we didn't.

Austin: Well, it just happened. You didn't notice it, because it hadn't happened until this exact moment in the narrative.

Art: I think I'm still annoyed.

Austin: Mm, okay. [Jack and Ali laugh]

Art: I appreciate...

Austin: The linearity of time.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Okay.

Ali (as **Veile**): Oh my...

Ali: [laughing] I was going to say, “my lords,” and I gotta figure out. I gotta figure out how she refers to the Ennead, if she even does, because that’s not it.

Austin: Yeah. How about, “Oh my gods”? No? Uh uh.

Ali: [laughing] That’s not going to be it.

Austin: That don't hit. It doesn't hit.

Ali: [laughs] But I...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Just imagine a polite but shocked reaction to seeing that happen.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And then... I'm torn between the impulse of being like, “We should also get up and go see this thing right now,” or being like, “Well, that’s why we're here. [laughs]

Austin: Right. Right. Sure.

Ali: You know, this is an illustration of how serious this concern is, and while I am realizing that we are, like, inconveniencing you by juggling these tasks, [Austin chuckles] they can be completed at once.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And, you know.

(as **Veile**): We wouldn't let you get sick, sir. No. No.

Austin (as **Waylon**): All right, well, then maybe we should sleep out in the mountains. Seems preferable to staying in this sick pit.

Ali: [quietly] Jeez.

Jack: Come on, dude. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Ali (as **Veile**): You know, this might be disrespectful, and if you don't want to answer, you don't have to, but being that you're kind of "in the know," so to speak, in the office, have you heard anything about this plague?

Austin (as **Waylon**): Ain't that the job y'all took?

Ali (as **Veile**): Oh, sure, but town gossip, you know.

Austin (as **Waylon**): Town gossip is we might all starve.

Austin: Takes a big ol' bite of the sandwich. [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Veile**): Well. Not if we have anything to say about it.

Investigation Continues [0:35:39]

Austin: Back inside, Beula's, like, going through table drawers, looking for a rate sheet for the feed and a card. Can't seem to find the rate sheet but does find a card. The card says...let me make sure I get this right, the right part of my notes. Says, "D.G. Flay." D period, G period, Flay, F-L-A-Y. You know, "Feed and Supplies."

Jack: Hmm. That's a *Gormenghast*-ass name for this guy.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: D. G. Flay.

Dre: [sighs] I have two ideas for my one question.

Austin: Mm.

Dre: And I'm, like, 95% sure which one I want to ask, but I figure I will put it to the party to see if anybody has input. My two questions are either, one: How can we cure these cows?

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Uh huh.

Dre: Or, two: Where is this guy?

Austin: You've gotten north. You've gotten north, and I don't know that you'll get more, genuinely, than "he went north."

Dre: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Austin: Uh, well, it depends on how the question is being answered, because I can give you the diegetic answer. I can give you the "what can you piece together with deduction" one, or I can give you the "the events of the story unfold such that you get a direction," you know?

Dre: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Jack: I think it is more important to me to try and help these cows in this moment.

Dre: Yeah. I agree.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Because it's one thing to arrive and say, like, "Stop feeding them that food!" and another thing to be like, "Good luck!" and just leave. [laughs quietly]

Austin: Yeah. I'll note that you have, at this point, presumably also noticed the one in the field, one of the two in the field dropping down to its knees.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, we can try and quarantine them, but I don't know if that's a roll. Just, like, bring them into the quarantine pen.

Austin: Yeah. So—

Dre: Well, you know.

Austin: Yeah, go ahead?

Dre: We're on the clock.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Mm-hmm. And the clock is short, apparently.

Art: I don't want to make things more difficult for us, but I think cattle herding is difficult and we don't know how to do it. [Austin and Jack laugh]

Dre: Mm. Fair.

Austin: Yeah. And in fact, I think the one that has not gotten sick yet begins to, like, move away from the sick one [**Jack:** That's good.] and is wandering further afield, you know?

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And I think, upon seeing that one, she says,

(as **Beula**): Well, that's strange.

Austin: Beula. Beula says this.

(as **Beula**): Old Roger hasn't had any of that feed yet.

Jack (as **Elena**): The one that fell?

Austin: She nods.

(as **Beula**): He's been out to pasture for the whole last few weeks.

Jack (as **Elena**): Well, then I fear it's probably contagious. Who's the remaining cow, the one that's currently upright?

Austin (as **Beula**): That's Belly Girl.

Jack: [laughs quietly] Like, an expression passes across Elena's face in confusion but is moving along. [Dre laughs]

(as **Elena**): Well, you should separate her from the others. Make sure she doesn't get anyway close to them. I'm going to try and get Roger into the quarantine pasture, and you should—

Austin (as **Beula**): Old Roger.

Jack (as **Elena**): Sorry, Old Roger. And you should keep all your other animals as far away from this quarantine as possible. Do you have other animals?

Austin (as **Beula**): We got a few things. Ducks and whatnot.

Jack (as **Elena**): Yeah, you keep them away.

Dre (as **Jonathan**): When you, uh...

Dre: Oh, what was the cow's name?

Austin: Old Roger or Belly Girl?

Jack: Belly Girl?

Dre: Belly Girl. I knew it was Belly something.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre (as **Jonathan**): When you go get Belly Girl, see if she's got any of those bug bites on her. I'm wondering if that's how it's spreading.

Austin (as **Beula**): Mm-hmm. Will do.

Austin: And, you know, I think probably goes off to try to track down Belly Girl, leaving you with the rest of the herd and...

Dre: Old Roger.

Austin: And Old Roger, yeah.

Dre: Yeah. Does Old Roger have any bug bites on him?

Austin: Yes, 100%. 100%.

Jack: Mm...This is tough, because cows do have bug bites on them.

Austin: Yeah, but it's the type that Jonathan identified.

Dre: It's the icky ones.

Austin: It's the bad ones. For sure.

Jack: It's the bad kind, yes.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: [sarcastic] The bad kind of bug bites, unlike...

Austin: But was not near the other herd, apparently.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: Or did not eat the same food, is what you were told, but was out grazing for...

Jack: Yeah, but the bugs could be out spreading it like malaria.

Austin: Sure. Totally.

Jack: I think...

Austin: And I should actually say this. Has the bites, does not have the bugs.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You do not see any flies on it.

Jack: I suspect—

Dre: Does it feel the same when I touch its side?

Austin: Yeah, 100%. It's the same type of bug bite. It's the same type of situation.

Jack: Yeah. I suspect they're, like, evil. [laughs quietly] I suspect they're invisible.

Austin: Mm.

Jack (as **Elena**): Jonathan, could you handle Old Roger, and I'm going to go see if I can get Veile?

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Yeah, of course.

Jack: You know, sitting from your position with the sandwich, [Austin chuckles] you can see Elena running up to the field towards you.

(as **Elena**): Veile!

Ali (as **Veile**): Oh, if you'll excuse me, sir.

Ali: And sort of, like, getting up and rushing closer to where Elena is.

Austin: Just takes another bite of the sandwich. Yeah, uh huh.

Jack (as **Elena**): Okay, I'm going to give you the rundown. The cows are very sick. Some sort of malevolent feed? The sickness seems to be spreading among the cows. Jonathan and I seem to have figured out that there was a fell salesman selling bad feed and he's gone off to the north, but I have run out of my spell abilities, as far as healing these cows could be, so I think maybe we swap.

Ali (as **Veile**): Oh. Yes, of course.

Jack (as **Elena**): You have a healing spell, right?

Ali (as **Veile**): Yes. I actually... I recently... [Ali and Art laugh]

Jack: "I've leveled."

Austin: I leveled up.

Ali: I just happened to level up.

(as **Veile**): I was just reading.

Austin: What does getting a new spell? Yeah, what—?

Jack (as **Elena**): That's amazing, Veile.

Healing [0:41:24]

Austin: Where *did* you get the new spell from, out here in the wilderness? How does that work for you?

Ali: It's interesting, because I did not... I got a new class.

Austin: Oh.

Ali: Like, I was speedrunning Entropist, and I got up to level 9 with that, and I was like, "Okay, I can take a third class now, because I can kind of wiggle." I wanted to be able to get a fourth class, and I don't know, I just wanted to have my options open. So. And I have been trying to contextualize this. I do—

Austin: Wait, so you've maxed Entropist at this point?

Ali: I am at 9.

Austin: Okay, so you're very close to maxing it. Okay.

Ali: Right. I took Spiritus instead of, like, popping the cork on the major—

Austin: You get a super ability, basically.

Ali: When you hit 10, you get, like, another. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Ali: So, in contextualizing this, I do think that, like, a lot of the last session was Veile overthinking about responsibility.

Austin: Mm.

Ali: And also, there was that moment of Elena being like, “I don't want to split up, because I've really been having a bad time. Like, it isn't funny or cool when I, like, pass out or fall down a flight of stairs [**Austin:** Right, right.] and then we just all get up at the end of the battle, and that didn't happen to you.”

Jack: It *is* funny, though, but Elena is right. [Ali laughs]

Art: It's *not* cool.

Ali: So I think there's part of Veile that is like, “Oh, I have to— let me hit the books again in this way,” because I think a lot of her magic is... I don't want to say, like, low effort, because she does a lot of very strange things.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: But I think that in her magic experience, she was in this small town where there was not a lot of big injury in that way.

Austin: Right.

Ali: And if there was, that kind of healing was probably pawned off— not pawned off but delegated to, like, higher skillset Spiritists.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Mm. I see.

Ali: Whereas she sort of has this sort of, like, niche. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah. Totally.

Ali: I mean, yeah. The place of Entropists in society is something I think we still have to figure out as a setting thing, but people do the stuff that she does, and it's normal.
[laughs quietly]

Austin: Is it? Is it?

Ali: However.

Austin: Is it normal, in your mind? [Ali laughs] Like, I'm not saying that she's THE Entropist, right, because that's not how the system works. But...

Ali: Right. She is not the only one who can...

Austin: Fuck with time or whatever.

Ali: Right. Or, you know, I read these for comedic effect, but do things like alter the very nature of your target, twist the laws of magic, steal another creature's life force. Like, this is all within the realm of, like, defense magic. You know, people do this.

Austin: Do they? [Ali laughs] 'Cause like, the way I'm saying this or the reason I'm saying this is because, like, we don't even see that many people who do, like, fireball magic.

Ali: Yeah. [laughs]

Austin: You know? Or like, there's a whole—you know, we haven't seen anybody do a summon, but there's a whole Summoner class in the game. I'm not saying that what you do is like... I'm not saying you're doing evil bad magic. What I'm saying is I don't know that it's— Maybe you're right. Inside of the subclass of people who are adventurers, 1 in 10 of them is doing entropy type magic, for sure.

Ali: Right.

Austin: I'm not disagreeing with that. But I don't think that's a big amount of people altogether. I don't know, for instance, is the Valte military filled with people who are doing Drain Vigor or whatever? Maybe they are. You know, I've written Drain Vigor on some character sheets, so like, it's out there.

Ali: Right.

Austin: But those guys are specifically not heroic adventurers. So, I don't know.

Ali: And it's also like, if you're going to the mage store, if you're going to the magic library.

Austin: Yes.

Ali: Like, Entropist books are going to be right next to anything else.

Austin: Right.

Ali: You know.

Austin: I suspect that it's in the version of this that is tied to the parts of what Entropist skills do, which are about giving your friends an extra action and restoring or stealing magic points from bad guys. You know, like that's the stuff that's probably very widely spread, more than whatever the one is where you invoke doom, your doom invocation. [Ali laughs] That feels taught to people who they can be trusted with that or something, you know?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah, and I wonder, 'cause, you know, Veile's also... Her, like, patron saints are Lucena and Caliginia.

Austin: Caliginia, yeah.

Ali: And I don't know if there's, like, an encouragement from the church to embody some of that stuff. I don't know if it's a your religious education is so rooted in what this skill tree is [Austin: Right, right.] that like, if they're going to say, you know, "We have 10 towns. 10 priestesses in those towns are going to be Caliginia people."

Austin: Right. I see what you're saying.

Ali: They're going to be the people who are entrusted with Entropic magic or at least encouraged to have these, so these spells are, you know, out there.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Ali: I think about it in that way.

Austin: Yeah, and I think that that's probably right, right? I think you are a priest of Caliginia originally. You obviously are on this mission from Lucena. And I think we can kind of work backwards from this, right? Like, you don't have any fire spells from Cinnor, the fire goddess. And so, like, there's no requirement of priestesses of the Holy Protectorate to, like, learn something from everybody. You've been encouraged to learn the stuff that is tied to Caliginia.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And there is probably some, you know, I wouldn't even go as far as, like, dogma, right? But like, there is a set of beliefs tied to Caliginia. Caliginia is tied to the cycle of time. You know, it's Caliginia, Fated Darkness. The night always comes. The day always comes after that, but the night always comes. Things do die. It is natural for old creatures and old parts of the world to fade. That happens. She's part of that system and is part— you know, and as such, you've probably done lots of funerary rites. You've probably done lots of, you know, you're there when someone wants to confess to wrongdoing and wants to, like, end a phase of their life and begin a new phase of their life. You know, there's all sorts of things that are about endings that are tied to Caliginia that aren't, you know, summoning the evil, you know, darkness to kill people. And you have been trained in all of that and along the way probably have learned that stuff, so I do think it makes perfect sense for you to now be like, "I'm on a quest for Lucena—Lucena, the Bringer of Light—and yeah, I'm going to learn some Spiritist stuff," because that's where light magic is situated inside of this set of beliefs.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So yeah, that makes perfect sense to me.

Ali: Anyway, I do have Heal now.

Austin: You do.

Ali: And I just want to say that when I saw how many Hit Points Heal gets you... [Art chuckles]

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: I put it in chat that I was like, "I'm going to throw up right now."

Austin: Yeah. Well, how's it work?

Ali: And I just want you to know, you've been at home, and I'm here with you now. [laughs quietly] Each target— up to three!

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Each target recovers 40 Hit Points. The amount increases to 50 Hit Points if you are level 20 or higher and then 60 if you are level 40 or higher.

Austin: What's your maximum HP, again?

Jack: These are going to be some healthy cows.

Ali: Huh?

Austin: What's your maximum HP, again?

Ali: Oh, probably nothing good. [laughs] It's 42, I think?

Austin: It looks like it's 43, maybe. Yeah, uh huh. Something like that.

Art: Wow.

Austin: Yeah, so you can almost—

Jack: 43.

Ali: It would have been really interesting to have this earlier, but.

Austin: Yeah, totally.

Art: This raises a lot of questions: Does the magical healing cure diseases? How many Hit Points do cows have? [Ali and Jack laugh]

Dre: Mm.

Art: All sorts of fun questions.

Ali: I mean, as a person, I have 40, as like a 25 year old woman who's, like, in kind of good health.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: That's crazy.

Austin: Well, you have 6 Might, so it's...

Art: But like, if a professional boxer started punching me, [**Austin:** Yeah.] and a second identical professional boxer started punching a cow, I'm dead way before that cow.

Jack: Way before.

Austin: Way before the cow.

Ali: Okay.

Art: Way before.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Way before! [laughs quietly]

Ali: Okay, but what if somebody invoked doom on you, turning your strength into frailty? You know.

Austin: I mean, that would be pretty bad.

Art: And also did it to a cow? I don't know. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Does the cow feel doom?

Ali: Just, there's a different realm of thinking about some of this stuff, but I don't know.

[Art laughs]

Austin: Yeah, I mean, this goes back to what is health points in a world of this, you know?

Ali: Anyway, I can heal these cows.

Austin: 'Cause they're not health points, they're Hit Points, I guess, actually, right? So. Anyway.

Ali: Yeah. The spell is up to three creatures.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: 10 MP per creature.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: So I can technically do— I can heal seven cows. [laughs quietly]

Austin: You can.

Ali: Or I can do, like, a ritual. We can kind of zoom out a little bit on this. [laughs]

Austin: No, let's— I mean, I think we should do one cow to see how it goes.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: Because that's what your instinct is, right?

Jack: Yeah, a test. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. And there's no roll on this. You just cast the spell.

Jack: Specifically we're looking for, like, a healing spell.

Ali: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay.

Austin: Right? So, what's this look like? What's casting Heal on one of these cows look like?

Ali: I think we probably go to the one that recently fell, right?

Austin: Old Roger. Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

Ali: And, you know, I think it's... You know, she's not trying to be extra with it, I guess. You know, in this conversation, she's someone who we've seen do magic a lot. I think that there's kind of a nervousness of being like, "Gosh, I haven't done healing magic in a couple years." [laughs]

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Like, I haven't had my Fundamentals of Healing class in quite some time. [Austin chuckles] So there's extra pressure on it in that regard, [Austin: Mm-hmm.] but I do think it's a little bit like she holds out her staff, and you see the animation that she does when she casts magic. [laughs quietly]

Austin: But it's the same type of maneuver. It's the same, like, staff out and then... There's nothing different in color. You're not summoning a different color of magic or a different effect.

Ali: Oh, I mean, I think we probably get the, like, ribbon wiggle again, and maybe it's like, I do a lot of imagery with the, like, empty hollow part in the middle of the bell-shaped staff or whatever.

Austin: Of the staff. Right, yeah.

Ali: So maybe it's a thing of, like... [quietly] God. I think a lot of it about, like, pulling magical energy into it and then, like, pushing it out.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: So maybe it's like the opposite of that?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Like if you're thinking about aether spend or whatever, it is trying to create the matter in the air to spread to these things.

Austin: Sure.

Ali: Instead of, like, dehydrating things to make an offensive spell like she usually does with her doom stuff.

Austin: Right. All right. It fills with the energy, and then you project it into Old Roger. Spend the 10 MP to do this.

Ali: I sure will.

Austin: And Old Roger stands back up on both extra legs and begins to be led dutifully towards the quarantine stable, and then, about 10 steps in, drops back down to the front knees. To use your metaphor, Art, about the cow and the boxer, it's like... You know, a healthy cow has way more HP than you, 100%. This cow's max HP has been seemingly reduced below where yours is. And so what you—

Art: Oh. And they bring in the boxers.

Austin: And then they bring in the boxers. [Dre chuckles] It's as if, Veile, you healed it temporarily. You were able to give it all that extra 40, and it just drained away. Something is more deeply— They are not physically wounded. I mean, they are also physically wounded, you know? But there's something spiritual happening here that will not be healed by a healing spell or a healing potion. There is something about— They are decaying in some way.

Art: So are you also suggesting it won't be fixed by the right food?

Austin: I am suggesting that, yeah.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: Again, there's no evidence that this one ate that food. There's no evidence that this one— There's no flies on this one, though it has the bites.

Art: Oh, I guess I don't have— I was wondering if I could make something that would...

Austin: I see.

Art: But this isn't a status.

Austin: No. Well, I'm, it's—

Art: Probably not something you can gain resistance to.

Austin: Um...

Art: Well, if it's poison. Is it a poison?

Austin: It's a poison. It's like a metaphysical poison, but it's a deeper— It's hard to know. I've given you a lot of what you could possibly know from this small part of the thing. You know, if someone said what they thought was happening, and it was right, I would ring a little bell and say, "Aha, you got it actually, somehow, and you feel that you got it right," but no one has said it.

Dre: Is it a curse?

Austin: What I'm not going to do is say, "Let's keep naming things until you get it right."

[Ali laughs]

Dre: No, no, no, no, no. I mean, that's— I think it's a curse, legit is like where my mind is going.

Austin: What is a curse? Tell me what a curse is.

Dre: It is a poison that is deeper than physical and is, like, magically based.

Austin: These things have not been cursed, no.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: There is something that is not physical and is deeper than physical, but no one came by and did a curse on them, outside of the thing I already said, which is they seem to have been given a magical sickness by the food, except for this one, which it doesn't seem like that's what this was, this one at least.

Art: Hmm.

Ritual [0:55:34]

Ali: So, I've been thinking about, from the start of this session, I've been looking at the list of the Ennead [**Austin:** Mm-hmm.] and thinking about doing, like, a Ritual to sense...something? [laughs]

Austin: Sure. Because you have two types of Ritualism, right?

Ali: I have...

Austin: You have, like, the Ritual Ritualism, and then you have Entropy Rituals, right?

Ali: Yes. Yes. Which, I mean, constant decay of physical matter. This could just be Entropism here.

Austin: Mm.

Ali: You were trying to get me off the scent when you were saying, "Not a lot of people do entropic magic." Well, something's happening here.

Art: Ahh.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: But Ritualism Ritualism has “sense the presence of magic,” and I don't know if this is, like... I don't know what I want out of it. What would I ask you that feels like it isn't something we already know and can be figured out magically? Because I do think that there is, like, a sort of like a magical...fingerprinting isn't like that, but.

Austin: Mm-hmm. No, but if what you're saying is, “Could I do a Ritual to find out more information?” I think the answer is yes. You could do a sort of magical Study that goes beyond what you could do. You know, a Ritual opens up that possibility quite a bit, because Rituals can just do fucking anything, you know?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Not anything, but they can do a lot, and there's rules for how much they cost, you know? So, around that.

Dre: Austin—

Ali: Yeah, I mean—

Dre: Oh, go ahead, Ali.

Ali: Oh, no, go ahead.

Dre: I was just going to ask: could I use basically my one question from Flash of Insight to ask, “How can the cows be healed?”

Austin: Yes, but I do have to then— the answer to give you that is the diegetic thing in the world happens to clue you in maybe or to give you a deeper clue.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: Which means, like, not ticking a clock, but like, I don't think you have enough yet to piece that together in this situation.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: But I can give you another piece of information by moving something forward, if

that makes sense.

Dre: Yeah.

Art: And I can't fix this by making them a big sweet and sour feed which would give them resistance to poison damage. [Ali laughs]

Dre: Mm.

Austin: You know, I think it depends on what we're trying to do here, right? Like, if what you wanted to do was say, "I want to make sure that they live one more week," I would say you can go ahead and do that, and in fact, I'm not even going to make you— You know, you wouldn't have to roll for that, because that's not how the food stuff works, I guess, right? But like, I'm happy to say that you've done that. You've done what you can for them to extend what life they have, at this point. That's...

Dre: Sure.

Art: Well, I don't have any sweet ingredients, so it's sort of...

Austin: Oh. Okay, well then you're not doing that anyway. But no.

Ali: Well, you can borrow sugar. [laughs]

Austin: As far as you can tell, there is something...you know. I am trying to be graceful in saying [Dre: Mm-hmm.] you have chased down the most mundane things. I think a Ritual could reveal more. I think your question could reveal more, but I'm telling you it would have to be from you getting a sort of flash of insight from something else happening that you immediately piece together.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: But it would not be... The state would change. The state of the world would change to give you that information, in a way that it might not change immediately if you got it some other way.

Dre: Yeah. Okay, I want to ask this, but I don't want it to be rules lawyer bullshit.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: But the last, like, or the second to last sentence on the move is, "Whenever you ask one of these questions, the Game Master *will* answer truthfully, and *you* will describe your character's deductive process."

Austin: Okay. But truly the thing here is I don't know how you will get here. I cannot imagine.

Dre: No, yeah, yeah, yeah. No, fair.

Austin: Maybe you could, but like, I think that there might be a limit to that, that is like...

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: You can't ask me how to build the atomic bomb with that thing, right?

Dre: [laughs quietly] Sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: So we know there are hard limits to it. You know, I could DM it to you, and you could tell me if you think you could figure that out and come up with an answer. Because I don't mind telling you that, but I don't want to say it out loud on the mic, unless... I don't want to deflate it, do you know what I mean?

Dre: Yeah, sure.

Austin: By just giving it to you in that way, unless you have a really cool way of getting it. So I'm going to DM it to you.

Dre: Okay.

Ali: Now we're really gaming.

Dre: We are.

Austin: Yeah, that's right. [Ali and Jack laugh quietly]

Art: Yeah. We have a pull-aside.

Jack: Austin very carefully typing out the words, "Take them to a cow doctor."

Austin: Uh huh. [Ali and Art laugh]

Dre: Interesting.

Art: I think that's just a vet. I think we're... [Jack chuckles]

Austin: So, yeah. And I just don't think, Dre, I don't know that you've... The player, the player of the video game Perpetua, which isn't real. Just, you know, imagine this was a Dreamcast game, and a player had been playing both sides of these campaigns. They might actually get there, but I don't know that I've heard you say anything about this stuff, you know? I'll read all this out loud after we're on the other side of this, and then we can put it all in. You know what I mean?

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I thought so. Okay. So, yeah. I think something has to happen, but I love this train of thought, Dre, because you will be able to take it this way once you get this information, either through asking the question and getting something happening that you can then run with or the Ritual being successful and getting you some extra information.

Art: I knew I should have taken that level in Veterinarian. [Austin and Ali laugh]

Jack: I know.

Ali: Okay. I do have to do a magic check on here.

Austin: You do.

Ali: And I have to figure out—

Austin: This is a whole thing, right? The Rituals are, yeah.

Ali: Eh, it's just a little math.

Austin: It's just a little math. I think— what is your Effect? What is the Effect you're—? You're just trying to figure out what's happened here.

Ali: Yeah. I think that I, in realizing that this is probably a magical effect, [**Austin:** Mm-hmm.] and feeling like Veile, whether she's right or not, feels like it is tied to entropy in some way.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Is trying to do the, like, I don't want it to suddenly be like, [laughing] “Oh, she goes into Batman vision, and she can see, like, the footprints on the floor or whatever.” But I do think that there, you know, in universe, there should be a way that, like, casting magic is touching the world in some way that those spells can be traced.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And she's able to call upon that to receive knowledge that is not accessible in the ways that Jonathan and Elena were looking at this.

Austin: I think I understand what you're saying. I think I do. Yes. [Ali laughs] You're not going into Witcher vision or Batman vision, but you are tracing the magical residue of whatever is happening here. You're hopefully going to see or sense connections that are unavailable in the physical realm.

Ali: Yeah. I've been trying to think of is there a specific deity that Veile feels like is more capable of this. Like, I was like—

Austin: This is Caliginia stuff.

Ali: Yeah. I was—

Austin: Or it's Pharmakos the Poisoner, right?

Ali: Oh, perhaps. I was thinking of— yeah.

Austin: But it depends on what it is, is really what it is, you know?

Ali: I was like, "Is flesh earth?"

Austin: No. It is not. [Ali laughs] Earth is earth. Earth is earth earth, you know?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Flesh is weirdly, the closest mechanical one is Castine, Living Metal, in the sense that it's physical.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: Castine is the one who's involved with physical damage. But I'd say Pharmakos the Poisoner, if what this is is a poison, but it's Caliginia because it's about death and it's about cycles and change, right? Fated Darkness is.

Ali: Yeah. I do feel like Cal—

Austin: But you could go either way.

Ali: I mean, Caliginia would be easiest for her, because we just had this whole conversation about it.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And also because I do think that, like, I think that maybe she senses some foul intent.

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm.

Ali: And like, if there is someone here who wanted to put an end to something, like I

think the sort of like, “You want me to get sick like all of this, and we're going to go hungry,” is like, someone is doing something that is bigger than killing these cows. Someone is trying to cause— someone is putting out a flame here, society-wise.

Austin: Right. Mm-hmm.

Ali: So...

Austin: This is a Ritual.

Ali: Create an illusion, treat an illness, locate someone or something is a medium thing.

Austin: Yeah. At a medium, you could even treat it, which is actually *very* interesting for reasons that will become clear.

Ali: Wow.

Austin: I'd say minor to find out what's going on; medium to treat Old Roger.

Ali: Okay. And then small would be... I mean, are we talking— eh, a crowd is tough here, because it feels—

Austin: A large creature. It's a large creature.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: It's not a human-sized creature, you know? Individual would be a human-sized creature. Small is a few human-sized creatures, a large creature, et cetera. So I think this is small. Unfortunately, this is a lot of MP, huh?

Ali: No. I mean, it's 60, which is something I can do.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: And I can also borrow MP from people, I think.

Austin: Oh.

Ali: Or I can halve the cost by doing something.

Austin: You do a rare or powerful ingredient, and other people can roll with you. I don't think... I think we maybe let you borrow MP once for a reason, and I don't think that that's true.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: I think we should not have let you do that, as I believe...

Ali: I remember having, like, a book or something, or maybe I just had, like, a +1.

Austin: Oh, maybe you had a book that let you do that or something. I don't remember.

Ali: Regardless, I have IP for an elixir right now and 60 MP to do this.

Austin: All right.

Ali: So, yeah. So, Willpower plus...

Austin: Is anyone helping with this, or you think you just go this? It's only a DL 10.

Ali: I would not say no to the assist.

Austin: All right. Then you will be acting as a leader, and everybody else will be doing Insight + Willpower, whoever's helping you with the Ritual.

Dre: I will help.

Austin: Okay.

Art: Yeah, I gotta.

Austin: Is this holding hands in a circle Ritual help? What is this?

Art: I hope so. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Great. Good.

Ali: Yeah, probably. I do think there's probably an element of, like, can you keep the animals calm while I do this?

Austin: I see. Sure.

Dre: Mm.

Ali: I don't know how cows react to people chanting at them.

Austin: Mm.

Art: I think cows are pretty chill.

Ali: I don't know. They stare at you.

Dre: They are until they're not, I think is how cows are. [laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Yeah. Yeah. And then they're all— like, if one's not, then they're all not, and then it's a problem, is the sense I get from cows.

Dre: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: So, I do think there's part of that, and I don't that it's just, "can you think about this really hard with me" would help. [laughs] It would help if you believed in your heart that we were doing something good here together.

Austin: All right. So, other people, I guess anyone else who's helping, give me Insight + Willpower. Your difficulty is 10. If you succeed, then you can give bonuses to Veile. Well, that's a 3, so that ain't it. Hey, that's a 10 from Uncle Nicky.

Ali: Okay, so that's a +1 for me.

Austin: And is Veile— Sorry, Elena is not helping here.

Jack: No. I'm up talking to the old man.

Austin: Right, okay.

Jack: We've swapped.

Austin: You've swapped. I see, I see, I see. [Ali laughs] I missed that somehow. My bad. All right, so that's a plus... What are your Bonds, again? How many Bonds do you have with Veile, Nicky?

Art: One.

Austin: You have one. So it's a +1. I believe that that's the case. I believe we have figured out how that actually works.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: So, yes.

Ali: Okay. I'm hitting the button. Fuck! Wait a minute.

Austin: That's a 6. That's not what you want to see. [Jack laughs quietly]

Ali: Uh...

Austin: Oh, I'm wrong.

Jack: You really don't want to see ritual for cow knowledge: 6.

Austin: Yeah. It's +1 plus another 1 for the highest successful Bond, so it's actually +2, not just +1.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: So that is actually—

Ali: So that would get me to a 7.

Austin: Which is not enough. You need a 10 for this, right? Because you—

Ali: No, I know.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: But I could also... Do I want to Fabula Point this, or do I just want to switch out...

Austin: Oh, of course, the 1.

Ali: The 1 for a 7.

Austin: Very powerful.

Ali: Um...I think this is really important to her. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah. Sure. All right.

Ali: [laughing] I realize how risk it is for the show for me to have the one where you succeed if you want, but I also would really like to succeed here, so.

Austin: Yeah. That makes sense to me. Yeah. All right.

Art: It's really just about finding something to fail later.

Austin: That's right.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Trading that 1 back. You begin to feel for the deeper wound, right? You know, I'm going to try to find a metaphor that has nothing to do with actual physical bodies to describe this, right? It's like what you're feeling for is the source of a river. You're trying to find the spring, because you know that there's something wrong with the river's spring, right? The river has been reduced to a dribble. The river, in this case, is the life of the ox. And so you're tracing it up the kind of, like, the delta. You're tracing it up the tributaries. You're like, "Okay, this is one little stream, and I'm trying to figure out where the stream comes from." Maybe it comes from its own little font. Maybe it comes

from somewhere else.

And what you find is it's supposed to be coming from a big river, the river that is the ox, the first ox, the original Draconic Ox, because all living things in Perpetua, all creatures have a draconic originator. And there's something wrong with that. You can feel— and Jonathan, you're part of this, so somehow you feel this too, and maybe, I don't know, we can read some of what we wrote here in a second back and forth. What I sent you was the first ox, the dragon ox, has itself been poisoned. And so, yeah, maybe you feel this in your body from that scar that you brought up last time. You suggested that to me. I think it's a good idea. You feel this kind of draconic connection. Something is wrong with the first ox, and what that means is that all oxes like it are dying. It is being killed. It is being poisoned. It is being hurt. And because you've healed it, you've done something very strange here, Veile. You have, like, made it exist separate from the draconic connection.

Ali: Eeh. Did I alter the very nature of my target?

Austin: You did. [Ali laughs] You made it stand on its own four feet, so to speak, right? Its fate is no longer tied to the fate of the first ox. It is now its own being in the flow of time and space, which makes it very unique in the realm of Perpetua. Maybe not the only thing. Certainly the dragons themselves exist in that way, but they also exist across all the cycles. You know, as a maybe reminder, because this has come up on the other side, but it hasn't come up on this side. There are, for each living thing, there is a draconic original, there is a sort of blueprint that all of the other ones are effectively mirrors or reflections or, you know, variations on in some way. You don't know where they come from. I don't think you've done any of that research. But that has come up over on the other side. I don't think they've done any of that research more deeply than that. But, you know, they fought the big Draconic Mole. That is *the* mole. That is the first mole. And here, you are learning the first ox is being hurt.

Jack: Who was also going through some weird stuff.

Austin: It was. It was also going through some weird stuff. So true.

Art: Huh.

Jack: Do we know how this illness, do we get a sense how this illness is dovetailing with the feed as well, the poisoned feed?

Austin: You know, I think this is a place where, Dre, if you want to ask a question, you could get a little more detail here if you wanted.

Jack: Sure.

Austin: But that's up to Jonathan.

Dre: Yeah, no. I think that's good. I think that is a good question to ask. I think that would be very important for us to know.

Austin: You tell me how you deduce it, but what is very clear to you is there is a one-two punch happening here. Someone was poisoning the oxes, the oxen, so that the first ox would itself be weaker.

Jack: Right.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: And then they could take advantage of that by attempting to kill the first ox. There's a reciprocal thing happening here. You know, they poisoned it downstream, and then they kind of pushed the poison upstream. They kind of fed it back into the main body of water.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: The river analogy kind of falls apart here, because that's not how water really works, but you know. You get what I'm saying. [Jack chuckles]

Dre: We're doing fucked up magic water. It's fine.

Austin: That's right. Yeah. [Ali chuckles]

Dre: I think what happens... I think this is less, like, deduction, and again, part of that, like, the scar tapping into the experience of this, because maybe Jonathan starts to have that deduction of, "Oh, okay, it must be that somebody started it with the first ox, and then, you know, it worked its way down from there," and I just suddenly feel, like, sick and dizzy and awful.

Austin: Mm.

Dre: It's like a horrible feedback feeling of, like, something I'm touched into is like, "No. No. No. No."

Austin: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Dre: And so then I'm just like, "Well, then what else could it be?" and I think then the next is, "Well, if it's not top down, it's down up."

Austin: Right. Yeah.

Dre: You know? And I think there's also probably a part of, like, well, if you're too afraid to kill the god, what if you just poison, you know, everything that's in its image?

Austin: Right. Exactly.

Dre: Dragon, not god, but.

Austin: But yeah. Yeah. Exactly. So, yeah.

Ali: I have two questions.

Austin: Yes.

Ali: Which is, like... [laughs quietly] God. Okay. Is there an opportunity for characterization for Caliginia here with the Lucky Seven interrupt?

Austin: Ooh, yeah. Absolutely.

Ali: Considering what Veile was just capable of, [laughs quietly] and perhaps... I'm

curious of her relationship with the dragons, but I don't think that that's a thing that you can just narrativize to me, but I'm curious.

Austin: No, and I don't know that you have one. I don't think you have one. You know, there is a cult of people who worships the dragons. You went to their tower in the very first adventure here. That is not, like, a common part of Perpetuan religious practice. The Holy Protectorate does not worship the dragons.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: The dragons are scary and ethereal, and they exist on this other plane. Caliginia I think is... You know, I can tell you what Caliginia feels, but let me see if I can give you a little of, you know, what is happening such that you can recognize it. You know, there is a chuckle from a shadow nearby. There is a little, like, almost impressed, [chuckles as Caliginia], you know? Which is ambiguous. I think, and maybe even, you know, as you're doing this, whenever you do the— maybe not whenever, but in this instance, when you do that 7 swap. As a reminder for people, you have an ability that lets you swap a 7 in for any one of your dice once per session, and then you can kind of continue to swap whatever that die is that you switched out in the future throughout the session. You kind of have an extra.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So you have like a slot, like a *Tetris* piece slot that is for a dice roll. And I think that when you do that this time, there's that birthmark that you have, that dark ring around your finger, and I think that it grows dark enough to feel like— it grows dark and thick like a real ring for a moment. You can feel it like it's a ring you're wearing for a moment as you do this switch. And, you know, I think that there's even words said.

(as **Caliginia**): Oh, very clever, Veile.

Ali (as **Veile**): [timidly] Thanks, ma'am. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm. Thank you, my enemy!

Ali: Eh, we'll see what happens.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: She was, just like a minute ago, like, "Oh Caliginia, please help me."

Austin: Totally. Yeah.

Ali: "Oh Caliginia..." [laughs]

Austin: You do those spells all the time. It's not like you don't get to use— It's not like you've been cut off, you know?

Ali: Uh huh. That's fine.

Austin: Yeah.

Chelik [1:16:48]

Ali: Speaking of the dragon cult, this goes into my second question, which is: do we feel like this is a Chelik conversation, [**Austin:** Mm.] or do we feel like we just want to move on?

Austin: Can you remind people who Chelik is?

Ali: Chelik is the big strong statue woman that we fought and became friends with.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Hmm.

Ali: Who gave us a paper dragon to send one message to her at any time.

Austin: That's right.

Jack: Oh man.

Austin: Chelik, awakened Dragon Watcher. Wise, focused, out of her time, melancholy.

Recently revived.

Jack: It's so funny, because earlier when we were like, "The food is poisoned," I was thinking to myself, "Wow, we have to, like, send out a message in the mail to be like, 'Don't buy from this guy,'" and I feel like it's a very natural upgrade to be like, "Ah, instead I'm going to send a message to the Dragon Watcher about the dragons being poisoned."

Art: Well, I still have a Bond of hatred with Chelik, [Ali laughs] so I don't think we should say anything.

Jack: And I think that's great.

Art: I think if Chelik wants to know, they can do their own research.

Dre: My gut feeling is that we should use that. We should send her notice.

Ali: Yeah.

Art: Wow. Betrayed by my own friends. [Ali laughs]

Austin: All right, so what's that look like?

Ali: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: And also, you've now debated this in character? This is a conversation in character that we just had?

Art: Well, I guess I didn't say "Bond of hatred." I probably said, like...

(as **Nicky**): [very close to mic] I hate Chelik. For what they did to us!

Jack (as **Elena**): Nicky, this is bigger than us. I understand that it was hard. I got knocked down a tower.

Art (as **Nicky**): Yeah.

Jack (as **Elena**): But if there's some sort of deep sickness here, this is beyond help that we can give. I mean, you did a great job with that one cow, Veile.

Jack: Can we sense that it's been separated from the [inaudible 1:18:44]?

Austin: Anyone who— You can't. You weren't part of the Ritual.

Jack: No.

Austin: But Nicky and Jonathan can. Even Jonathan, who failed, can. But you weren't part of the Ritual.

Jack: Oh, right, yeah. I suppose I'm still up on the hill, yeah, absolutely.

Austin: Well, wait, wait. You're not up on the hill. What hill? I'm confused about where you think you are.

[someone whistles a tune]

[laughter]

Austin: The last thing that we saw with Waylon was he was sitting at a bench eating a sandwich, outside of the pastures.

Jack: Okay. He was, like, looking— Right. I see. All right. I grew up near a farm at the bottom of a valley.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And so I think about looking down a hill onto a farm, when the farm comes up.

Austin: I see. I see.

Jack: So, I don't think I'm, like, up on a distant hill. I just sort of picture, like, a field
[**Austin:** I see.] that is running upwards and there's, like, a barn at the end of that field.

Austin: Right, right, right.

Jack: Where Waylon and Elena are looking down onto the farm that way.

Austin: That makes sense to me. Yes. I just wanted to make sure you didn't think that you had, like, continued the journey without everybody.

Jack: Oh, god, no.

Austin: Okay. Okay.

Jack: No, no, no, no, no. Just wrong child field memory.

Austin: I understand. Yes, yes. [Ali and Dre laugh]

Jack: Yes. I think that you should have that conversation in character, because I think that Nicky's hatred is interesting.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: But I am eating a sandwich, so I recuse myself. [Ali chuckles]

Austin: But yeah, let's rewind a little bit and have the conversation about maybe bringing Chelik into this.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: From when, Ali, you— I'm fine with you having done the out of character version of this, "Ooh, should we talk about Chelik?" but I would love to then immediately get back into character.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Art: And Chelik is she.

Austin: And Chelik is she. Yeah.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Chelik was she/her. Yeah.

Ali (as **Veile**): I just think, with the gravity of this situation, it would be inappropriate not to make her aware of this. What could someone want with the dragons that they're sending poisoners through small towns?

Art (as **Nicky**): Yeah, maybe she can come by and throw some dragons down a tower. [Austin chuckles]

Ali (as **Veile**): Well, I do believe that tensions were ironed out. I'm sure—

Art (as **Nicky**): Nah, I don't feel ironed out. I feel real, real wrinkly.

Art: Do we have that kind of iron? Is that...? [Ali laughs]

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. No, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Uh huh. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: Okay.

Ali: I was trying not to say “ironed out,” but then I was like, “Veile talks about laundry all the time. This is the perfect thing to say.” [laughs]

Austin: All the time. Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Art: It feels like a pretty easy technology. I feel like we must have been using heat to straighten clothes for centuries.

Jack: The iron is ancient.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. [Ali laughs]

Dre: I think when Nicky says, you know, “I'm rumbled,” Jonathan kind of rolls their shoulder, their arm where the scar is, and says,

(as **Jonathan**): I mean, yeah, I got bad memories too, but shit, Nicky. If these

oxen die, it's not good news for the town, my town.

Art (as **Nicky**): Fine. Fine.

Ali (as **Veile**): Well, I appreciate you being the bigger person. And I think if Elena was here, she'd say something, you know, refreshing about how you've— you know, you've forgiven people before, I'm sure.

Art (as **Nicky**): Nope.

Ali (as **Veile**): Hmm. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Hmm.

Ali: Glance to Jonathan. [Austin chuckles]

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Nicky, thank you. I owe you.

Art (as **Nicky**): Mm. Hmm. Hmm! Hmm.

Ali: I know about the letter. [laughs] Okay. And then I think I pull out the little... I got, like, an origami paper dragon, right?

Austin: You do, yeah.

Ali: With which to send one message to Chelik.

Austin: You do. What's the message you write on it or you put into it or whatever?

Ali: Yeah. I think that this is probably, like, surprisingly verbose, I guess. [laughs] I just think that there's like, you know, like a... Dear Miss Chelik. I hope that you're well, and I appreciate that you left this line of communication open. There's a very serious issue, and I would not have sent this if I did not think that you we're the most senior— not senior, but, you know, I want you to know about this. This is pertaining to your interests.

Jack: Dragons? [Austin laughs]

Ali: We are at, like, these coordinates. We are here. We are in this town and this farm specifically, and it seems that there has been some sort of seemingly novice but quite involved and serious wound upon these oxen that we think affect the dragons and your kin. You know, if there is any information you want to send back to me, we're going to be here for a couple days if you want to come through and, like, take a look at these oxen. I'd very much appreciate it.

Austin: Mm.

Ali: As would the town, the peoples of Spillaway Peaks. In goodness and health, Veile Lynndel.

Dre: Okay. Now, Ali, I need you to do that again but sing it as a song, so that then when Chelik writes back, she has a song, and we're doing the thing from *Wicked*. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Right. God.

Jack: Oh.

Ali: I think I'm all right. [Dre laughs]

Austin: Yeah. It lifts off into the air and flaps its little wings and begins to fly away into the sky. It's tiny, so it takes a little while to get going, but it gets going.

Jack: Oh, it just leaves. Wow. I guess I had sort of— I don't know why. I was picturing this real RPG style, where like, Veile writes the letter, and it just like, I don't know, she's like a stone woman, so it dives into the ground or something, and a big pillar of stone—

Austin: She's not a stone woman!

Ali: [laughs] She was petrified for a long time.

Austin: She was *petrified*.

Jack: Oh.

Austin: Something or someone petrified her. That doesn't make her— That's like saying

Han Solo is made of carbonite. [Ali laughs]

Jack: I see. I see.

Art: Okay, but if you called Han Solo “that carbonite guy,” everyone knows what you mean and it’s pretty much an understanding.

Jack: No. I appreciate what you're doing for me, Art, but...

Austin: No, but you wouldn't then go further and say, “And so Han Solo should be able to, like, fall on top of people and crush them with his carbonite weight.” [Dre laughs]

Jack: Okay, so—

Art: You can't prove that doesn't happen.

Austin: Okay. [Ali and Austin laugh]

Jack: This is like a category misunderstanding that, prior to this point, had had no bearing on the story [**Austin:** Yes.] but was down in the back of my brain, where I was like, “Yes, she was petrified, so we thought she was a statue, but she was like a draconic statue that had become...that had been frozen,” you know?

Austin: Right. I understand what you're saying, yeah.

Jack: Rather than being a dragon woman turned into a statue. I thought she was a stone woman who had been petrified. This is not important, because— well, I suppose, in a world where the elements exist, it is important, but, you know.

Austin: Yes.

Ali: Elena’s memory of that day is very hazy, and we don't hold that against her.

Austin: Understandably. Yeah, fair enough. Fair enough.

Jack: Falling, falling, hitting the floor. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah. I think that it takes off, and I'm pretty sure what I said is she will be there as soon as she can be, right? Which I'm not using in weasel words. Like, the call has been made. It's not going to be instant. She certainly moves faster than most people, I think, but that is not instantaneous. [typing] I'm going to double check that I did not say right away, you know? But I don't think I did.

Ali: Yeah, when I imagine this, and bringing this sort of video gamey into this, but I do feel that this is a little bit like the quest completion screen comes up, I had everything in my inventory and I got the check to sort of get the success here, and then maybe there's going to be another quest marker with Chelik when I come back to this area or something.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Yeah, it'll be mentioned in, like, the quest text.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I think that this is—

Art: In your journal.

Austin: Yeah. That makes sense to me. Totally. You know, she said she would come, so she will— you should expect her to show up, but what that means is not necessarily immediately right this second, you know? So.

Ali: And I do think it's also, like, you know, a good thing for us to be able to go to this farmer and be like, "We have an idea of what is happening here," even if we're not like, "Oh, they poisoned dragons, and you should care about that for some reason," [Austin chuckles] but being like, "We were able to contact somebody out of town [Austin: Yeah.] who is going to come here and have more knowledge and skill on what this is, and for now, they're going to live through the week or the month or whatever."

Austin: Yeah. That makes sense. All right, with that information known, I guess, one, when Beula comes back with the other final ox, whose name I've already— I have it.

Jack: Lady Belly? What's her name?

Austin: Belly Girl.

Dre: Belly Girl.

Austin: Belly Girl.

Jack: Belly Girl.

Austin: Yeah. When Belly Girl comes back with Beula, or vice versa—they come back together—you get her up to speed in a way that does not reveal necessarily the deep ontological dread of the situation but does explain that you have a lead. And yeah, she offers to let you stay here the night, if you'd like to.

Dre: Well, I guess, yeah, do we want to do that, or do we want to push on up the mountain and, like, try to make camp further up?

Austin: Yeah, I suppose that's actually what the conversation with Veile and Waylon was a little bit, and Waylon wanted to stay up on the mountain, but.

Ali: Oh, 'cause he's freaked out about being here.

Austin: Yeah, I think so.

Ali: But also freaked out about being in the woods overnight, but I think we'll be fine.

Austin: It's true. It's true.

Dre: I think we'll be fine.

Ali: Yeah.

Art: I also think we'll be fine, just if we're all going to...

Austin: [chuckles] Weigh in.

Art: Check in here.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: All right. Up to the Mountains, up to the Clayridge Mountains. Beula is hopeful that you'll be able to find and help, find the solution whatever it may be.

Jack: And we said, you know, someone might come. We've put out a call.

Austin: Oh, sure. Right, yes, yes. Yeah. [chuckles] Have you described who might show up?

Ali: Probably. [laughs]

Jack: It's so funny that she's, like, a "the clock runs short" person, and in two days time, a dragon woman is going to arrive. [laughter]

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. All right.

Ali (as **Veile**): She's very tall. She's a little severe. But she's very earthly and world weary.

Austin (as **Beula**): Sounds like my type of gal.

Ali (as **Veile**): Exactly.

Art: I love that the first thing you mentioned was height. [Ali and Austin laugh]

Austin: She *is* tall!

Dre: She is tall.

Art: She's tall. It's important.

Austin: Yeah. You're being serious. Mm-hmm.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: All right. Up into the mountains.

[["Perpetua"](#) by Jack de Quidt plays]