

Live at the Table 73: A Land Once Magic

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Introduction

Jack: Hello, everybody.

Austin: Hello.

Jack: Hi.

Austin: You want to do an intro, we're not—?

Jack: Well, we're on the preamble screen right now. I don't think we've technically, I don't think we've technically begun. This is the, this is the gentle hello section before the formal hello.

Austin: I see.

Jack: This is when we tell the audience to turn their cell phones on.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Oh, okay. Confessions are available.

Keith: And to expect a coming hello.

Austin: I see.

Keith: Soon there'll be a second hello.

Jack: Soon there will be a second hello. We can also check our levels here. How do I sound? And how does everybody else sound? [pause] I mean, other people would need to speak to test that.

Austin: Sorry. We all needed to talk. Hi. Hello.

Jack: Hi, Austin.

Austin: I'm here.

Jack: Okay.

Dre: Hello, I will go second. Dre is here as well. Hi, Jack. How are you?

Jack: I'm okay. And finally, Keith.

Keith: Hi. I'm third, and I'm going now. And I'm also listening to the live version. It's disorienting.

Dre: You shouldn't do that.

Jack: Keep the audio doubling.

Keith: Sounds pretty close. Sounds all pretty close to me.

Jack: Yeah, we're near enough. Good enough for jazz, and then we'll be fine on the edit that goes into Patreon. All right, now we're gonna say, oh, Keith could be up a bit? I think Keith is fine.

Keith: I'll get louder. It's fine. This is the quietest I'll be all day.

Austin: That's the actual thing. We did our intros, and we were all, like, down here. But we're actually probably gonna be. We're probably gon—[shouting] Coop, we're gonna be up here the whole time, Coop!

Keith: It's called Atlanta One because I'm talking loud!

Austin: Yeah, exactly.

Jack: Roll 20 isn't working again, Coop!

Austin: This damn machine! I'm sick of it!

Jack: It's not picking up my audio! All right.

Keith: A whole world of ones and zeros! It's madness!

Jack: Okay.

Austin: Yeah. I think we're gonna be okay. I think we're gonna be fine.

Jack: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical world building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host today, Jack de Quidt, and we are coming to you live on twitch.tv. Unlike our first Live at the Table in January, in fact, on January 1st, which was live to tape, this is true live. We are here right now. I am joined by Austin Walker.

Austin: Hello, I'm Austin Walker. I'm here. You can find me on the Internet. We have seen Kickstarter now.

Jack: Yeah, I was gonna say it is being Kickstarted, and it's going really well.

Austin: It is going really well. Thank you so much for your support.

Jack: Also joined by Andrew Lee Swann.

Dre: Hey, thanks for joining us everyone. You can find me on Bluesky and if you are enjoying watching this and you don't already, please check out our patreon [friendsatthetable.cash](https://www.patreon.com/friendsatthetable)

Jack: And Keith J. Carberry.

Keith: Hi. You can also find all of us in various configurations listening to the podcast Side Story and also Media Club Plus where we talk about video games and also TV and movies.

Jack: We got a lot on.

Keith: Yeah, we do.

Austin: It's true.

Dre: Let's talk about the fuggin Sopranos.

Jack: We are. I'm very excited. I just finished the first season of X Files so I've cleared my plate of 90s television to move on to the Sopranos, which I'm very excited about.

Keith: Oh no, Jack, you've gotta watch season two of The X Files.

Jack: No, I'm also going to watch season two of The X Files.

Keith: Oh, okay.

Jack: The X Files got disbanded at the end of season one. They're clearly never going to come back.

[Dre laughing]

Austin: I guess they got cancelled. I guess the end.

Jack: I guess the end. Oh, and that creepy cigarette smoking man put a small, I think, rubber alien baby in a vault in the Pentagon.

Keith: Scary!

Austin: Hmm, the alien's skin is made of rubber. Interesting. I'm gonna add it to my list of clues.

Jack: Mulder's famously—imagine if Mulder said, I'm going to add that to my list of clues every time. I'm gonna add that to my list of clues. We're gonna be making some lists today, I think. We are playing A Land Once Magic, which is a conversational post fantasy world building game by Viditya Voleti, with layout and graphic design by Luna P, illustration by John Gagne, editing by Charu Chandni Patel and production by Elliot Davis. This is a world building game, which is very exciting [**Austin:** Woo!] because we have played a lot of world building games, but we tend to play them in the context of beginning a season or beginning like a new setting or something. It's been a long time since I've played a worldbuilding game just kind of for the joy of it, you know.

Austin: Yeah, just for the love of the game.

Jack: Just for the love of the game. Because you do this long enough and you start to tell yourself incorrectly, well, you know, why would I play a worldbuilding game if I'm not gonna do anything with the world? Oh, why would you smell a beautiful flower knowing that the flower is going to fade in Autumn? You smell it for the joy of it, you know. But at the same time, I also wanted to play a world building game kind of early in the year, such that if during later Live at the Tables we go, oh my God, what if we do a story in that world with all the weird shit that we made earlier? So you might see some more worldbuilding games kind of in the early part of the year. Has anybody here played this game before?

Austin: I haven't. I'm supposed to—I was supposed to play it in like December and then January and then it all got away from me. But I backed this game at the level of “you'll play the game with me” and I live close to Vid. And so we keep rescheduling and punting and being unable to line it up. But I'm supposed to play with Vid, which would be really nice because this game kicks ass.

Jack: Everybody everywhere is constantly fighting scheduling to play tabletop games. It is [Austin: So true.] It's how the world works. I'm really excited to play this. I have heard really good things about it, not just in terms of the kind of the way the game design works, but also the worlds that it produces. I've heard people whose work I really like kind of come out of sessions of this game saying, we made something really cool.

We are going to be playing inside Roll 20. And this game, as Vid says early on, only requires a deck of standard playing cards. Hell yeah. So we have a very loose Roll 20 that you can see here. I have playing cards down in the bottom right. I think everybody should be able to see the playing cards, but I am so rarely in Roll 20's GM level that if you can't see the playing cards, let me know.

Austin: They are here. You just drew a seven.

Jack: And a seven has appeared.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: We also have index cards, but the book even says, you know, you might not really need index cards. I think that, you know, since we're doing this on Twitch, it might be a good idea to keep track of some stuff. But I like a tabletop game that just sort of says, yeah, deck of cards. That's it, let's go. Let's start just by reading this through. This game kind of talks itself through play. Do you want to start reading this "how to use this book" page, Dre?

Dre: Yes, I do. [reading] How to use this book. A Land Once Magic is a conversational world building game for two players that, through prompts and discussion, creates a fantasy world like no other. This game is a conversation, an excuse to dig deep into the things you love, swing hard with big ideas and get excited when someone creates something you've never thought of. Playing the game is simple. Move through the book sequentially, starting with palette and touchstones, then into your first table: A magic. Work your way through the table sequentially, mixing in exploratory tables as you go, and finally, bring this game to a close with a point of views. The game teaches you as

you go, so feel free to jump right in. [stops reading] Do you want me to keep going or did we want to talk about any of any of that stuff we just covered?

Jack: I'm happy to keep going.

Dre: Okay. [reading] Exploratory tables are unique. You choose one of six to accompany certain tables throughout the game. You will only draw on them when a prompt has already been answered. Because of this, you may only ever answer three to six questions between two exploratory tables. But you are encouraged to dig further into the exploratory tables during or after the game, or play the game again with new table pairings. This book is also a tool to inspire new ideas or flesh out an existing world. Jump around the tables as needed. Return to them throughout play. If you wish to craft a new legend or build a new city, jump in and out of the various exploratory tables to see how deep your worldbuilding can go. Drop this game in your bag. Keep it handy. Pull this game out at cafes with friends, in hotel lobbies, at conventions, as a session zero before a new campaign or to inspire your next story.

Jack: Okay, and we just need playing cards. We have playing cards. This is a game with jokers in it, which is good. And the jokers do something that I think is very fun, as I think is often the case with Friends at the Table. When I was just making sure that the cards worked, I drew a joker on my second draw. I sort of have to remind myself that there really are only two jokers in the deck, but they do keep showing up.

Austin: Yeah, the adversary is clever.

Jack: And read. [group laughter]

Building the palette [00:09:45]

Jack: Okay, let's see. Austin, do you want to tell us about palette?

Austin: I would love to tell us about palette. [reading] Before you begin crafting your world as a group, you will create a palette. Your palette consists of a few paints, heavily descriptive words that help everyone get on the same page when crafting together. You

will create a palette of about three to four paints. Each player should create or pick two paints and write them down, but don't show the other players. Once everyone has two paints, reveal them at the same time. Discuss amongst each other which paints you want in the game. Each player gets the final say on at least one paint. Look for complementary and contradicting—look for complementary and contradicting paints. Your world will contain multitudes, and the more evocative and diverse your paints are, the easier that will be to create. Below is a list of suggested paints to help create that palette. [stops reading] And then there is a list of, I don't know, 90 words.

Jack: We got a beautiful little action poem happening here.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: I think alphabetical as well, which is great.

Austin: It is alphabetical.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Keith: From A to Y.

Jack: From A to Y. I don't want of those—

Austin: The last one is zany. But it's hidden somewhere on the page. You gotta find it yourself.

Jack: Can you find it? Are there any adjectives that begin with zero? With zero—with X.

Austin: Zero? Xeroxed. Yeah, there you go.

Jack: Yeah, that's like two tone and kind of faded. And you can see the staples.

Austin: Copied.

Jack: Or just copied. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Weird.

Jack: So we don't have to—

Austin: There's got to be another one.

Dre: X-rayed.

Austin: Oh, I thought you were gonna say X-rated, which is also.

Jack: Oh, X rated is absolutely—

Keith: I have thought of one. It's xenophobic.

Austin: There we go. Oh, Xanthic, like yellow. We have a big yellow world.

Jack: Wow. That's—Venus is Xanthic.

Austin: There's like. There's a lot of, like, ones you make by—like, that aren't real. Like you, like xenagogic, like, interested in moving around different spaces. Like a xenagogue, you know, like a traveler.

Jack: Is there any way we could find a xenagogue, Austin?

Austin: Yeah, Realis on Kickstarter right now.

Keith: Xylophagous, which is feeding on wood used for insects.

Austin: There we go. [**Jack:** Wow.] that's pretty good.

Jack: We don't have to draw from this palette, but we are gonna come up with two and we should put them in the roll 20 chat. I don't—I think because of my screen resolution, our Roll 20 chat is not visible on screen, but we are going to read them out and bring them onto the main screen. Once we decide on our two. [**Austin:** Interesting.] So everyone comes up with two. We put them in the Roll 20 chat, but we don't hit go until it is time to go.

Keith: Okay [long pause] Now? We're doing this now?

Austin: Yes, now we're typing them but not hitting go yet.

Jack: Okay. Oh, half my chat is visible.

Austin: It's really enjoyable.

Jack: Just. Just peeking in.

Austin: Peeking.

Jack: Oh, I'm typing in all caps. What a treat. [pause] Okay, I have two. Obviously the chat can see mine.

Austin: Right.

[pause]

Dre: I'm thinking too hard.

Austin: You just gotta. Yeah, you just gotta feel this. [pause] Yeah. Okay, I got mine.

Jack: You gotta let your body be at the tuning fork, you know? Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, size Xenagogue—Artyom did the Xenagogue. You can see it. It has a really sick orphan vessel in the art, in fact.

Jack: Bonus orphan vessel drawn by Artyom.

Austin: That's right.

Jack: Okay, I am ready.

Dre: Okay, I'm ready.

Jack: Okay. Three, two, one, go. [pause] Ho, ho, ho! Oh, wow. Okay, we have a vibe emerging.

Austin: Yeah, we have a vibe emerging.

Jack: Keith has said miniature and vernal. Austin, what have you said?

Austin: I have said sprawling and eerie.

Jack: Dre?

Dre: Coastal and dense.

Jack: Keith, you can read mine since I read yours.

Keith: Sure. And I clicked away. Misty and drowned.

Austin: Interesting.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: Seems like we got a little water action going on maybe [**Jack:** Seems like we...] but also maybe a coastal action, you know?

Jack: Well, where is the water if not the coast, right?

Keith: Well, I can tell you.

Jack: Well is right. The water is the alpha.

[laughter]

Keith: When I said vernal, I was thinking of the woods near my house when I grew up had what's called the vernal pool. If anybody's never heard of a vernal pool, it's a pool that emerges in spring long enough for, like, tadpoles to spawn, and then it disappears during drier weather.

Jack: Is it symbiotic with the tadpoles?

Keith: Basically, yeah, it is, like, it is a semi. It is a semi imper—it's an impermanent pond, basically. And so vernal just means, like, to do with the spring.

Austin: Right.

Keith: I associate it specifically with this small, like, temporary ecosystem.

Jack: Wow. Boxesofboxes in chat says, “this place is wet”. Doubleforte says, “Friends at the Table’s soggiest one yet”. Okay, so we need to choose how many here?

Austin: Three to four, because each person gets to pick one. So it’s one each.

Keith: It’s four.

Jack: Okay. Yeah. Should we just go down the list and pull them in and write them on the palette as we go?

Keith: Do you want to each pick someone else’s?

Austin: Yes, I think that’s a good idea.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: I guess.

Jack: Yeah, I’m happy with that. Let’s go in the order down at the bottom, the Roll 20 order. Dre, you want to go first?

Dre: Yeah, sure. I’m gonna pick Sprawling from Austin.

Jack: Okay.

Dre: I’ll put that on the palette.

Jack: Nice. Thank you. Sprawling. Keith?

Keith: I’m going to pick Misty from Jack.

Jack: Nice. Austin?

Austin: I’m going to pick Coastal—hmm. I’m going to pick Coastal from Dre.

Jack: And I am going to pick Eerie from Austin.

Austin: I would almost love to pull more in because I think these. I think we kind of have a set, you know—like, I like the vernal in the sense that rather maybe we don't put them on the palette. But we shouldn't forget ideas like Keith's vernal pulls. Yeah. Which are really cool, so.

Jack: We could just pull them in. We can say vernal also.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: We're going to get letters, if we pick five paints. People are going to be so mad.

Dre: That's true.

Jack: I'm going to put Vernal in.

Austin: Okay. Put Vernal in. And then we also said, well, I don't have the tools like copy and paste. That's really funny. I didn't know that you couldn't copy and paste as a player in Roll 20.

Jack: Oh, I have to imagine that this is—Roll 20 is horrible to each of us, but horrible in different ways. And we're discovering where it's horrible on the other side.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Okay. Our palette is Sprawling—

Austin: Wait, but there's—Misty should be in here too, right? Because didn't Dre pick Misty?

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Dre: No, I picked Sprawling.

Keith: I picked Misty.

Austin: You picked Misty? Keith picked Misty. Okay.

Jack: As a Pokemon fan, I'm putting that.

Keith: That's why. Oh, did you mean the other kind of Misty?

Jack: Misty, Misty. Okay.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Sprawling, Coastal, Eerie, Vernal and Misty.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Sweet. Keith, do you want to tell us about touchstones?

Keith: Sure. [reading] Everyone picks one piece of media not traditionally considered fantasy and draws an aspect of inspiration from it as a touchstone. These are themes, setting elements, specific moments, or just vibes. It can draw on a small element or a big idea. For example, your touchstones could be Cowboy Bebop's jazz and bluegrass soundtrack, Legally Blonde's fierce determination in the face of prejudice, Hellboy's stark shadows and deep colors, Borderlands funky guns. This helps create a fantasy that pulls from outside itself. Don't be afraid to get weird and out there. If you're struggling to think of a touchstone, pick an aspect of something you're currently invested in or a favorite piece of media you always go back to. Be excited about your touchstone and get excited about others. The easy—the easier it is to draw from them, the better your world will become. Once everyone has declared their touchstones, make sure to keep the palette and touchstone where everyone can reference them throughout the game. If you're ever stuck when playing, always go back to these to help guide your answers. [stops reading] Is this next paragraph part of this or is it part of another thing? [reading] These palette and touchstones aren't laws upon your world, but they are guiding principles everyone at the table agrees to. So if you break away from them, check in with others. If you have a paintbright and you introduce some very dark content, ask the table or respect a fellow player if they call out that it fights an established pain.

Jack: Yeah. If we suddenly start getting very autumnal, having put Vernal on the [Austin: Right.] On the list, or we say all the mist burns off.

Austin: Right. Right.

Jack: Okay. Does anyone—

Austin: I might have one of these.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah, go for it.

Austin: I want a fantasy world that has the divide between Houston and 13 in Apollo 13. I want a home and away. I want people going out somewhere and people back at home calling in and being, like, [Jack: Connected to the—] Whats your status? Yep. What do you see? Tell me what you see. I want people calling home and being like, yeah, we need you to help walk us through what we're looking at here. [crosstalk] What do the books say? What do the records say? How do we deal with this? Yeah.

Jack: [crosstalk] Building a thing. When they bootleg that thing inside Houston in Apollo 13.

Austin: Importantly, there's distance. You cannot—they can't—Houston cannot send them what they need. Houston can only talk them through what they might need to do.

Jack: Yeah. Jim Lovell has to make it in the...

Austin: That's right.

Jack: In the little thing. I haven't heard it myself, but I saw it reported that there was a great conversation between the Artemis II astronauts and Houston this morning where one of them was talking about how beautiful the moon was on approach. You know, they were talking in really poetic terms about seeing the moon outside of the capsule. And Houston responded, "Moon joy, copy." Which was really good.

Austin: Yeah, it's pretty good.

Jack: Okay, you want to put that down? I have one. I would like a touchstone that is... [long pause] Intense stillness—whoops—and gradation of Rothko. When you look at a Rothko painting and it looks like one color, but that color is just imprinting itself on your retinas. And then the longer you look at it, the more you notice that there's just this very subtle, gentle gradation in that color from, you know, from the top to the bottom. And if you stand in a Rothko gallery—ooh, that nearly rotated—if you stand in a Rothko gallery for long enough, all these pictures, which at first seem like these, just these hard blocks of color just sort of like, open up into this softness and movement and intensity. But it's not a softness that is always comforting. There can sometimes be something insidious in that softness or soft, like terrain that is uncertain under your feet. But then you look at one on another wall, and there is a kind of grace or a kind of comfort or relaxation in that softness.

Austin: Yeah, I really like in that—there's the sense of, like, it's a big block of color. And then like—and I can—it's all red. This is all red. And then the longer you sit with it, the sense of like, actually like, it, it literally isn't. It literally isn't all red. There's white in there, there's flecks of pink in there. And even two reds that look very alike are actually kind of different in places. I think some of his pieces are easier to pick that out of than others. But the thing that you're hitting of, like, when you sit with it, you can see something is actually a little off or a little different. Off—not bad necessarily. But in a fantasy story of sprawling coastal, eerie, vernal, misty, maybe off in a creepy way sometimes too.

Jack: And often in a Rothko painting, it's off in a creepy way.

Austin: It is. It is. Yeah.

[pause]

Keith: I'm percolating.

Dre: I'm thinking something with like, wind being very important in primary. I've recently started playing Valheim again and I forgot, like, how subtle but very present wind and the wind mechanics in that game are.

Austin: I didn't get deep into Valheim. Can you tell me how the wind works in Valheim?

Dre: Well, first, it's very visual. Like you can always see which direction the wind is gusting in. They do this with little like, particle effects and things like that. But the wind is animated in that way. So first you're just always seeing it for the most part. Early in the game it's important because you have to be upwind from animals so that they can't smell you when you're trying to hunt them. I believe it affects like, the flight of arrows. And then once you get later in the game and you start sailing, you have to learn how to like, tack into a wind and sail a boat properly.

Austin: I see. Interesting. I think that that sounds like a great touchstone to me, both the part of it where it's visible and the part where it's a major force to be learned and that has its own agency in the world, its own power.

Jack: Yeah. Very happy with that. Valheim looks so beautiful as well. Their color palette is so great.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: I started playing Myst again recently for Run Button. And I was thinking about Myst and Uru and how especially Uru has this like, multi layered archaeological nature to it. Maybe someone who's like, really, really following those games can tell better than me. But when I'm reading something in Uru, I'm always like, now, is this per—am I reading this—like, these are the notes of someone that's contemporary to me about like this sort of disappeared culture or is this a different second middle layer of disappeared culture that's also themselves writing about an earlier disappeared culture? And so Uru has this very, like, out of time feeling to me where I'm like, never sure, if I'm reading it, who they're talking about and how old the things they're referencing are.

Jack: Yeah, that sensation of trying to locate something in history or trying to locate it in time as being part of the sort of broader puzzle of like, you know, when you play Riven or when you play Myst or something, there are these sort of top level puzzles, right, of who is talking to me, what happened, how do I activate the thing that looks like a cauldron with legs to do whatever I want it to do, but then at the same time there's that

great feeling of like, when did that happen? [crosstalk] Was that before or after? **Keith:** [crosstalk] When is this about?] Yes. Yeah. Riven is so good at that. There's so many bits of Riven where you're reading documents and you're like, how does this fit into my understanding of what was happening here? So you talk about, like an uncertainty in, in time, or are you talking more about that feeling of finding the things?

Keith: More the former.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Like the layering of history, but you don't know—you don't necessarily know which layer you're looking at?

Keith: Right.

[pause]

Jack: Yeah, I'm happy with that. Do you want to put that down?

Keith: Oh, I can put it down, right.

Jack: In this beautiful hand—beautiful handwriting font.

Keith: What was the font?

Jack: It's—what is it? It's Cedarville Cursive.

Keith: Cedarville Cursive.

Austin: Ah, Cedarville.

Keith: Got it.

Jack: After working together for so long, we all, the four of us all have the same handwriting, which is strange because we don't handwrite a lot.

Dre: Yeah, no.

Jack: Very peculiar.

Dre: The isomorphic field.

Jack: Is it called the isomorphic field? What is that called? Morphogenetic field.

Austin: Morphogenetic field. There we go.

Jack: Did I tell the story that my parents met him? The man who—

Dre: The man who invented the morphogenetic field?

Keith: I remember hearing about this. Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, they ran into him and they were like. He was introduced to them. What's his name? Sheldrake. I can't remember his first name. My parents were like, this man's name is so familiar. This man's name is so familiar. And they got home and they looked up the name and they were like, oh, my god, it's that guy. Which I feel was a real missed opportunity to be talking to Sheldrake and not remembering.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Cause otherwise you could have really taken that conversation somewhere. Good.

Keith: You remember also that the son is like a mushroom scientist?

Jack: And the other son is like a quirky musician. And they're like English gentry or something. Or they're like—the Sheldrakes come from a very old family.

Austin: Oh, my God, their names.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah, their names are so funny.

Austin: Cosmo and Merlin Sheldrake. [**Jack:** And then his name.] Merlin Sheldrake, the British mycologist, is—that's great.

Jack: His name is Rupert Sheldrake.

Dre: I googled him and the first thing, like, one of the first things that pops up is a YouTube thumbnail, which is like a very YouTube looking thumbnail with the question, is the sun conscious?

Jack: I take it back. They are not from like, a noble family in England, but they have developed an extremely weird family between the mycologist and the musician.

[**Austin:** And the musician, yeah.] and the inventor of morphic resonance.

Austin:

Jack: Okay, I'm gonna read the next page. [reading] The world shifts. If a joker is ever drawn, that player may immediately add a new palette, touchstone, or both. This can reflect how your world has organically taken new shape to encourage that continued direction in play. Or this can introduce a new direction for your world. After shifting the world, shuffle all cards, including the drawn joker. That player then continues their turn by drawing a new card. [stops reading] I think this is really great. This art is so good.

Austin: Yeah, it's excellent. It's really great.

Jack: [reading] A magic. Start your world with the titular magic, a story about its origins, what it's capable of, and how it is changing in a way people aren't ready for. This creates a shape of your world's magic, without getting too specific, that will become clearer and deeper as you play. It also plants the seed of the conflict your world is going through as everything reacts to its magic. Take turns drawing one card for each subtable in sequence and finish the sentences. Each player who drew a card can name or elaborate on the result. But make sure to discuss the entire table as a group. If you need jumping off points, use the suggestions. Keep things open ended. You'll be expanding on these throughout play. [stops reading] So our first question is, "It is said that magic was". Who is up first? I think it's Dre.

Dre: Oh, I think so.

Jack: You want to draw a card, Dre?

Dre: Yeah. We've done this a lot, and I can never remember how to do it. There we go. A ten of spades.

Jack: Which here is just spades on this table.

Dre: Oh, right. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So it said that magic was found by us. Hmm.

Austin: Can you read the whole thing that it says? Because people listening won't see it.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah, sure. It said that magic was found by us and the examples they gave are in craft, in song or in violence.

Austin: It's interesting that you read that as examples because I read that as inclusive.

Dre: Mm.

Jack: [crosstalk] What does this say?

Dre: [crosstalk] I read it as examples because of the little like, example box where it says, [**Austin:** Oh, I see.] Corbin draws a spade, answering, it is said that magic was found by us in craft as we infused objects with magical ore.

Jack: We also have—if you need jumping off points, use the suggestions. So I think the real guidance here is in bold, but we can pull from—

Austin: Yeah, that makes sense. So then where did we find it? I will say that's also an interesting thing. Found by us, but then the three things are things we do. It's not found by us. None of the examples are like—

Keith: We cracked open a rock and there was—

Austin: Magic in the rocks. Right, exactly.

Dre: I'm going to say it was found by us in these—I don't know if we want them to be pools, but I think this is going—I'm thinking back to vernal, where there's something about some sort of ephemeral process that makes magic only available, like limited times as, like this transitional time is happening.

Austin: I love that. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I love them being the actual pools. Yeah.

Jack: God. Finding magic in pools is—it's like the hand coming out of the lake holding the sword, except the magic is the lake, right? It's not—

Austin: And the lake is only there for—

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then it's summer—

Austin: How long are vernal pools around, Keith?

Keith: Depends on how hot it is. [**Austin:** Interesting.] They—so that's one of the problems with being a tadpole, is you gotta make sure that you're getting legs fast enough before it gets too hot out.

Jack: Can you give us an example of another problem faced by a tadpole?

Keith: Yeah. Forest creatures. Squirrels will eat the hell out of a tadpole.

Jack: That's a big one. Yeah, yeah.

Dre: Fish too, right?

Keith: Yeah, fish too. But vernal pools can't—they can't sustain fish.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: So there's—you got salamanders.

Dre: Wikipedia says that's why they're so important is because it's like one of the few places that some of these creatures can like, live or be born.

Austin: Right, because—

Keith: Because if there's a salamander in a real pond, it will get eaten by a fish. But in a vernal pool, you are in long enough to get wet and then you in your adolescent stage and then you make your way to a bigger body of water when you're older.

Austin: Interesting.

Jack: I bet it feels so great to be in the vernal pool.

Keith: I bet it feels great to be a salamander under a log. And you flip over that log and you're like, I'm just under here. It's cold and wet and I'm breathing all in through my skin. And I'm sleeping.

Jack: And then I can go and eat the tadpoles. And I'm sleeping. Yeah, yeah. Keith, you want to learn, "With it we could"?

Keith: Yeah, of course. Here's my—let's see. There we go. I have dealt us another spades. With it we could defeat and conquer. [**Austin** and **Jack:** Ooh.] Defeat and conquer whatever stands before us is what is the little example text. We could defeat and conquer. Okay. Sprawling, Coastal Eerie, Misty. Eerie, Misty. Oh, there's gotta be something in the mist.

Austin: There's gotta be something in the mist.

Jack: There's gotta be something in the mist.

Keith: There's gotta be something in the mist. If we have to defeat and conquer something, it's whatever's in the mist.

Jack: And is that the thing that we're connected to, Apollo 13 style?

Austin: Oh, no. I go the other way. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: The teams that go out to defeat the things in the mist.

Jack: Oh, yeah, that's cool.

Austin: I was going the other way. I was going. The teams that go out to find the vernal pools that have the magic we need to survive whatever the mist is. You know what I mean? But maybe it's both. Maybe it's, you got to send one team out into the mist and one team towards wherever the vernal pools are.

Dre: Mm. Or maybe you have to go through the mist to get to the vernal pools?

Austin: Unless you've been thinking of the vernal pools as being...

Keith: in the city limits?

Austin: or the—wherever. Yeah, within reach.

Keith: I can totally imagine a Minecraft style like, you know, everything's dangerous until you put a, until you put a torch there, you know, and so you've gotta get to the vernal pools by creating chains of unmisty, undangerous land.

Austin: Interesting.

Jack: Oh, yeah. Okay.

Keith: And so there are pools out there, right? But also there's pools here.

Austin: But we built our lives around pools.

Keith: Mm.

Austin: I mean, I guess maybe it's important. We are not necessarily playing as a group of adventurers or something or this civilization. We are building a world, which means there might be more than one group of people who are building their lives around vernal pools. You know, this is not a [Jack: Right.] By default, this is not like A Quiet Year, post apocalyptic game or something. This is a world building game. So, like, we're saying things that are true about the world. It's true about the world that vernal pools are tied to some sort of magic, and how people relate to that might change as we go forward. How many different types of people relate to it differently, right?

Keith: Yeah. I mean, we don't know what it is out there in the mist.

Jack: We know there is some defeating and conquering going on, though, and I'd like to, like, refocus a little on that.

Keith: Mm. I mean—yeah, to strip it back down to that, the original with the magic, we can defeat and conquer the mist itself or the things in the mist. What do we feel about—how do we feel about those as different but similar ideas?

Jack: I want to know more—oh, go on, Austin.

Austin: Yeah, go ahead. No, go ahead.

Jack: I want to know more about the mist, but I also want to find that out in process, in play.

Austin: But we've all seemed like we're orbiting around the mist is not good or is scary or is a thing we keep coming back to because we drew defeat and conquer. We're like, oh, well, it's either the mist or it's something in the mist, or it's—it's not another group of people. It's not, you know, it's not a different kingdom. It's not—it is whatever stands before us, and we've—or it's defeat and conquer a danger in the mist, whether that is the mist or something alive.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Maybe. We don't know. All we know is when the mist comes, it goes bad.

Keith: Right. Could be a kingdom in the mist.

Austin: It could be. Yeah, Exactly.

Jack: But one thing we do know is that there might be vernal pools out there.

Austin: Right.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Keith: It's like if the only way to get light bulbs was to go out into the mist and collect them from a ditch in the ground surrounded by bad stuff.

Jack: That's what that scene in the middle of the Prestige is about. Me misremembering the Prestige. [group laughter] I think it's—okay—

Austin: So it's danger in the mist is what we're saying.

Jack: Yeah, I think so. That we are—with the magic from the vernal pools, we are able to defeat and conquer.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Which is interesting, because mist is liquid in the air.

Austin: I know it's—yeah. Well, let's play to find out what happens, Jack.

Jack: Yeah. You want to draw a card for, “But as the world changes”, Austin?

Austin: I do. I got a club. Hmm. But as the world changes, magic has begun to disappear suddenly, leaving us scared, question mark.

Dre: Okay, I think I have a pitch.

Austin: Give me.

Dre: About the pools in the mist. What if, like, this is very much like we—society is built around these vernal pools, but we have to like, they're, they're finite and so we're constantly moving. And so the mist is like a thing that we have to move through in order to find like, vernal pools in order to like pre-build and prepare for, you know, whatever mana source that we're using to run out.

Keith: So this is like, introducing a sort of nomadic drive? Like in order to stay by the pools, we have to jump from place to place?

Austin: Move from pool to pool? But so it disappeared suddenly, then what you're saying is the—they—that they naturally, as we use them, they get used up and then we have to.

Dre: Or maybe they haven't, and—

Austin: They haven't, I see. So we're newly nomadic. We're newly moving from pool to pool because before they used to return long enough for us to draw the magic from them.

Jack: But the wells are all starting to run dry.

Austin: Right, yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: Does this work, Austin, with your idea of like a home in an away and like having communication but being extremely separate?

Austin: It does, but you know, it might actually not because it. Because the point—one of the things—of the thing that I want to get is like, there is a place that we are in contact with that is not at threat, you know.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Flight control, Houston is not in danger at any point during Apollo 13, but they also cannot physically help the away team, right? I really want to get that sense of like, there are people who are out in the world who can hear from the safe home, but are not—you can talk to each other, but you can't, you can't directly. [**Keith:** You can't go there.] You can't go there and they can't come to you. You're trying to get back there, you know?

Keith: Right. They can't send back up.

Austin: They can't send back up. Exactly. It's too—it's—you can't—it just does—it literally—there's—that's part of the thing that makes that story so interesting and that,

that, that, you know, that type of travel so different. You know, if you could, if you break down at the highway, you can send somebody out to the highway. It might be hard to get the call out. It might be hard to find it. But like, you can fly a plane or a helicopter over the—anywhere that people tend to travel in the world without it, you know, and then eventually get someone there, but you literally cannot get a rocket into space quick enough because of the way the scale of it all works. The type of travel is so demanding that it is, it is impossible to reach those—to reach through and help, right? So I like the idea of there being some element of this that is about bouncing from pool to pool or something like that. But, you know, this maybe goes back to Keith, what you were suggesting of, like, maybe there is a place that is safe and then there are places out—maybe the safety is what is now changing. Maybe the local pulls are—no because then we lose the home and away.

Keith: You know, when you're playing Starcraft and the minerals by your base run out and it becomes like, okay, it's time to like, build a second base, or I have to send my guys further away to get—to me, that's sort of the thing that I'm thinking of like, how far do you have to go to where you can still talk to that first base, but there's no real going back or sending more. [**Austin:** Yeah, yeah.] Like it would be too big of a challenge.

Austin: Yeah. But that does mean that the home base ones, the home base one could maybe be in threat, but it's not the natural state of—the start of play or whatever, however we're framing this is not—we've been—the whole society has been bouncing from pool to pool because I think that's what erratic. Or maybe it doesn't. Maybe the way it works is that you have. If you think of it as like a caravan, the caravan moves to, from pool A to pool B and then it says, okay, we can be here for a year. By the next year, we have to go and find another place to, we have to find a place where pools still exist or something, and we have to move to that one. So you could still kind of have the home and away where you're like sending out scouts into the mist, you know, in order to. I'm imagining this as a town surrounded by mist and you're sending people out into it, you know, but maybe that's wrong. I don't know.

Jack: Well, we do have Sprawling as a key palette option. So I think there is a town that is sending people into the mist. Two sort of adjunct ideas that I had that I don't know if they are useful here. The first one is very stupid, but might get us somewhere. What if it's mist you can only move through one way?

Austin: That's interesting. Yeah.

Jack: I can't work out whether or not it would be more interesting that you—I mean, you can send people out, but they can't come back unless they've got a certain thing from the pool. You know, that could be a way to do it. Or you could send people out holding a special object that they then have to use with the pool. And once they have expended that object, they can't come back.

Austin: Or once—they could, you could send them out to find the pool. And then when they find the pool, you can go to them, but they can't come back to you. It's like if the astronauts landed on the moon and then we were like, oh, now we can go to the moon because you found the place to land on the moon, but we—you can't come back here. You don't have what you need to get back this way. But we could slowly move towards you still if we wanted. You know what I mean?

Jack: [crosstalk] So it's one way mist outwards?

Keith: [crosstalk] There's a Philip K Dick book like that.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. Right. One way out.

Keith: Right? Yeah.

Austin: Isn't that—that's what you were suggesting was like one way outwards, not...?

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Once you leave, you. You don't. We just don't have what you need to get back.

Jack: We have to come to you, which is really scary.

Austin: Well, that was going back to Dre's idea of like, the kind of nomadic sense of what's—we're losing what we need to live in this place.

Jack: Right.

Keith: The Unteleported Man.

Austin: Is that the name?

Keith: Classic Philip K. Dick. Book title.

Austin: I haven't read this. It's a great name.

Keith: Yeah. The Unteleported Man is about this corporation has figured out how to teleport, but it's only one way. And so you get to teleport to their like work colony planet and—but to go back, it's like thousands and thousands of dollars and like, you know, decades of time on a ship. And so one guy is like, I'm going to fly a ship out there and make sure that everything is cool.

Jack: Oh, before, like, because, because I'm not going to teleport.

Keith: I'm the Unteleported Man. I'm going to fly my ship out there.

Austin: The slow way, yeah.

Keith: Because I'm not so sure that everything's on the up and up out in the Fomalhaut system.

Austin: Great. Love it. Two things I want to say before we leave this section. Does it still feel like it's disappearing suddenly?

Jack: No, I mean...

Austin: Because it doesn't to me necessarily. It doesn't feel like the magic has begun to disappear suddenly in the story we're telling. It feels like what we're telling is a story where—or a world where we have become used to it disappearing. And so we—the natural flow of things has become, it disappears, we move, it disappears, we move. And

so disappearing suddenly feels like we might need to go a little harder on something here without somehow losing one of our touchstones. We also haven't dipped into part of our palette, which is Coastal, which maybe could give us an answer here. Is there a boat answer here?

Keith: There's always a boat answer.

Jack: The first thing I think of is we can't find the pools. So we're just sending out astronauts. We're just like shooting them out into the mist. I'm calling them astronauts. You know what I mean.

Austin: Mistronauts.

Jack: And we're—Houston is just talking to these remote teams of hunters who can never come back, who can only move, literally only move one direction in the fog. Some out into the mist over the water, some out into the mist on the high cliffs on the other side of the city walls. And we just aren't hearing from people. We've done this in the past, and they find a pool within 20 miles and they're, you know?

Austin: I see, right.

Jack: There's just teams and teams and teams out there, and they haven't found it. That could be one way of doing it, because that would count as suddenly if you're just like, it's just not here anymore. We just can't find it. And we would be stumbling and scared because the only thing we can do if we want to keep having magic is keep sending out more scouts in the hopes that, you know, we pick the wrong angle. You know, we shoot someone at a 75 degree angle and we find it there or whatever. But this is like when you were playing Kerbal Space Program and you learned really early that kind of one of the worst things you could do was go off half cocked on a Kerbal rescue mission, because then all you've done is stranded a second Kerbal in space.

Austin: Yeah. I feel like building on what you just said and going back to our touchstones. I'm rereading our touchstones. There's a few things here that feel like they're absent but could, could connect. One is again going back to the palette of

coastal, and then the other one is, Dre, you had wind, invisible force. I think there might be something there that intersects with the way the mist moves, with the way ships might move in the water? If we're coastal, if we're sending ships out into the water, if we are moving up and down the coastline. And so maybe there's something there to build on here. And maybe building backwards a little bit when we talk about defeat and conquer, because right now what we have is defeat and conquer the mist. Is that what we've written down? The dangers in the mist, right? Which is also tough because it's like, partly I'm like, well, what's magic do for us? We know we have magic, but what it does with magic, we could defeat and conquer the mist. It's not like with magic...

Jack: We power our fancy ship or something.

Austin: Right, right, right. Maybe we do. Maybe there's part of—if it can get back to, that's how we defeat and conquer the mistake, or we defeat and conquer the dangers of the mist, then maybe that is justifiable. Maybe it is it powers our ships. Maybe it is it provides the energy and sustenance we need for these long journeys. Whatever. Because that's what they—that's what we're doing.

Jack: It lets us talk to the, to the away teams, which is even more frightening. [**Austin:** Right, yes.] Because it's like we have no magic. Our magic is running out. The only way we can get magic is by sending out the away teams. And the only way we can speak to the away teams is the magic. Which means that if it doesn't work, there is eventually going to come a point where it all goes dark. And we just have to hope that our away teams are, like, stumbling out through the mist and they'll find it and they'll make contact with us.

Austin: And they can use it to make contact back with us.

Jack: But they can't come back.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: I mean, that—I think that'll make sense. We already live in a world where the same stuff that we use to commune and connect and build in power also defeats and conquers.

Austin: True. The other thing that I think we haven't hit quite yet, and we can come back to this later, though, is ambiguous layers of time in history. Have other people been doing this? Are we picking through the ruins of a culture that had a different relationship with the pools? [**Keith:** And the mist.] Maybe we can answer that later. Sorry. The pools and the mist. Yeah, sure, totally. But does that—I guess what that means is the people who are going out are finding a world that had history, had other people who lived there, had geological eras or whatever. Right, sure.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: And how long do you spend fighting the mist before the first person finds, like, a book?

Austin: Right, right.

Keith: In the mist.

Austin: Yeah. All right, so it sounds like we're kind of where we're at is, it's taking longer to find the pools. The pools aren't closer. We're sending people further and further away. There are more and more missions that go quiet before they find the pools. Some—and there's more and more people who don't get.--Who don't come back at all. Lost explorations. Lost, lost, whatever.

Jack: Yeah. I think because it says we are—what does it say? Stumbling and scared, I think I actually want to go a bit.

Keith: That is just a suggestion.

Austin: Exactly, exactly.

Jack: You're right.

Austin: Otherwise, it's in craft, song and violence, you know? Yeah, okay. All right, so I got it, I got it. Disappear suddenly. Making our exploration for the vernal pools longer and less successful.

Jack: How jolly we were when we wrote down "found by us in vernal pools". Okay, right.

A legend [00:53:26]

Jack: [reading] A legend. Your world contains many myths and legends, and this one is foundational. An ancient story is told that forms a basis of how people interact and see their world. But like many tales, it can be warped to fit anyone's motives. As you play, this legend's influence echoes through every corner of your world. How do different cultures relate to it? And how does its warping bring about the changing magic? Option one, or rather, section one, A legend is told of. [stops reading] Now, I am drawing a card and I have drawn a 10 of clubs. A wandering creature.

ALL: Oh, ho ho!

Austin: Well, there we go, you know.

Keith: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Here we go. Oh, wow.

Austin: The examples in the book are the Nightingale Behemoth. The Wyrms Toothed.

Jack: The Wrm Toothed.

Austin: Wyrms toothed.

Jack: The Wyrms Toothed. I think it's a worm. I think it's a worm or a snake or something. Something—because I'm picturing like—hang on, let's look at our touchstones again.

Dre: Worm with a Y? Not worm with an L.

Jack: Oh, no. [group laughter] We have Sprawling, Coastal, Eerie, Vernal and Misty. To me, there's a bit of—what's that thing called in Stephen King? In—the thing with the piebald side. What book is that in? It's just this sort of like this massive worm like creature.

Austin: Oh, the long boy you're talking about in Lisey's Story.

Jack: In Lisey's story, yes. Immense worm-like creature out moving through the mist. This thing is gigantic, but I think it's—and I'm saying worm here, I think with more of an O than a Y. Although here at Friends at the Table, we love dragons that are kind of snake like. Spiritually, I think those are good dragons, but I think that this is something that kind of chews through the boggy earth, moves through the mist, slithers and slides. When you picture, like a sandworm from Dune or something, those things are very wide, but this thing is narrow and thin and long and it is snaking through the mist miles and miles long. It could do that bit in Snowpiercer that I think about all the time where they turn and see the train on the other side of a valley. You know, the train is so long that they have made a curve and they can look back and see the other side of the train.

Keith: It's like when you play Snake for a really, really long time.

Jack: Like when you play Snake for a really, really long time.

Keith: The light cycle game.

Jack: Yeah. What does it say?

Dre: Or Noby Noby Boy

Keith: I don't know that one.

Dre: That's the worm game, right?

Jack: It is the worm game.

Austin: Noby Noby Boy. Yeah.

Jack: Where the worm has to go to the planets.

Austin: To look for Noby Noby Girl. Yeah.

Jack: To look for Noby Noby Girl. Yes. The worm is also very interesting because of—culturally, in our world, the way the worm intersects with history. The worm is kind of like here we have ambiguous layers of time and history.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: And on Earth, culturally, the worm is, you know, so closely associated with death, so closely associated with, like eating things away and things coming to nothing. But at the same time, the worm is like a recycling or a rejuvenating creature. You know, the worm is the process by which humans come to nothing and then are restored to, you know, the Earth. I don't know how that works in our world, but I do think that we are getting some sort of—we're carrying in some sort of theme when we bring a big worm into a story about layers of time and history. The worm is Eerie. I don't think I need to explain that.

Austin: Well, we don't actually know what their tale tells of yet, Jack.

Jack: No, we don't. But I mean, a giant worm moving through the mist, that is conceptually—

Keith: It's certainly teeing us up.

Austin: It's teeing us up.

Jack: Dre, do you want to draw a card and tell us what their tale tell of? Their tale tell of.

Dre: Their tale tells of personal sacrifice. Well, I guess it doesn't have to. Sacrifice is the example? Or no, sacrifices.

Austin: Yeah, sacrifice is the thing.

Dre: Sacrifice is the thing, and then personal—

Keith: Personal sacrifice is the thing. Yeah. So it could be impersonal sacrifice.

[**Dre** laughter]

Austin: Well.

Dre: Oh, what if we—what has the worm caused us to sacrifice?

Jack: Or what has the worm sacrificed?

Austin: Well, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's funny, I'm—this is a legend, right? So I've been reading this as an ancient story is told that forms a basis for how you—how people interact and see their world. So this isn't just like a folk tale—or it is a folk tale, but it isn't just. It's a legend that we—it's like a core legend that we move through life referencing. Right? It's not—it's a worldview legend, you know?

Jack: Yes.

Austin: And so right now, it seems like based on looking ahead just a little bit where we're gonna warp this story, we're telling a version of it first that is like, this version of the story has been core to who we are as a people. And that could be, oh, no, the worm is scary and wants to eat us. It makes us sacrifice ourselves or, you know, whatever. But it could also be some other version of that in which the worm is a symbol of personal sacrifice or other types of, you know, sacrifice for the world, for the—for nature, sacrifice for whatever. Or it could be, hey, the worm, the worm eats us. The worm makes us—you know, it's sacrifice. Or we have to sacrifice in little ways to make sure we don't get swallowed by the mist worm or whatever. Like, there's—but—there's a lot of space here, but the thing that I just wanted to emphasize is, like, it isn't just a spooky story that we're coming up with. It is particularly a story with cultural significance.

Keith: Right.

Dre: What if the worm used to not be spooky and scary?

Austin: What if—right now? [**Dre:** What if the legend—] Yeah, go ahead.

Dre: So what if the legend was that the worm made some sort of sacrifice and now is like, cursed to wander because it, like, can never be full again, or something like that.

Austin: Made a little frown, I'm sad for the worm.

Dre: I know.

[01:00:22]

Keith: The worm is like a specter of its, you know, a permanent reminder of its sacrifice, whatever that was.

Austin: Yeah. Did the worm, does—did the worm do something so that it could make the pools?

Jack: That's what I was wondering.

Keith: Yeah, I was gonna...

Dre: Yeah, maybe. Yeah.

Austin: That we live in... through? It permanently left home so that it could—[**Keith:** Worm-anently.] It worm-anently left home [hysterical **Dre** laughter] so that it could make the pools of magic that we need to keep the mist at bay.

Jack: Or it, you know, chewed into an aquifer or something way down, and the magic flowed through its body ruinously. But, you know, it, it—a worm is sort of a tube. It opened up the aquifer, you know, and the vernal pools kind of crept up from that.

Austin: Right. It freed the crystallized magic below.

Jack: But in the same way that, like, you know, holding a live electric current, you know, would be bad for you. In that moment, the worm was kind of like, shattered spiritually.

Keith: Now, this is a legend, so—

Jack: The Elden ring broke.

Keith: Is there a worm?

Austin: We don't know.

Jack: We don't know.

Keith: We don't know.

Austin: We don't know. It is a legend. That's correct. But we tell that story, and, I mean, the book actually asks us even at this point, how do different cultures relate to this? How does its warping, which we're about to talk about, bring about changing—the changing magic? Some people like this. Some people go—some cultures go, you have to be like the worm. You got to dig down there and find the aquifer of magic and release it. That's good to do. It's good to give yourself to what we all need.

Jack: What else are the away teams doing?

Austin: Right. And there are other people even at this point who go, well, that's not—you don't want to be like—don't be like the worm.

Keith: Don't get yourself cursed. Be cautious.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And there are some people who say the worm was greedy.

Austin: The worm actually kept more of the magic than it gave us.

Jack: Yeah. And it wouldn't have shattered itself if it hadn't been sniffing away through the dirt, you know?

Keith: And now you've got this fucking worm to deal with.

Jack: Maybe. But again, we don't know if the worm is real.

Austin: We don't know if the worm is real.

Keith: Well, that's—but people might still say that they are.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I think the worm is in the mist, et cetera.

Jack: And people say, of course, it's just a story. And then the first person with a real wise posting expression on their face says, oh, why are the away teams going missing then?

Austin: That's right, yeah.

Jack: If not the worm.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Okay. Yeah, I'm happy with this. How do we want to write this down? I mean, so we need the first—

Austin: Sacrifice is what we need.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: We need the tell tales of sacrifice.

Jack: Well, the first are telltales of a, a worm. Of a worm. The telltales of a wandering creature.

Austin: Of a wandering creature. A big long worm.

Jack: It's a lot less romance when we just describe it like that.

Keith: Big, long worm.

Austin: Big, long worm. Little guy. A big little guy.

Keith: A big, big, little big guy.

Jack: A big long worm. [chuckles] Okay. And then the tale tells of sacrifice. The worm. The worm. Sacrifice the worm. Don't sacrifice the worm. Can we—

Dre: I'm gonna let you type, Jack.

Jack: Okay. The worm bit into an aquifer of magic.

Austin: I'm gonna quickly grab a drink. I'll be right back.

Jack: Okay. And was ruined. Though, this act of sacrifice gave us the vernal pools. No, I'm not. I don't want the space there. I want it here.

Keith: All right, it's time to warp this.

Jack: Well, let's wait until Austin's back, but. Yes.

[long pause]

Keith: Anybody watching anything good?

Jack: Finished season one of the X Files.

Keith: I mean, I know that's good. I know that's good. Season two, Jack. Oh, my God. I mean, when I rewatch season one, every time I'm surprised at how many bangers are in season one,

Jack: I'm really excited. I think my favorite episode of season one was EBE. Oh, no, it was Beyond The Sea. Yeah, it was absolutely Beyond The Sea.

Keith: Oh, Beyond The Sea is so good.

Dre: Not Under the Sea.

Keith: No, no, no.

Jack: Beyond the Sea. Like the song.

Dre: Wait, Under The Sea is also a song, Jack.

Jack: A different song.

Dre: Okay.

Keith: You know, something is gonna hit harder than you expect when Brad Dourif is there.

Jack: It's a true rule of the world.

Keith: It's a rule of the world. Whenever Brad Dourif shows up, you're like, holy shit. I think this is about to be fucking awesome, whatever this is.

Jack: And whatever character he's playing, you know, I mean, he's usually playing a Brad Dourif character, but it can be any kind of character. And you might think, I'm not—this probably isn't gonna really hit for me, but then it does. That's his power.

Keith: By the way, Jack, have you continued on your journey through the Myst games?

Jack: No, I've kind of got stuck halfway through Riven and sort of fell off. I need to come back to that.

Keith: Do you know who is featured prominently in Myst 3?

Jack: I saw chat just say Myst 3 is rad because of Brad.

Keith: Yes, Brad Dourif is like the main FMV character that you interact with in Myst 3.

Jack: And does it hit hard?

Keith: He's so good in it. He's really good in it.

Jack: Keith, you want to warp this legend?

Keith: I would love to warp this legend. Is Austin back? I didn't hear.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: I'm back.

Keith: Okay, great. Warping the legend. That is a clubs, no, spades. It's so small for me.

Jack: You can zoom in and you can also make it bigger. Yeah, that is the spade.

Keith: [reading] But now the legend has been warped, giving rise to rebellion. The ashen rose, the blaspheme. The heart's crescendo. [stops reading] **[Jack: Wow.]** Rebellion. Oh, my goodness. Well, I mean, I feel like we illustrated a little bit of what this could be in just talking through the sacrifice of the worm, which, you know, sort of through human nature or whatever nature—through nature, through social nature, will sort of like bifurcate opinion on what is happening. You say that the worm did something to cause a thing, and then you have a bunch of people saying, like, it's good that that happened. And then a bunch of people would be like, might be fucking bad that that happened, actually. So, you know, if we have people who are—who disappear suddenly because they're going out to find these pools, the pools of the worm, I think that that is an axis for civil unrest and potentially rebellion.

Jack: Is the rebellion people saying we need to find another source of what—?

Keith: It could be that. It could be people who've moralized the power from the pools negatively. So you're like, we don't even want—the power from the pool inherently has led to this. We have relied too—or, or the reverse. Like, you know, I could see it going any of these ways. Like, we need to take the power for ourselves. We need to find a new source. We need to even increase how much we're using the pools. We need to find a way to make this permanent, to stop having to search for them. We need to punish the people who are making us go out to find these pools. I think any of these are possible. **[Austin hums in thought]** There's no—I don't think there's like, I don't think anything is off limits.

Austin: Right, right, right.

Keith: How can people use this for their advantage to foment rebellion? Or how can people like, feel passionately about this sincerely to foment rebellion?

Austin: Right. I think we just have to pick one though. If I'm looking at the list of examples across each of these and it's like a particular, a particular thing rose.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You know, a tyranny—like, like you said, the ashen rose, the blaspheme, the heart's crescendo.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's not a conflict or something. It is like a rebellion of some kind.

Austin: The worm killers. The, the—

Jack: The worm killers or the aquifer closers. Find it, find it and close it. Or find another—

Austin: Oh, anti astronauts is very fun. But I don't know... We've built a sort of like—they'd have to kind of be fatalists, right? They'd have to be like, nope, the mist has to come get us. We're going to stop being able to put the mist away. We're blowing up our ability to keep the mist at home, you know, or keep the mist from home, rather.

Jack: When you say anti astronauts, do you mean people who are anti the concept of sending the astronauts out, you mean—**Austin:** No, no.] Yes. You mean like antimatter—

Austin: Will you just send people out who are there to destroy the polls instead of connect us to them? You still have to send people out to like—because what I'm imagining is if there's a group that is like, hey, we are going to change the way things work here. No, we're going to—we want the mist to come get us. We want to break our reliance on these distant pools of magic, whatever it is. You would have—those people couldn't do that. I guess they could do it by stopping you from sending out astronauts. But you could also, if you had people who are like, I don't want us using this power anymore. Not in an ecological, we shouldn't be interfering way, but in a, it's evil, it shouldn't be here way. They've just sent out their own astronauts to, in quotes, their own scouts, their own teams to go find those places. And instead of letting us connect with

the, the, instead of letting the, whatever, the status quo leadership or government or society is connect to that magic and draw on that magic, they have to somehow separate us from that magic permanently. They have to cap the, the—

Jack: I like this, but—

Austin: You know what I mean?

Jack: I would like to just refocus it a little on the legend. Right? This is also about a legend of the worm, right?

Austin: Right, Right. But the, But—sorry, but the—this isn't.

Jack: I suppose my question.

Austin: The tyranny rebellion faith industry is happening now.

Jack: Yes, but the legend has been warped, giving rise to like, what is the nature of the warp?

Austin: It sounds like the nature of the warp is what? Is that—it was actually bad that the worm did this. The worm should have never—

Jack: Oh, I see. Right. Yeah.

Austin: Raised the pools. We're tapping the pools. We're stopping—we're draining the pools. You know we're getting rid of the magic, right?

Keith: There's like a reframing of the sacrifice as like an attack.

Austin: Here's the—for me, here's the cleanest way to do this. You idiots. The magic doesn't help us survive the mist. The pools make the mist. We have to go out there and cap all the pools.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. This is some Yoshihiro Togashi thinking.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Uh huh.

Jack: I like this a lot. I also am just deeply fascinated by the idea of astronaut versus astronaut combat in one way mist, where it's like, what does that do to the way you fight? If you can't, you know, move—if I am ahead of you and you attack me, I can't move towards you. I just have to hold my ground or take cover.

Austin: You're still, you're still—yeah. Sorry. I now realize we were thinking about this differently. You literally mean they can't turn around?

Jack: You can't move through the mist. Yes, the other way.

Austin: Literally. I'd been meaning it as once you enter the mist, you can't leave the mist back into home. [**Jack:** I mean—] not that you couldn't like, scratch your back.

Jack: You could. I think it's probably a loose circle around you that you could move back.

Austin: You get what I'm saying?

Jack: Yeah, I absolutely get what you're saying.

Austin: I couldn't scratch your back if you were behind me?

Jack: No. You couldn't—

Austin: We could rotate around.

Jack: You couldn't take my helmet off if I needed you to or something. You know, if we dropped something.

Austin: You'd have to get in front of me to do that.

Jack: Yes.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: The thing that I was actually thinking, that's one of those things where you think it and then you don't say it, and you realize it's central to the way you're thinking about it, is that, like—it's like fur that you can stroke one way but is very sharp if you stroke it the other way.

Keith: Almost like a porcupine.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Like a porcupine where it's like the mist will shred you. It will tear you apart if you—

Austin: I have a question that I don't think is practical, but I do need to know the answer of.

Jack: Absolutely.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: Is the world a sphere?

Jack: We don't know.

Austin: I don't think we're moving in distances enough where this would ever come up. But theoretically, if you kept going straight and there was a land bridge in this world or whatever, if there was a way to wrap back around.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Would it start pushing out? Does it push out to its sort of, like, opposite point on the world, and then from there, can you not go anywhere anymore?

Jack: God, if you get to a pole, are you just stuck. You're just stuck there?

Austin: That's what I'm saying, yeah.

Jack: I think it is something like that. It's like iron filings in a magnetic field. You know, this also explains why I was talking about, like, sending out hundreds and hundreds of teams in lots of different like, like, scattering them out because you want to try and capture as many angles as possible.

Keith: Remind me. Because, I, Jack, I understood what you meant by not going backwards, but I also just forgot about it. How are we getting back to—when people are coming back, how are they getting back? The pools let them come back.

Jack: I don't think anybody is coming back, right?

Keith: Ever? Once you go off to find a pool, you're never coming back? You're just—

Jack: This is what you were saying, right, Austin?

Austin: No?

Keith: I thought that we hadn't discussed modes of return.

Austin: No, I, we—yeah.

Keith: I think Austin, what you said was that there was something in the pool that you could go back if you brought it back.

Austin: Well, at the time that I was pitching was inside of the kind of construct of the, what if they were nomadic people, what I was pitching was once they get to a place, the home culture can then move to the new one, like nomadically around through the mist. You know what I mean?

Keith: Right? I mean, you talked about The Unteleported Man. You can go to where the pool is.

Austin: That's right. But then I was like, oh, wait, that gets rid of the home and away thing in a way. It doesn't feel dangerous. We kind of abandoned that whole set of things, but we kind of kept, you can't go backwards in the mist. I'm fine with, like, the magic

teleports the astronauts home. Once they make the connection between home and a pool.

Keith: Right. They have a pool of magic. They can get home via magic. But if you get to a pole without ever finding a pool, you just have to live at the edge of the earth.

Austin: I guess? Yeah.

Keith: It's evil. That's so bad.

Austin: Well, again, it's not actually. It wouldn't be a pole. It would be the opposite point of the map. Right? I mean, we could just say it's the pole. What that would do is then change what we're talking about when we talk about the direction you can't go in. Because if there's the porcupine hair pushing you back or hurting you, right? If you go towards home, then where that will naturally lead, I believe, if I'm doing this right in my head, is not one of the poles unless you are at the equator. Unless home is at the—if home is at the equator, then it will lead you to one of the poles, because that will be the furthest point away or not the furthest—no, it wouldn't, right, because?

Jack: It would be the other equator.

Austin: It'd be the other side of the equator. Exactly. Yeah. So what I'm saying to begin with is, right, which is like. It's only the opposite if you're on a pole, you know?

Keith: Well, there's. I guess the idea of a pole is like, is there a spot on Earth where there's no direction to walk that isn't away—that isn't into the mist?

Austin: Right, exactly. Or that isn't—right. Exactly. Or that isn't back towards home.

Keith: Right.

Austin: That's the point at which you get trapped.

Keith: So on a flat earth, you get to the end of the world and can't go back because you're walking into the shredding mist.

Austin: That's right.

Keith: But on a globe, there's a point where the mist, or potentially, there's a point where the mist converges and all directions from that point are into the mist. The shredding mist.

Austin: The shredding mist, Right. Exact—exactly. Which is again, maybe not a thing that happens because this is a not a practical question. Like I said, if we're talking about like walking around a continent sized landmass, you're never going to run into the point where, I mean—you will actually, when you hit the coast, right?

Keith: Right. Well, and maybe I guess my question is, are we leaning into how horrible this sounds [**Jack** laughter] or are we trying to figure out how a people can live like this and then the coasts can either become like, a killing field or the way that you can avoid—maybe the reason you stay by the coast is because the mist is different over the water or being on a boat is a way to be above where the mist is line is.

Austin: Yeah. I want to be very careful about, about. I don't want to throw away the mist kills you if you go back, or it hurts you or it stops you. But I do—in a funny way. I want to talk about the video game *Myst* really quick. Because I have to tell you, you cannot play a game like the video game *Myst* if you can't go backwards.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: So once—I just want to start thinking about actual—we're talking about a sprawling world where there is ambiguous layers of time in history. And I'm cool with actually continuing—I want to be very clear. We're playing in a realm almost of poetics at this point. I love the shredding mist or the stopping mist that prevents you from going home. But I want us to imagine people walking around an apartment building or an archaeological dig. You can't go backwards.

Jack: Right, right.

Austin: What happens if you open—what happens if I walked—if the mist was to my north right now and I walked into my kitchen south, I could never leave. I would die in the kitchen.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I'd have to break the wall and keep moving in that direction, which is cool like that. If the astronauts have like, wall breaking capabilities and they have to keep moving forward, there's, there is something really cool here because that's worm-like. Right. Worms have to keep moving forward. Right? Worms—I don't know that worms can—I mean, they can turn. They can turn.

Jack: But a worm can't back up, I don't think.

Austin: Maybe a worm can back up. Because a worm, both sides of a worm can be its head, I think.

Keith: Right, well, this is this—now this, Austin, what you introduced is like an aspect that I hadn't thought or—not that I hadn't thought of, that I had thought the opposite of, which is like, is the mist inside your home? Because for me that's the reason why you would build a city or a town or a old—

Austin: Oh, I meant old homes.

Keith: Oh, like old. Like you come across someone else's house that is now in the mist and you have to walk through it.

Austin: If there's ambiguous layers of time in history, that means there are other people probably lived out there at some point.

Keith: You said my kitchen. So I'm just thinking like, this is your domicile.

Austin: Oh, I meant my human. The place. I'm—the place I'm looking in my life. If an astronaut walked through here.

Keith: Yeah. You know, not that you build a house and then you have to live your life from one side to the other.

Austin: Yes, yes, yes. No, no, no.

Jack: That would be so annoying.

Keith: Yeah, like I just wouldn't build a house if that was the case.

Jack: You put your phone down in the wrong place. You're like, well shit.

Austin: Well shit, it's gone now.

Jack: Yeah, I think you're right, Austin. And I think sitting in the realm of poetics here, there are kind of—there are ways we could work this that are not particularly subtle, but would do the trick. You know, the astronauts deploy with these kind of like globes of light that can push, that can push the mist back or something. But that comes at a cost. They only have a certain number of them. It weakens, it makes the mist angrier around it or it draws something within the mist. I think that's—

Keith: Well, this is why you have to defeat the mist.

Jack: Right. This is also why you have to defeat the mist. And our city is ringed by this light, but at the same time magic is kind of pouring out. So there's the risk that we won't be able to construct these globes and also that the big ones that protect our city will also start failing. Of course there are the people who are sending out the anti astronauts who say—wow, that makes their position really interesting as well, because they're these kind of like, they're these kind of like, knife sharp futurists where they're like, we only need to move forward, let the mist come, you know?

Austin: Right. The other way of doing this would be like, you can't go back. There's always like a mile or a half mile behind you. And once that, you know what I mean, you're able to move back a little bit, but not past a mile.

Jack: It's like if I'm reading sheet music when I'm playing, I can see four measures ago and I can think about what happened. But if you want me to think about 30 measures ago, I'm going to completely lose my flow because that's pages back or whatever.

Austin: In a way, this is actually a different type of coastline. Right? You go until you can't see the coast anymore, and then the coast is always fading, you know what I mean? Like, it's a sea of mist behind you, but you always have a little coast. The area around you is coastline, and the coastline moves with you, you know?

Jack: Yeah, yeah. This would also allow for combat without just being this sort of like Ballardian nightmare.

Austin: But it does give you the thing you said, which is if there's a group behind us by a mile.

Jack: By a mile—

Austin: We can't go back—

Jack: And fight them there.

Austin: And fight them there.

Jack: No, no.

Austin: You know? We can try to get—you know, let's imagine they've climbed a hill and they can look down on us. Like, there might be a position there where, like, the only thing we can do is try to outrun them going forward, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Because they can back to the other side. There'd be overlapping—I'm going to draw a tactical map on this here really quick. Right, let's imagine. I'm going to use the top really quick. Let's imagine up is away from, like, north is away from the, from the, the center where they're, they're moving. Right? You might have a group, a northern group that is like, this is all flatland. Right? And then a southern group that is, whoops, up on a

hill. And the southern group, that's not a good circle. It—you know. The southern group is—[thinking noises] How do you draw two circles that are the same? There we go. I actually know how, it's copy and paste. Yeah, but I do—can I not—I can't copy and paste. They don't let you do it. Ah, but yeah, you, you get a, a second group like that. **[Keith: [audible 01:24:18] a fucking circle]** I hate it! You get a second group and like, let's say that's all hill. They can just like, tiptoe a little bit to move their circle up a little—you know what I mean? They have really nightmare advantage. The north group is like, we got to fucking keep going until their circle gets off the hill. You know? That's fun.

Jack: There is a little bit of the contemporary Battle Royale mechanic in here, right? Where, you know, in the late stages of a Battle Royale, when you are like, if, if we can go out of the circle and take damage, but our position will be better. Except here you couldn't do it because you would just be torn to pieces if you, you know.

Austin: Right, right. We don't even know that we're talking about like height advantage. Like, I don't—we're talking about astronauts, and so I think we start thinking about astronaut era technology, but we don't know that that's the case, you know. But.

Jack: No. Astronauts. This is—and I was thinking about this. We're using astronauts in the same way that we use panther. You know, where it's like this is the word that we have that means something on earth and we have taken an aspect of it, but it means something completely different.

Austin: That's right, yeah.

Jack: For people who are unfamiliar, a panther is a sort of bird in Hieron.

Austin: That can split into many other birds.

Jack: Splits into many other birds.

Austin: And then other people might make, for instance, a giant robot based on that animal.

Jack: Yeah, yeah. It is not a big cat at all.

Austin: At all. Except it moves like that. Still somehow, you know, has panther like qualities.

Jack: Yeah. Also the word, the animal's name is pronounced ibex, but that's not for us. We say that differently.

Austin: Yeah, if we say it there, we say ee-bex.

Jack: Okay, so what do we write here? The legend has been warped, giving rise to rebellion. And the rebellion is this group who are pro mist, right? They are anti astronauts. They are trying to cap the wells.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Oof, I just moved the index card. I hate Roll 20. Okay.

Austin: Yeah. Hmm.

Jack: A rebellion of anti astronauts has grown. These people try and cap the wells and what, like produce more mists?

Keith: I don't think they're pro mist as much as they're anti messing with the pools, and—which necessitates a life of dealing with the mist.

Jack: Ah, I see. Okay. Yeah. So they try and cap the wells and restrict the kind of like vernal pool hunting or economy.

Austin: Because they believe that if you get rid of the pools, the mist will go away.

Jack: They're the people who say the—idiot, the pools make the mist, the trees make the wind.

Austin: Trees make the wind, Right? Uh huh. Yeah. Speaking of the wind, the wind. Does the wind touch the mist in interesting ways?

Jack: In certain areas it does. And that's got to suck because it can move it, right? It can [Austin: Sure.] It can like, send currents of mist.

Austin: And I guess now is the time I want to ask, is the mist dangerous or is there something in the mist dangerous?

Jack: Oh, I see.

Austin: Well, I mean, is the thing in the mist that's dangerous is you can't go backwards in the mist after.

Keith: Well, I think it's gotta be both.

Austin: There are also things in the mist. Creatures in the mist.

Keith: Right, yes.

Austin: People in the mist. Something you don't like.

Keith: Things that have evolved to live in the mist.

Dre: Ooh.

Austin: Yeah. Mistborn.

Jack: There are rumors out there of—

Austin: That's a game, right?

Keith: Is that a game?

Austin: Yeah, I think so. Or no, it's the fucking Brandon Sanderson series, of course.

Keith: Oh, okay.

Austin: Is this what that book is about?

Jack: Are we copying Brandon Sanderson?

Austin: Is this whole thing—are we from first principles?

Jack: [crosstalk] Does Brandon Sanderson say you cant go backwards?

Keith: [crosstalk] Does Brandon Sanderson have mist that kills you?

Jack: [crosstalk] Does Branston have mist that kills you?

Austin: I don't think—

Keith: Stephen King has mist that kills you.

Austin: What's the mist in Mistborn called?

Jack: What? Mist! I don't know. I don't know. Is there mist in Mistborn?

Austin: [reading] The final empires in the dystopian world of Scadrial? Scadrial, where ash constantly falls from the sky, all plants are brown, and supernatural mists cloak the landscape every night. [stops reading] There we go. Different thing. We're good, we're safe. But we can't call them the Mistborn.

Jack: There are ghost stories that people tell of people who have walked back in the mist and have just, you know, been rendered into white bone and they stay so determined that they still walk through the mist, you know?

Austin: Right. Mist-walkers.

Jack: No, I think that's also another thing.

Austin: Damn it.

[Dre laughter]

Keith: When you go to the desert, you know what I mean, like, all the animals that live in the desert are mean as fuck because they have to live in the desert. It's all like, evil snakes and evil scorpions and, like, you know, when you go to the forest, the rabbits are, like, cute and scared, but when you go to the desert, the rabbits will kick the shit out

of you. You know what I mean? And like, the mist is the ultimate version of that. It's a really hostile environment—you go deep, deep, deep into the ocean, you don't get goldfish, you get anglerfish.

Jack: It's true. And maybe there's a worm out there.

Keith: And maybe there's a worm out there.

Austin: I've heard there's a worm,

Keith: You know, at the top of the ocean. The squid are calamari. At the bottom of the ocean, the squid are the size of your house.

Austin: Right.

Jack: Those guys rule. I love those guys so much.

Austin: Do the creatures of the mist also have to live by the “you can't go backwards in the mist” rule.

Jack: Some do.

Keith: I think that's what causes—

Austin: Some do.

Keith: I think. Yeah, I, I think that—the thing that evolving to live in the mist does is make that part of it maybe not as important for them.

Austin: They live in small enough areas or can keep moving forward in various ways or whatever.

Jack: Can you imagine how frightening it would be to see something coming out of the mist towards you the wrong way?

Austin: Oh, that's really good. [**Dre:** Ooh, yeah.] But it wouldn't happen based on this, this mile away.

Jack: No, you see it way off in the distance. You look through a telescope.

Austin: No.

Jack: Oh, no, you're right. Because it would—

Keith: Because it's mist.

Austin: Yeah. It would reach the mist. This is my—this was the astronaut on the hill example I was talking about before. Because the, the spheres of movement, if we're doing the mile long or even hundred yard long movement, those don't line up evenly for everybody.

Jack: Yes, you're right.

Austin: I would—I could have mobility that you don't have anymore. And so I could very easily jump in and out of your mist, because it isn't my mist. Do you know what I mean? I wouldn't even know I'm moving in and out of your mist.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: Right. Everyone has their own mist.

Austin: Which maybe is not what we want to do. Or maybe we found the broken problem with this is that not everybody has their own mist.

Keith: Well, the mist is magic, so it can work however.

Austin: Yeah, maybe I see thin mist and you see thick mist.

Jack: Well, because it's weighing your soul, right? There's—

Austin: Oh, now wait a second.

Keith: The mist can feel—I think we're reaching midichlorians very quickly. The mist knows what direction you're moving, and it has a problem if you go backwards.

Austin: I'm drawing more circles briefly.

Jack: Okay, sounds good.

Austin: I want to—I just want to make sure we're all on the same page about when I talk about, like, the mists having different amounts and different whatever, right? So I'm doing two different colors, right? Do you see what I'm talking about? The orange team can move anywhere in the orange circle, but the green team can only move in the green team circle. Which mean—which means that the green team sees everything that isn't green in the inside of the green as the mist, whereas the orange team doesn't. The orange team doesn't see any of—they only see the stuff that's in—outside of their circle. So they see this little bit. I'll move it up more. They see all that.

Keith: This is very close to how I've been imagining it.

Austin: Okay, cool.

Keith: So I'm going to do—I'm going to do more—

Austin: The difference being—is the thing that I want to be really clear on is if you're in the orange circle, right? You are—your mist is not the same mist as the other teams mist. The other team would be seeing mist in the—go freehand for a second—all of this would be mist for the green team. I've drawn a little mask on this green guy. All of that would be missed for the green guy. But not for you, you know, or—yeah, yeah, yeah. Maybe the other way around actually. Yeah, it is the other way around. But you get what I'm saying, right?

Jack: Yes. It would be—

Austin: All of this would be green team mist, you know.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: It looks ugly but not for you because you're just there.

Jack: Yes.

Keith: So we're imagining, in pursuit, this is what we're...?

Austin: Because it goes back to Jack's initial—I'm locked in on Jack's initial thing of like it would be—it would suck to fight in the mist because a group could be behind you and you couldn't go back towards them. Exactly.

Keith: Right so this is what I've been imagining, like you've got—the orange team has come up on green. Orange is completely free to move forward, but green is not free to move back and meet them.

Austin: That's right. And, Keith.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: This—I'm going to change to red—this spot, you know, we're assuming this is the shape. This spot is where it becomes mist for the green. But the orange team can't see that as mist at all.

Keith: Right. Because they're in it. They're in their mist.

Austin: They're in their mist.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: Right.

Austin: So that they're in their non-mist zone.

Keith: So there's an area of non-visibility for the green right there, that the green sees that as mist.

Austin: That's right.

Keith: But orange doesn't. Orange has that whole area of inside their sphere.

Austin: But that's what I'm saying.

Keith: But this is then—but this is the less strategic zone.

Austin: And again, I'm really less interested in even the combat part of this. It's just that like, what we're getting at then means that there is different phenomenological experiences of being in the mist. The mist is not just physical. It might also be physical, but it hits you in your brain in some way or in your magic, soul, whatever, right? That is like, I know that there is stuff out there that I can't see and it's not because there are tightly dense particles of water that are preventing me. It's not just that. It's also that if I got closer, I could start seeing it. [**Jack:** Yes.] Is what we've been saying.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Unless the reason they could see through the mist for a mile or they can move through the—no, this is what it is. It's not just seeing through. It's moving through. That's the thing that's different. Because if it was just “we can see a mile”, that's because they have special goggles or they have a magic spell on them that lets them see for a mile.

Keith: Or the mist is light.

Austin: Or the mist is light. Well, right, right. You can—exactly. Like normal mist. Like, oh, I can see a little bit into the mist. Exactly. But then there's a point of which is how it's being. But because it's tied to each individual person and you can't move backwards past it, past a certain point before it becomes porcupine and starts shredding you, then that means there's something very weird happening.

Jack: Yes. Yes.

Austin: Yeah. Okay.

Jack: Yeah, no, I'm cool with this. I think there's a—we are essentially on the same page, and it's very strange because we are both, and I don't think that these two things are necessarily in opposition and definitely aren't in opposition in, like, a piece of live collaborative storytelling. But we're doing this strange dance between the sort of, like, practicality of it and also the poetics of it, which is very Ballardian or like Philip K. Dick or something, right? Where it's like—or Ray Bradbury, right? This is like, part of what

makes the Martian Chronicles go so well is that he stages both of these things at the same time, and it's kind of orbiting them around one another. But it does feel very weird and kind of enjoyable to do, to be being, like, you know, telling Beowulf and also being like, how did he get that arm up there? How did he attach it to the arch above the door?

Austin: Right, to the, to the, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Well, and all of this knowledge of how the mist works, the people who live there have it, and it's because it was, you know, it was paid in blood. And this is why there's a rebellion.

Jack: Yes, yes. The pools make the mist. And someone else says, no, no, no. The pools make the lamps we use to set up.

Keith: The mist makes the pools.

Austin: How do—so let's say I'm an astronaut who finds the pool. What happens then? How do I get the magic from the pool back home?

Keith: Battery?

Austin: Because I am not going—cause in your view, Jack, I'm not going back home. Or is it, we put the water—maybe not even the water. It's like there's a, there's a off gas of magic. You know what I mean? Like, I don't know.

Dre: Okay, maybe you gotta carry with you or assemble as you go some form of, like, transportation.

Jack: Dig a trench.

Austin: You dig a trench and you just, like, run the little bit of pool water back through the trench all the way.

Keith: So then it is the water.

Jack: That would be the water in that case. Yeah. The other way is we do it—

Austin: How big are these pools?

Keith: You know, they—15 to 50ft wide.

Austin: Okay. So we're not—we're probably not digging a trench dozens and dozens of miles long for a pool to then run a 15 foot pool of water back through it. I don't think it would make it.

Jack: No, it—she gets stuck in the middle. Okay. So the poetics answer to this is that there's some sort of transference. There is an empty pool in the capital or in the sprawling, eerie city, and the astronauts dive into the vernal pool out and emerge in the pool along [**Austin:** Oh, yeah.] with the water in the—it's very Jeff Vandermeer, right? There are those incredible moments in *Annihilation* where the characters dive in the water and are transported with the water somewhere else.

Austin: Yeah, that's the thing that it should—I think that's great. I love walking into the water and walking out of the water at home. The only way forward is—the only way back is forward.

Jack: Oh, this is very worm like, right, too.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: And lots of people say, well, is there a tunnel between the vernal pool and the main pool dug by the worm centuries ago or whatever? And other people say, well, the astronauts don't report any knowledge. You know, they close their eyes as they go into the pool and they open their eyes as they come out in the capital. Other people are saying, we should close the well in the capital because as we keep saying—

Austin: Well, maybe that's like, the big action that the rebels want to take, but they can't get—no one, no one—there's not enough support for that yet, you know?

Jack: It's much better that they can do sort of Guerrilla war against the—

Austin: You have a name for these? For the pool closers. [**Jack:** Not that.] I don't think it's the pool closers.

[long pause]

Jack: What about something like something that evokes like a stone being dragged over something or like. Cap isn't quite right. It's a big day for moving stones here on the 5th of April.

Austin: I guess it is.

Dre: Maybe they don't cap it. Maybe they like, scrape things into it or they just like, throw dirt into the pool until it like, fills up.

Jack: Oh, they like, poison or shut the well.

[long pause]

Austin: Why don't you think it's tied to capping? It's just—you think that it's not like a particularly fun word.

Jack: Yeah, I don't think it's a particularly fun word. I mean, if we can find a way to do it, like capstone or something is—but that's a different meaning, right? Capstone is not really...

Austin: I mean, you know, what's the capstone etymology? Let's find out. Edge of the final stone, the top stone, the fitted stone,

Jack: Which suggests the completion of a process, whereas instead it feels like this is like the solution of something, right? Or the...

Austin: Yeah, yeah. [thinking noises]

Jack: You know, if this was set in the 80s or something, they'd be called something like Clean Air.

Dre: Oh. I don't hate it.

Jack: But I don't think that's quite where we're at.

Austin: Yeah. I don't know. All of our metaphors lean kind of science fictional here, so I would almost like to overcorrect towards something that feels really fantasy.

Jack: I agree. I absolutely agree. Something about closing doors. Something about, um...

Austin: It's not really damming, right? But it's—I'm going to read all of their examples across—all of Vid's examples across the four things. The radiant crown, the scepter, the dawn sigil. Those are tyranny. The ashen rose, the blaspheme, the heart's crescendo. That's rebellion. Faith is the sacred scorched, we born of blood, waders of her worldly waters. And then industry is the raging forge, Ophelia, Ophelia Industrial, the rapid ascension. So there's a little sci fi in there. Ophelia industrial.

Jack: What about a cork or something?

Austin: Oh, yeah, something. Yeah. The cork feels—might listen to the tavern space more than the rebellion space, you know? The big cork.

Jack: Look, Marielda has told us, as has real life, that the rebellions are in the taverns and the, and the factories. You know?

Austin: That's true. Can we get a little—what we need is the right, the right adjective with it, right?

Jack: Yes. Adjectives beginning with X.

Austin: I was literally going back to look at our pallet words, but I don't know that—the coastal cork, the eerie cork, you know, the gold cork, the kinetic cork—I'm looking at the palette words, all of them now. The crisp cork, the cork, the corked world, the...

Something about—they're not draining the, the pools. Right? They're, They're—maybe they are trying to drain them, but they're, but they're not because they're not, they're not bringing it back. They're just trying to close them. Or freeze them. What if they freeze the pools? Is that a fun visual?

Jack: They scrape something in and they freeze them. [**Austin:** Yeah, that's really good.] Flash freezes the pool.

Austin: It flash freezes them. Yeah. And then we can get into things like frozen and frigid. And, you know, all the, all the ice words.

Keith: So we're still—we're looking for an adjective.

Austin: We're looking for a name. We're looking for a name. It doesn't have to be the core—now that we're talking about freezing, you know. Something rime, you know, though?

Jack: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Dre: What about, like, rime is also good because Coastal.

Austin: Totally. Yeah.

Jack: Is it just like the future's rime or something? You know, is it like—

Austin: The Future's Rime is kind of nice. Or Tomorrow's—

Jack: Tomorrow's Rime.

Austin: Tomorrow's Rime.

Jack: Tomorrow's Rime is pretty good.

Austin: Rime, R, I, M, E for the listener.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Tomorrow's Rime was my favorite Jethro Tull album that he didn't get the chance to make.

[laughter]

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I'm happy with Tomorrow's Rime, honestly, because they are, they are these people with an eye to the future, but then at the same time, they're freezing things, which is kind of cool.

Austin: Which is kind of—yeah, yeah. And rime is specifically like mist—frozen mist. Right? Like frozen, frozen—it is specifically that.

Jack: Yeah. Are rime and hoarfrost the same thing?

Austin: I think so. Rime ice forms when supercooled water droplets freeze onto surfaces. Yeah. Hoarfrost is exactly—similar to Hoarfrost. Yeah.

Jack: God, it's so cool when that happens. I love to see it when that happens.

Austin: Yeah. Hard rime is a white ice that forms when the water droplets and fog freeze to the outer surfaces of objects. That's interesting. Cool. Soft rime is when ice deposition that forms in the water droplets and light freezing fog or mist freeze to the outer surfaces of objects. So there's light and hard and I just read them both. They basically sound the same to me.

Jack: They sound pretty similar. I think we could get rid of one of them. Or you could just trim the fat.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And don't worry about the science.

Austin: It looks different, I guess. Anyway, yeah, Tomorrow's Rime. Let's write that down.

Jack: Yeah. We can add this to the—it's also, as Lilith in the chat points out, a Twilight Mirage name.

Austin: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Alright—

Jack: It's a New Earth. New Earth name.

Austin: Yeah. That's Hegemony, yeah.

A world [01:47:04]

Jack: Okay. [reading] A world. This table is where most of your world building will take place. Here you are zooming out, creating foundations and riffing off each other by answering questions within three categories. The culture. Questions that flesh out the people of this world, how they connect and their society. The land. Questions that flesh out the physical world. What makes it weird, how it exists and the people's relationship to it. The changing magic. Questions that flesh out the state of magic in the world, how it was used, and how it's now changing. Take turns drawing one card and comparing it to the table, answering the question under the corresponding section. Each player should answer at least two questions, or until a total of six questions from this table have been answered. You can continue to draw, but the point of this section is not to answer all of the questions, but to create conversations, leave gaps to let others fill in later. Before drawing cards as a group, choose one exploratory table, which to further define specific aspects of the world to pair with this table. If a card is drawn and that question has already been answered, answer the corresponding question on the chosen exploratory table or draw a new card. You can pair any exploratory table, but for this table, I suggest either magic or wildlife or vocations. [stops reading] This mechanic is so cool. I would recommend going and looking at these here because the exploratory tables are so detailed. You know, Vid asks things like, what animal used to be wild but is now kept as a pet? How has this creature changed from its ancestor? Or, does magic have a bias as to who can use it? And they say that we, we will draw from the exploratory table if we essentially double up, but we can also dip into it whenever we want. And my suggestion is that if we find that we haven't drawn from the exploratory table at the end of a section, we should pull one on it.

Austin: I agree.

Jack: Because they are so good. Do we have a strong feeling about which exploratory table we would like to use?

Austin: I really lean magic because I'm still like, well, what's it do besides stop the mist?

Jack: Yeah, definitely. What's great, and I really love the way this game has been structured to kind of draw these questions out, is my first thought was, oh, well, I mean, we've already riffed off each other and asked questions and things, but we kind of haven't. There is so much in here that we don't know about. So let's do the magic table.

Austin: But I'm fine if there's an overwhelming, like, all three of them sound great, just to be clear.

Jack: We're gonna get more opportunities, I think one more opportunity to use them. And again, we can dip into any of these kind of, whenever we want. Yeah.

Dre: Gotcha.

Austin: Cool.

Jack: Okay. Who drew the last card? Keith drew Rebellion, I think?

Keith: Yes.

Jack: So. Oh—before we start, each player should answer at least two questions, or until a total of six questions from this table have been answered. I think we should just do six rather than eight.

Austin: Yeah, also, Dre, I think left the Roll—there you go. You're back.

Dre: No, I'm here.

Austin: Weird. My Roll 20 pushed you off the game.

Dre: Weird. I was in a different tab.

Austin: I don't know if. Oh, I think it did. I think it unloaded it from—I think it saw that you weren't on the right tab, said, hey!

Dre: Weird...

Jack: Roll 20 is starting to snitch on us?

Dre: Yeah!

Austin: Snitch service, yeah.

Jack: Oh, my God. I gotta get a fucking mouse wiggler for Friends at the Table work. Otherwise, Austin would tell me off.

Keith: I've been frequently tabbed away to look at the PDF, so I don't know, maybe something else weirdly interesting.

Dre: Hmm.

Austin: Anyway.

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Anyway. I'm drawing a card for the world.

Jack: You sure are.

Keith: Me too. This one's for the world.

[sniggering]

Jack: Which one have you drawn, Dre?

Dre: I haven't drawn it yet.

Jack: Oh, okay.

Dre: A nine of hearts.

Austin: Okay, so that is odd. And hearts.

Dre: Okay. The cultures. What relics remain of the common ancestry amongst all people?

Austin: Ooh, wow. Maybe something from before the mist? Do we believe that there was something from before the mist?

Dre: That makes sense, because I feel like that would also give both sides of this conflict over the mist. Something, like—it would add further fuel, right? To this group that's like, we need to go back to the time before the mist.

Keith: It's also an interesting thing to learn because, you know, you may not have records of a time from before the mist. And so you'd have to notice, like, hey, all this stuff that we know whenever we find stuff, like, they're not talking about the mist or depicting the mist at all. And we talk about the mist all the time. It's like, one of our main things that we're talking about. [group laughter] So you have to, like, notice it from its absence.

Austin: That's great, yeah. But what are the relics? What relics remain of the common ancestry?

Jack: Of the common ancestry.

Austin: So that already there's, like—that does suggest there is not one home in the mists.

Keith: Right.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. There's another town out there somewhere. Or another—

Austin: Right.

Jack: Culture. Or another culture.

Austin: Multiple cultures of people. Yeah.

Jack: And we have a common ancestor.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Which, when, when—assuming that there's an easy through line, if there's suddenly mist, then you sort of necessarily sever the relationship between all major civilizations.

Austin: Right. Because it's—you can't go back and forth.

Keith: You can't just, like, you don't know how anything works yet. So you can't, like, go somewhere because—

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Or you can, and then you can't go back.

Austin: Can't go back. Maybe you can, can you move between linked pools? Linked big pools.

Jack: Astronauts can.

Keith: Only if they had pools that pre-existed the mist. If the pools in the mist I see were created at the same time, then they would be able to.

Jack: Which they clearly were, says Tomorrow's Rime. Because—

Austin: Right.

Jack: Okay. What relics? Gosh.

Dre: Trying to think of like, what, what would exist that would be very common in a world that is like, not ruled by mist, that would become useless once the world is covered in mist.

[long pause]

Austin: Mm hmm.

Dre: Hmm. All I can think of is like hats and like, sunglasses. [laughter]

Keith: Yeah. Beach—beach stuff. Yeah.

Jack: Circular racetrack.

Keith: The beach used to be cool instead of eerie and wet and evil.

Jack: Oh, what about [crosstalk] ruins

Austin: [crosstalk] I mean—

Jack: Oh, sorry. Go on, Austin.

Austin: No, you go ahead. You were really excited.

Jack: Ruins of like, mail stations, postal stations. Something that suggested like, like, like bi-directional movement. Is that a relic of common ancestry? That's a relic of pre-mist. It's not really a relic.

Austin: It's not a relic of common—yeah, common ancestry is really, is really a different thing, you know, because otherwise it's like pictures and paintings of distances, you know what I mean? You used to be able to see more than a mile!

Jack: Over there! It doesn't say anything about our ancestors.

Keith: It's not relics—it doesn't say like, what are the relics that show that there is a common ancestry. It's just that it has to be of them.

Austin: But there is a common—in other words, there is common ancestry.

Keith: There is common ancestry. The relics don't have to be *of* the common ancestry.

Austin: You're right. Yes. Yes.

Jack: I mean, an option here could be something as simple as like, statues to a sun God, you know?

Dre: Ooh.

Austin: Yeah. And I think that would be a really great way to go in terms of trying to get us back towards traditional fantasy spaces, you know?

Dre: Sure. Yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Sun God, water God, you know.

Jack: But the sun God being something that, you know, what's the sun God in the mist?

Keith: Is there a visible sun like in the town when you're living in the—when you're—

Austin: No, maybe that's, that's a great reason for there to be statues of a sun God. Because none of us have seen the sun.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: I mean, this pale, awful light. Yeah, there's light.

Keith: There's light. There has to be light. But there's no visible sun.

Dre: Like I'm thinking of like, when it's like a super duper cloudy day and you can tell it's like daytime and the sun is out, but it is not bright.

Keith: It could even be bright.

Jack: Yeah. Oh yeah, it could be bright.

Keith: But you can't see any visible sun.

Jack: Yeah. So let's say statues of a sun God are relics that speak to a common ancestry before the mist. What do these statues look like? What is a really sick statue of a sun God? We like our sun Gods.

Dre: Seems—do we want a person or an animal? [**Jack:** Ooh.] I'm kind of thinking animal just because of the presence of the worm?

Jack: Oh, interesting.

Keith: Maybe very colorful?

Dre: Yeah, like, I'm thinking a toucan for some reason. Like, that is just the thing that has popped up in my head, or some other kind of like tropical bird.

Austin: Tropical birds, fun.

Jack: Toucan holding the sun in its beak.

Austin: Are there tropical birds that have, like, rounded crests that could be the sun?

Jack: Cock of the mott. Mott of the rock. What's that guy called?

Austin: Rupert, you mean?

Jack: [laughting] Rupert.

Austin: That's not the type of—that's not really what I mean, but like.

Keith: The crested caracara?

Dre: What about the gray crowned crane?

Austin: Oh, cranes are so good. Let me see—oh, look at that thing. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. The gray crowned crane. That's a sun God right there.

Jack: Wow! Gotta put a picture of this on.

Keith: Oh, yeah, look at this.

Austin: Look at it.

Keith: Jesus. You can tell.

Austin: There he is.

Keith: There he is on this day.

Jack: Okay, I'm gonna put it on the screen now. Grey crowned crane.

Austin: That's a damn—that's a damn sun God to me.

Jack: Look at that thing. Wow. Holy shit.

Austin: Also called a balearica.

Dre: Ooh.

Jack: Where does he live?

Austin: The sun.

Dre: The sun, yeah.

Keith: He lives in the sun.

Jack: Gosh, that thing's so cool looking. God, and that thing on the—his hat on the statue is made of like spun gold.

Austin: You know, it looks like it's sub Saharan or south of the Saharan desert, actually. Yeah.

Keith: I was looking at the picture of the wrong thing. The thing I was thinking of was a red crested turoko, which I like—the other thing—I said a bird that wasn't the bird that I was looking at. I listed poorly.

Jack: Okay. And these statues, they just stumbled into them in the mist?

Austin: No, they're in the cities.

Jack: Oh, they're in the city as well. We have them too. Yeah.

Austin: All of the cities, right?

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: And in the world, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Oh, bird and worm is so good.

Dre: It is very fun, isn't it?

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

[long pause]

Jack: —is a gold crested crane. This iconography is all over the place.

Austin: Yeah. Sometimes you just get the crest. Sometimes you get the whole bird. Sometimes you get the bird in action. You get the bird silhouetted against the sun. You know what I mean? You get all sorts of various—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And there's slightly different meanings, right? Because the, the sun crane in motion going after food is different than the sun crane at rest, standing on one leg, you know?

Jack: Do you think there are statues of the bird sun God in the building that contains the big moon pool? The one that they—

Austin: Well, no, that would be the moon God, probably. [**Jack:** No I mean—] I know what you mean. I know what you mean.

Jack: The vernal pool. Sorry.

Austin: I don't know. Maybe no.

Jack: Do you think they're that close? No. No, there's not—

Austin: I think it's interesting. I don't know. Both are interesting, right? Both are interesting.

Jack: I don't know. We can come back to this. This is a good one. We got a statue of a bird. Previously, we knew two things about nature. One, the mist hurts you if you go backwards. And two, maybe a worm is out there? Okay, it's my turn. I'm going to draw a card. And the card that I have drawn is an ace of clubs. [**Austin:** Ooh.] That is an odd club. The cultures, how are ideas recorded?

Keith: Does ace count as face?

Austin: Yeah, ace is face, Jack.

Jack: Ace is face. Okay. When magic changed, how did wildlife also change? Hmm.

Austin: We sort of touched this, right?

Jack: Well, sort of, because the change is that the vernal pools are disappearing. That's the change.

Keith: Right.

Austin: You're right.

Jack: Making exploration for the vernal pools longer and less successful. So, I mean, I wonder if animals rely on the vernal pools as well for their magic or for their sustenance. And they are having to range out further, which means that animals are becoming both more spread out, but also in the way that you sometimes get with starving animals or with disrupted animal populations. They are, like, wandering into areas they shouldn't go. You know, we're seeing, like, migrations of animals, like wild horses through the

mist, looking for vernal pools or something. Or, you know, big flocks of strange birds descend on the city for a weekend as they are flying out in search of the magic. All living things need magic, maybe, the theory goes, we don't know whether or not the animals are looking for the vernal pools because they need the vernal pools to live, or if they need them for their own magic, their own culture, you know?

Austin: Yeah, I do like the idea. You know, some of them could have started—come into town in a way that they never did before. Yeah, the ecological, the big, weird ecological upset as groups of animals that once stayed in one area have now moved into neighboring areas. Neighboring biomes, you know, astronauts have been coming back and being like, we ran into stuff we never run on on this route.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You know.

Jack: Yeah. And people's animals have—

Austin: What I like—

Jack: Oh, sorry, go on.

Austin: No, go ahead.

Jack: People's animals have gone missing as well. Like a cow farmer's whole herd breaks out of the fences and goes out into the mist in the hunt for stronger, more powerful magic that they can't get.

Austin: The thing I was going to say was kind of broader, which is one of the things I like about the vernal pools is you don't know if you're going to run into any on your way out because they come and go.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: So you could send two people on the same angle, separated by a month, and the group that goes out second might hit one that wasn't there while the previous group

went out on the same exact route. And so what you come to learn is the route and what might show up there, as much as the, as much as, like—you're not like, oh, there's a—we know there's a pool, there's—you're like, oh, I know that there is an old post office there, and then the mountains, and then that cave system would go through the cave system and then. You know what I mean?

Jack: Yeah, yeah. It's like the 38th degree—if we go out on the 38th degree expedition one went through the post office and then for—the shipping yard or something. And then six months later, when expedition B came through, the shipping yard had floated up into a vernal pool. And that was a real source of excitement, you know.

Austin: Right. Well, this is also the sort of, like, this is also the sort of home team, away team stuff of like, you could call back and be like, hey, there was a landslide here since the last time a team came this way, we're trapped here. We have to go, like, we've already traveled a mile into the canyon. The way that was supposed to be cleared has been covered up. Do you have—has a team come through here in the last decade and have they come back with any, any alternate paths that you have written down? Because the way that we studied before we took this trip isn't open. And someone calls back and says, we think there's a cave system near there. We don't know if it opens all the way through. They didn't. The last group that went through there didn't go all the way through, you know, but we, you know, if you have enough light in your lantern, you might be able to make your way through.

Jack: The horror of getting into that cave system and discovering that it doubles back underground.

Austin: Right, Exactly.

Jack: It doesn't work. We just can't go this way.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: I'm so excited—something that we kind of know exists and have sort of been gesturing at the very edges of, but the game hasn't asked us to come to yet, which I'm so excited to see if it does, is whatever Houston is, you know?

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Okay. I'm gonna write down here. Animal migrations are disrupted as magic hungry wildlife seeks vanishing vernal pools. Okay. [long pause] Wait. Sorry. I don't think I should have gone. I think Keith should have gone.

Austin: [crosstalk] Nope. I think I haven't gone in forever.

Keith: [crosstalk] I agree, but it wasn't a big deal. Yeah.

Austin: How many—I think—here's, here's—the time that I went was, but the world—the magic begins to change. Which was the third card drawn. So since then, there have been 1, 2, 3, 4 cards drawn.

Dre: Whoops.

Keith: Okay, so, Austin, you're one behind. I'm one behind. But only just. I only just missed my first turn.

Austin: That's right. Yeah. Yeah. So I think I should go, and then you should go?

Keith: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, totally.

Austin: And then we can restart the whole thing from the top or we can go back to Dre or something.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah. This sounds good to me.

Austin: Okay, so this is another face card. King of hearts. So it's a face card heart. When the magic changed, what crumbled first? Hmm. My pitch here is that it's like the city walls that, like—the magic hadn't changed again—the magic changing being the vernal poles have started disappearing, right?

Jack: Yeah. Becoming harder to find.

Austin: They're becoming harder to find. The internal pool is getting shallower because of that, and the mist is pushing in for the first time in the era of the mist. And so, like, you know, we had built out to the edge of the mist, and we had built, you know, the sort of structures—at some point, many, many, many generations ago, someone said we need to mark the edge of the mist, and we need to, like, build something so that if something tries to come at us through the mist, it hits the walls before it hits the people. And there just weren't wall—like, the mist closed in on the walls, and so like it, it—and I don't know if they're out there. Maybe they're not out there. Like, maybe when you pass through the mist, the first time people went through it, at that point when magic started changing, they were like, well, of course the walls will just be on the other side of the mist, and they're not.

Jack: Are there ruins of the walls?

Austin: Yeah, the walls have been like. It's as if the walls have been aged. It's like the walls have suffered a thousand years of aging. You know, they're dilapidated. They're marked up in weird ways. The whatever sort of internals are there might still be there, but, like, the rocks have fallen in strange ways.

Jack: What is the new, like, what has been left as the thing on the edge of the city?

Austin: Whatever would have been on the outskirts already, right?

Jack: So is that like...?

Austin: Well, it depends on what. It depends from town to town, right? In some towns, that's like the cheapest housing. In some towns, that was farmland. And now the farmland is right up against the edge of the mist. You know, people had to hurry and put up fences because the stonework walls used to be the natural end of the pasture. But now the cows started wandering into the mist.

Jack: Those are the cows that are going off to, you know.

Austin: Right, exactly. Et cetera, right? And so people now rushed to try to put up ad hoc walls. But those walls were stoneworks. Those were like, we inherited those good walls, you know. And, you know, at some point, there are old walls further inwards that represent when the town space was different, when the town—previously you built walls to be like, this is the edge of the town. But in some cases, the town—in many cases, maybe the cities got smaller because the mist intruded in on them. But in some cases, towns kind of got bigger as conceptual social objects because they took up whatever the space of the mist was allowing us to have. You know, you might, you might have had a little village center once that now the whole—everybody inside of this little chunk of the mist hole, right, is now connected because it might have been two or three townships is inside of one section of mist. And that's like, well, we're one unit now. The world has put us together, you know.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: But it's those outer outer walls that have now broken.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Quite literally crumbling and then disappearing into the mist.

Jack: It's not a great sign when that's the first thing that goes.

Austin: I mean, it's the mist pulled in, you know?

Jack: Yeah. Yeah. [pause] Are you writing that or should I write that?

Austin: Oh, I'll write it. I will write it. I forgot that we write. This is World?

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: We're very quickly gonna run out of space on World.

Austin: No, this is short.

Keith: We have, I think we have three more, though, to go for World.

Austin: Oh, I see. Then we maybe need another world.

Jack: Another, maybe you need another world.

Keith: Maybe you need another world.

Austin: Yeah. I've long said this.

Jack: Let me just copy and paste this. [**Dre:** World 2.] Good earth.

Keith: Okay.

Jack: Beautiful. Keith, do you want to draw a card?

Keith: Yes, I would like to draw a card. I drew the seven of diamonds. The cultures. Is there a common language. Where and how do cultures converse? That's a tricky question. The—it's hard to know how long it's been because we haven't said. And we've said various things like they've forgotten what these statues really mean. Or maybe we just implied that. Did they forget where the statues come from? Yeah, because they had to discover the relics. No, this is what relics remain.

Austin: Remain.

Jack: No, I think they know they're statues of the sun God. They're just—there's no sun anymore.

Keith: Right.

Austin: We don't see the sun anymore.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: The—we also talked about, you know, evolution of animals. That's a very, very long time.

Austin: It's magic. It's not.

Keith: But it's magic.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: You know, how quickly do places that are almost totally disconnected develop new languages or diverge the language that they're speaking to where you'd lose cognition between two speakers?

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: So I guess. Is there a common language? Sort of?

Austin: You think there was one in the era before the mist, but we've been in the mist era long enough for it to be the world.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Is there communication? We know there's communication between the sort of home team and away team stuff. Is there communication between—

Keith: But that's not intra-culture.

Austin: Well, that's—right. Well, what I was gonna ask was, is there communication between different cities using the same magic system of communication?

Keith: I mean, it would be really great for them if there was. If you couldn't go to another city. Like, that's the—this is like, how hard is this world to be in? Is every city that you come across that isn't yours a no go zone? Do you have to be afraid of every group that—every orange group that comes up on a green group?

Austin: I don't think so, right?

Keith: No, I don't think so. So, yeah, I think that they're—

Austin: It's eerie, but it's not, you know, we didn't choose some of the other words that were in the palette that we didn't. The suggested palette that we didn't choose were things like Stark and Ruthless. We didn't choose Ruthless.

Keith: Yeah. The—so—we did choose Eerie.

Austin: We did.

Keith: I think there's probably something eerie to, you know, who knows how long ago? Long time ago, the connections between places are sort of severed by the mist sort of becoming in between them, this difficult to pass through thing that takes time and effort to learn how to navigate, you know, even sort of—even approaching safely. And in that time, you know, you go to another city and they have like all of the same inputs, but they have different ideas about what's going on and where things came from and why things are happening. And it's not like going to another country, because two countries don't have the same cultural inputs. But these places do have the same cultural inputs. They have a common ancestry. It was not so long ago that they've forgotten everything. They sort of speak the same language, but it's sort of like every—all of the conclusions are different—or not all, but they're different enough to be like, strange.

Jack: Is there a way they can communicate at all?

Keith: When? In person or telecommunication wise?

Jack: I suppose either, right? You know, you could theoretically send someone to a city.

Austin: Yeah. It's hard for me to imagine you—if you—again, maybe there's something in the magic that we haven't answered yet that will help us understand this. But if, Jack, if all four of us live in town A and we send you out into the world and you go to town B, if we can talk to you using whatever magic has connected us, then what would stop us from having similar magic communication to town B? And the answer might be magic has allowed that sort of contradiction. You have to have done something. Maybe there is some sort of ritual that you have to create that sort of magic communication. Maybe it fades over time. Maybe there's all sorts of realm of how and why it might be limited.

Keith: You have to connect yourself specifically to the control tower before you leave. And you can't talk to anybody that's not been physically connected.

Austin: Right. But maybe, is this a world where we send Jack to town B to live, so that [crosstalk] there will always be a connection?

Jack: [crosstalk] This is my suggestion. It's the fish from Twilight Mirage again.

Keith: [crosstalk] You're a devil man.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But the fish is a person.

Jack: Or it's like—we have. There are a pair of people. Person A stays home. Person B goes out to the town, and then I'm this sort of like I'm the telephone line, you know?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Send the ambassadors out. They can never come home, but they are connected to the other place.

Austin: I really like that.

Jack: This is like deep in your Houston thing, except it's kind of not, right, because the other interesting thing about the Houston thing is that they are scientists, is that they are explorers. Right? It's not one loved one trying to talk to another. [**Austin:** It can be, though.] But it can be. Yes. Yeah, yeah.

Austin: There's, there's—I mean, you know, that movie is loved ones trying to talk to loved ones. And also loved ones not being able to talk—you know, you can't—the envoy—if I sent you to a different town and you were my partner, I could never talk to—you know what I mean? I could never talk directly to you again. I would have to talk to whoever's on our side who talks to you.

Jack: Yeah. Yes.

Austin: Or vice versa.

Jack: This is the uh—there's a little bit of Agent 47 and Diana in here. Yeah, the like intimacy of a handler and an asset as being different from the intimacy between an asset and someone, you know, personally close to them or whatever.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Have you read the—oh, the William Gibson story. It's in Burning Chrome. Someone in chat's going to remember it before I do. It is called—it's not Winter Market.

Jack: I haven't read Burning Chrome.

Austin: Oh you should—oh, Hinterlands. Have you read Hinterlands? [**Jack:** No.] You've not. Hinterlands is so good. Hinterlands is so good. The very short version is that a cosmonaut stumbles into the zone in space, she disappears for two years and comes back and she has something in her ship that is advanced technology from another world. She doesn't know where she came from. She dies. But it completely revolutionizes science. And so the world starts sending people out to that spot in space. And the story is not about people who go, who do this journey. The story is about a type of person whose entire job is to talk to the person who just came back from this journey into the other realm. And they are very carefully trained to be super personable, to be a little flirty, to be really calming, to try to prevent this person from dying from immediate shock, from wherever they've been and coming back. And they have handlers who tell them everything to say, who are like, piloting them in this encounter. And so part of what that story is about is the relationship between this guy who is this, like, perfectly attractive, perfectly, you know, charismatic, self hating, miserable person whose job is to talk to these cosmos—these astronauts who are coming back, these travelers who are coming back, and his relationship with the guy who tells him what to do and what to say in these moments, who he hates, but also has the deepest, most careful intimacy with in the world also. Yeah, they're high as hell. Yeah, that's correct, Krilda Sova.

Jack: This is also Authority, right? The second Southern Reach book as well is about these kinds of things, right? That sounds extremely sick.

Keith: What does it do in the story to have the guy that you talk to be perfect and hot?

Austin: It's a way of maybe getting some information from the person who comes back. The person who comes back is like going to give up on life basically immediately.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: 20% are dead on arrival. 70 have irreversible mental damage and then have to live in long term care. 10% get brought to a place called Heaven in an effort to keep them alive as long as possible and tease out any information they can provide before they take their own lives.

Jack: Horrible, qow.

Austin: It's one of my favorite stories in this collection. It's just incredible.

Jack: Oh, that's really good. Okay, so how are we framing this? Is there a common language? We said it is starting to shift, right? Dialects and—but probably not quite mutually unintelligible because we have these ambassadors, right?

Keith: Yeah. Have you ever seen videos of people in Germany talking to or listening to like, Pennsylvania Dutch speakers?

Jack: Oh, yes, I have.

Keith: And it's like. Oh, yeah. I like, get like, almost all of this. Or like if you see someone from Newfoundland speak and like, an Irish person is like, oh my—like that's exactly—like, he sounds Irish still somehow like, it's like that, I think.

Jack: Yeah. And where and how do these cultures converse? They send out half of a pair of people who are connected to each other and the other half can never come home.

Keith: They don't get shifts. Right? I'm going to invent shifts.

Austin: Well, maybe they do. Maybe you send out, you know, group—three—a team is going to go live there, you know?

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: And maybe it's like, hey, we're going to send someone whose whole job is helping with agriculture and send someone who's—or whose main job is helping with agriculture. We're going to send someone whose main job is helping with, you know, magic and learning how the—you know, trading magic secrets and someone whose whole job is building stuff. But all three of them can be the telephone person, you know?

Jack: Yeah. Teams of telephone people go out for telepathic communication.

Austin: Is it telepathic?

Keith: Or magic?

Austin: But I'm sorry, but is it—is it visually tele—is it visually, um—

Keith: Is it visually non visual?

Austin: Are they talking through a scrying pool? Do they have a rock that makes sound? Do they have a crystal ball of some sort? Do they have some sort of book that words appear in? There's all sorts of ways for long distance communication to work in fantasy. Right.

Keith: It can't be a scrying pool because this has got to be the same tech that they use for teams on the go. So.

Austin: That's right.

Keith: It would have to be an object or telepathic, like a portable object.

Jack: Okay. Terrible idea. It's like an organ transplant. They've swapped something.

[Dre: Oh.] It's kind of like having an object.

Austin: I think we should say though—it is a little. It is, it is—and that would, that would connect us—I think that does move us closer to sci fi, though, than we—maybe it doesn't. Maybe we just want to start leaning in that direction, but.

Jack: Let's give them a fun object. Let's give them an object.

Austin: Other stuff that feels like it would work for us. A little bird. Some sort of jar of sound.

Jack: A bird that they've raised together is really something.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. A bird is kind of fun.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: And the bird talks?

Dre: Also—yeah.

Austin: Yeah, the bird talks.

Keith: Okay. So you talk to a bird and the bird is like a phone. And you each have a bird. So you each have a bird. And then also you have to have a guy still.

Jack: Well, it's because the magic comes from the person. The magic is in raising these birds.

Austin: Right.

Dre: Ooh.

Austin: What happens when the bird dies? Then that's the end of your job. You can just live here now.

Jack: Yeah. Then—but I can't go home.

Austin: You can't go home.

Keith: I think you could go home.

Jack: No, Keith, remember. Remember why you can't go home?

Keith: Well, but, but if you—you can go home if you find a vernal pool.

Austin: Oh, that's true. And this other town has a vernal—

Jack: Then I would have to—

Austin: Oh, but then people can just jump back and forth between the vernal pools.

Jack: You can't—there must be some you can't go to—you can't go to—okay, hang on. You can't go from one town's vernal pool to central pool to another central pool. The central pool that you will end up in if you walk into a vernal pool is your home's—is your first one.

Austin: And you can't go through another central pool to get to your home one?

Jack: No, if you go in a central pool, you're just swimming around in that pool. The magic doesn't work that way.

Keith: Right. Because it's—there's something different between a home pool and an away pool.

Austin: You can go home, but only by leaving town and—

Jack: You have to be an astronaut. You have to be an away team member.

Austin: But you were already an away team member if you got to the other town.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: You have to go out again.

Austin: Or you get escorted by an astronaut team to then bring you to...

Jack: Yeah, but there's an immense risk. You know, I can be eating conchas and drinking coffee in town B. My job is over. I never get to see my love again. But I don't have to work.

Austin: But I'm safe. I don't have to go back out through—you probably have to work.

Jack: Yeah, but not as a telephone person.

Austin: That's right.

Jack: Yeah, but it's like, if I want to go home. I have to put on the gear and go out with a team and find a vernal pool, which is already getting hard to do. Teams of telephone people go out accompanied by magical birds to act as communication.

Keith: I don't know about these birds. I don't want to—

Austin: You're anti bird. Okay, let's walk back bird.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah. The thing I kind of want to avoid—

Austin: I'm anti telepathy. The thing I don't want is—or I'm not anti telepathy, but I'm anti. I want there to be an object. I want there to be a relic. I want there to be an artifact. I want there to be something instilled with magic that connects us.

Jack: A ring.

Austin: A ring.

Keith: As long as the object can produce the drama of needing to radio back home to be like, what the fuck? I need this. I need help with this. Do you know the way for here? And for them to be like, yeah [muffle radio noises] As long as that can happen, then I'm fine with whatever.

Jack: Moonjoy copy. Right?

Austin: Moonjoy copy. And that, to me, Keith, is why telepathy doesn't work.

Jack: Yeah. The important thing is that Jim Lovell is talking into a headset.

Austin: Something has to make sound in space for me.

Keith: Right, sure.

Jack: Yeah. Okay. What about—

Keith: And this is why the bird doesn't work for me, 'cause I'm like, we're gonna say this to a sparrow? I can't be dramatic to a sparrow.

Austin: Well, I could be dramatic to a sparrow.

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah. I think that's maybe. That's maybe a you issue.

Austin: I'm fine with it. I'm just saying. I know why I didn't have that feeling. I'll walk past a pigeon and have a little soliloquy about it.

[sniggering]

Jack: Okay. And I actually. I don't want it to be sci fi. I want it to be like a—I want it to be something that would be in my bag in Diablo, you know?

Austin: Yeah. You know, they're like a little stone that resonates a sound. Like a little gem, you know, finely polished round gem that you can hold in your hand. A—some sort of instrument. You know, a harp that plays itself.

Jack: [crosstalk] A stone that gets warm. Yeah.

Austin: [crosstalk] A music box. Yeah, a stone that gets warm. A—it should be something that maybe doesn't naturally make sound to really emphasize that magic is doing this. You know, a little jar of water or something that—like vernal pool water, you know?

Jack: Bell with a clapper missing.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: There's maybe something that you have to, like, bring to your mouth and your ear like a phone, but it has the water there?

Jack: A shell? A shell.

Austin: A shell. A shel is nice.

Keith: I mean, I'm not so tied to not having bird as to put the show at a halt.

Jack: No, no, no.

Austin: I'm happy to find a different—I'm happy to find object instead of bird... or insect instead of bird or a little hive. A little—let's look at our words again. Let's go back up to the, to the touchstones and to the palette. Coastal again gets us back to shell. Vernal could get us to, like flowers.

Jack: Eerie could be a whistle or something.

Austin: Eerie could be a whistle. We don't have a lot of—I mean, we actually do have a lot of intense stillness and gradation of Rothko. We've just kind of made that the world as we were talking about language and stuff recently, and even as we talked about the fog closing in, the mist closing in.

[pause]

Jack: Horrible helmet that you wear?

Dre: Hmm.

Austin: The speaking helmet. Yeah, I do like that. I mean, that's like a fave for me is like the—

Jack: Putting on the big speaking helmet.

Austin: The big—and this is drawing from the same pool of Apollo 13's long distance communication stuff is like, World War I and two communications officers who have like the big backpacks.

Jack: The backpacks, yeah.

Austin: Chromehounds requiring a—Chromehounds, the, the Xbox 360 mech game from Fromsoft, where the only way that you could communicate between teammates with voice chat was to have someone who has that style of like commander communication. [**Jack:** Oh ho ho, that's so good.] And even there had limited range. So you'd like, be in the range of comms mech. Yeah. You know, there's private servers up and running.

Keith: I think that last time we talked about Chromehounds, you mentioned this, but I haven't like, looked into—

Austin: Yeah, I only—I was just reading into it. So I haven't like done it yet, but I'm very curious.

Keith: Bluetooth headset. But. But it's a thing of water taped to your ear. Bone conducting water speaker.

Austin: Yeah, water. You like—a drink you drink.

Jack: I was thinking about this. I was thinking about this. A drink you drink and then you speak aloud.

Austin: You speak aloud.

Keith: Abyss style. You have to drown yourself in a goo in order to talk back home.

Jack: That's sort of walking into the vernal pool.

Austin: If we do want to go eerie. I think the idea of I am letting my body be possessed to be a speaker is eerie. And then it's not—you know, then it is, it is eerie, but it's not

telepathy. I'm not going "I'm hearing the sounds that they're saying over there", it's some sort of process by which I become the radio that connects us to Houston.

Keith: Right. You're the bird.

Austin: Yeah. I'm the bird.

Keith: I'm the bird.

Jack: This is pretty good. And it also is sharper use of the word telephone person, right?

Austin: Yeah, it is.

Jack: It is.

Austin: I like this.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I like it being like a—you have to take a shot of something, you know, like a drink.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Now we're kind of inventing Dune from first principles, right? This is the chum company and the guild navigators to act as communication devices following...

Keith: To act as birds.

Jack: Taking a shot of a drink.

Austin: We used to send communications through birds, but the birds can't come back anymore, you know?

Jack: The first homing pigeon. Awful.

Dre: Oh, no.

Austin: I mean, actually, maybe homing pigeons might still work. It just don't. They don't come home. So maybe they don't—no, they don't work because you can't train them, right?

Jack: No. Yeah, you could do step one of the training and then you could use—

Austin: But birds can't migrate anymore. They only can migrate in one direction.

Jack: They can only migrate in one direction. [crosstalk] We have this animal migration disruption—

Keith: [crosstalk] Well, they may be able to escape the canopy of the mist.

Austin: Right, Right. So. Wow, that's fascinating. They can get up above the clouds, the mist.

Keith: Yeah. [**Austin:** Ooh.] So I think, you know the animals that fare the best—I assume that when the mist shows up, there's sort of a mass extinction. And the animals that are most suited to avoiding the mist are the ones that benefit the most, so.

Austin: This is great for our sun crane guys.

Keith: Birds can fly above the mist. Creatures that can burrow underneath the mist. All the worms are fine.

Jack: Shit. Does that mean that the worm—if it's real—does that mean that the worm can go wherever it wants?

Austin: The worm can go wherever it wants.

Jack: Well, underground. Yes.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Interesting. Wow. Okay.

Austin: Wish I were a worm. That was me roleplaying playing briefly as someone in the world.

Jack: Sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: I already feel as if I'm wriggling through life.

Austin: Yeah. I'm also proud of us for none of us saying, like vermal pools, you know?

Jack: Yeah, it's true. Well done, us.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Okay, who should we go next? We have now rectified the Keith-Austin problem sort of, more.

Austin: Right. I've gone twice in this—in this section, in the section of card drawing stuff.

Keith: Okay

Jack: So should we just say Dre goes, then Keith goes, then Austin goes, and then I pick up again? That sounds fun.

Austin: How many times have you gone, Jack?

Jack: I don't know.

Austin: Okay.

[laughter]

Keith: I believe I—I believe Austin is still behind one, but maybe only—I don't know. I think that I just did my third. I think everyone's done three, but Austin.

Austin: I see nine cards. Was there a card? No. Yeah. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine cards. Which means we're in the middle of the run.

Jack: King, four, seven, seven, Queen, ten, nine, Jack, ace, five. That's ten. One, two, three, four, seven, eight.

Dre: Three for magic. Three for legend.

Austin: Yeah, ten. You're right. Ten.

Keith: I also only see nine, but that's okay.

Jack: Three.

Keith: Oh, okay, I see it. I found it.

[**Jack** counting in background]

Austin: Yeah, I see it. We are halfway through a run, which means that, yes, someone else has only gone twice. And then that should be that person. Then maybe me again. And then we're good.

Jack: Let's see—

Austin: Really what's happened here is maybe partly—did we—

Keith: I'll say. I'll just go that I did, I did, defeat and conquer dangers in the mist.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: And then my next one was rebellion in Legend. So I did one in Magic, one in Legend, and then my first one in World was dialects are shifting. That's three.

Dre: Okay. I've also done three because I did found by us in vernal pools under Magic. The sacrifice story under Legend, and the sun God statues in the World.

Austin: Right.

Jack: I did animal migrations are disrupted. I did, I think the big long worm?

Austin: Yes, for sure.

Jack: And...

Keith: Vernal pools are longer and less successful. Jack, was that you?

Jack: That might have been me, yeah.

Austin: No, vernal pools are longer and less successful is me. That's disappear suddenly.

Keith: Oh, Jack, you were disappear suddenly?

Austin: No, I was, I was disappear suddenly.

Keith: Oh, that's one. Okay.

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: So I'll lower it a little bit so it's clearer. Yeah. So, Jack, I think maybe you have to go again.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: Okay. And then I go. And then we're back around.

Jack: So I'll go. You'll go. And then where should we pick up?

Keith: Then Dre, then me.

Austin: Sure. It truly doesn't matter.

Jack: No, it's essentially—

Keith: I'm not worried about it.

Jack: Okay. And this will be our fifth in the world section.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Of six. Cool. All right. I'm gonna draw a card. And the card that I've drawn is a three of clubs. Oh, ho, ho. How are ideas recorded? How are those ideas shared long distances? Now we have part of the answer to this, right? Which is that the ideas are shared with the telephone people. How are ideas recorded?

Austin: This is great because it's going to really answer part of like, setting vibe.

Jack: Yeah, I mean—

Austin: Do we have big books?

Jack: The first thing I thought is like, scribes guilds, right? It's like—

Austin: Yeah, sure.

Jack: It's like. I'm thinking real like, monastic library, you know, illuminated manuscript makers. Although is that fitting with eerie and vernal and misty? [**Austin:** I think so.] The Name of the Rose is kind of eerie, but not quite in the misty way. The Name of the Rose is eerie in the bodies are showing up way. And what's in the library? I suppose.

Austin: I think monasteries are eerie in the misty way too.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: They're up on the hill. They're there. You know what I mean? They're separated from—

Jack: If we give Guillermo del Toro a monastery, it's going to be an eerie monastery.

Austin: I simply mean that the monastery is offset from everyday life. It is not the church that people go to for services. The monastery is separated in the way that mists separate.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And in the way that it can produce a perspective on life that is different, the way that the mist can, can do that. Not our mist, but all—but real, real world mists, you know?

Keith: It requires you to like, take vows to keep you separate too.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's great. Yeah. So I think monastery—

Jack: So do we have isolate scribe, isolate information organizers? People bring them things?

Austin: We're now creating Canticle for Leibowitz from first principles.

Jack: Give us long enough, we're gonna get that.

Keith: I don't even know what that is, so, wasn't me!

Jack: And the monasteries are—

Austin: You might know it as the Fallout Brotherhood of Steel which is just lifted from the Canticle for Leibowitz. They don't have power armor, but they, you know. But the rest, the parts of the Brotherhood of Steel that is like a monastic order is from Canticle for Leibowitz.

Jack: And these things are within the towns, but they are isolate. They are on the edge of the towns in the way that Foucault thinks of like prisons and hospitals and schools, right? Where it's like schools—

Austin: Yeah and schools.

Jack: They're sort of—they are peripheral, which obviously puts them at risk from the mist. And I imagine there's some sort of internal tension about that of like, do we move the organizations closer to the part of the city? And I imagine that Tomorrow's Rime are like, no?! But I think it is important that within the cities or within the towns, the communities, people can actually go to and from the month monasteries because they are the ones who are organizing information. It would be really—and I'm sure that there

are some monasteries that became lost in the mist, or away teams that went rogue and set up these monasteries. And those ones are really interesting because you can go there, but you can never leave, right?

Austin: You could leave, you just can't go back home.

Jack: Oh, yes, you're right. You're right. I just have to keep going out.

Austin: Or you could leave and go home, but you have to keep going out and find another vernal pool to come home through. Yeah.

Jack: This has come up a couple of times in chat, but people are also pointing out that we're extraction shooter [**Austin:** Yeah.] As well. Okay. But yeah, there are organizations of scribes. Whoa. Organizations of monastic scribes on the periphery—does periphery have an A after the P-H? No. Peripheries of communities. Collect and organize information. Cool.

Keith: Which one was this?

Austin: Peripheries has an -ies, though, Jack.

Jack: Oh, yes. Periphery has a Y.

Austin: Yeah. Also, I just want to emphasize one other thing here, which is like, the other place that information is kept—and I don't think this is introducing something new, I think this is honoring what we've already said, is in people. People teach each other things from generation to generation in this world. So there might be knowledge that exists that is not only in the scribes, not at all in the institutional knowledge. Yeah, exactly. But instead is, you know, we talked about like, oh, the telephone men, the telephone people go from place to place. You know, when they set up in a new thing, it's not just that they're going to go serve as the communication possession person.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: They're also, oh, hey, I know how to grow yams, and I brought these seeds and I know what they need, right? And that style of thing is probably also true for blacksmithing and for, you know, keeping birds and for playing music, and there is a sort of like—I don't know that it's—we don't need there to be like a blacksmith's guild, but, like, there is a system of apprenticeship and mastery that reflects individual artisanship and craft, you know, in that traditional way, too.

Jack: Yeah, definitely.

Austin: We don't need to write that down. I just want to say it aloud.

Jack: No, no, no, no. I appreciate it. And the reason that I went for the scribes first is that I feel like the—how are ideas recorded, How are these ideas shared long distances, speaks to the telephone people and speaks to that kind of personal exchange of knowledge straight away. So I wanted to make sure that I hit recorded first.

Austin: Something else that's interesting about this is you can't go out and bring anything back with you, I think, or there's a limit to what you could bring back with you because there's a limit of what you could travel with, right? But that means that, like, let's say you're getting—let's say you leave from—I'm just going to use the United States as an example because of ease of reference. Let's say you leave from a town in North Florida and you're looking for vernal pools all the way up the east coast, right? Let's say that in, in North Carolina, you get something really use—you find something really useful and—but very heavy. You know? You find a big chest, you know, filled with, let's say, like it's a seed vault, right? [**Jack:** Yeah.] And it's like, oh, my God, it'd be so good to bring this home, but we can't carry it. We haven't found a vernal pool yet. And you get to a town in Maryland, and the town of Maryland is like, you can stay here, but only if you give us that seed vault. Or you say, you say, please let us stay here. We'll split this seed vault with you. And so likewise, like the monastic—the way I got here is I was like, where's the monastic order getting paper from? And there might be places where they can produce their own paper, but there might not. There might be places that need paper in trade. And so you either set up trade with places that can, by which—but that trade is always very circuitous because you can get someone to bring

you something from outward in, but you can't just deliver it right back. **[Jack: Yeah.]** Whatever comes back has to get through a pool again, you know?

Keith: Would you—the way that you would do this is maybe you'd communicate via your telephone people to send out a party simultaneously. They would each reach each other's place and then each have to leave to get to a vernal pool to go back home.

Jack: Oh, my God. But if you get that wrong, you've shot two Kerbals into space again.

Austin: You've shot two Kerbals into space again. Yeah.

Jack: And you've shot two Kerbals into space with valuable—goods so valuable that you would want to coordinate them totally.

Austin: And you might do the other way, right? Which is like, oh, wow, we found a stockpile of paper, and—on your journey, and you call home and go, hey, we don't need this paper back home, right? And you know, back at the desk, someone talks to another person as a microphone and goes, no, we don't need it. And then your friend who's your astronaut goes, no, we don't need it. Exactly in the tone that you're—the guy back at base says. And then you go, where should we bring it? Should we divert from our current path to drop this off somewhere? And if so, should we go to town A or town B? You know? Who needs it? Who do we have agreements with that if we found paper, we would bring it to them? **[Jack: This rules.]** Yeah. This is really good.

Jack: This is Death Stranding, but sicko mode. And I know you might be thinking, isn't Death Stranding Death Stranding sicko mode? No.

Keith: No. Because if you turn around the wit, the mist doesn't shred you.

[laughter]

Austin: Yes. There's simply special places in the world where the mist will shred you when it's raining and make you age quickly, unless you happen to be a bridge baby or whatever, and you've been born weird. And, you know. Death Stranding's cool. But this is more sicko. All right.

Jack: God. This is also—

Keith: Did you guys see the post, the Kojima post about. He went to a store that had only self checkout, and so he took his backpack and put it on his chest like BB because he felt like he was in Death Stranding.

Austin: Very funny. Oh, my God. Normalest guy to ever live.

Jack: There's like, a different version of this. There's a different version where we have tuned the adjectives differently. That becomes, like, unidirectional Fury Road. You know, the really important bit of Fury Road is that you have to go back, right? That's the midpoint of that movie. But the idea of these mad caravans just endlessly rocketing in one direction through a wasteland is really cool. All right, we have one more thing for World. Who have we decided its turn is? It's you or Keith, right? Let's do you, Austin, and then we journey back down the line.

Austin: Did we decide that? Okay? We did. Okay. The Adversary's here.

Jack: Oh ho ho, Austin. Here we go. So let's start.

Austin: I told you he was clever.

Keith: I've forgotten about the Adversary.

Jack: [reading] If a joker is ever drawn, that player may immediately add a new palette, touchstone or both. This can reflect how your world has organically taken new shape to encourage that continued direction in play. Or this can introduce a new direction for your world. After shifting the world, shuffle all cards, including the drawn joker. That player then continues their turn by drawing a new card.

Dre: Hmm.

Austin: That's interesting. Can we take five for me to run to the bathroom and think about it?

Jack: Absolutely. We will be right back.

The adversary [02:50:34]

Jack: Hello.

Austin, Keith and Dre: Hello.

Jack: Austin, I have a pitch you have had time to think about. For viewers who may have kind of just arrived during the break, we sent you away with a task.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And your task is to immediately add a new palette, touchstone or both. Because you drew the Adversary.

Austin: I drew the joker. I drew the Adversary. It's true. I have—

Keith: To me the joker is a friend.

Austin: That's great. I don't trust that motherfucker with my life.

Jack: [laughing] You want to start with palette or touchstone?

Austin: Palette. The palette word—I think it's, yeah, I think it's Acrid.

Jack: Whoa.

Austin: I think it's, it—the mist has a scent, it has a feel. It has a sort of, like, sharp, bitter quality that grows as you walk closer, like, backwards through it.

Jack: And it's that acidity that eventually kind of like, explodes into the—or, like, crescendos into the violence of it.

Austin: That's right. And I had, like, a real simple touchstone, and I remembered I'm not allowed to do the simple one, because the simple one was just like—it was just like—the simple one was from fantasy, and they can't be from fantasy.

Jack: They should—

Austin: So let me try to, like, ground this maybe, which is in, like, a moment. I think one of our away teams is out there and makes a discovery, makes a realization. And this didn't happen recently. This is before magic changed. So this is a while ago, the magic hadn't started [**Jack:** This is the good times of the vernal pools.] Well, but still mist world. Still world surrounded in mist. And historically, what we have found is—we found the solar statues, the solar birds, the sunbird God. Right? Hey, we're all from the same culture. Blah, blah, blah. They find something finally that talks about the mists out there, and what it says was—is, you know, in some version of the language that they speak, but diverted, “sure is good we got through those times”.

Jack: Hmm.

Austin: The mist, the short touchstone, is time travel fuckery. I already started hinting at this a little bit and I didn't mean to, but I talked about how the stone walls, when you stepped outside the mists were, like, aged by thousands of years. I think that what is in the mist is all of the world across all of time, in both directions, forward and backwards from the moment that is caught in the mist. This is why you can only go forward and you can't go back because you can't go back in time. You can only go forward. And so there's, like, a forward metaphor happening here. Of course, if you get to the vernal pool, you can, because it's magic, right? But that means that when you're out there, you know the geography generally, maybe not all of time, but maybe it's all of, like, all the time of the civilization you're part of from its start to its end. Right? Because it's not like you're going out there and the planet isn't in the same place—or like the—you know, but you might go out there and, like, the canyon has water in it now, and it's a raging river. You might go out there and the canyon is dry, and you might go out there and the post office was newly built, and you might go out there and the post—but it's still abandoned, right? You might go out there and the post office has been turned into, you know, a village, an abandoned village. And it's like you're kind of moving through, you know, the version of the vision of time that is like time is a cube and it's all happened already.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And you're kind of like on a pathway, moving through it in a loop forever. Like that's what consciousness is. It's like that. And the astronauts can move sideways. The astronauts can move through—they can take a—when they leave, they're sort of like moving into a version of a snapshot of the world in a certain time. When they leave home, when they leave the coast, they're moving into that version of the world. And what gets really tricky is when multiple groups of astronauts cross over and multiple parts of time start overlapping each other in strange and sometimes destructive ways.

Jack: But in this—the place that is out of time is just the mists, as far as we know.

Austin: Well, or is the place that's out of time, the towns? Is the aberration of this, that we are able to—that we exist out of time? You know, this is—I mean, unfortunately, is the TARDIS out of time, or is the TARDIS the thing that is locked—you know, which, which thing is out of time? Is it the TARDIS or is it the world? It's the TARDIS and the town is the TARDIS.

Jack: Yes, yes. But if I'm in, you know, Miami.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And I send out a team of astronauts and they go out into this confused time space or this true time space, whichever way you look at it.

Austin: The time mist, yeah.

Jack: The time mist. And they pass the post office that is ruined—

Austin: Or not built yet, depending.

Jack: But is always abandoned, because you can't really live in the mist, unless you can. Unless you have built a camp or whatever.

Austin: The places in the world are all from times before or after the mist.

Jack: Yes, that makes sense. But then when I reach New York [**Austin:** Yeah.] Is that—

Austin: Is New York an active town in this world or more different ruins?

Jack: An active town.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: That town is like, as far as we can, as best as we can tell, live in the same time space as Miami.

Austin: All of the living towns are in the same—because you can communicate between them, you can, etc.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. But when I go out, I am now walking into the swamp. I'm walking into the world chewed through by the worm. You know?

Austin: That's right.

Keith: So somewhere in the plane of time [**Austin** agreement] Where the mist is, it is—there is life happening as normal and that gets sort of magnified [**Austin:** I don't think—] At the point outside of time that we are in, in the towns?

Austin: I think that the history of the world is—or the history of our people is, there was a time before the mist.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: There's the mist—there's our now new mist time. Because this might simplify it. There's a post mist time that will be—but maybe there's a post that time that is mist again. In fact, maybe this cycle has happened a number of times, but we're the time that can move across the ruins of all of the times that have been ruined by the mist. There is no other era that we've run into yet of mist explorers. Normally, the mist just closes and opens and closes and opens. But we're the ones who can go—we're playing Chrono Trigger, right? We can go without—we don't know what version of the map we're moving into, right? But we can go to prehistoric time, we can go to future time, we can go to fantasy time, we can go to whatever, right? Not literally those times, but you get what

I'm saying, right? [**Keith:** Sonic CD.] We can go to Arthurian—we're playing Sonic CD, right. But though. But each of the times is that each of the versions of the world that we see are ruined, abandoned, grown over. But what they're ruins of is different. What's been grown over is different, et cetera, you know? But it's past and it's future. Sometimes we come back with stuff from after another living—another sunny era. Another era after the mist, which is part of what the fight is about. We know that other times have gotten through the mist.

Jack: And is my method the better way to do it?

Austin: That's right. And Tomorrow's Rime is like, this is how they must have done it. Right?

Jack: Yeah. Yeah. So I'm just going to write down here ambiguous layers of time and history again. But I'm going to put an exclamation point after it.

Austin: That's right. Yeah, yeah. This is the other thing that I did. I went back and reread all of our touchstones and said—the first thing I said is, we don't have enough wizards. And then I said, well, but I can't put wizards from Earthsea on the touchstones because it says, don't do—

Jack: Don't do fantasy.

Austin: Don't do fantasy as the touchstones. And then I said, well, you know, we'd been talking about Death Stranding, which has some—a different type of time thing going on. I, you know, thinking—I hear about the weirdness of time in—I'm thinking about the time traveler. You know, I'm thinking about, like, oh, you can move through time, but also space. Right. I'm thinking of the weirdness of time in, like, Tenet. The like, the, the astronauts have a different relationship with time because they sometimes see the same place. [**Jack:** Oh, Interstellar.] No.

Jack: Oh, sorry. And you said Tenet, and then you said astronauts. My brain was like, what's the—

Austin: No, I meant our astronauts. I meant our astronauts as the agents. Yeah, exactly. It is determinist. It is determinist. Coyote Black races, time determinist. Or is it, like, hypothetical things? Do they know? There are particular eras of time that they're seeing.

Keith: Nintendo could put out a timeline for—

Austin: That's right.

Jack: It must have taken them a while to even figure out what was happening.

Austin: That's why I said, there's a moment where they're like, wait a second. This is from—this is the first time we've ever read anyone talk about surviving the mist. But the thing they're reading is, like, you know, a book that then is about, unfortunately, the mists are coming back, you know?

Jack: Well, it's fun because if I was an astronaut out there who had been doing sort of—the astronauts are really odd because they're kind of archaeologists, but their primary function is they're sort of like oil drillers, you know, they're, like, sent out to find these things. But if I found a book that was like, the mist time is over. My first thought would be there was a time in the past when the mists came and then left.

Austin: And that might also be true, Jack.

Jack: It might also be true.

Austin: That might have happened. And so part of what the job is, is like, bring this stuff home so people can figure out. Is this—we need evidence of when our mist stopped. How did we do it?

Jack: And this is what the Monks are for as well.

Austin: This is what the Monks are for.

Keith: So there's multiple distinct eras according to our, like, the progression of the palette and the touchstones. There's—and the answers to some of our card draws.

There's—holy shit. No one that we've ever taught—we've found, like, writings of. They don't talk about the mist. Maybe they didn't have the mist.

Austin: Maybe they didn't have the mist

Keith: And then there's, they find them talking about the mist, and it's like, oh, they had mist. And then it went away. And then there's a new development where it's like, well, oh, wait, also, it will go away and then come again. And that is a process of sort of understanding how these different texts fit together.

Austin: Right. And sometimes you come back and you have a weird red gem and you go, what is this? Is this just—did they use this for money or is this how they talked from town to town? They don't do the possession drink? What do you mean they had a bird?

Jack: But this is also the same thing as your seed vault, though, right, Austin? Because sometimes you find something extraordinary and you can't get back. You can't find a vernal pool. And you arrive in a town and you're like, the only way I can pay to stay in this town or to resupply for the next leg to find the vernal pool is with this artifact that I found that might be extremely important if we can bring it back.

Austin: Yeah, you find a type of medicine that hasn't been developed in your world yet.

Jack: But I have to give it to those guys in the town where they're already charging me three times as much as they would for beer because they don't like astronauts from my town.

Austin: And maybe they reverse engineer it and eventually can develop the good medicine for the bad poison. You know?

Jack: Yeah. I want to play this game. Okay, now you, now you have to draw a card. Oh, wait, no. First, first. Hang on. I'm going to recall. Recall. Oh, Roll 20.

Austin: Everything gets shuffled in.

Jack: Oh, Roll 20. How I hate you. Oh, Roll 20. [**Austin:** What's up?] Okay, here we go. Don't worry, it was—you'll be able to see on the stream. Okay. Recall and oh, Roll 20, how I hate you.

Austin: Oh, I see. I see what's happening now on the stream. Yeah.

Jack: Come on, bro. I feel like I'm picking a lock. Can I just, no I can't. Ah!

Austin: What?

Dre: What happened?

Jack: I accidentally drew a 10. But now I have to. Okay, now I have to recall that. I just need to shuffle it. Oh, it worked first time that time.

Austin: You can hit shuffle after recalling, too.

Jack: I can't go into the menu is the issue.

Austin: You can draw a card. There you go. You got it. You got it, you got it.

Jack: Who just drew a king?

Austin: I didn't touch it.

Keith: I also didn't touch it.

Jack: I have to recall this.

Austin: There's a button in the recall menu that says shuffle after recalling.

Jack: Okay. Okay. So if I can make it to the recall.

Austin: I don't—why is your thing doing the thing where it's not? It's because Roll 20. Huh?

Jack: Okay. Shuffle up to recall. Right. We're good. Okay. Austin. You may draw.

Austin: Okay, I'll draw. It is a face card. It is the jack of... What is that? I zoomed in too much. Jack of clubs. I have to go back down.

Jack: The changing magic.

Austin: Is that what it is?

Jack: We've seen this one before.

Keith: Which means...?

Jack: When magic changed, how did wildlife also change? Yeah.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Okay. Yeah, we did that one already. Yeah. Okay.

Jack: So that means we go to the magic table.

Austin: Right?

Dre: The exploratory table.

Jack: And you drew a jack.

Austin: A jack.

Jack: Oh ho ho.

Austin: Okay. A good one. How does the way magic functions influence people's ideals and philosophy?

Jack: That's a doozy.

Austin: It sure is. It sure is.

Dre: Mm-hm.

Austin: It's funny. I feel like I just went, you know? Partly, also, I still feel like I don't have a strong sense of what's day to day magic like.

Jack: Like I was about to say, we don't really know what magic does. We know some applications of it. It can create telephone people.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: There was some talk about tools that could mitigate the mist.

Austin: Sure. Right.

Jack: And we know that it can transport people to home through a vernal pool.

Austin: That's all, like—yeah, that's a real—right. The vernal pool can do that. Does it provide light? Does it—can I cast a fireball with it? Can I heal someone with it? Can I—not to get too into the genre of fantasy. Right? But, like, does it allow me to alchemize things from one material to another? Does it—

Keith: Maybe something that we've kind of left on the table a little bit has been that we can use it to defeat and conquer.

Jack: I was about to say that. Yeah. With it, we could defeat and conquer. And we wrote down “defeat and conquer dangers in the mist”.

Austin: Dangers in the mist. So not just push the mist back, but the wildlife of the mist. The bad astronauts.

Keith: Space from the mist. Yeah.

Jack: The Rime. Tomorrow's Rime.

Austin: Tomorrow's Rime. That means it can probably do fireballs.

Keith: Right? And I feel like, maybe not fireballs, it can do lights.

Jack: Almost like a, like a sickly little ghost light. Slow fireballs that track you.

Austin: Could.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah. There is something kind of fun about on some level, what is the magic for? Kind of prosaic magic stuff. There's something really interesting about, like, I mean, the stuff we—I use to go to the grocery store in my car is at the end of an immensely violent and destructive chain. You know, people who are working day to day with oil have a very different relationship to it than someone at the gas pump. Right. And so I wonder if the astronauts... We have been thinking about the magic specifically as it relates to the outside world. And I wonder if in the inside world, they're like, I can use it to, you know, wash clothes or I can use it to—

Austin: Yeah, but there's a risk there of being so—we're really using it to wash clothes when the mist is coming for us?

Jack: Yeah, and also we narratively—

Austin: Scarcity narrative, you know.

Jack: Yeah. And there's a risk that we neuter some of the tone as well. Right? Like, the tone of the world is so distinct. And then we're like—

Austin: Well, maybe there's rationing now and that's part of what's happened. I don't know.

Keith: Yeah. I feel like I sort of live in a world where people are washing clothes with magic when the mist is coming for us.

Austin: I mean, that's true, but we've invented a fantasy world where this seems like it's the most important thing in society instead of a thing that we're all pretending isn't happening.

Keith: Sometimes it's both.

Austin: Sometimes it's both.

Keith: Seems like, again, I feel like I live where it's both.

Austin: Right. But we do live in a globalized society where that is a thing that an entire system has been built to make sure happens. Whereas it sounds like we're talking about towns of a few thousand people. And maybe I have more hope for the town of a few thousand people to be like, hey, maybe we shouldn't—hey, we just lost the walls to our town. Maybe we should wash our clothes once a week instead of twice a week with the magic water. Maybe I'm wrong about that, but I, I—it feels like the natural state of the narrative was already scarcity and not abundance.

Jack: Yeah, I agree.

Keith: I agree. I was thinking of bigger towns, but maybe that's just me.

Jack: The towns are sprawling, although that doesn't necessarily—

Austin: No, I thought the world was sprawling.

Jack: Oh, interesting.

Dre: I was thinking it was like a bunch of, like, little towns.

Austin: Same, Dre.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: I was thinking more like small cities.

Austin: Interesting.

Keith: And some towns, like, you know, maybe there's not a place with a million people.

Jack: I have some good news about what the next section of the game is about.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: It's cities, right?.

Jack: Here's something that I don't know if this is what we want to go with, but I think it's worth bringing up. What if the magic is only used for dealing with the mist and sending out the astronauts? There's something very blunt about that where it's like, you know?

Keith: My main concern with that would be, like, I mean, and then you—then Tomorrow's Rime kind of has a big place here where it's like, we're going through all of this effort just to deal with the mist when we could not go through this effort and not deal with the mist?

Austin: Well, no, because the current theory is if we don't keep the vernal pool full, the mist closes and kills us. Is that—that's what

Keith: Are we refilling our home pools?

Austin: When you get to the vernal pool—oh, sorry.

Keith: It transfers the water.

Austin: Yes, I remember that.

Keith: Yes.

Austin: We're refilling it with that stuff.

Jack: So that's the thing.

Austin: So Tomorrow's Rime is kind of betting on—their belief is we've got this whole thing wrong at the foundational level.

Keith: Right.

Austin: And that if we stop refilling the pool, the mist will go away, actually.

Jack: Yeah. There's a little bit of the push the button in Lost thing going on here. Right. Where it's like, we just do it all the time because we have been doing it forever, and we believe that it has one outcome, but what if it actually has the opposite outcome?

Austin: Right.

Jack: Yes. Scarcity magic is interesting, Austin. I mean, we could.

Austin: I'm not—sorry. I'm not set on, I'm really not set on, we should have—it should only be used for the astronauts. I am, I am simply opposed to we should be washing our clothes with it, mostly because really, aesthetically, I like to see someone wash their clothes by hand. I think that's like a classic fantasy visual.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Of the type of fantasy I'm interested in, because there is a type of fantasy where you go, hocus pocus, no more dirt or whatever, and then the fucking, all the dirt comes off the clothes. And I'm not interested in that very much. I'm interested in someone having to wash their hands or wash their clothes by hand. And then in some ways that, like, using magic can also be like using your hands to wash your clothes, but the effect is something different than that. You know, I think there's a big gap between you can only use it to go fight the mist stuff, and we're using it—everybody in town is using it every day for minor things, you know?

Keith: This is not an argument for this. Just that when we were talking about using magic to wash your clothes, I was thinking of a magic clothes washing machine and not hocus pocus.

Jack: Yeah, same.

Austin: Sure.

Keith: Like, magic as electricity more than magic as like, not like, you know, everybody's got a wand and are casting little help me out spells.

Austin: Yeah. I think maybe it's probably worth saying I've been imagining this as a fairly traditional fantasy world without washing machines.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: And not like, despite—this is maybe the downside of using words like astronaut constantly and telephone people. I'm not imagining this as a sci fi world.

Jack: No, no. I'm not either. But I think that that's why it's interesting to use words like astronaut and telephone people.

Austin: Totally.

Jack: Really push it out of the—

Austin: That's all. You know.

Keith: I'm also, you know, magic, magic which is—functions as electricity, I think fits into a lot of different kinds of fantasy worlds. Although not most traditional ones.

Austin: Totally. I just wanted to—and if we want to slide more in that direction, we can. I'm just explaining why I was where I was. Which is like, people are doing hand washing or they're doing big tub washing together, but they're not—if they have something that helps them wash their clothes. It's something that you could build with pre industrial revolution in my mind.

Jack: Like a mangle.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: Okay. Let's think of some other uses for magic.

Austin: For me, the easiest and quickest one that feels like classic inside of the space is healing.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Someone has gotten hurt badly and they heal more quickly through the application of salve that has been—that has some of this water in it or something, you know? Some of the vernal liquid.

Jack: Do you think there's like, animal husbandry here?

Austin: Sure. We talked about cows already, right?

Keith: Using magic to husband animals?

Jack: Yeah, we did talk about cows already. This is also like deep Earthsea magic as well. Right. Like the—**Austin:** Yeah.] The sorcerers in Earthsea.

Austin: Big time. Weather magic.

Jack: Weather magic.

Austin: I mean that's what we already have in a way. Right? Pushing the mist back is weather magic.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: And then I think some kinds of scrying, although I'm the telephone people, are so like, sharp and interesting that I'm really wary of overplaying scrying. Like additional scrying, you know.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: But maybe divination, some sort of gestural divination.

Austin: Yeah.

JAC: I also—

Dre: Do we include navigation as part of scrying?

Jack: Oh yeah, you're right. Yeah. There's gotta be magic that the astronauts use in some way. Right. Whether that's, you know, a needle that points a direction. Although, God, that stuff has got to be really rudimentary in the mist.

Keith: I can imagine it's a really, really big deal who decides and how it's decided where astronauts get sent out.

Jack: Yes. This is where Houston comes into play. And we haven't really met them, really yet, but I imagine there's some liaison with the monks as well.

Austin: What are the other—what are other important things magic could do inside of limited space, right? Because we're all in towns or whatever. Even big, even big ones.

Keith: Are we still answering, how does—

Austin: I guess we are.

Jack: Yeah. But we need to get there first.

Keith: How does magic functions influence people's ideals and philosophy? Well, we first need the way magic functions and then we can get to ideals. Got it.

Austin: Okay. Yeah, that's exactly right, Keith. Yeah. The big picture sounds like... I guess it sounds like—it functions by, it functions in the way that magic often does, which is like speeding things up. It's hard to come by, so we use it for important things, which doesn't mean we never use it for fun things. I'm sure it's used for a festival every year. Right?

Jack: Yeah. If we get to the calendar section, we'll see that.

Austin: Yeah. Right. And I do think that the fact of like, you know, if I can come back around on washing her clothes with it. In an era of abundance, maybe it did feel like we could wash our clothes with it somehow.

Jack: But we're at the bottom of the barrel now.

Austin: That's right. We're in recession times. We're in rationing, we're in, only the astronauts get it.

Jack: Yeah. Or only the—I mean, that's another—and this kind of dovetails into answering this question on the magic page. Right? Is that another function of magic is for the establishment and wielding of institutional power, right? [**Austin:** Right.] Like magic is a way that you can demarcate class or political power.

Austin: Is it used in the growing of food?

Jack: Yes, I think so, right?

Austin: In a world where the sun is stuck behind the mist.

Jack: Yeah. It's like people grind lenses that they can—magicians grind lenses that they can put in the, you know, greenhouse roofs or people offer prayers over crops. People bless regular water, normal water, not vernal water, so that it has, you know, better growing power.

Austin: Oh, so people are waiting—

Keith: Lenses are great—

Austin: Go ahead.

Keith: Lenses is great because that's a really efficient—that's a one time use of magic for essentially an infinite amount of uses of—

Jack: Light.

Keith: Lens.

Austin: Of lens.

Keith: Yeah, you get lens forever. Once you use magic to make one lens.

Jack: Maybe it wears off, but yeah, you have—

Austin: You were saying, Jack, that people pray over crops as a form of magic. Is that drawing on the same pool of magic that the vernal, that the communal well is?

Jack: I think so, yeah.

Austin: Okay. So that means that it's not literally just the water. The water produces a—the water is sort of filling an invisible gauge.

Jack: I think so. There's two ways of doing that. One, the water is filling an invisible gauge, and two, the priests and the sort of supplicants are dressed in religious bells or beads or, you know, costumes that have been created through a magical process. Right? Where it's like the magic is imbued onto you by—

Austin: So if you're not wearing that stuff, the prayers don't do anything.

Jack: Maybe have like a spiritual purpose, but.

Austin: Sure, sure, sure. Yeah.

Jack: And I could go either way.

Keith: If you've got a mana—if you have a mana bar, if you're a guy and you have an amount of—and like, at some level, there's some conversion, a mathematical conversion of like, how much vernal water does it take to make X amount of good grow water? Like, can I use one cup of vernal water to bless a whole field?

Austin: Right.

Keith: Or does it take 10 gallons to bless a whole field?

Austin: And maybe for some people it takes a gallon and some people—for some people it takes a cup because they're better with it in some way. If that's—I'm asking if that, you know, that could be one thing that happens in this world. It might not be. It might be a one to one perfect thing. And it might be, it might be that if you mix it with different things differently, it comes out differently. But really what I was trying to get at was just like, okay, it sounds like one thing you can do with it is make stuff with it. We

know—a thing that I think we have now firmly established, telephone people. You drink it. There's some sort of ritual. You can now become possessed by someone on the other end and be the—and deliver a message. You know, be possessed by them and speak as them. Right? So that's one thing. That's—you consume some of the water. Keith, your lens idea, or Jack, your lens idea was you build something with it. You infuse something with it. Whatever. Keith, you're talking about the robes or whatever also. Boom, okay. That's—so that's the other thing you can do with it. So that means, like, **[Keith: That was Jack but it's okay.]** That was Jack? Okay, well, like consuming it seems like it can give you abilities. Using it in, in construction or enchantment can, can produce magic effects. We talked about there being a salve. So applying it directly also seems like, that it can do some effects. The chanting is different because it seems like simply by being—no, because you said it, you said you're wearing the clothes that then let you do it. **[Jack: Yeah.]** That seems like a pretty clear—I mean, one thing ideologically that sounds like it comes down from that then is that the magic is not in us.

Jack: Yeah. Oh, yeah, yeah, definitely.

Austin: The magic is in the world and it's in this stuff. And I do think that that's maybe produces a different effect. And it's not in our sun God bird, who I can appeal to the sun God bird all I want. And it doesn't seem like magic happens.

Keith: And that goes right—all the way back to magic that was found by us.

Jack: Yeah, definitely.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: This is kind of important to me for the tone as well. Where, you know, the vernal water and the stuff that we put ourselves through in this world to get it is not one to one with oil. And I'm being very careful not to draw those things together, like as a one to one comparison. But the thing about oil, right, is that that's the thing that combusts. You know? We can't wish for better oil. Our fervent spirits or our clear thoughts, you know, can't. We are not in conversation with the oil in that way. The way we are in conversation with the oil is that it is a powerful—or it gives a huge amount of power and

we are sort of like adjacent to it, right? We're moving it around. And I think the vernal water is similar to that. Right? This isn't a world where we have innate magic that the vernal water lets us touch. We need the damn thing to make the stuff go.

Austin: Yeah. It's really hard not to fall into the oil comparison then, ideologically and philosophically though, you know? **[Jack: Yeah.]** But where it's like—it feels like everything I want to say is tied to—so people are having different feelings about how much we should be using. Whether it is our, you know, innate right to live that way, to use. To use it, versus to that we shouldn't be using it. It's really hard not to fall into that stuff along this line of thought. I'm curious if anyone has any other angles on, on it. Which doesn't mean we shouldn't go that way, to be clear. But I—like Jack, my instinct is that leaning into the metaphor will limit us going forward and, you know, to call on a little Tolkien here, like push us way closer to strict analogy and not the sort of flexible, adaptable story that can apply across a bunch of, you know, a couple of, you know, different readings.

Jack: Yeah, it's interesting because, you know, there are a lot of quote unquote, essential commodities in the world that aren't oil. And there are ways in which our interactions with them and the sort of axes of power that intersect with those are similar. But there are also ways in which they are different, right? Like the food industry or factory farming or operates in different ways than the pursuit of oil.

Austin: Right. And in the fantasy world we're setting up, there is no such thing, as far as we know, as a petro-state. There is no such thing as **[Jack: No, there can't be.]** Soft power imperialism, where a central, you know, that is not the world we have set up.

Jack: And something that is important is that we haven't—and I'm sure we're about to talk about the ways in which people sort of construct themselves around the vernal pools. But something that we haven't said is this culture controls the vernal pools, you know?

Austin: Yeah, Never. In fact, it doesn't seem to be possible.

Jack: No. The mist—

Austin: Right.

Jack: Hmm. I'm scrolling back down. I mean, would you like to have some sort of, some sort of personal connection to the magic, Austin? Would that be—would that open doors for us?

Austin: Sorry, what do you mean by a personal connection?

Jack: You know, some sort of something innate in yourself that the vernal—

Austin: Oh, oh, I don't think so necessarily. No, no, I was just trying to, like, I was trying to get at where we were. I wasn't sure quite [**Jack:** Right.] When you were talking about praying over crops, that's where I was like, oh, is there other magic in this world besides the vernal pools? But it doesn't sound like that's the case. It sounds like it all moves through that. And so I think that, yeah, ideologically, one of the big one—the big things is probably about, you know, I—tonally, there is a real limits of the self thing happening, right? That, like, the big stuff that matters in the world is stuff and not people, but people can, can, you know, that's the axis on which counter ideology might emerge also, right? It was like, no, we have to go get the vernal pools.

Jack: Right. It's kind of inert without us.

Austin: Yeah. And, yeah, importantly, I think this is a question about ideals and philosophy, right? And so you end up being like, if we have a scarcity world, then, you know, some ideals are about, you know, we've already had our big legend about sacrifice, right? It's like, I'm gonna be—I'm gonna live like the worm. I'm gonna give myself to, to the world such that I can bring back what we need to survive, you know, and then other people who are saying—that stuff we've all said before, I think.

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: I think maybe we kind of already have some of this. It's just we did need to know on the day to day.

Jack: Yes, I agree. And then also to the philosophy, there's that stuff about futurity that we've been thinking about.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: That is more troubled and is interestingly troubled by this sense of time overlapping. But this idea of the like, one directional movement that presumably shapes philosophy.

Austin: Yeah, for sure. For sure. Yeah. There's sort of like—there's a unique perspective about our place in time and history from the people alive here, right? There's a sort of like, the effect of knowing that there will be maybe more than in our own life. There's a real conscious understanding that time does not end with us.

Jack: Yeah, because we keep finding bits of it.

Austin: Right. Which can both drag you into the Tomorrow's Rime group, who is like, and we need to bring ourselves there, and this is how we do it quick. Or could go the other way. But again, it's on this axis of relationality to time is front of mind, you know?

Jack: Yep. Yeah. There's, you know, I could see a sort of new archives position developing of like, well, we just hold on as long as we can in this moment because we might find the information out there. You know?

Austin: Or we might be producing the ruins for tomorrow's travelers. As far as we know. We don't think we are. We haven't found any evidence of that, but we might be, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: No one has shown up yet with a copy of today's newspaper from out there saying, you know...

Keith: Hey, found this old newspaper.

Austin: Yeah. You're in it, you know, but maybe we will. And we have to admit that that's part of, you know, there is a—maybe there is a sort of like, what is the astronaut effect called?

Jack: What?

Austin: Astronauts. You see the whole Earth, that thing.

Jack: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: The overview effect. The overview effect, you know, which—obviously not a thing that's been super well studied, I believe, but the way that when you can see all of the Earth, it shifts the way you feel like you relate.

Jack: But seemingly only for a bit, given Neil Armstrong's history. No. Was it Buzz Aldrin? Buzz Aldrin.

Austin: I don't remember. Yeah, I don't remember. Big spiritual connection. But when you build a whole society around the whole cult, everybody kind of has that relationship to time. Maybe that's not true. Maybe it's not everybody. Maybe if what your job is is cow, I'm handling cow, you don't have that broad perspective.

Jack: Well, what you're thinking is, my cows walked off, right?

Austin: My cows walked off, bud. I don't care that they might have walked off into a thousand years ago or a thousand years from now. Can you get them back? And the answer is, only if we can get them through a different vernal pool.

Jack: There's also a real—you know when you're watching a movie and you're like, that dog doesn't know it's in a movie. There's a real bit of that cow doesn't know it's time traveling. [group laughter] The cow walks out and finds the post office from 35 years in the future and goes, okay, looks like a post office to me. That brings to an end the World section.

[pause]

Cities [03:30:06]

Jack: Hello?

Austin: I'm here.

Jack: Yeah. Okay. So. Wow.

Austin: Whoof. What do we have left? We have... cities?

Jack: We have a city and then there are sort of legends. So the, the world and the city are the big—we're gonna do a city, and then we get to decide whether it's a city crumbling or a city flourishing, which is interesting. And then we have a journey and a point of view, which are more like the opening two of the, like, broader. Okay, who wants to read a city?

Dre: I would be happy to. [reading] Create a city in this world. This table defines broad strokes of the city's purpose, how magic is viewed or uniquely shaped, and of a folk legend born here. Use what you've built from the previous tables and hone in on themes, factions, and environments. Take turns drawing one card for each subtable in sequence to finish the sentences. After you have finished going down this table, decide as a group whether the city is a city crumbling or a city flourishing, and proceed to the respective table.

Jack: I think Keith is drawing. We're journeying back, worm-like.

Keith: Dre, were you the last one to draw?

Jack: Austin was.

Austin: I was.

Dre: Austin was.

Keith: So I think it's Dre and then me.

Dre: That was the order we were using. [pause] You know what? I'm just gonna draw a card.

Jack: Okay.

Dre: I'm just doing it. Spades. Ooh. Okay. Its influence was laws.

Jack: Oh ho!

Dre: Interesting. This—I'm getting the vibe of, like, there's not a lot of laws, but there's like, a handful of very strict laws.

Jack: Yeah. Do we think this is the city that drew up foundational documents for how the astronauts work? Not the—it's not innovation where it's like, we figured out how to build telephone people, but it's the like, this is what the operation is. This is what the, you know, this is what you do. Or do we want to zoom in on a different kind of law and instead go for the kind of like, here is how a society is structured?

Dre: Personally, I am less interested in the latter, but I don't want to shut down that conversation if people have good pitches for it.

Austin: What was the first example? What was the first thing that you said, Jack?

Jack: These are the people who kind of develop the textbook and the operating procedure for the astronauts.

Austin: I think that makes sense, though. I do think law feels like it's broader than, than just that.

Jack: Yeah...

Austin: But maybe. But maybe I'm—but I guess the questions are being, are we going to get enough from that that helps us understand whether it's crumbling or flourishing eventually, or are we just going to get more about our astronauts and not enough about what life in the world is?

Dre: Sure.

Austin: I do like, but I think there's an overlap between these two, which is like, I talk about this all the time. I probably said this in six out of the 10 or whatever Friends at the Table seasons. Harold Innes, the Canadian communications theorist, media theorist and historian, has this notion of biases of time, biases of space in media and in, like, ancient empires, basically. He has a book called Empire And Communication. And in that book he kind of says, hey, there were empires that used media. There are empires that biased time and empires that biased space. And so, like, empires that biased time built things out of clay and stone, and they used—I always forget which is more durable, parchment or papyrus, I think parchment. And those things lasted a long time but were generally heavy. And so it's hard to move things around. And so you ended up with the vision of the empire where there's like, a town would have a obelisk, and the obelisk would have the 10 core laws on it, you know, and those laws would be then interpreted locally, but would last a long time. And it wouldn't be a very micromanaged empire, right? You'd have the center—the center would occasionally, you know, once a generation, send out a change in the tax code, you know, but then it would last for a long time. Whereas empires that biased papyrus or, you know, oral history, you know, stuff that was like that you could travel with quickly, tended to allow for rapid communication and therefore more micromanagement. A center that has a lot of executive power because it's very easy for them to say, no, no, no, no, no, we're changing taxes from this season to last season, because we know—

Jack: We don't have to chisel it into something.

Austin: They don't have to chisel it into something and carry it a long way. They can just send a messenger with some paper in an envelope, you know, and it's—this is obviously, I'm butchering this argument, right? But that, that, that these are like different extremes of ways to think about time and space. And so I do think the idea in we have—we have built a world where I guess there is instant communication through the telephone people. So maybe with that you can have a center of law that can say we want to change, blah, blah, blah. But it does—but the separation, there is still real

separation. And we have not set up a world where it feels like there's a center capital that's going to tax [Jack: Their city states.] the periphery. Yeah, exactly. But if they did set up some sort of core rules around, you know, it does also sound like we've set up a world where there is some semblance of trading or different communities having different needs. And so it does sound like maybe there's some sort of like, is there a place where some great accord was signed? [Jack: Oh!] Is there a place where some sort of agreement was reached? And it stands in for that? And it still is the place where those sorts of decisions—is there a place where there is a telephone person from each city? You know, from each city state.

Jack: I was gonna say this. Someone somewhere makes a pitch, and the pitch is you have to come here. And they somehow managed to make that pitch, like compellingly enough, right? That like, they managed to draw telephone people from—and that is where they lay out accords, right? Trade accords or information sharing accords. There's something really—it asks a lot to say, you all have to come to this place. Right? In a world where going somewhere is so intense. Also, I was thinking about how if I send out through the telephone person, a law, if I decide in my distant town that I'm actually the boss of your town and I send out a message, you just kill my telephone person.

Austin: It's a real kill the messenger. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: We don't want to talk to you anymore, and if you want to talk to us, you have to send out someone else. Yeah. So is this city like a—it's weird because it's in traditional fantasy, right? This would be like a meeting city. This would be like a meeting place city. Except this was like a meeting place city once? One time?

Austin: Oh, wait, what if it's at the center of the continent? What if it's the place that everybody else can send people to?

Dre: Oh, yeah, right. Because everyone can walk forward towards the center.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. And weirdly, a generation later, the people born there can go to any other city.

Jack: Whoa, whoa. What does that look like?

Dre: I do think—I think this—one. This idea is sick. I do think we're getting away from talking about laws, though.

Austin: I'm just saying, though. I'm just simply saying if that—yeah. If there is a place there. Yeah, you're right, you're right, you're right. But it would be a place that's pretty central.

Dre: Yeah, no. Um—

Keith: Central is great. But also, as long as you leave your city, you can go in any direction you want, as long as you don't go back.

Austin: Right. But if you're in the middle of the continent, that means you could reach any city to any periphery. Whereas if you're in. If you're in Miami, right? I guess if you're in Miami, you can reach any city too. No, you couldn't, right? If you're in—sorry. If you're in—I guess so. Right. It's not that you can't go south, it's that you can't go back towards. You're right, you're right, you're right. How do we think—oh, but you can't leave—I mean, this is where it gets really tricky. Let's say you're in Boston and, and you're going. Listen, it's where I'm from. You're—it's plausible. You're in Boston. And you go from Boston to Indianapolis.

Keith: Right.

Austin: You can't go to New York after that.

Jack: No, you can't. You can't.

Keith: What I would have to do. What I would have to do is use the, the vernal pool that's in Indianapolis to go back to Boston and then walk.

Austin: Well, you can't do that. You have to find a different—because there's nearby in the cities, is what Jack said. Jack said, you cannot, we cannot go from the city.

Keith: Wise. I hope that we revise that to saying that you always go to your home one.

Jack: No, no, no, no.

Keith: Okay, but so, okay, so I have to leave Indianapolis, find a vernal pool, hopefully go back to Boston and then go to New York.

Austin: And then go to New York. Yeah.

Keith: Right.

Jack: Yeah. This is also, I think this isn't laws, it would be innovations. Right. But I think the idea of like chains of movement through the world is something that is very important to these people of like, how you do this.

Austin: Maybe that's one of the things that was agreed at like this great meeting, this great according. Right? Is like, the particulars of what setting up trade looks like are up to the people doing it. But like we have a—there's a live and drink Caves of Qud, right? Like some core—for people who haven't played Caves of Qud. There's a thing called the water ritual. Water...

Jack: Water ritual, yeah.

Austin: That you can do with anybody where you share some water.

Jack: Or blood.

Austin: Yeah, anything liquid, right? And—or is it just water and blood?

Dre: Oil and blood maybe? Depending on...

Jack: Because cannibals will want the blood.

Austin: Yeah, well—

Keith: Any cannibals will want the blood.

Austin: Cannibals do want the blood. Some of them, some of them just want meat. But the, there's some sort of like system in Caves of Qud. You can do this to like raise your,

your relationship with them and with their faction because you're kind of like, hey, look, we're sharing water. This, this—we're—I'm signaling to the world itself and to you that we're tight. And you could imagine a version of that here, right, which is like we, we have a shared whatever that is. We, we drink each other's vernal, vernal liquids and then, you know, and then from there we, we have—are able to reach an accord after that, you know?

Jack: Yeah, I agree with you. I also just think of these people arriving in this town and be like, yeah, we all live in hell, right? And they're all like, yep, this sucks. Yeah. And you know, this is also, this is probably where there were some rumblings from Tomorrow's Rime for the first time around the signing of this accord, right? Where they're like, people are making these declarative statements about the world and that, you know, who's to say that any of this is—they are making statements about the world that we don't even know are true. And there's a danger in signing these accords that we are signing ourselves up to a future of perpetuating this nightmare rather than capping the wells and moving away from it.

Austin: Right. And this is also where if someone says, hey, we had a team of astronauts get killed, we think someone from town C did it. The last thing they said was town C! [death noises] We want some sort of justice or reparation or whatever. Is this the city where that happens?

Jack: Yeah, yeah, it is. And the telephone people in this city jobs suck because they are like right down at the quick of it, right? And they are constantly—their bodies and mouths are barely their own, the amount of communication that's through rattling through them.

Austin: We can talk about how the city was founded maybe at some other point, but I'm curious if this city pre-existed, this use, the city became the city. The city wasn't like, built by people from each—like astronauts didn't found this city together, post mistfall.

Jack: I don't know that they did. Part of my—

Dre: I don't think so.

Austin: Yeah. Okay.

Jack: There's something really compelling about like the case having to be made for this being the place. And there's like a lot of intricate diplomacy that happens. I like the idea of this city just being here. I mean, obviously there's no such thing as a city just being here, but it's different than astronauts founding it, you know?

Austin: A city that realized we don't really—

Keith: They found it. They didn't found it.

Jack: They found it. They found it. Yes. They didn't founded it.

Austin: Yeah. But there's something really compelling about the city being, the people in the city being like, well, east city has the wind and they can use the wind in this special way. And west city has all the fishing. And north city, what do we have? And they are like, well, we gotta convince people to have us.

Jack: Yeah, we're in the middle

Austin: We have to be the thing. We're in the middle, yeah.

Jack: Yeah. Okay, so what should we write down for this? This is the city. Its influence was as a center. Its influence was as a literal center and home of multi city accords. There's a bit of Constantinople in here as well. Right. Like a city who uses its, like, geographic position and its cultural position. Whoop. Way too small. Okay. Now I think Keith draws.

Keith: Yes, I believe.

Jack: What are you drawing for, Keith? Ooh, it's variant of the magic.

Keith: Yeah, variant of the magic. Queen of clubs. Brutal.

Jack: Whoa.

Austin: Okay, well, fuck.

Keith: The city's magic was brutal. The example is used with force and power for violence or protection.

Jack: So there's one way that it could get the other cities on board. Right, which is that it's the biggest and most violent city.

Austin: Or that that is what it is. That is the result of the accord.

Jack: Oh, yeah. It wields its power within you.

Austin: Right. We have given you monopoly over violence.

Dre: I don't know if this fits with brutal, but I'm also wondering if, like, part of this city's role is to also control movement. Because, like, in a, in a real way, if you are not careful with where you're sending people and where people are going, you could completely strand like, little towns and cities. And so I wonder if part of how this city is brutal is that it is very controlling over like, how people travel, where they can leave, where they can go.

Austin: Oh, so like, you have to send in a request to approve a new expedition to this center.

Dre: Yeah, or even like a, probably like a trade route or something.

Jack: Even if I want to go somewhere else?

Austin: Definitely a trade route. But I'm saying if you're, if you're saying like you're—one of the fears that people have is—or one of the fears that this, this city has is like, we can't let town be like, keep sending out astronauts. You're feeding the coyotes or whatever, right? There you go.

Dre: The worm is getting huge, bro!

Austin: Stop feeding the worm. All you're doing is feeding the worm. Are, are they in some sort of position of approving or denying not just big things like trade routes, but

smaller things like, all right, everybody gets 100 astronauts a year. That's all kind of a lot, actually. Everybody gets 20 astronauts a year.

Jack: I don't know. I can kill like, a lot of astronauts very quickly.

Austin: Oh, I see.

Dre: Have we talked about too, how astronauts are chosen? I mean, that would be another version of brutality.

Austin: We have not.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. They are, they are... You know, throughout history, the human brain has been compared to the piece of technology that is ascendant at that time. You know, for a long time, the human brain was a book. Now we talk about the human brain in terms of a computer. And so when I say this, know that I am not trying to make this more sci fi, but using the touchstone that I have as a person alive now, there's something like air traffic control about this, right? There is like, that the role of air traffic control is not just organization, but is a kind of essential—air traffic control is essential, but there's a safety aspect to it, right? We choose where the planes go. And you have to listen to us because if you don't, the planes are going to start hitting each other.

Austin: And let me be the first to say, we're not listening. We don't care. Of course, 90% of the expeditions are approved, but what are we going to do? Not send out a rogue expedition once a year, twice a month?

Jack: And how are they going to know?

Austin: How are they going to know? They don't know. Turn off your transceiver or whatever. It's not sci-fi. Turn off your gem, tell us—blindfold your bird, whatever.

Jack: You know what I mean? The idea of them saying, yeah, no one's listening to this. Everyone's doing it.

Austin: Or they might be. They're within a realm, right? Because what they're saying is you can send out, 10 and 13 are getting sent out, or 12 are getting sent out, right? But they're not sending out 40, maybe. Though, what do they—and here is where the other half of this used with force and power for violence and protection, question mark. For me, it's like, and what do you do? What do they do if someone says no? What do they do if they find out that you have been disobeying this?

Jack: Blockades where they start killing your astronauts. [**Austin:** That's hard.] That's so intense. That's really intense. Yeah. And of course, the Rime don't give a shit about this at all. They're sending out teams, you know.

Austin: Yeah. They're uniformly rogue, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: What do they do? We might find out. But, like, we talked about this earlier, right? Where, like, a telephone person says something you don't like, and you're just like, well, come and stop me. You know? I'm 500 miles away through the mist.

Austin: And maybe the answer is they do come and stop you. Maybe there have been instances where they come and stop you. You know, is this a place where astronauts go to get trained? Is this a place where there are more—you know. It's funny because, like, I don't know, 10 minutes ago, it's like, well, they don't have anything special here. They just have the location. But now it's like, have they become a resource for—has being in the center made them a place where there is a lot of, you know, traditional, powerful equipment and magic. Also, wait a second, sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry. I have to—we have to rewind because we jumped to something that this is not asking us. We were talking about how the place is brutal. [crosstalk] The question is—

Jack: [crosstalk] Oh!

Keith: [crosstalk] Its variant of magic is brutal.

Austin: Its variant of the magic is brutal!

Jack: Oh, my God.

Austin: Which is part of why earlier I was like, we have to figure out what the magic is.

Jack: Right. And the answer we came to, interestingly, was about a lot of not particularly brutal stuff.

Austin: Right, right. It's part of why I was like, okay, so what we now know, the visions of it that we have in the kind of formal sense are some people drink it to become telephone people, which means one of the verbs we now have available is, like, consuming it through the mouth. We can drink a little vial of the stuff, maybe mixed with something or prayed over a certain way or, you know, presumably you don't just drink it raw to become a telephone person. You drink it and there's some sort of secondary—

Jack: You're trained. Right? This is where the pairs of telephone people come into play.

Austin: Oh, so it's just training. It's just you learn how to use the magic energy that's in you from drinking it.

Jack: Maybe, yeah. I don't know if there's some sort of drift compatibility or some sort of like weird psychosexual thing going on or—

Austin: I mean, that's all on the table always, but I meant more. There's not a certain type of prayer you have to use. You don't have to mix in a certain amount of sunflower seed or fur or—there's no other components in, in, in that. Because if there is, then what you can imagine is—or, or if it's just training, what you can imagine is like some people drink it and instead of becoming telephone people, they get really strong, right? They can open up their spell—the D&D spell book and pick shocking grasp. You know what I mean? Like, that's the—this is kind of why I'm like, the other thing we know we can do is we can kind of like enchant with it. You can make the robes let you pray over the crops [Jack: The lenses.] With it. You can make the lenses that make the sunlight better or whatever, right? So what are—given those particular use cases? Drinking it, putting it in

a salve, building things with it, and enchanting things with it. What is the brutal version of those core verbs?

Jack: I mean, you could drown someone in a vernal pool.

Austin: Okay, but that. You could drown someone in a regular pool. There's nothing magic about that.

Jack: But the process could be magic. It could produce a kind of person.

Austin: Oh, I see. I'm sorry. Yeah. I was thinking about effect. You're coming up with different causes.

Jack: Yes, I see how thinking about it as effect, you're like, that's not special. Drowning.

Austin: Yeah,

Jack: okay, you could. I mean, the brutal ways to wield magic are martial. They are coercive. You could threaten. You could...

Austin: Right. Truth serum. You could mind wipe.

Jack: They could be...

Austin: Can they make things from—can they summon poolish creatures? [**Jack:** Wow.] Can they?

Jack: Summoning a poolish creature in the ruined post office from 30 years in the future!

Austin: Now you're getting it. Now you're working with verdant pools, yeah.

Jack: They summon poolish creatures. Well, no, I can't just be compelled by it. I just saw a beautiful vision and it's not necessarily true.

Austin: I like being able to summon a poolish creature, but I also like being able to drink it and maybe summon a fireball. You know what I mean? Or, or whatever. I really like

being able to put some of it in a rag and move the rag across my sword and the sword catches fire.

Jack: Yeah, that stuff is really good.

Austin: You know, The Witcher is a potent example in moments like these for me, you know? In fact, the Witcher's like, weird sigils are also really useful because they're not that. [**Jack:** His hand signs.] Yeah, his hand signs. If he could only do his hand signs after dipping his finger in a little bit of the verdant pool, and he's like, drawing the hand sign in the air, in the air with the oil, you know?

Jack: Drinking the verdant pool would fix me. [group laughter] Yeah, yeah. All right, I'm up for this. But let's zero in on the brutality of it, right?

Austin: I do like brutality in the cause. I do like, they have people that they've drowned in the vernal pool and now they've come back as super soldiers or whatever.

Jack: You know, they've breathed in a foolish creature.

Austin: That gets us back to the abyss.

Jack: Oh, it does get us back to the abyss. Yeah, yeah. They have fish that they've grown in pools. Awful fish.

Austin: Yeah. If you drown yourself in the verdant pool—

Jack: If you drown in the verdant pool—

Austin: If they drown you in the verdant pool, you can't breathe non mist air anymore, but you can just live in the mist and you can move backwards and forwards.

Jack: That's it. That's it.

Dre: There it is. Yep.

Austin: Yep.

Jack: And they are nightmares.

Keith: They are.

Jack: They are like these feared creatures that enforce—that's how they enforce it.

Austin: Yeah. Drowners. The drowned.

Jack: The drowned. No. Mist-drowned. No.

Austin: Mist-drowned.

Jack: Well, I mean, poolish creatures.

Austin: Poolish creatures. The poolish creatures.

Jack: Poolish creatures is fun to me because it has a little Lewis Carroll to it in a way that if you look too closely at Lewis Carroll, it starts getting kind of unpleasant. Okay, so the central city wields brutal magic by drowning convicts? No, drowning people in verdant pools. In their verdant pool.

Austin: In their—yeah, specifically theirs.

Keith: Vernal pool, by the way. We've switched to verdant pool, which would be a green lush pool.

Jack: To turn them into into poolish creatures.

Dre: Mm.

Keith: Mist cops.

Austin: Mist cops.

Jack: Well, they're mist cops, but they're also like a werewolf. They're like—**[Austin:** Yeah.] they're sort of like loose cannons. Unlike the police.

Keith: Like—yeah.

Austin: Wait a second. And they are. Are they monstrous or—in form? Are they, are they—and do they, they take different forms? Are some of them big, like flesh monsters and some of them not? Or are they just a type of—

Jack: I sort of picture them as, like, ruined people who are very strong.

Austin: Some—there are some ruined people on the call with you, Jack.

Jack: What? What?

Keith: Who?

Austin: Me!

Jack: Oh. Why are you a ruined person?

Austin: That's just how it feels often. What do you mean?

Dre: Yeah, okay. Yeah.

Jack: Right. I thought you meant poolishly ruined.

Keith: Well, it's also because someone drowned Austin in a vernal pool.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Who can only breathe mist, but can move in any direction in it. This is a long—

Austin: Now why are these people loyal to the Power City?

Jack: Because that's—because that's a good question.

Keith: Are they just—are they simply bound by the magic?

Jack: Well, yeah, I sort of—in my brain, I think this is why I'd been thinking of them as, like, convicts, as, like, prison labor or, like, enforced labor. But then it's like, well, why wouldn't you just—

Keith: How can you enforce them there?

Jack: Yes, exactly.

Keith: They're unenforceable.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Are they loyal? Because, I mean, here's one way they could do it, which it gets less—

Austin: W—oh, well—go ahead.

Jack: They choose to do it.

Austin: And why do they choose to do it? It's the most worm-like thing you can do.

Jack: Whoa.

Keith: Wow. It is.

Austin: The worm sacrificed itself. [**Jack:** The worm sacrificed itself.] And the center of law and order should have the most traditional reading of that legend. [**Jack:** Worm philosophy.] The most traditional, right, conservative, kind of like, that base level version of that story is the worm sacrificed itself for us.

Jack: 25 minutes ago. This town was pretty cool. They were kind of chill with it.

Keith: Yeah. Honestly, we hit brutal, and I was like, we've been going for four hours. I don't know if I can make a brutal version of what we just did, but we did the other side with it.

Jack: Poolish creatures.

Keith: I didn't help, but we got there.

Jack: They're zealots, right? They are, yeah.

Austin: They believe, they're true believers.

Jack: Yeah. Which makes them all the more frightening because not only are they physically capable, they are ideologically—they believe that they are ideologically sound.

Austin: Well, and, you know, there's a group out there that's like, let the mists eat us.

Keith: Well, yeah. And then. But—and once you become a poolish creature, you're kind of bought in. Like, you don't—**Austin:** Oh, yeah.] It's like, you know, when you buy something expensive, you're never gonna be like, it's not even that good. You're like, I know. I'm justifying to myself how extremely right I was to be doing this.

Jack: And it's cracking—watch. I could go over there. You can't go over there.

Keith: You can't go over there. Forwards, backwards, left, right.

Austin: Do you stay a poolish creature forever, or is there a—okay, yeah.

Keith: I mean, it's for literally forever, not for the rest of your life. Forever.

Austin: Oh, wow. You're immortal.

Keith: Yeah, Like the worm.

Austin: Like the worm. Become worm-like.

Jack: I had a question. I have a question. How does the Rime feel about the poolish creatures?

Keith: Bad.

Keith: Yeah, I think they've got to be like, their natural enemy. Yeah.

Jack: And also, it's a perversion of the mist. Right? Because they're like, it should be beautiful to be in the mist, and instead the—

Austin: No, they don't think the mist is good.

Jack: No. Right, right, right, right. Sorry, I got confused.

Austin: They think that the pools are creating the mist and we gotta fill the pools in.

Keith: [crosstalk] Right. That we've ordered society around—

Jack: [crosstalk] Which would also mean no more—

Austin: [crosstalk] It might also be—sorry, go ahead.

Keith: This thing that's awful.

Austin: That's right. There might also be groups that love the mist. I don't wanna—like, I'm not saying we don't have that, but it seems like the Tomorrow's Rime is, like—

Keith: In some ways, counterproductively, that group is the poolish creatures. They wouldn't be like that.

Jack: I was thinking about this, too, where it's like, if we cap the vernal wells from the perspective of the Rime, we kill two birds with one stone, we end the mist and we also end the poolish creatures. Which means that the city, the central city, actually has an incentive to—

Austin: Yeah, yeah. To keep mist in general. They didn't want it to eat all the cities, but they don't want it to go away.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Their whole set of power is based around being the place that's easy to get to and having the Polish creatures and having the law—

Jack: And controlling all the astronauts.

Jack: Yes. Yeah.

Austin: Theoretically. Theoretically.

Jack: It gets a lot scary. Now I begin to understand, Austin, why you're like, well, only some people send out rogue missions because if they catch on that I'm sending out too many rogue missions.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: The poolish creatures can't get me in my town, though.

Austin: No, but they can. Can they report back what—you know, what astronauts they've run into? They like—let's say you're not a rogue astronaut and you run into a poolish creature. You have to do some sort of arcane identification ritual to be like, I am approved.

Jack: And if the poolish creatures deny that and they just kill you, who's going to know?

Austin: Who's gonna know? I mean, the telephone person.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: You're—the telephone person at home.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Killed by poolish creatures and we have documents. But then it's like, okay, so now I have to telephone that really unfortunate telephone person in central city and say, your poolish creatures killed another one of my guys. Feeding coyotes—[laughter] Feeding my astronauts to the poolish creatures. [more laughter]

Austin: To the poolish creature. It sounds like you're—yeah. But also, you see now why, on the other hand, if you are a rogue astronaut group, you would maybe not wear the, you know, sigil of your realm or whatever because you don't want it to get back to your hometown.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You don't—rather you don't want it to get back, you don't want it to blow back onto your hometown via—so you go out there, you don't wear whatever the—it's so hard not to imagine them in like, cool astronaut patches and shit, you know? But it's not that. Some other sigil or something, right, that's like my town. But you don't wear it when you're doing your rogue thing. You take it off, you know, you do the division dark zone thing.

Keith: We said that we didn't want to hew so closely to the oil thing, but we now have invented oil tankers sailing under false flags.

[laughter]

Austin: We have, we have, we have. But it's like if the oil tankers were also oil rigs and they are sometimes empty and they have to go drill the oil. They don't know if they're gonna find any, even.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You know?

Jack: Wow. The poolish creatures can't enter the cities, otherwise they start drowning. Which means that the organization—

Austin: They can hold their breath?

Jack: They can hold their breath, but not for—you know—

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Which means they have to have organization on the edge of the city. Like I'm some bureaucrat from the central city who has to deal with the fucking—

Austin: Paul Reiser and the fucking aliens.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Oh, Keith, you had a question?

Keith: Oh, I—was it pre existing that they drown in non mist air?

Jack: Yeah, that was something Austin figured out when—

Austin: I didn't say drown, I just said died. But drowned is good.

Keith: Yeah. I was thinking that if, if they don't get shredded by the mist, then maybe they get shredded by non mist, but drown it—drown is the—that's just the other end of the shred.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Love it.

Jack: I love the poolish creatures. What a great discovery.

Austin: Well, we got one more here for the city before we decide if it's crumbling or flourishing.

Jack: This is—who drew that?

Austin: We are now—

Jack: This is now you, Austin. You're drawing. Keith drew the—

Austin: Okay. And then we're back around to Jack?

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: Jack. Yes.

Austin: Okay. We're sure.

Keith: Yes.

Austin: I got a six of spades. A hero titled for their achievements or failures.

Jack: Local legend.

Austin: A local legend. Oh. [pause] All right, let's keep, let's keep making it, keep making it nuanced and complex in some way. The other options here were a miracle, a catastrophe, or a beast. A local legend, told in Control City, in Center City.

Jack: Control City is pretty good. It's not subtle.

Keith: Is it a city aligned legend or a rebellion aligned legend?

Austin: I think it's a city, it's a local legend, but it does say achievements or failures. But it does say a hero. I think it's a—I think I want it to be—we've gotten really bad about this city and maybe it's still bad, but I want something that's like, I can imagine people living in the city calling them a hero.

Keith: Sure. Well, I was thinking, you know, my question, are they rebellion aligned or city aligned, I think being local doesn't necessarily mean that it's like the brutal city's guy.

Austin: But it's a local...

Keith: Folk heroes kill people, kill cops.

Austin: Yeah, sure. But I don't think that the—we have built a pretty asymmetrical source of oppression from this group, right? [**Keith:** Right.] Like, the people who are suffering from the poolish creatures are not this city. Weirdly. Right?

Jack: No, no. Yeah. They like the, they like the poolish creatures.

Austin: If I'm thinking local legend, I'm not thinking—if I'm thinking hero, local legend. It's a hero to the people of this city. And I don't think the people of this city hew rebellion. There might be rebels in the town. I want to save the rebellious hero for the places where there are rebels.

Keith: Yeah. I guess the thing that I think of is like Occupy Wall street happens in New York. It's not a city full of people who love the global financialization. You know what I mean?

Austin: Yeah, but I'm not, I guess I'm not thinking about this place as New York necessarily.

Keith: No, I'm just giving an example of like, the resistance to a thing can happen from where the thing is. Not necessarily, you know, you don't have to find—you don't have to go to the hinterlands to find **[Austin: Totally.]** Someone who's opposed to the, you know, whatever horrible thing is happening in this.

Austin: I just think that in the particulars of the world we've created, we have made the sort of bad stuff really obfuscated for the people who live in this city.

Keith: Uh huh.

Austin: Because they're not, they're don't, they don't talk to people from other cities. Right.

Keith: It's very hard.

Austin: Unless they're talking to people who are passing through, right?

Jack: Who are only astronauts. A particular subset of people.

Austin: Right.

Keith: But wouldn't the astronauts coming from outside into your city be the exact ones who know all about the, the poolish people and—

Austin: Totally. But sorry, the poolish people. The poolish creatures, not the ghoulish people. Yeah. But I just think that there's a degree of—I will say partly, I'm a little cautious of being like, and the great resistance hero is from the place that's doing the bad thing. Thank God we had the good guy in the bad place.

Keith: Yeah. It's just the word rebellion that is the—it just feels like rebellion is inside.

Austin: But it's not inside. It's in the world. Rebellion isn't in the city. It might also be in the city, but rebellion is—I've been imagining that rebellion happening across the entire world.

Jack: The Rime are sort of everywhere.

Dre: Right.

Keith: It's a rebellion against the order of the astronauts as a whole, not against the particulars of this city.

Austin: That's how I—because maybe only because we had this first.

Keith: The city didn't exist.

Austin: Yeah, exactly.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I don't think the city built the astronauts. The way we told the story was that the city, in fact, had very little, but drew the astronauts to it and drew the other cultures to it to say, hey, what if we use this place as a place of exchange and good? And then they started making poolish creatures. But I think if instead, Keith, what you want to say is, like, this is the center, and, well, everything important is happening here, the fight is here too, then we can kind of pivot in that way. But I think it leaves the other towns kind of in a weird place.

Keith: I wasn't advocating, just asking.

Austin: Right, I see.

Keith: And then when you were like, well, it couldn't have. I was like, well, it could have. It doesn't mean I was advocating for it. I just am saying it's all possible, and if the answer is no, then it's fine either way.

Austin: Yeah. I'm not, I'm not opposed to it being—you know, I think if there's overwhelming interest in it being a rebel hero or something. But again, I, I don't know that the re—that this rebellion is right either? [**Keith:** Materially.] Like, very materially.

Keith: Like on the backs of the science—the scientific facts.

Austin: I don't know that capping all of the wells—pools will make the mist go away. I think that's an open mystery for all of us at this point, which is why I maybe want a hero who is—who cuts across that stuff, you know?

Jack: So not a poolish creature.

Austin: Not a poolish creature. Unless there's like, a really fun story of a poolish creature that.

Jack: I mean. But then that's—it's, it's like—it's not like, this town's Chrollo. Right? Which would be a poolish creature.

Keith: What if it's like the greatest of all time pirate astronaut? Like the guy who did the most ever successful runs. Illegitimate runs.

Austin: Or both. Both legitimate and illegitimate. Was always on both sides of the law.

Jack: And he's, like, retired to this town. He was from this town. And he's no longer running anymore. Oh.

Austin: I mean, he's a legend, so I think he's long dead.

Jack: Oh, sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: You know, local legend. Not local legend. [**Jack:** Right, right, right, right.] Titled for their achievements or failures. Yeah. Like the, the astronaut who went on the—yeah. Who—you know, it's not Robin Hood, because Robin Hood kind of has that little arc. It's like, um... Is it like, it's like Snake Plissken. You know what I mean? It's like—

Jack: It's Snake Plissken. It's also like—there's a bit of—there's something like, almost like a lineman about it, right? Where like someone who over and over again, in the danger, you know, restored the phone lines or whatever. Casey Jones, kind of?

Austin: Yeah, sure. [**Jack:** I mean, Casey Jones—] Bridges, right? Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Casey Jones' train crashed. But he was a hero.

Austin: Yeah. It's not the first, though. It's the one who—

Jack: It was the best.

Keith: It was the greatest, yeah.

Austin: And then story after story of this person. Right? Did you hear the one where such and such a thing happened? Where Ishmael did this? Ishmael didn't—it's not how Ishmael stories kind of go, but you know what I mean.

Keith: Mm-hmm

Austin: Who's a good mythic character in this way who has just dozens of variant stories?

Jack: It is our friend Paul Bunyan?

Austin: Oh, I forgot about Paul.

Jack: Him and his incredible Wikipedia table.

Austin: I forgot about Paul Bunyan. Yeah, maybe.

Jack: When I say our friend Paul Bunyan, I do not mean my personal friend. I mean our friend on Friends at the Table because of. I'm just going to put it briefly on screen. Excellent.

Keith: For what it's worth, I want more than personal friends with Paul Bunyan.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Oh, let's close this. Because of this beautiful table.

Austin: Yeah, it's pretty. I want more stories than this. I want more than eight stories. I want 80 stories.

Jack: Stove skating, pea soup lake, giant camp, Gigantism, Winter of the blue snow, Blue Ox, Locking the Dakotas and creating geography? Something that only the Laughead newspaper says he did. Yes, I am with you. This is—

Austin: Who's the Arthurian knight who has the most stories? [**Jack:** Lancelot.] Probably Lancelot, right?

Dre: Yeah, probably Lancelot.

Keith: Does he have the most?

Jack: He has the sexiest.

Keith: It shouldn't be Lancelot. He's the worst one.

Austin: Media Club Plus Arthur.

Keith: Yeah, it's been a long time since I've looked at this stuff. But he's not the worst as in the least talented. He's the most talented, which doesn't line—[**Jack:** He's a bad person.] But he's boring. Everybody thinks he's boring. Even the court thinks he's boring.

Austin: Legendary characters with most stories about them. Top hit, Merlin.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Jack: Oh, come on. This guy's not Merlin.

Austin: No, no, no, no.

Jack: This guy's Blackbeard. But also. What if Blackbeard was also legitimate?

Austin: Yeah, but you get what I mean. That's the type of thing I'm thinking, you know, Not Beowulf, who has the kind of three great stories, three great acts, you know, but, you know, Sinbad has seven voyages. More than that.

Jack: What about Odysseus?

Austin: Odysseus, right. That style of chronicled—but Odysseus kind of just has the one arc. This astronaut has gone here and back many times.

Jack: Oh, yeah, yeah. And has always perpetually. And I don't say this in the sense that he's got some secret magic, but has, like, time and again found a vernal pool to take him home. You know, there have been times where it was really—

Austin: That's the thing, right? That's the thing that is. Like, he always—for some reason, or—they always found the pool at the last possible second, the stories turn on, and then, wouldn't you know it, you know?

Keith: Every time you'd think that, well, you know, here they were without a pool, stuck at the end of the world.

Austin: Yeah, they literally did. They got stuck at the opposite side of the world once. And wouldn't you know it, a pool was there and brought them home.

Jack: And we don't know if this person—if that's true.

Austin: It's a local legend.

Jack: Yeah. Statistically, it's very unlikely, but yeah, you know.

Austin: Thoughts on a name or a title? So the most traveled person always comes home. They've gone into—they've gone to every major other city, state. Anarchist. Homer doesn't say this, but—because they always make it home. Odysseus, you know, it does fit. It does work, weirdly.

Jack: I mean is there something like the Unteleported Man here? Right? Like, is this the—you know. Ah, you can get corny if you go too far down that road. Right. With the, like, Doctor Who Girl Who Waited stuff.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. The Man who Voyaged or whatever is not really. Yeah. The Jaunt. Just naming other messed up teleportation stories. Yeah, He's Gep. That's correct, HemsAndHaws.

Jack: Oh, he is.

Austin: Gep. He's Gep from Outward. But like the Something Knight or the Something, you know?

Jack: Yeah, like the Everywhere Knight or something.

Austin: Oh, that's pretty good.

Jack: The Everywhere Knight.

Austin: The Everywhere Knight. Does he have a real name or just called the Everywhere Knight?

Jack: That's the name in the legend, right? The Everywhere Knight. It's like a, it's like a Vegas crooner song. They call me the Everywhere Knight.

Keith: It's like the history itself remembered to be a little bit fantasy.

Jack: Yes. [laughter] No one knows when he's from. Okay, cool. So what are we writing here?

Austin: The Everywhere Knight.

Jack: Locals in Center City. In the center city. I'm not committing to that as a name have a legend of the Everywhere Knight. A person who—an astronaut who traveled, who, you know, ranged most widely.

Austin: Yeah. The Ranger. His name is Strider.

Jack: His name is Strider.

Keith: That one sounds familiar.

Jack: And successful.

Austin: From the Capcom video game. Oh, yeah.

Jack: Do we think this city is thriving or flourishing?

Austin: Wait, no, wait a second. You've given us a false choice, Jack.

Dre: Do we think this city's cool or awesome?

Austin: Heads, I win. Tails, you lose.

Jack: And answer very carefully, because my army of poolish creatures.

Keith: Well, of the two, only flourishing is in the book. So I pick that.

Jack: Okay. Are we crumbling or are we flourishing? The thing that's interesting about this book is that they—these adjectives are true, but they are inflected differently, right? The crumbling city asks us to think about the possibility of a bright future, and the flourishing city asks us to think of a possible fall.

Austin: Right.

Jack: Vid is doing a bit of the uh [**Keith:** We have a bad city.] Magician's force here.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. We do have a bad city, which means—

Keith: Flourishing city is bad.

Jack: I mean, so my first thought is it's flourishing and—because we know ways in which this could go badly wrong, right?

Keith: Yeah. I feel like. Yeah. A city flourishing (derogatory).

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, I think that's right. And I just went so Jack, you're going, right?

Jack: No, you didn't just go. I just went.

Keith: I just went. Which means that Austin, it's you.

Austin: No, it isn't. I just went. Didn't I?

Jack: What did you just do?

Keith: No.

Dre: Oh, my god.

Keith: It was Dre, and then me, and then now it's you.

Jack: No, it was Austin, right?

Austin: I just went.

Jack: Oh, wait.

Dre: I thought Austin did the legend, right?

Austin: I just did legend.

Keith: Oh, what did I do then?

Austin: The variant of the—you did the variant of the magic brutal.

Keith: Oh, right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: It's Jack. I think. We're doing the order at the bottom of the screen, right?

Jack: Yes, it's me.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: Okay. Bottom of what screen?

Austin: Oh, boy. The Roll20. Wait, wait. We have to pick an exploratory table.

Jack: We do.

A city flourishing [04:19:55]

Austin: And that's how you should read A city flourishing.

Jack: [reading] A city flourishing. This table fleshes out the city you have started. A city with a bright future. But for how long? Determine the history and the residents of your city by answering questions within three categories. The future. Questions that look forward into the city's future and what that reveals about its current state. The ambitions of the people. Questions that establish an important resident in your city. The legend's influence. Questions that focus on the legend and how the people view them. [stops reading] Oh, we're going to meet the Everywhere Knight again. That's great. [reading] Suggested exploratory tables. Calendar or Pantheon or Vignettes. [stops reading] So I think my gut here says Vignettes because I want to get some personal stuff in here. Calendar is fascinating. I mean, we see a parent cooking dinner for their family. We see people in love on a date. We see a funeral. Where do the names of—yeah, I think vignettes.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: God, Vocations is really cool. What art form is emerging and which is dying?

Austin: Yeah, I'm good with Vignettes. I like that quite a bit.

Jack: Okay, I'm gonna draw. And the card I have drawn is a nine of diamonds. It is an odd diamond. Who used to feel welcome in the city? Who used—**[Austin: No.]** Oh, wrong. No, I'm flourishing.

Austin: We're flourishing.

Jack: Who is arriving or ascending in the city to claim power?

Austin: Interesting. [pause] I will once again be right back as y'all discuss.

Jack: Okay. Who is arriving or ascending in the city to claim power? Okay. The most obvious thing is that our poolish creatures have started to become—they are ascendant, right? There is, you know, poolish philosophies. [**Keith:** You can't arrive in the city.] They're having to do it from the outside. It's limited. And it's also not terribly interesting. I'm the—but the poolish creatures are extremely cool and I'm worried about over-playing them.

Dre: Sure. You don't want to turn them into just like, zombies.

Jack: Right. Or cool zombies that we just keep showing the audience and they're like, yeah, we know they're cool. Imagine if in the abyss, James Cameron had drowned that rat and it had become a poolish rat. That rat was fine.

Keith: He starts enforcing the rules on the submarine. That's the best movie. It's the only good movie he ever made.

Jack: Terminator's good.

Keith: Did he make Terminator 1? I always forget he did. Yeah, because he didn't do—

Jack: He also made Terminator 2. He made Aliens. Aliens is good.

Keith: I haven't seen Aliens. I've only seen Alien, but it is, like, one of my favorite movies.

Jack: Alien is fantastic. Okay, here are some other options. Someone has come from another town and is starting to rework the Conchords. The arrangements were made, and a constitution is being—an outsider has come in and has kind of weaseled their way into the power center of the city and is starting to mess with the concords.

Austin: I'm back.

Keith: By, by [**Austin:** What was the—] How and why is he allowed to do this?

Jack: Artifice, Right. Like, it's someone who has—who is an outsider who has risen up the ranks. This happens all the time in War and Peace as sort of, like, different political maneuvers happen where, like, a star rises and then falls, and then a star comes from outside and rises and falls. Something we talked about but kind of discarded, Austin, was poolish creatures becoming ascendant.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: Who is ascending in the city to claim power? There could be a faction of people who are—[long pause] Like, we should vassalize these other cities. Right. We're already in a real position of power. What we have are a series of sort of, like, realpolitik arrangements with external city states. But what if we just cut out the middleman and, like, sort of establish suzerainties or vassal states, right? What if there is a king?

Austin: Maybe there was a king. Maybe someone came home with evidence...

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: What if someone came home with evidence that there will be a king?

Jack: Oh, yeah, this is it. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Because they find—they find—

Keith: So they find the future king's living ancestor.

Austin: They find evidence of their—

Jack: Or the tomb out in the world.

Austin: The tomb, Right. Or the tomb, a record, a mural that says...

Jack: Here is how it happens. They find the tomb, and on the tomb is a sword. And rather than bringing the sword home, they say, well, I mean, someone's gonna make that sword, so it might as well be us. And then once they've, and then once they've made the sword, they're like, well, we might as well essentially make the skeleton in the

tomb, right? So we need a king. And it's this very, like—it's the construction of a future as, like, a stepped political project as you go down the slippery slope one step at a time. And they are ascending.

Austin: And like they're finding, like, well, sometimes they're finding stuff. And here's where we can get slippery with the time. We said that time is deterministic before, but it's like, you know, they don't find a map of what their domain is at first, right? But then at some point, they decide we're going, and maybe they succeed. They bring one town under control and they find evidence that the town was under control, you know?

Jack: [joking] Yes, of course, you idiot!

Austin: Maybe that evidence also says that four other towns are under control. And then they say, well, look, it says that these other towns are part of our kingdom, so we better go get them now.

Jack: After having invented the Canticle of—for Liebowitz from first principles, we're inventing the divine mandate backwards.

Austin: Backwards, yeah. The divine in this is the future.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: The future read by people who've decided, we gotta build that future.

Jack: Yeah. A king is on the rise based on discoveries about a future king. This—

Austin: And to be clear, this isn't this king's tomb, it's some descendant of this king's tomb, right?

Jack: Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah. When the mists have passed or whatever.

Austin: And the stuff we're finding, I do think has to be debatable in some—[**Jack:** Oh, sure.] Undebatable in some way and debatable in some way. Right?

Keith: If you find a king, how could you ever prove definitively that this is your—that you found your descendant in a tomb?

Austin: Right.

Keith: You could never definitively prove that.

Jack: No. [crosstalk] But this is where statecraft kicks in.

Keith: [crosstalk] You could claim this is my—I am this dead king's ancestor, which means at some point, he inherited his kingship from my descendant right on down the line to me. I should now be king.

Austin: The once and future king.

Keith: Yeah, yeah.

Dre: Oh, sure.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: King is on the rise based on discoveries about a future king. This is a complex multi-step process. Because it's critical, right, if you are the faction that wants to get a king, that you don't jump the gun. Right? You have to make the sword first or you have to take that one town first. You know, we have to get people who are city states and are also proud of a kind of republic, a republic of poolish creatures into, we're gonna head a king. So you're gonna do that gradually.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Okay, cool. Me finding a document that's like, they guillotined that guy. And I'm like, oh, I wouldn't bring that home.

[laughter]

Austin: Right, I mean, the poolish creatures are gonna wait by the door and say, turn in all the stuff you brought.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You know?

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Well, hang on. Did the poolish creatures enforce my team of astronauts?

Austin: I guess not yet.

Jack: Not yet.

Austin: No, no, no, I meant the other homes.

Jack: Oh, I see.

Austin: I mean, they start working as, you know, TSA agents on the borders of every town going, and what are you bringing in?

Jack: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Crucially on the borders.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: We made a kind of sensor that you get by drowning one. Okay, so I've gone now. Which means it's Dre's turn.

Dre: Yes. Five of clubs.

Austin: Five is odd.

Dre: Yep. What omen—

Jack: We now have two five of clubs.

Dre: What?

Jack: Somehow drew two five of clubs.

Dre: Oh, that's fun. Oh, one for me, one for you.

Austin: Hmm. Stacked deck. One's a creature.

Dre: Yeah.

Jack: Oh, God.

Dre: What omen are the people of the city ignoring? Ooh, that's fun.

Jack: That's a good one, isn't it?

Austin: That's a good one.

[long pause]

Keith: Omen not, not necessarily bad.

Austin: What if they can see the sun through the mist for the first time in a long time?

Dre: Yeah. Yeah, I was definitely thinking something about the mist being definitely—

Austin: Yeah, I think that makes sense. We can. We can brainstorm around mist ideas. Thinner mist, thicker mist, shapes in the mist.

Jack: Yeah, you start feeling the acidity changing whichever way you go.

Austin: Yeah. Mist starts smelling different.

Dre: Man, yeah, seeing the sun through the mist is good. I think it just hits on a lot of things that we have already, like, talked about, I think. Why would they ignore it?

Austin: Yeah, that's the question, right?

Jack: The sort of. The narrative work here suggests that it's a bad omen because you have more incentive to ignore a bad omen than a good omen.

Dre: Sure.

Austin: So maybe it isn't the sun then, because that feels like—maybe it doesn't feel like a good omen, but.

Jack: We like the Sun God.

Austin: We do like the—well, we like the Sun God.

Keith: We like the Sun God.

Dre: I don't know if they like the Sun God.

Austin: Because it feels like they would be like, look, it's a sign that our kingdom is thriving. The mist is fading back, and then we can see the sun again. That's good. Or something, right? But maybe that's not what they do.

Keith: Well, maybe they can see the sun again, but it's the presentation of it that is—like, your first impulse would be to say, oh, the sun, isn't this good? No one's seen the sun in forever. But there's something else about how it's happening that is like, we don't really know how to feel about this.

Jack: Is that ominous enough? [pause] Astronauts show up, and we don't know where they're from. Although that happens regularly. That's how rogue astronauts work. Although they wouldn't really come to this town, would they? And I don't think that the poolish creatures would be super happy if a team of astronauts showed up and said, we're not telling you where we're from.

Austin: Non-astronauts show up. What are some other—

Dre: People who have, like—astronauts who have left the city? People keep seeing someone who looks like people who have supposedly left, like, throughout the city.

Jack: Whoa.

Dre: There's like—

Austin: Interesting.

Dre: So, like, astronaut Tom left a week ago, but I swear to God, I saw Tom at the coffee shop yesterday.

Austin: That's scary.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: That is really scary.

Keith: Hearing—telephone people hearing voices that they don't know.

Jack: Oh.

Austin: Or words that they can't—no one knows who's calling. Yeah.

Jack: Getting calls in from the telephone people.

Austin: Yes, yes, yes. And they're saying shit that you're like, wha? And, yeah, sometimes it's just the connection gets weird and they say, you know, they say one year hence, even though they just say that.

Keith: Hence? What's hence?

Austin: What's hence?

Jack: What's hence? And then someone on the other side of the town is saying, actually, one year hence, the great king will come.

Austin: That's right. They're ignoring—yeah, exactly.

Jack: Wow.

Austin: I really, like, yeah, something else is possessing the telephone people, but they're just saying, weird issue with the magic communications.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Or it's a sign that the king is—like you said, yeah.

Jack: Something else is possessing the telephone people. Telephone people is in inverted commas. [pause] Yeah, and I think that sometimes they say, like, you know, where lies the slumbering, you know, classic Annihilation, Crawler writing stuff. But sometimes they just, like, recite lists of birds or make animal cries or, you know, or just, you know, nonsense like echolalia or something.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Okay.

Keith: Sounds like they're radioing in a proper thing, but, you know, like, none of the facts make sense.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: No one was in that area. There isn't a town called that.

Jack: God, that's so scary.

Austin: That's two answers right so far?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Four more.

Keith: Yeah. It's me?

Austin: It is you.

Keith: All right. Three of diamonds. That's a exploratory table.

Austin: Oh, it is. Because we already had an odd diamond before.

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Oh, yeah.

Austin: So this is three Vignettes.

Keith: We see a healer tend to a sick member of the community. What are they sick with? And what has the healer told them to avoid to get better? Well, I had a gut instinct, and we can at least start there. But, you know—what happens when you drink the vernal water, not drown in it like the ghoulish...

Jack: It depends, I think, is what we've said. Right? It depends on a sort of spellcraft that you have constructed around you.

Austin: Sometimes that's how you become a telephone person.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: Right.

Austin: And we've gestured at you can also—it can give you other powers if you have different training or if there's other sorts of components or something involved in what you're drinking.

Keith: My gut instinct was like, something going wrong with—someone going halfway with becoming a telephone person or halfway to becoming poolish and making you sick with magic.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: Huh.

Austin: Can I. Can I just pause for a second? Because I wanna read what it says for vignettes, which we didn't read out loud.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: Because I wanna make sure that we don't fall into the trap of making what we're about to say too important. Not that this—it can't be. But. [reading] Fill your world with everyday moments. Create a snapshot of life, mundanity in all its beauty and the faces of everyday people. Get a deeper understanding of the small things. How your

grand world building trickles down to moments rarely seen and day to day life in your world. [stops reading] So I want to make sure that we're not like rushing to...

Jack: Right.

Austin: You know, what's it look like when. What's it look like when someone gets hurt and then someone uses magic to heal them? It doesn't even say magic. It doesn't even say magic. It says when a healer—it says we see a healer—

Keith: It is one of the only kinds of magic we specifically have talked about existing.

Austin: We did. You're right 100%. But I just want to make sure that we don't lose the vignette in search of the event. You know, mostly I'm curious—one of the reasons we took vignettes is we were curious about what everyday life in this world looks like.

Keith: I guess then the two options are that we switch to a lower impact scene in order to highlight the snapshot of mundanity in all its beauty. Or that people getting sick with magic is a snapshot of life and money. People get sick all the time from magic.

Austin: Totally.

Keith: One of the things that happens in a place like this, and it's why so much of the society revolves around astronauts and talking about what astronauts can and can't do and why they have a sort of outsized sort of impact on what the society is doing and what they're interested in. Because it's a way that people get sick, people get—people even outside of the astronauts can get sick for magic. [**Austin:** Yeah.] So those are, I think, the two avenues that I see.

Jack: Yeah.

[long pause]

Keith: And I don't want to choose. I want to not choose.

Austin: Oh, okay.

Keith: [laughter] I don't want to choose it.

Austin: You don't lean one way or the other. It sounds like you lean towards the magic, towards like, something weird is happening with—either with poolish creatures or with astronauts or with someone waking up with elements of that stuff, even though it's not what they normally are. Or you said your first pitch was like, something goes wrong halfway through the process or something.

Keith: Yeah, I, I think that maybe that—I do think that this story deserves to have, like, the weight that's put on this particular piece of society that we've put by being very interested in it and fleshing it out a lot, that, like—people trying to just live in the city are—have to deal with magic in their own way. [stuttering] If we talked about the scarcity of the magic, the encroaching of the mist, the laws around astronauts and stuff, and it's like, how does this stuff affect regular people? Is it that they just live their lives and they're in a normal city? Or is magic a big positive or negative part of their day?

[pause]

Jack: I wonder if—I mean, I was thinking of something really simple, right? Which is it's like, what if someone... got caught in the mist and traveled back in such a way that they were wounded but not killed? You know, like, like, almost like they got like a, like a rug burn or, you know, a frostbite or something from having to turn back to catch something or to get through a gate or something. And they didn't push hard enough against the mist that they were shredded. But that process began, right? Something really prosaic of like, you know, we talk about the astronauts not going back in the mist, otherwise they'll die, and it's like they're trained obviously not to do that, but it's like, what if a child runs, you know? I don't know why somebody would be out there. I'm trying to find something really simple and, you know, like, personal.

Austin: Yeah. You know, we can go the other way, too, which is that someone got caught in it closing in on them during one of these moments where it's closed closer.

Keith: Yeah. A gust that blows the mist close to the edge of a city.

Austin: Oh yeah, windstorms that sometimes bring it into town, and everyone has to bundle up and get inside.

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: You don't want to breathe it in. You don't want to get caught in it.

Jack: Be specific about their motions.

Austin: Wow. I know we're trying to get away from oil, but I know we're doing air quality index now

Keith: In Pokemon Z-A, the way that they have Pokemon Centers along the spokes on the outside of the wheel of the city, which is just a feature of that city. But in a place where—that's where you get burned from the mist during a windy day, that's where you put your doctors is on the edges.

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Doctors all bundled up so that they can go out in the wind.

Jack: Yeah. It's like. And this is like, abrasions or something. It's like—

Keith: Yeah. And I guess that you don't have to do anything special. You just clean it and bandage it.

Jack: Salve or something.

Keith: Yeah. And you tell them to go, go inside, go in the basement. Don't get hit again today.

Jack: Yeah. And I bet in the same way that when you smash a joint or something on a table and you have that rush of nausea, I bet there is a fever or something that's associated with the thing, but at the same time, it's like a physical injury rather than a magical injury and your soul has come loose or something.

Keith: Burn your hand on a pot, and you're like, not sure yet if it's gonna be bad or not. You know, it's not super serious, but you're like, in an hour, this is gonna be nothing. Or my hand is gonna sting, like, all day.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I like that a lot.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: I'm happy with this. I'm gonna put this down as... a person got caught in a gust of mist-wind and suffered abrasions all over their body. They are being bandaged and salved by a doctor.

Austin: Great.

Jack: Now it's you, I think.

Austin: That was Keith?

Jack: Yeah, that was Keith.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Okay. Yeah. Ace of diamonds. Face card.

Jack: Ooh, face cards.

Austin: Diamonds. The legends influence. The legend of the Everywhere Knight influence. The legends influence. I thought it was gonna be a sentence. It wasn't. How do the people tell the legend's story to others? That's fun. [pause] Plays?

Jack: I was gonna say, is it like mummers plays?

Austin: Ooh, mummers plays. Puppet shows, [**Keith:** Parade.] Parades?

Keith: Parade of the snake, or a how big can we get the snake around?

Jack: The snake? The worm?

Keith: I mean, the worm. The worm.

Austin: Oh, right. Sorry. Wait. Which legend is this? Is this the city's legend?

Jack: Questions that focus on the legend. I think it's the worm. Wow. Yeah.

Austin: You don't think it's the local legend? Because this is the city section?

Keith: That's the hero.

Austin: Oh, you're—well, that's the hero because—it's because I chose—because we rolled hero.

Jack: A local legend.

Keith: A local legend. A hero.

Austin: Yeah, Especially focus on the legend. Nobody's—capital L Legend.

Keith: The city's legend. Yeah.

Austin: Now I'm flopped and going, wait a second.

Dre: Yeah. No, I think it's capital L legend. Like the Legend section.

Austin: The OG Legend. A Legend. But up there, it's not capitalized. [**Keith:** Worm party.] Hmm? What was that?

Keith: All caps.

Dre: I was just thinking if we were telling the story of the worm that's probably, probably a good party. Like a good parade.

Austin: Did you say worm party?

Dre: Worm party.

Austin: Oh, yeah. Worm party. I see. Questions that focus on the legend and how people view them. Them. The legend. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. It's a shame that the Everywhere Knight is very clearly not of the same era as the—

Keith: Ooh. Just to complicate it though, in the examples of the legend, they are all personified in some way. An unbeatable monarch, a band of rebels, a contemplative scholar, a wandering creature. We picked the least them of those four, wandering creatures.

Austin: Oh, did we? I didn't realize that. I see a legend is told of... I see. Interesting. This legend's [**Keith:** Dealer's choice.] Across every corner.

Keith: Yes.

Austin: So maybe it's either. Maybe it's either. Maybe it's become both in a really weird way. Which, like, it can't be both. We know and have said that they don't live at the same time. Yeah. You know what I mean? Like, the Everywhere Knight is from the era of the astronaut.

Jack: Yeah. Whereas the worm

Keith: Maybe he can be everywhere because he's a thousand mile long worm.

Austin: Which is that like—it's like, you know, there is the, there is the, the one festival where it's like the area with the day—the Everywhere Knight met the worm. I guess the legend—the worm legend isn't that the worm is dead necessarily. It's just that it's deep underground. Right? So.

Jack: Or out there, going forward out there.

Austin: I think regardless, we kind of have our answer and we don't have to. Like, this doesn't have to be a big one. How do the people tell the legend story to each other? It's a lot of performance. It's puppet shows, it's theater. It's parade. It's public performance. Right?

Jack: The people of the city tell the story of the legend through widespread public performance. Great.

Austin: And I would say the story of the Everywhere Knight. Because that I think is the—

Jack: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Austin: I don't think that they're doing that for the worm.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I actually don't think that the worm is getting plays. [**Dre:** [sad] Aw.] I mean, it's in the Everywhere Knight play about when the Everywhere Knight met. But I do think that that's like distinct.

Jack: Vid says that he meant local legend.

Austin: Yeah. Okay.

Jack: Yeah, yeah. Okay. Now it's me with—hang on, wait. This is, this is one. This is two. This is three. This is four. This will be the fifth. Yeah. And I have drawn the five of diamonds. Oh, it's on the table again.

Dre: Ooh.

Jack: Five. Vignettes. We see musicians performing a well practiced song. What are the instruments and what is the song about? Hmm. I mean, I think the instruments are wind instruments. They are flutes and whistles and recorders. They are things that can catch the wind. And I think that there are sort of huge wind catchers, right? Like up on the walls of the town and up on the tall buildings that can create these sounds, you know, blow through and produce these tones when their stoppers are opened up, that singers who are also on the roofs and musicians that are also on the roofs use as, like the drone tones. There was that Co-Op—there's a British grocery store called a Co-Op. There was a Co-Op that all its refrigerator units made this beautiful ambient tone that

fell into harmony. And it went viral because everyone was like, the sound of these refrigerators is extremely beautiful. And I think there's that through the, through the wind blowing high above the city. And I think the song they sing is about the worm, right? I think worm music is long and is ambient and is very sort of tonal. I think it's a simple song. I think it's about the, you know, the founding myth, right, of the worm chewing through the, the aquifer and opening up the vernal pools.

Austin: Yeah, I like it.

Jack: I'm gonna write here, roof mounted wind instruments, sing, play [**Austin:** Worm song.] And musicians sing a song about the worm. Because you could categorize—you know, I was thinking about, like, doing, oh, this is, this is a song about all the various different towns that kind of came together to form this place. But I think that's a bit neat and also is a little close to—there are ways in which this town is like the other towns. And one of those ways is the—is the shared history with the world. Right? [**Austin:** Yeah.] And in that way, it comes in line with. With the other towns. And now it's Dre for our final city card.

Dre: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Jack of diamonds. [**Jack:** Diamond face.] Diamond face. So is that another—we already did a diamond face.

Austin: We did. We just did.

Jack: Wow.

Austin: Okay, so we're back to Vignette, Jack.

Dre: I like this one. We see laborers on a lunch break. What are they working on? And what treat is being shared around?

Keith: I love treats.

Dre: We do. How—do we think this is a city that is very tall?

Jack: We know bits of it are. Because they have the things on the roofs that make the music.

Keith: I would advocate for tall because if you have a decreasing diameter because of the mist encroaching [**Dre:** Oh, yeah.] And you know that you can build up, can exist above the wind, you'd build up naturally.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: You build up naturally.

Keith: I have, like, a very small city that also has multiple layers. There's no sun to block, so who cares?

Jack: There's light to block.

[pause]

Dre: Yeah, you can make light.

Keith: Yeah, you can make light.

Dre: I've, I've totally started thinking about the treat being shared and forgot that we still have to determine what they're working on.

[**Jack** laughs]

Keith: [crosstalk] I think it can go in any order, yeah.

Austin: [crosstalk] Well, we kind of did just determine what they're working on.

Dre: Yeah, Yeah. I mean, they're working on some sort of building.

Austin: Yeah. Like maybe with the, with the increase in, or like the, the tightening of the mist building up, they're like, we gotta start building up the middle, you know?

Dre: Yeah. What if it's like a, like a house expansion, but they're just going up instead of, like, being like, yeah, we put a new bedroom on the back of the house. It's, we put a bedroom on top of the house.

Jack: You put a new floor on.

Dre: Yeah, we turned the ceiling into a new floor. Okay. Now the important part of the question, what treat is being shared around?

Austin: Great question. Important, shareable treat.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: Sweet or salty?

Dre: What kind of food do you think they eat? Because if they don't get a lot of sunlight, it's gonna be hard to grow plants.

Jack: That's part of what the magic is for. Remember the lenses that let them.

Dre: That's right.

Jack: And they can pray over the—my brain is like, gummy candy.

Austin: Tell me more.

Dre: I like it.

Jack: Or a caramel or something. Or like a, like a—

Dre: No, I like gummy. I like gummy.

Keith: Gummy. Closest gummy—I mean, the epitome gummy is the gummy worm.

Jack: That feels disrespectful. I don't...

[laughter]

Keith: I just—I think I just, I'm saying I see how you got the gummy.

Dre: I don't know, Jack. You ever seen a king cake? It's just got a little baby Jesus in the middle of it.

Austin: That's true.

Jack: That is true.

Dre: Now, importantly, you are not supposed to eat the little baby Jesus in the cake, but, you know.

Austin: Okay, but it's a good sign.

Keith: They don't worship the worm.

Austin: No but the worm is...

Jack: Venerate the worm.

Austin: Venerate the worm. Some people venerate—the norm is to venerate the worm. And then there are alternate perspectives.

Jack: The norm is to venerate the worm.

Austin: But what if there is like a big—what if there's like a—what if there's a king cake? Because, like, part of the king cake is, oh, look, I got the piece of the king cake with Jesus in it, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: What if there's like a, ooh, I got the thing that has the gummy worm in it.

Keith: Sure.

Austin: But I don't know what it—like a fortune cookie, but inside the cookie is a gummy candy.

Keith: You get some kind of gummy. And if you get the gummy worm, it's lucky.

Austin: It's lucky.

Dre: Sure, gotcha.

Keith: Or unlucky, depending on your—

Austin: That's right. Damn it. I got the gummy worm.

Keith: I got the gummy worm. The worm. The worm fucked us all.

Jack: And then everyone's like, oh, that person is from Tomorrow's Rime, right?

Austin: That's right.

Jack: Yeah. But. Okay, okay. I think this is great. I want to know what the gummy is in, and I want to know why it is widespread enough that a group of people, like, laboring on a house, would have that as a snack. Right? Or a treat. It's like, it's got to be something that you bring in your lunchbox to work. Or it's sold, it's widespread.

Keith: Jack, what is the question?

Jack: What is the gummy in? What is the outside of the fortune cookie?

Keith: Have you—you know, at a baseball game, you get the sundae in the little mini helmet?

Jack: Yes.

Keith: In those sundaes, there's sometimes, like, cake and ice cream and gummy worms. I swear this is true.

Dre: No, no. Yes, you're correct. Keep going.

Keith: So I'm thinking, like, there's, like, a cream cake, like a cupcake, that either inside the cupcake is a gummy—which I had to say the baseball sundae to ground it in that that is a combination that is real in the world and not a weird thing.

Jack: And that cupcake is in my lunch.

Keith: Yeah. You get a cupcake, you unwrap it. You take a bite out of it. It reveals the hollow, the center cavity in which is a gummy.

Jack: And the gummy might be the worm.

Keith: And the gummy might be the worm.

Dre: Oh, okay. So there's always a gummy.

Austin: Right, that's what I was saying.

Keith: Yeah, there's always a gummy, but it might be the worm.

Jack: Okay. This does sound like a treat. I would enjoy this.

Keith: It's passed the test.

Dre: You should go try dirt cake sometime, Jack.

Jack: Laborers building a new storey [**Keith:**I forgot about dirt cake.] On a building.

Dre: That's what I thought you were talking about.

Keith: No, totally. I just forgot that that's what it was like, that it was called that, that sometimes it wouldn't come in a little baseball helmet.

Jack: Okay. Laborers building a new story on a building. Eat treats that are cupcakes that could contain a gummy worm. Let's just scroll up a little and compare that to the central city wields brutal magic by drowning people in their vernal pool to turn them into poolish creatures who could only breathe mist but can move in any direction in it. Good game.

Dre: You gotta find joy in the day to day, you know?

Austin: That's right. Yeah, that's right.

Keith: Were you gonna not have a little cake with gummy worms in it?

Dre: You could get drowned and turned into a poolish creature. You gotta eat that cake.

A journey in the land [04:58:56]

Jack: Okay, now we move on to our final section or our penultimate. There's a little tiny outro.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: [reading] A journey in the land. With a clear shape of your world, zoom in further to look at a group traveling. This table—

Austin: We really built ourselves into a really fun place here.

Jack: I know, I know. It's really good. [reading] This table brings you down to the ground of the world. Take a moment to see what you've created from the perspective of the people. Who are they? What are they doing? What stories do they tell? [stops reading] We find that one of Vid's prompts is like, someone turns 180 degrees and walks three miles, what do they find?

[laughter]

Austin: Well, then we would know that they were a poolish creature. So we would still be able to say.

Jack: Right, yes, we. Or dead.

Austin: Or dead. They find death. Keith, I think, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: I will draw a card. That is a four of diamonds. When traveling with a—nomads.

Austin: Yep.

Keith: Migration, Wayfarers, Family.

Jack: So this is people who have paid for passage, right? Safe passage. They're being escorted

Austin: By astronauts?

Jack: Well, here's the thing.

Keith: It would have to be astronauts or the poolish creatures. And I don't think it would be them.

Jack: It wouldn't have to be astronauts. It would just be so dangerous. Nothing we have said so far about astronauts gives them—you could do it. You can walk out into the mist.

Austin: I guess I've been—you're right. I've been saying astronaut, lowercase A. Everyone who does this is an astronaut.

Jack: Oh, yes, you're right. You're right.

Austin: But you're saying, like—yeah, you're. But you're—no, you're right, because I've been talking—

Keith: Once you've paid for passage, who would you pay if not an escort? So I was thinking of, like, you might not be able to pay escorts.

Austin: Jack's suggesting that anybody could leave town at any time. Which is true.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: So dangerous.

Austin: It's just that the group that we've been talking about and calling the astronauts are people who we've been imagining are trained and equipped and are, like, [**Jack:** Regulated.] Regulated. Right, poolish creatures allow for them when they've been—when that has been approved.

Jack: But, like, you don't need a stalker to go into the zone. Or rather, to put it another way, if you enter the zone, you are a stalker. Although you know the professor, [**Keith:** Maybe not for long.] The professor hires a stalker because he knows that he would not survive if he went into the zone.

Austin: Not everyone who goes into the dungeon is an adventurer.

Jack: Right? Yes. So I want to make sure that we leave ourselves open to the option of like we haven't said anything about the capital A astronauts that means that they are the only people who can enter the mist.

Austin: No, but what we have said, there are some things that are interesting here, right? Because like nomads live—people who are nomads in way of life live in transit or not in transit, but they move. Sometimes they move according to things like seasons because they have flocks of animals that need to move to different territory to have access to feed. Sometimes they move for religious reasons or for, you know, familial reasons. You move towards a center of population for important festivals or important parts of the year politically. Then you go back out to the periphery for your day to day life. Like there's all sorts of reasons to do it, but often it means moving out and in again.

Jack: It does, yeah.

Austin: Go ahead.

Jack: You could still have nomads here. They just, they just would be unidirectional. Unless they found a vernal pool. But maybe—

Keith: But then they'd only be able to go back home with it.

Jack: Yeah, maybe if they go into a vernal pool, you know, if they have been nomads generationally. What happens if you go into a vernal pool?

Austin: Well, we've gestured at is you attune yourself to a home pool in some way. You're washed, you're baptized, you know, whatever, in a home pool. And you go back there. I mean, we can open the world—the option up here to like there are people who don't live in—besides the poolish creatures, there are people who can live out there.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Who just aren't tied to a pool. It's just hard. And what if they've never—what happens if you've never been attuned to a pool?

Jack: This is what I'm saying. Yeah.

Keith: Jack was saying, yeah.

Jack: This is.

Austin: Sorry, but does that mean you can go forward and backwards?

Keith: Well, that would give a lot of credit to Tomorrow's Rime, I think.

Jack: No, you can't. Because the not going backwards is not a property of the pool. It's a property of the mist.

Austin: But it is a property of the pool. Because the pool is what determines what home is.

Keith: Well, I think the direction that you go in is determined by—

Austin: What if you were born in the mist?

Keith: Where you leave from—

Jack: What if you were born in the mist?

Keith: The question is, if you're born in the mist, where is from? And I think that there's—the two avenues are, well, if you're an intergenerational mist family, where there's no home pool, then maybe there's no way to be going from somewhere and no way to get locked in a direction. Or the cruel thing is you're stuck in the direction you start crawling in when you're a baby.

Jack: And that's also what I wondered. I wondered if it was something as mundane as that.

Keith: And maybe the way around this would be to say—

Jack: I mean, a baby's not actually gonna get a mile out.

Keith: They're seafaring, because it's easier to predict where the mist is going to be. So that you could go somewhere, port there if you need to, find a pool if you need to, go back on the water where there's no—

Austin: But you cut yourself off so quick.

Jack: It's so hard to be out there. I mean, we know this, but.

Austin: Right, we've spent the last five hours being like...

Keith: You can't do this one thing.

Austin: You can't go backwards. And more importantly, sorry, you can't do this thing. And it's really hard not to do that thing.

Jack: That's why the juice is.

Austin: That's where the juice is. So that's where I'm like, is there a smaller group of people who can—we've already—we have one small group of people who can do this. They're poolish creatures. They can move backwards and forwards. They're awful. They live out in the mist. That's not good.

Keith: Are they just—are they the no—are they the only nomads?

Austin: No. That's what I'm saying is, I like the idea of there being another group of people who are not astronauts, who—you know, I really like to think at the beginning of *Destiny 2*, where you lose your powers and you learn that, like, you have people who aren't fucking guardians who live out here and who have to, like, fight the Vex sometimes and we don't have your powers, but we make do and we die is what happens. We don't get to come back to life, you know, and then that part of the game ends before, before you do anything with it, unfortunately. But I do like the idea of there being a small amount of people who are like, we are—what we're trading is living in tall buildings. We are trading away the weekly festival, *Song of the Worm* or whatever. We're having a really hard life out here. We never get to go into the towns, but we can go wherever we want.

Keith: Never get to?

Austin: We never go in. They can never come under the sway of a pool or whatever. Right?

Keith: Right. But they can—like the, like the poolish creatures, they can move whichever way, but not poolish creatures. And it's because of, at some point there were people who were able to be born in the mist and they were able to stay in the mist without—

Austin: I think it's just really hard to survive out there. Even if you can't—even if you can walk backwards [**Keith:** Even going whatever direction.] Yeah. Cause like, you can't farm in the mist. You can't settle—maybe you can, but it's—you know, there are creatures out there. It seems really hard. There's creatures out there besides the poolish creatures.

Jack: Everyone resents you as well, like culturally.

Austin: Right. Because you're like, I'm not gonna be part of your—I'm not—that's not how we live. We don't live like that.

Jack: But also because you possess something they want so badly and at least perceptually, you're not a poolish cre—you know, let's say I want so badly to be able to turn back and walk in the mist, but I look at a poolish creature and I'm like, they can do it. But look at the trade off, you know? But I look at a nomad and they look like me, you know? Yeah. They have a kid. They can just move freely.

Austin: Right.

Jack: We know it's so hard.

Austin: It's so hard. It's so hard. A complete different alternative idea, because I'm happy to throw anything out is, maybe when traveling with a blank here and it hits nomads, maybe there are towns that have been swallowed by the mist and there are people leaving those towns, refugees leaving those towns and moving to the cities that haven't been swallowed yet.

Jack: I like both of these. Is it structurally more interesting to have only one entity that can move in any direction in the mist? Or is it structurally more interesting to have two different—

Austin: Well those people wouldn't be able to move—

Jack: No, no, no. I'm thinking about the nomads who can move freely.

Austin: It's funny because if I was building a setting to use again, I would insist that we also have non-poolish creatures that can move backwards and forwards because it—but this is the game designer in me and the GM in me being like, if we're supposed to tell 100 hours or 500 hours of story in this setting, sometimes I'm going to need you to run into somebody who isn't an astronaut or a poolish creature out there. This is a stalker. Right? It's like sometimes you have to meet scientist Dave.

Jack: All right, we're talking about GSC's Stalker now.

Austin: Yeah, sorry. Yes, yes. Though also sometimes, if you're playing the open world game, I want you to run into people who know this place, who are not just other astronauts.

Keith: You know, I think that we take nomad literally. And they are, because of their intergenerational nomadic lifestyle, they can move backwards and forwards.

Austin: But they were born out there.

Keith: But they're born out there. They're not transformed. They're just people.

Austin: And sometimes they go, I want to move into a town. I want to attune myself to a pool. I'm done with this.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, that's a good thing.

Keith: Can you cross into a town without attuning, like, for a—

Austin: Yeah, I think so. Right? Yeah, maybe.

Keith: Go into a town, buy supplies, go back out.

Austin: Right.

Jack: But I think there shouldn't, or not all of them. But I think in general, there is a kind of a wall that has come up. [**Keith:** Distrust.] Yeah. And a resentment.

Keith: You're satisfied?

Jack: Yeah, I'm happy with this. Let me make a journey.

Keith: Not only am I satisfied, but also it's 7:30.

Austin: It is.

Jack: Copy. Paste. I'm putting it up here next to our mist diagram. The journey. A group of nomads—

Keith: I didn't even get to draw my diagram of how I think astronauts walk.

Jack: Whoa. Very bouncy, because of the low gravity on the moon.

Keith: No, you know. You know that's not—

Jack: Nomads who can move freely in the mist, comma, living a hard life by not attuning to a pool. There's texture here, I think, which is good. City. All right, who drew last? Who drew the nomads?

Austin: Keith.

Keith: I drew the nomads. That was me.

Austin: Yeah. All right, so I'm up for during—so we're traveling again. We are zooming in on a group that's traveling. Group of nomads is traveling during the eight of hearts, a holiday. A celebrated or observed. National or religious. Sorry, Celebrated or observed. National or religious. As examples or as, you know, relevant terms. So some sort of nomad holiday.

Jack: Yeah. Interesting. And it's traveling during, not traveling to.

Austin: That's right. Worm holiday? [**Jack:** I was thinking worm holiday.] Do they have—how does this nomad culture feel about the worm? I mean, they're behaving wormishly.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Positive.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: The worm moves out here. The worm keeps moving.

Jack: Yes. Are they following a path of the worm? No, that's kind of—that could be what one nomad culture does all the time. What if they're at a place where they believe the worm did something? What if they've—the holiday is now—

Austin: The aquifer point? They're at the point where it dug deep. They're at like, a big crater in the ground or like a, like a deep tunnel system or something.

Jack: Yeah. What if [crosstalk] What if it's a spiraling tunnel?

Austin: [crosstalk] A mouth of a cave, yeah.

Jack: And walking the spiral is special because you're going underground, which gets you out of the mist, which, you know, is obviously nice for them, even though it's not...

Austin: God, yeah, yeah.

Jack: But also there's something magical—there's something that only they can do about that. Well, I suppose underground, anybody could do it.

Austin: That's what—yeah, we got there. Can astronauts go backwards underground?

Jack: We have over the course of this recording, we have had two answers to this in two different scenes. In one, birds and digging creatures are exempt from the mist. That's how the worm moves and that's how birds fly. In another scene, we had some astronauts who were stuck in a canyon and went down a cave hoping to find a way out of the canyon, and found that it doubled back, but—

Austin: I mean, that still hurt them. Because if it doubles back and spits them out backwards.

Jack: Yeah, you're right. You're right. Yes.

Austin: But you're right that they could go, in this version, what we're saying is they could go underground, backwards 10 miles and then pop back out.

Jack: And then go forward and—

Austin: go forward again and try to find a different path forward. I think I've talked myself into liking that, actually.

Jack: Yes. This does produce a question that I don't like to think about, which is, why haven't the cities done tunnel projects? Is it because they're very far apart and it's really hard?

Keith: Horrible terrain?

Jack: Horrible terrain.

Keith: Like Sandy—like, you can't dig a tunnel. It's all—it's like sand and loam and

Jack: Mostly sand and loam. Caves and tunnels are rare. Yeah, you're right, Keith. This is exactly how they would move.

Austin: Yeah. I got another answer that I think doesn't erase the first one, which is Siofra River Valley from Elden Ring. It's weird down there, man.

Jack: You gotta be real careful.

Austin: Yeah, you gotta be careful down there. There's weird shit down there.

Jack: There's antler people, if I remember right?

Austin: Oh, yeah. Oh yeah.

Jack: They'll mess you up. Yeah, all right. They're down in, they're down in what the legend says is the circuitous path that the worm took to bite the aquifer. This is a holiday.

Austin: The festival of the worm bite. [**Dre** laughter] The—you know, the holy day of—I don't know.

Jack: Yeah, it's dark down here. They got lanterns.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: You know, they got a cool caravan, oxen.

Austin: Yeah, how big is the group? This group that's travelling?

Jack: It's probably safer to move in a fairly large group, right?

Austin: That makes sense. Yeah.

Jack: Like astronaut teams—

Austin: Multi family units?

Jack: Are like four astronauts or something.

Austin: Yeah. Because you need to have a tank, a healer—

Jack: God. I had a thought early that terrified me that never came up, that I do just want to say, which is that you'd better fucking hope you've got enough vernal liquid for your telephone person, astronaut to make it to the town. Because if they have to take a shot to make the connection.

Austin: Oh, yeah.

Jack: They're simply traveling with what they believe is enough stock. But if they get waylaid or something, you might just get cut off from town.

Austin: Well, this is where you hope to find the bodies of other astronauts [**Jack:** And take theirs.] and take their—yeah, you bend down and do the marathon loot.

Jack: You know, this is how, you know, the world we've made is so, so bleak and difficult because the actual thing you would hope to find would be a vernal pool.

Austin: That's true. You're right.

Jack: But we're like. No, the bodies. The dead bodies.

[**Keith** laughter]

Austin: That's right.

Jack: Okay. I am.

AUTIN: Or another town. Or any other. You know.

Jack: Yeah. Okay. Queen of hearts. Let's see here.

Austin: The story is being told about? Yeah.

Jack: The story is being told about protection. To comfort, subdue or bolster.

Austin: Subdue is a fun one to sneak in there.

Jack: I know, I know. It's a little insidious one there. Okay. As the caravan is going down the spiral, the concentric spiral of this worm tunnel, they are telling a secondary story that happened like a thousand years, you know, apart from the aquifer being bitten. Right? But the thing that has drawn these two stories together is the shape of the circle. The round, if you will.

Austin: Ah, the round. The round. Yeah. Uh-huh.

Jack: Because this is a story about a time that the nomads were set upon in the mist by mist creatures. Not really—this is, you know, way predates poolish creatures. And the worm arrived and made a circle around them, you know, like wound its body around the nomad camp to keep them safe to, you know, keep out the mysterious mist creatures. And this is really interesting because the worm—no, wait, the worm can't do that. The worm can't turn back on itself like that. The worm has to dig to turn back on itself.

Keith: Underground it can.

Jack: Underground it can.

Austin: Oh, the worm, you're saying the worm—yeah, the worm can't turn in the mist either. Is what you're saying.

Jack: Yeah. So this story doesn't work.

Austin: Right.

Keith: Okay, well, we could say that it goes underground, continues to loop, comes back up, goes down underground, [**Austin:** Weaves.] and then it—yeah, weaves itself into this pile and then it shakes the dirt off and it all—the loop rises up from the dirt.

Austin: That's fun.

Keith: To reveal that it is around them.

Austin: I do want to say, if the astronauts have a little bit of wiggle room, does the worm not have a little bit of wiggle room?

Jack: The worm does have a little wiggle room [**Keith:** No, the worm is cursed. But the—oh, the worm is cursed. And I was going to say—

Austin: Oh, right, the worm is cursed.

Jack: While the worm does have wiggle room, the worm is also like two and a half thousand miles long. So its wiggle room is like—it's not two and a half thousand miles long. It's like 45 miles long.

Austin: That's really big. I mean, then it can protect you very easily simply by turning a little bit forward.

Jack: Yes, but the power is in the shape of the circle.

Austin: I see what you're saying.

Jack: Which is a very—

Austin: It can't be a train that cuts the bad guys off from you in the way that like a movie has where like you're running, you're doing an escape, and then like the train comes and separates the cops from you so you can get away.

Jack: I hear you—

Austin: And they throw their hats on the ground and stomp on it and go, damn it, they got away again.

Jack: And they get into their little open topped car and they go poo-poop on the horn.

Austin: Yeah, exactly. That can't happen here is what you're saying. It needs to be a circle.

Jack: I think the circle is a powerful shape.

Austin: Yeah, it is.

Jack: Because it requires, or at least without great effort, it requires you to double back on yourself. And the worm, like Keith said, can make it by going underground, but.

Austin: This also does say—or suggest to me that the Worm—the nomads believe the worm is alive, fully.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: In the Era of the Mist. There is no question to them about that because this legend takes place.

Jack: They have stories about—

Austin: Yeah, okay.

Jack: Yeah, cool.

Keith: Era of the Mist, another great unreleased Jethro Tull album.

[**Austin** laughter]

Jack: And we say great, but we have complex feelings about great here with Jethro Tull. Jethro Tull rules. You don't get the Realis theme without Jethro Tull. Shout out to Jethro Tull. Also, feel differently about COVID, you old man.

Keith: Look, he's the Whistler.

Jack: He is the Whistler. He is the Whistler, standing on one leg. Okay. The Nomads tell a story about the worm forming a complex circle to protect them from mist, that's a comma, creatures. Okay. The circle is not complex. The circle is simple. The way the worm makes the circle is complex. All right, who wants to read the final section? A point of view.

A point of view [05:21:21]

Austin: Ah? [reading] To bring the game to a close, each of you makes a character on this journey, listening to or telling this story. Consider being a member of the main group, a guest or stowaway, a child or an elder, someone who hitched a ride to or from the city. Think about every aspect of your world. Draw on the elements that most excited you, something that was deeply fleshed out or something that was only briefly touched on. Look at the various factions, professions, and cultures that exist in your world. Grab that thing that someone else created that inspired you, that you could rant about for hours or that you'd love to embody as a person. Once you found it, create the point of view in which you'd want to see it explored. Anyone can begin describing their character to the group. Jump around until everyone has introduced their character. Treat this moment as if it were the prologue to a story you will tell elsewhere, describing your character in as much detail as you'd like and reveling in the secrets, relationships, and character arcs you'd want them to experience.

Jack: God, it is so cool that we are ending on people who can move freely in this world.

Austin: Yeah. Though I think my character is someone who can't. I think that there is a—who's the Chalice Knight? **Jack:** Rings a bell...] Who's the one who was—the Grail Knight, not the Chalice Knight. The guardian of the Holy Grail. At the end of—

Jack: The Holy Grail.

Austin: The Holy Grail. The end of the Last Crusade. The Last Crusade. At the end of the Last Crusade, there's this, like, there's the knight who's guarding the Holy Grail. Right? And I kind of like the idea of an astronaut who at some point fell in with the

nomads, found out about this place, claims to have seen the worm, and maybe secretly, personally just loves the freedom to move back and forth and gave themselves to this place as, like, a guardian of the place that, like, awaits the arrival every year of the Pilgrims for Worm Day. For Worm Bite Day, but can't leave here and walk home and doesn't want to go find a well.

Jack: Oh, that's great.

Austin: Or not a well. A pool, a vernal pool.

Jack: That kind of a gate guard or kind of a psychopomp.

Austin: Right. But the—only for the—you know, it's actually kind of a—it's not a cushy life, you know?

Jack: The mist is very dangerous.

Austin: And I think that the places we've taught the city, the city would love to plun—you know, plunder this place or explore it. Thinks, well, what if there's—if this is where the aquifer got bit, maybe there's more vernal water there.

Jack: Yeah. Which we know that it's unlikely because it all flowed out through the worm.

Austin: Right, exactly.

Jack: And into the world.

Austin: Exactly.

Jack: Does this knight follow the nomads down through the spirals or does [Austin: I think...] They stay at the door?

Austin: I don't know. It really—it really depends on what else is here. Because, like, if there's a group of people here that they could be, if they could, if they—if they have been adopted into the nomadic culture, then yes. But I don't—maybe that's not fully—maybe they're working on that, you know? Maybe they are learning these ways

still. They will never go out with the nomads or it will be—it's very dangerous for them to go out with the nomads, you know, because the nomads don't follow the same rules about travel that they would have to.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And the only way that—what they wish to do is use one of the pools to go back to a home they don't want to go back to.

Jack: Yeah. Better to, better to maybe stay at the door.

Austin: But maybe within time, you know, with time and years, they, they eventually start—they do the whole thing. They feel like they are part of this group enough that they are allowed, you know? Not allowed, not, someone said, it's okay, you can come now necessarily, there may be that too. But even just like, of course they're gonna go down and sing the Worm Bite Day song or whatever.

Jack: My character is a mom who is braiding her kid's hair sitting on the back of an oxcart. They have a light lantern. I think it's just a flame lantern, right, I don't think it's like a magical lantern that's on a, like, suspended on a stick and is, like, bobbing with the movement of the oxcart. And the mom is kind of like slightly impatiently, you know, turning the kid's head so that she can see the light, see the braids in the light better. And I think that this might be the first time that the kid has made this pilgrimage down here. And probably the mom, when she was younger, had imagined that in the descent, she was going to be telling the kid the story of the worm going down and biting the aquifer. But the journey is really long, and she completed the story in the first turn or whatever, and the kid wasn't super interested. So instead she's saying, just move your head like this. And the kid is, you know, talking about something that they saw on the surface as they go down in to celebrate where the worm bit the aquifer.

Austin: Love it.

[long pause]

Keith: Hmm. This is—to go back to the original story, this is like a nomad tradition is to come to this place?

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: I think everyone knows that this place kind of exists. It's like, very culturally important.

Keith: It would be much harder for anyone else to get there, to organize their way here. It would be a much more difficult journey than if you can just walk to it.

Austin: Well, and it sounds like maybe people who are not part of the nomad culture don't know where it is, or don't—some may not even believe it's real. Yeah.

Keith: Then maybe my character is an astronaut who's met a crew of—on an illegitimate run and so is sort of not beholden to anyone and meets a crew of nomads, which happens. You are wandering through the mist and you find a camp, and it's nomads, and they're basically friendly. And, you know, every once in a while you end up sort of taking a rest for an afternoon wherever they're staying or overnight or whatever. It's probably better than whatever astronauts are usually doing overnight because they're just a small crew. They don't have a society that they're carrying around with them, talking about—and the nomads are talking about snake bite day. And he's like, snake, come on, What are you talking about? Yeah, the snake, sure. And gets sort of roped into like, hey, it's tomorrow. It's this way. It's not very far. It's the direction you're already going. Just go down, come down, take a look.

Jack: You can double back on yourself in the cave. It'll be fine.

Keith: I bet every few years there's like one or a small group of people that aren't nomads that are like—that find their way somehow with a group of nomads to the place.

Jack: Yeah. And when they come to leave the place, that's, of course, when they either have to part ways or, depending on the original sort of direction of the astronaut.

Keith: Yeah.

Dre: Hmm. I have two very different broad ideas. The first is either a current or former, like, telephone person that has been sent to find the nomads, for some reason. Or a person who is, like, an evangelist for this omen about, like, the king that's supposed to be coming and is, like, just wandering [**Keith:** [inaudible 05:30:10] the nomads on the king.] The world. Well, maybe. Or maybe it's just like, I gotta go find—I gotta go find this king, and who knows where they are? Or I have to go find, like, omens for this king or something.

Jack: I like that a lot.

Keith: There's something about an emissary who's, like, collecting stuff that he can say is an omen.

Dre: That's fun. Yeah.

Jack: Or again, might legitimately be an omen. We did find that thing that said there was going to be a king.

Dre: Yeah, this person believes it. They are not doing a grift. They are doing this very earnestly.

Austin: Yeah, I like this.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I—you know, I will flag that we are—not flag, because we're not playing this game, right, but I do think that it is—I think mostly what it is is it reflects that we spent four hours building a different group and then being like, there are some nomads here, too. I think, Jack, you're the only one who built a nomad, who's—not built, but who's like, and I'm a No—I'm, I'm a part of this caravan.

Jack: I've statted her out.

Austin: Yeah. Oh, wow. Okay. Ready to go? I'm not sure.

Keith: Yeah that's true, I mean, we—this is, it's—

Austin: I did it first, so.

Keith: I'm just under six hours right now, and for, for five hours and 20 minutes of it, there were no nomads.

Austin: That's right. That's right, exactly. So I think it's probably natural that we were all like, oh, we're interested in these other places we've spent the last five hours building.

Keith: It would be weird if there was not an astronaut. Like, that would be I think what would be really weird if in the final thing, we didn't talk about astronauts at all.

Austin: Yeah. The word that we've said more maybe in the last five hours than in the history of Friends at the Table. Almost certainly, right?

Keith: Oh, yeah. I think there's weeks at NASA where they don't say astronaut this many times.

Jack: Excellent. Let me go to Search at the Table, yeah?

Austin: According to—yes. Yeah, you go ahead.

Jack: According to Search of the Table, it has been said 26 times across 20 episodes. We are going to double, at least.

Keith: Oh, we're gonna quadruple—I think that we at least said astronaut a hundred times.

Jack: The first time we said astronauts was during Mariela 13. And the most recent time we said astronauts was, let's see, because—it would have been Palisade 18.

Austin: What did we say on Palisade 18?

Jack: It's you talking and you say—you're talking about a meme. You say and the other one about the moon or like it's the image of an astronaut looking down at the earth. And one of them says wait, it's all Ohio. And the other one says always has been.

Austin: Yeah, I always confuse that. I think you're probably saying that at the time when the moon's haunted. Where I always go in my mind it goes, astronaut says moon's haunted. And then another astronaut goes, always has been.

Jack: Let's find out.

Austin: Which is how it goes. Yep.

Keith: It does feel like I've—I feel like I've seen that one though.

Austin: I agree.

Jack: Yep. You absolutely. Yep. Let me just read here. You say I always combine those two to “moon’s haunted, always has been”.

Austin: There it is.

Keith: Maybe I've just heard you say that multiple times.

Austin: I'm so sure you have. Yeah.

Jack: This has been A Land Once Magic by—

Austin: Is there not? That's it. That's it. That's the—

Jack: [reading] A game of A Land Once Magic ends when you are ready to move on from what this game offers you. If you are attached to your world and wish to continue to see it grow and change, consider taking it into a different world building or role playing game. A journey in the land and a point of view ends in a perfect place to introduce characters for a character driven game. Start play as the story is being told. Decide who is telling it where and who is listening. Use A Land Once Magic to inspire your own art. Create an original game or story or comic based on the world you made. Keep the story going and the world alive or put this world away. Let it rest. Let it live on in your memories. Cherish the world you made together and let that be all. Come back here to make another one and cherish it all the same.

Austin: Cool game.

Jack: Cool fucking game. Really cool. Really weird place we made.

Keith: Astronaut. Astronaut. Astronaut. Astronaut. Astronaut. Juicing the numbers.
Astronaut.

[laughter]

Austin: I want to shout out a game that I think would be a really cool one to play this game in which is Off Guard Games' Into the Dark which I once ran for the Beastcast. It's by Stras Acimovic who you might remember was one of the designers on Scum and Villainy years ago. It is a fantasy game—I'll just read the little pitch. [reading] The world is covered in Murk. It is more than just a darkness. It is a miasma that hates the light, devours flame and warps the living. Somewhere in that hungry dark is a Nightwell, and near it a Shade. A creature born of the Murk itself and not just twisted like the beasts that it creates. Your lands are threatened and someone must bear the Silver Flame to the Nightwell to close it. If you're lucky, you might make it back with treasures from the world before the Murk. If you're careful, you might just survive your expedition into the dark. It is like a simple Forged in the Dark style game with like four classes and like more traditional adventure structure. But I think you could hack it pretty easily to be Mist Worm.

Jack: What is our fourth class? We have astronauts, nomads, polish creatures...

Austin: Oh, our fourth class, you're saying?

Jack: Yeah.

Dre: Do we have something with the sun God?

Austin: Oh, that's pretty good. We haven't really—

Jack: Yeah, we know nothing about that. It's a cool bird.

Keith: Knights. We talked about knights.

Austin: Yeah, sorry. The knight that I was talking about was astronauts. Yeah, that specifically.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: The Everywhere Knight was also an astronaut.

Austin: That's true. Yeah.

Jack: People looking for the king. King evangelists, regular people. A sort of Realis struggler who got lost in the mist. You could also play Realis here, I suppose.

Austin: Oh, yeah. Pretty easily, for sure. This could be a moon of Realis, easy.

Jack: Easy.

Austin: You know, the mist always keeps you from moving backwards, et cetera. Always keeps travelers. Yeah, from. Anyway.

Jack: Anyway, thank you so much for watching and thank you so much for playing, Austin and Keith and Dre. This was a really good time. Yeah. And we will see you soon for another Live at the Table. Is there any other business we want to hit before we leave?

Austin: Have y' all recorded the Media Club Plus Q and A yet?

Keith: No, we're recording that. It's not scheduled. But soon. But soon.

Austin: So people should get their questions in for that, right?

Keith: Yeah. If you have any questions about M. Night Shyamalan or the M. Night Shyamalan movies that we watched or comments about the scant few that we didn't watch, you can send your questions to friendsofthetable@gmail.com with Media Club Plus in the subject line and we'll be picking from those to talk about on the Q and A.

Jack: Some cool stuff is happening in Realis over on our Patreon. You can back us on Patreon at [friendsatthetable.cash](https://www.patreon.com/friendsatthetable).

Keith: I love to back us on Patreon.

Jack: Cool stuff is happening in Perpetua. We are deep inside the labyrinthine halls of the Castle Eschatonica. We are only moving forwards, but not because we will die if we go back. I mean, I suppose we would die eventually. The way out of the Eschatonica is forwards.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: But there's no shredding mist.

Austin: There's no shredding mist. The shredding mist might get you.

Jack: What's the place with the card creature that bites you?

Austin: Janessica.

Jack: The place is—

Austin: Or Ikororia?

Jack: Ikororia would have some shredding mist somewhere in it. Okay, have a great rest of your night. We will see you soon. Thank you so much for watching. Bye.

Austin: Bye.

Dre: Bye, bye, bye.