

Perpetua 36: The Castle Eschatonica 04

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Recap

Jack (as **Elena**): Sometimes these dungeons, they're built on strange geometries. Strange tricks, and sometimes they have a- something like a sense of humor about them.

[["The Castle Eschatonica"](#) by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

—

Sylvi: [conflicted] I kinda wanna go north is the thing!

Art: Alright!

Sylvi: I feel like if there's things happening that direction, we should investigate those things. Oh, I just don't know! [laughs]

Keith: Let's go north. [**Jack:** laughs] Fuck it.

Sylvi: I'm so excited!

Keith: Caoimhe's very excited to go to the gun shop.

Sylvi: Well she's looking between both doors so fast that her head is just like a motion blur.

—

Austin: And then under one of the tea cups, there is an invitation. There is a letter with an invitation. It says: "High King Eleku and High Queen Sono invite you to witness the end after the end at the High Masque."

Jack: Huh.

Ali (as **Veile**): The end after the end?

Jack (as **Elena**): Does this mean anything to you? We don't know these names.

Janine (as **Brontë**): No, it does sound like some sort of ball or a fair though.

—

Austin: You step into this room. As soon as you step in—

Sylvi: Goblins.

Austin: Not goblins, but two little freaks crawling around the ceilings.

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: They look like they- they look mostly like humanoid, but they have the sort of webbing of bat wings between their arms and their sides. They are not like bat people of the Valte, they are a different type of being. They have huge teeth, they have big eyes, these are—I have written here that they're blood-starved. They leap down onto the ground and close in on you.

—

Austin: Past worlds slammed together question mark? Gnova, but like G-N-O-V-A like gnosis or gnostic, that style of G-N. And it says a god of distant color and light next to it. You're pretty sure this means that this is a god from a previous Ennead. They're not supposed to be around. Underneath that there's a note and it just says like, curator question mark? Librarian question mark? Twisted freak question mark? [laughs]

Keith: [laughs]

—

Austin: As suspected, these are all of the shapes Perpetua has taken. And then it says, why did it stop looking like this? When does our turn end?

[“[The Castle Eschatonica](#)” by Jack de Quidt plays until track ends]

Invitation to the Masque [0:02:46]

Austin: Okay, picking back up, where were we? The three of you were over on the kind of amber colored hallway sun side of this dungeon. And that was of course—was that Caoimhe, Nicky, and Jonathan?

Sylvi: Yep.

Austin: No, that was Caoimhe, Antistrophe, and Nicky.

Sylvi: Oh yeah, sorry.

Dre: Yeah.

Keith: Mhm.

Sylvi: I got Jonathan and Antistrophe mixed up for some reason.

Ali: [laughs]

Austin: Right.

Sylvi: Sorry, the metal armor made me think it was a big turtle shell.

Austin: [laughs]

Dre: Fair.

Keith: That's okay.

Austin: And then on the other side, Brontë, Elena, Jonathan, and Veile—

Sylvi: Uh huh.

Ali: Mhm.

Austin: Have been- explored the moon symbol side of this dungeon. Y'all have been- y'all walked through a little sandy throne room, you got bit by a weird creature, you found an invite to a party. You did not fight weird vampiric monsters in the Necrosmith's Workshop. You did not come under fire from artillery in the Oracle Infirmary. So a little bit different in character, your dungeon delve so far. Who wants to jump off? Who wants to start first?

Janine: I just want to note that I'm untapping Efta and Zolfta because at the end of our last session, [**Austin:** That's right.] I rolled the fatigue die and they got under ten.

Austin: Love that.

Janine: Which means they are back in the mix and not just there for flavor.

Austin: Love it. And then I should- we should say, people have leveled up since we last recorded, [**Ali:** Mhm!] a handful of- I don't know who all did what. I kind of peaked and some people- I talked to some people about what you got, but there might be some surprises even for me as we continue.

Let's start by setting the stage over on the moon side of this dungeon. Y'all, again, are standing in a reception area in front of a doorway. Actually in front of two doorways, one of which you know is connected to a super long stairwell which you avoided climbing

and took the much simpler, sloping round hallway up to this reception area, this coat check. You do have an invitation. As you remember you got one from the balcony to the west a little bit, and you were kind of like greeted by a kind of- maybe a little surprised looking receptionist who also has a sort of guard with them.

The guard is in a type of dress I think most of you—I mean none of you have ever seen this particular outfit before—I would say, Brontë, it looks- all of you would say it looks regal, Brontë you can very clearly tell that there's like, oh, those bits of gold on the lapel that are kind of like- they're not like simple captain's bars, but those are definitely indicating some sort of rank or something. But you don't know where this person's from. This person is not from any of the nations of Perpetua that you know. And also they both have angel wings. I mentioned that in passing, [Sylvi: Mhm.] both of them seem to have angel wings.

Dre: Oh right!

Jack: Did we- did we get a name on the—I feel like we heard someone's name and in my brain, it's the name of the harlequin faced painter. It was a name like Gogal or something. [laughs]

Austin: From—wait, sorry, not from either of these people. You're talking about—

Jack: No, possibly from the invite? Or I feel like something—

Austin: Yeah, Gnova. Oh, no no no, the invite did not have anyone's name on it. I don't believe.

Jack: What am I thinking of then?

Austin: You're thinking of Gnova, the harlequin faced painter.

Jack: That's gotta be it. Yeah, where did we get that from?

Austin: Who is kind of—I think I may have just said—oh, from the- the sun side found that diary of another adventurer.

Jack: Oh they did!

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Okay, excellent.

Austin: Yeah. Gnova, G-N-O-V-A.

Jack: And the text on the invite? What does that say?

Austin: I think it's pretty simple. It's like it has invited you to—I'm trying to remember if I gave you a particular name of what the masquerade party here is called. Bah bah bah... did I say out loud... um, I think- I don't remember if I did. It's been a week since we've last played, I don't remember if I said so, but it is like the end of year celebration masquerade at the Tower of the Winds, the Tower of Four Winds, actually. And it does say that you are guests of the... let me make sure I get this right, one second. The Empire of the West Wind.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: And specifically, and I think at seeing this on the invite, the receptionist kind of goes,

(as **Receptionist**): [sharp inhale, displeased]

Austin: You are an invite of House Deadwind. And he looks up to you and he goes,

(as **Receptionist**): Ah, your invitation allots you four proper masks. Your attendants will need to wait here or wear servants' veils, you understand.

Jack: How does- how does May feel about this?

Austin: Well May thinks that she's gonna get a mask. [laughs] What do you mean?

Ali: [laughs]

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: In fact, I think May is like,

(as **May**): Yeah, that makes sense. What type of masks you have?

Jack: No, hold on. Hang on. Uh, Elena looking at Jonathan.

(as **Elena**): I mean...

Dre (as **Jonathan**): What?

Jack (as **Elena**): Only four masks are available.

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Yeah, I don't need nothin' fancy.

Jack: Oh. [laughs] I hadn't even considered this as an option!

Ali (as **Veile**): Well, I mean, are we entitled to a plus one?

Sylvi: [laughs]

Austin (as **Receptionist**): You're getting four masks, that's the—

Art: [laughs]

Ali: [laughs]

Austin (as **Receptionist**): No. That's plus three.

Austin: Says the receptionist.

Dre (as **Jonathan**): Think we're gonna have to sweet talk 'em if we want extra masks.

Austin (as **Receptionist**): There aren't any extra masks, you're the final guests to arrive. We assumed that, like normal, House Deadwind wouldn't be arriving in number.

Jack (as **Elena**): You don't have any spare masks? What if one gets broken?

Ali (as **Veile**): Is there bad feelings between the two of you?

Austin (as **Receptionist**): [suspicious] You are invited to the Masque, yes?

Ali: [laughs quietly]

Austin (as **Receptionist**): You did not steal this invitation?

Janine: Can I—

Dre: [laughs]

Austin (as **Receptionist**): You know our ways?

Janine: I feel like at- I feel like maybe even slightly before this point, [**Ali**: laughs] Brontë would have just walked up and taken a mask and tied it on.

Austin: Give me a roll, 1 to 30.

Sylvi: [gasps]

Janine: What?

Austin: A d30.

Janine: Oh, okay. [laughs]

Austin: Give me a d30 roll. 7, alright. Your mask, and you can- [laughing] you can describe this how you would like! Is a mask that is based off of a sort of, like a two wheel handcart. Like the sort of thing you would carry behind you. Maybe it has big wheels for eyes? It is goofy. It is not a—

Janine: Carry behind you?

Austin: You know, like a- like if- like you would attach an ox to. You know what I mean? Except that- [**Janine**: Oh!] imagine a person carrying that sort of handcart.

Dre: Ohh, god, what are those called?

Austin: They're called handcarts.

Janine: Handcart...

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: But it's ox. Okay. Um—

Sylvi: [laughs]

Austin: Well no, this is not big enough for an ox. This is—I'll send you a picture.

Janine: No, I know the- I know the mask isn't big enough for an ox, I'm just—

Austin: No, I meant the handcart isn't big enough for an ox.

Ali: [laughs]

Janine: Oh, ohh! Okay, [laughs] okay. Alright.

Austin: Yeah. It's this type of device.

Janine: You know I think the easiest thing to do would be like oh the wheels are somehow like glasses, but I don't think that's what it is. I think it is- I think, okay, so imagine you're taking this handcart, right, [**Austin:** Mhm.] flip it upright so that the hand pull bar part is up [**Austin:** Yeah.] and the box part- I think the box part is like the—wait is this full face or half face? Or do I decide?

Austin: Uh, you decide.

Janine: Okay, I think it's half face. The box part is like the eye area so it is slightly conformed to the face, has eye-holes cut in it. The wheels are sort of on either side? Of the head, like at the temples. [**Ali:** Mm.] And the hand, like the pull thing part is up top, it's kind of like- it's not like crown or tiara-like, but it's sort of going in that direction, you know? It's like a sort of like arching type thing that's meant to kind of, [**Austin:** Mhm.] you know, give you a little bit of like a head aura.

Austin: It's supposed to give you a little bit of head aura, got it.

Janine: [laughing] Yes.

Austin: Uh huh.

Sylvi: Mhm!

Austin: I understand. Alright, [**Ali:** laughs] and you place this on your face.

Janine: Mhm!

Austin: Who is next?

Jack: Okay, I'll step up and put my hand out for a mask.

Austin: Give me a d30. And if you get a 7, we'll reroll it.

Jack: Handcart again!

Austin: [laughs]

Janine: [laughs]

Jack: That's a 26! A very high roll.

Austin: 26, that is a high roll. Let's see here... that is—oh! Oh, this is nice, this is good. You got a quince mask, themed mask. Like the fruit.

Keith: Ooh, the fruit?

Austin: Like the fruit!

Janine: [sadly] Aw.

Jack: Huh! Okay, this is a half mask that sort of just comes down over Elena's eyes, and the top portion of the mask that sort of sits on her head is an elaborate sort of still life fruit bowl exclusively of quinces. I think there is sort of like a- it's got some of the

trappings of a still life as well, I think there is like a beautiful silver fork in one of the quinces. And there's also, I don't know, like a snail or a butterfly or something? On one of the fruits.

Sylvi: Mm!

Janine: That's lovely.

Austin (as **Receptionist**): Two more...

Austin: Sighs the receptionist.

Ali: I would love to—

Austin: The guard kind of gives you a sympathetic look. [**Ali:** laughs] Like he does not like this guy particularly. What'd you say, Veile?

Ali: I would love to take a mask.

Austin: Alright, give me a roll.

Janine: Yeah, I was gonna say if you didn't I was gonna have him—

Jack: Woah!

Ali: [laughs]

Janine: I was gonna have Brontë like beckon you, like c'mon. [laughs]

Ali: [weakly] I got a 1 on a 1d30... [laughs]

Austin: You did get a 1 on a 1d30. Maybe you're getting it out of the system. Yours is a limestone themed mask.

Ali: A limestone themed mask!

Austin: Mhm.

Ali: What does limestone look like? It's like kind of...

Janine: Like white and chalky.

Austin: Yeah, white and chalky stone. Kind of like, could be gray-ish.

Janine: It's that soft stone, you could break it with another stone really easily.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Ohh sure. Huh.

Austin: It could be pretty, but it's like, you know. It's a pretty basic stone. You know?

Ali: Yeah then I think that there's something like a- like it is kind of the quintessential mask mask and maybe it's polished a little bit so you can kind of see like the variation in the colors, but is not trying to be like something else, you know?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And is just kind of a—[laughs] I'm now thinking of those dorky red eye masks, but I think that it has to at least have elegant enough shape for this to be like a costume presentable piece or whatever—

Austin: Yeah. And that is the vibe for all of them.

Ali: But is just like a white stone mask.

Janine: Oh!

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Hang on, there's- this actually, okay. I was looking at polished limestone, which mostly is gonna give you a bunch of pictures of floor tiles.

Austin: [laughs] Oh, okay.

Janine: But I found this one from Hawaii stone dot com, which I hope this—is this actually lime? I'm gonna click- actually make sure this is actually limestone.

Ali: [laughs]

Janine: Okay, it's brown fossil limestone, which makes sense cause limestone is water et cetera, old. But it's cool cause there are fossils embedded in it and it just feels cool. Maybe this is- you want something like this.

Austin: Ooh, that's really cool.

Ali: Ohh!

Austin: That's really sick.

Ali: Yeah that's fun, that's a little beachy. [**Sylvi:** Ooh.] That's fun for Veile.

Austin: It is a little beachy, yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: [laughs]

Austin: And if no one else is gonna stop her, Maybella's gonna step up.

Janine: [laughs]

Dre: Um, Jonathan is gonna get the mask, but he's gonna put it on Maybella.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: And he's gonna use that as an opportunity to kind of like whisper something to her—

Austin: Ooh.

Janine: Ohh.

Dre: Out of earshot of the fancy people.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: Which is basically just like,

(as **Jonathan**): Okay, May. Just keep your head on a swivel. Okay? We don't know if there's anything weird with these masks, but you got it!

Austin (as **May**): You know I do.

Austin: Alright, give me your roll.

Dre: D30, right?

Austin: D30.

Dre: 10.

Austin: A 10! That is... [laughs] wow, very- a lot of mineral focused ones here. [laughs] This is, of course, the saltpeter mask.

Sylvi: [very quiet Lois Family Guy voice] Peter.

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: You know, like the explosive material.

Jack: The gunpowder—yeah.

Sylvi: Uh huh, yeah.

Austin: Mhm.

Janine: Yeah... hm.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Potassium nitrate. What does that even look like?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: We got some sort of French Revolutionary calendar shit going on here I think.

Sylvi: It really feels like it.

Austin: Sometimes you need three hundred things.

Ali: [laughs]

Sylvi: You got the Brumaire mask.

Janine: Saltpeter kind of looks like salt is the thing, that's why they call it that.

Dre: Yeah...

Austin: Yeah, mhm.

Dre: Maybe this—

Janine: Sometimes it's yellow, I guess? [laughs]

Dre: Yeah, maybe this mask just looks like a big collection of like huge salt flakes. So it's just a- lots of varied shapes and texture, [**Austin:** Mm.] really bumpy and irregular and asymmetric.

Austin: That's fun. Yeah, cool! And then the rest of you are given kind of white head veils that, like, I'm imagining—god, what is- is this a- ugh. Who is—mm, is this a real person or am I making this up? Is there a character in Guilty Gear with a white mask?

Dre: Yeah, yeah!

Sylvi: Yeah, there is. Venom.

Austin: You know who I'm talking about? Not the new guy—

Dre: Venom.

Austin: Not—yes, yes, the classic, yes.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: The one that's just like a long, flowy—I guess that's actually Venom's hair, isn't it?

Sylvi: It is Venom's hair, but I knew what you meant immediately.

Austin: But imagine that with a- as a mask. So just kind of like flat white that kind of just hangs low to around the bottom of your neck, the top of your chest, and then has a symbol of kind of two angel wings that then have kind of- I guess different gusts of wind? Of colored wind coming in towards, like towards the—or maybe out from the middle. Right, so there's like a north south east west kind of wind and then there is the angel wings as a frame around them.

Sylvi: That's so cool.

Entering Alteros [0:17:31]

Austin: And as you- and as you are- put on the masks and veils, I'm presuming Efta and Zolfta are also putting on the veils, Elena? Or not Elena, jeez. Brontë.

Janine: Mm—yes. [laughs]

Austin: Sorry, I was looking at the wrong character sheet. They- the door opens for you. And, you step in? Question mark, presumably? As you do, you realize there is a- this is a much steeper kind of route up, a much steeper hallway. But as you step through that door, wings magically kind of burst onto your backs.

Jack: Woah.

Dre: Woah!

Ali: [gasps]

Austin: You all have gained flying while you are here.

Sylvi: Fuck off! I'm so jealous.

Ali: Can we describe the wings?

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: Please describe the wings.

Ali: [laughs] Are they attached? Are they magical?

Austin: They are magical, attached wings. You have wings here.

Sylvi: Aw man!

Janine: Does everyone have the same wings?

Austin: No. But they're all- they're all—

Janine: Do the wings correspond to the mask?

Austin: No, they're all generally angelic wings in nature. They're all big bird-style wings. I don't think anyone here has like bat wings. No one here has wings attached to their hands, you know what I mean? It's not that style of the- there's not a range of wings. Generally speaking, Alteros, which is the kind of Celestial Echo you're moving into now, is this kind of world of- the dominant rulers of this world all have these types of wings. These types of like traditional angel wings, though you could still describe them in different ways, there are lots of variations therein, so. Also I guess as you step in, I want to say that the receptionist like calls after you, like,

(as **Receptionist**): And none of your hexes!

Austin: Chiding you for something you have not done.

Jack: I wonder where they are?

Austin: How's- are you flying? Are you walking up the steep thing? Or are you trying out these wings?

Dre: Oh I'm flying!

Jack: Gotta try out the wings.

Ali: [laughs]

Janine: Mhm.

Jack: What, Dre, do you have wings? Does everyone?

Austin: Everyone gets wings.

Jack: Or is it only the people who are wearing the masks?

Austin: Everybody who's here has wings.

Jack: Okay, cool.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, just up the stairs.

Austin: Hovering up—no stairs.

Dre: Mhm.

Janine: Well what do everyone's wings look like?

Ali: Yeah, we have to—

Austin: That's what I was waiting for. Yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Sorry, I've been googling Gaia Online wings. [laughs]

Austin: There we go.

Dre: [laughs]

Sylvi: Ali, god fucking bless.

Ali: [laughs] Um—

Sylvi: I immediately know what you're talking about.

Ali: [laughs]

Jack: Elena's wings are very straightforward. They are just sort of pale white, al- like a slight tint of blue, straightforward angel wings. Or sort of like dove wings, almost. But not like the evil doves of the Valte [laughs] the good doves. Of the earth.

Sylvi: [laughs]

Janine: This is actually so funny and perfect that I—one of- so one of the like myriad characters that I sort of based what I want Brontë to look like on in the show he's in, does have wings.

Jack: Oh perfect.

Janine: At one point. And they are just big, cool black wings with like the tips of the feather sort of gradate blue a little tiny bit. They're sort of like crow- they're very like crows' wings. They're really- they're really fucking cool. And I'm gonna be honest, I kind of just want that. It's just it's a real clean, elegant, classy look.

Austin: If not now, then when. You know?

Janine: Yeah, yeah.

Ali: Truly. I think Veile has like kind of—oh, those do look so cool. Okay. [laughs]

Janine: [laughs]

Ali: [laughing] I think- I think Veile has kind of white or off-white colored wings, but as if they were magically created to be coordinated with her outfit and her general vibe. I think that the sort of like lower feathers have almost like a purple gradient to them.

Austin: Mm.

Ali: And I think the description of her trying to- I don't think she's like flying right away, I think she's doing the sort of meek step forward, [**Austin:** laughs] and realizing her like feet aren't on the floor anymore. [laughs]

Austin: [laughs] Uh, Jonathan?

Dre: I think—yeah, Jonathan has um, I'm thinking of- I've been looking—now I started googling bird wings. [**Ali:** laughs] I really like these pelican wings cause I think it fits for Jonathan. [**Sylvi:** Ohh.] They're like bigger individual feathers that you can- stand out from each other instead of being like a big ruffle of feathers. I think Jonathan and May's probably look similar. I bet May's is like a brighter, more vibrant color?

Austin: Yeah, I think so.

Dre: Because she's younger and Jonathan's are like [**Austin:** And—] a similar color, but more faded and more brownish.

Austin: Yeah, I think hers probably lean red, orange you know? Like there's a real- there's like a- there's—not just brighter because they're younger, but brighter because she is- something in her spirit goes, I get wings now and I want my wings to be fiery red, you know?

Janine: [laughs]

Dre: Fuck yeah, dude!

Sylvi: I love her.

Austin: Like a big, cool, golden red eagle. You know?

Janine: Oh—

Austin: How about Efta and Zolfta?

Janine: Yeah I was gonna say I forgot Efta and Zolfta. I think Efta and Zolfta both have a set of bumble bee wings.

Ali: Awe! [laughs]

Austin: Oh that's very funny.

Janine: So they're like kind of small, but they're like—

Austin: That's very funny.

Janine: Round, insectoid, like very translucent. There is kind of a—the picture I linked [laughs] they look glittery, I suspect it's pollen. I think it's probably pollen on them, [Austin: Oh wow.] but I like the idea of the membrane being like a little bit glittery. Maybe only Efta's are a little bit glittery and Zolfta's like what's going on there.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah. That's really good. Alright, yeah, you make it up this entryway and into the first tier of this tower, which—I'm gonna try my best to describe it visually to you as you come into it. It is a tall tower that has these kind of like sliced out tiers. So there is like a triangular- it's like a pizza that's been poorly cut into six tiers. And so there's like one regular sized slice where you are right away and then to your left is like a hard wall. The southwestern wall here is a hard wall, that is like a- you can't go that direction here on this floor at this point.

But then it kind of steps up a tier to a second tier that is like—or you know, you almost think of like a tall cake that has been cut such that there are kind of steps around the cake. Does that make sense? Like a spiral staircase almost.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: And each- as you come in, the first thing that happens is you hear someone, you know, announced and it's like, you know,

(as **Announcer**): Now entering: Lady Hyacinth of House Ice.

Austin: And you know, this- there's like a sort of- a blaring of trumpets and a woman in all white with a mask of ice, you know, floats upwards from the tier of entry. There's kind of like a long red carpet out that people are walking down, getting their announcement made. There is, again, a blast of—what is the word I'm looking for, for this sort of trumpet call?

Jack: A fanfare?

Austin: A fanfare. And then they float upwards. Like just upwards into the next tier. Some people are walking around, but like from the bottom tier to the top tier, there are people also just kind of floating around, talking at different heights. The- each level of this tower is many floors high so there's plenty of room to just kind of like float and hover and mingle.

And each of the tiers has a different theme and, you get the sense, a different host. That each of the Four Winds seems to be hosting a tier, and then there's this tier, and then there's also an- the fourth tier seems like it's being hosted by a different group. And I'm just gonna give you these tiers now instead of slowly walking through all of them so you can start thinking about what you want to do.

The first tier is the tier of art, there is a kind of like open gallery space. And in general, the art here has to do with wind in different ways. There are kind of like conceptual sculptures that are using the wind, they're like kites almost. There is a degree of like windchime style performance pieces happening and musical pieces happening. And there are people who are using or who have used air magic to do kind of Pollock-esque painting by, you know, kind of throwing the paint against the canvas. And so this is kind of a chat and mingle and look at the art that people have brought here for this kind of year-end celebration.

The second- or I guess the third tier is the tier of feasting. This is where all of the food is. [laughs] This is where everything- everyone has brought their best chefs to compete and produce the best possible food.

Jack: [laughs] Ohoho!

Austin: The fourth spear—spear. The fourth tier is the quietest one and seems to have a degree of solemnity around it. And it does- it is the one that seems like it is not directly being hosted by one of the kind of four kingdoms of this world. Again, one per Wind. And it is the tier of spirit. There is a- there is an altar there, kind of towards the center of the room, that is- it's like a floating altar that has some sort of spiritual leader there who is leading guided and group meditation.

There is also a strange door that looks like it has—you know like- you know the classic faces of the wind, you know the winds like Zephyrus and all that. There's like **[Jack: Yeah.]** one of those on or slash in the door. You're pretty sure that is the door you need to go through to go forward.

The fifth tier is [laughs] strangely placed because it's next to the meditation one, or maybe not so strangely placed. This is the tier of dueling. At any time, two members of the various houses of Alteros are in one on one floating duels while everyone else watches. And on the top tier is the tier of music where live music is played and dancing is focused- is kind of a floating ballroom.

Jack: This party sounds sick.

Austin: It is called the High Masque. That is the words that were on the invitation, I'm now remembering.

Jack: I feel like—

Ali: I know the queue time on the tier of dueling is crazy.

Austin: Oh yeah. **[Ali: laughs]** Cause it's one v. one, you know what I mean? That's why there's so much space, it's not so that there's a lot of duels happening, it's cause there's everybody waiting. Everyone's put their quarters up and is waiting to get to go.

Jack: Can you go to another tier and they'll call you when it's your turn to duel or do you have to stay there?

Austin: I think you probably- I think you can probably go register for a duel. Yeah, I think so. And they'll call for you, you know.

Jack: I'm busy meditating in the tier of spirit—

Austin: Yeah, call for me.

Jack: When someone tells me that it's time to beat the shit out of— [laughs]

Austin: [laughs] Yeah.

Ali: Can— [laughs]

Austin: Everyone here has a different mask. There are hundreds of people here in unique masks and you very quickly get the vibe that politicking is happening here. That this is a sort of winter palace. This is a sort of like; everyone has come together to, you know, flirt and backstab and politick and plan for once the frosts have thawed and the work of, you know, either working together or against each other will return. Let's go to the other side, now that we've set this up.

Ali: Mm, mhm.

Exploring the Sun Side [0:29:34]

Austin: Last time we talked to you, you were in a grimy Necrosmith's workshop.

Ali: [laughs]

Sylvi: Uh huh.

Austin: You had fought some blood-hungry vampiric creatures [**Sylvi:** Uh huh.] called Blood-Starveds. And you had fought them off and now you had a choice to either go through the northern door of the Necrosmith's workshop or head back east toward the empty room you've been avoiding and see what goes down that hallway.

Sylvi: [sighs] And no snacks, huh?

Ali: [snorts]

Austin: I'm checking, let me just double check if there's—you want to see if there's any snacks in the, let me see, [cross] in the Necrosmith's workshop?

Sylvi: [cross] Yeah, there's no like lovely- lovely like- made by the best chefs in the world.

Janine: [cross] You can eat anything, it's just what happens after that's the issue.

Austin: [laughs] That's right. You know.

Sylvi: Okay. You know, just want to be clear.

Austin: I mean, you know—

Keith: I mean you might have snacks, we just gotta find the snack room.

Austin: You gotta find the snack room.

Keith: They had to find their snack room.

Sylvi: You're right, you're right, you're right.

Austin: That's true. I will tell you, there is a snack on my sheet somewhere in this side of the room. The dungeon.

Sylvi: [laughs quietly]

Keith: Great.

Sylvi: Some blood sausage.

Keith: An array or is it just a single?

Janine: Is it Caoimhe? Ha ha ha ha.

Austin: It's a very— oho.

Ali: [delighted laugh]

Sylvi: Why thank you!

Austin: Wow!

Janine: [laughs]

Sylvi: Thank you so much!

Austin: It's a special ingredient.

Keith: Ohh.

Sylvi: Okay.

Keith: Uh, well I guess—

Art: That's only half a snack. [laughs]

Keith: I guess we gotta go north. There's no—unless we want to go back and go northeast.

Sylvi: I kinda—like there's a part of me that wants to go northeast, but I'm happy to keep continuing north and the chance is that it connects again. I think it was pretty obvious that I was really curious to go towards the room we kept avoiding, however I don't mind being outvoted if y'all would rather just go north.

Art: Wasn't the problem with going—

Keith: I think that we'll end up at the right place any- eventually any- either way.

Sylvi: That's a good way to live your life.

Art: We have to do another hard dungeon roll if we come back through here is why we haven't done it yet.

Keith: Oh yeah, we do have to do the hard roll in there.

Sylvi: Listen, it's gonna—

Art: A 12 or whatever.

Sylvi: You can't live your life fearing dice rolls. You gotta just...

Art: I can and I do.

Sylvi: Well, I'm built different.

Art: And here we are.

Keith: I also don't fear the dice rolls.

Art: Alright! Then let's take your little shortcut.

Sylvi: Nicky got stuck with the wild cards.

Keith and Jack: [laugh]

Austin: [laughs] Alright, so you're going back through the little middle area?

Art: Nicky knows Nicky isn't a combat character I think is the real—

Austin: Ah, I see.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: Fair.

Sylvi: Don't worry buddy, I got healing magic.

Art: Alright...

Austin: Alright, so you are. You are going back through that little middle one that you've been avoiding.

Keith: Mhm.

Sylvi: I'm soo curious, cause we heard like guns and stuff.

Art: [reluctantly] Yeah...

Keith: And we get to fill in this little—

Art: But then we're gonna have to come back! If we- when we find out whatever this is, and we still want to see what this is, we're gonna have to come back.

Sylvi: Well we could go north first as long as we promise to go back around the other way.

Keith: I promise that we'll do that.

Art: Alright, yeah.

Sylvi: Okay, then let's go north first.

Austin: Alright, going north first.

Sylvi: Yeah, good,

Austin: There is a long hallway that then curves off a little and comes to another door. As you go through this hallway, the brickwork gives way to wooden roots and kind of low brush that you're walking through.

Sylvi: Mhm.

Austin: Have any of you—yes. Nicky, you feel like you're moving towards a place quite like the strange, swampy garden Celestial Echo where you found Birch Balustrade and the big weird plant monster and the bug people. Do you remember that? Redolencia.

Art: Mm!

Austin: Which means you know what you're headed to and I think you can—I mean, you know what you're headed to in terms of the way the world works different and can maybe take a second to prepare or to maybe tell people that the two big Celestial Laws of this place are Alchemical Tilt and Unstable Magic. Spells heal half damage, skills and items heal twice as much. And then Unstable Magic is: when casting a spell, fumbles when one- you get fumbles when 1s or 2s are rolled as a pair. So not just 1 and 1, but also 2 and 2.

Sylvi: Okay.

Art: But not 1 and 2. I think I asked this same question the first time.

Austin: But explicitly not 1 and 2 or 2 and 1.

Art: Okay.

Austin: Yeah, it's in the- I have since maybe updated how I'd written this cause that's how it says in my notes. It says, "i.e. rolls of 2 or 4 but not 1 plus 2 or 2 plus 1." Correct. So yeah, you know what- you know how this place is gonna shift as you open this door and go into it. You give people any warning?

Art: Yeah, I'm trying to think of how to say this in not rules text.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Alright.

(as **Nicky**): I've done this one before. You can't- you can't use magic to heal people in here. It's not gonna work.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): At all?

Sylvi: Caoimhe looks so crestfallen.

Art (as **Nicky**): Well it's—

Sylvi: Another room where her magic isn't as effective.

Art (as **Nicky**): It's gonna be worse. But potions and the like, those are gonna work a lot better.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Oh, that's good. I have those.

Art (as **Nicky**): And I don't really know how to explain this, but the magic—

Sylvi (as **Caoimhe**): Oh yeah, good thing I spent most of my life studying potions.

Art (as **Nicky**): Magic in there gets weird.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Okay.

Sylvi (as **Caoimhe**): That's kind of exciting though.

Art (as **Nicky**): I don't do any of that, so I don't know.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): I also don't do any of that, so this is great.

Sylvi (as **Caoimhe**): [dryly] Uh huh.

Art (as **Nicky**): Alright, be careful. It's unstable.

Sylvi (as **Caoimhe**): Alright, well one of you go first then.

Art: I don't really understand how much room there is for passing here.

Austin: There's enough room- there's just enough room to pass by. [**Sylvi**: laughs] I think you're right, it is tight in here. This whole area—

Art: I'm in the wall when I stand here, you see.

Austin: I see, I see. Well that's cause you're- that's only cause you're looking at the picture of you. If you were just a person you could kind of saddle- side-saddle—not side-saddle. What's the word? Sidle your way past.

Sylvi: Sidle, yeah.

Art: Sure, sure.

Austin: You know?

Art: Alright, let's do it.

Austin: Alright, you go in and instantly your feet crunch on something in the ground. Give me a, um- give me a—you know what, I'm not even gonna actually give you a roll here. I'll go the other way with this which is like giving you the upper hand. You're walking in a dark, low- kind of low-ceilinged area. It kind of goes wide. Imagine- [laughs] you know in an Alien movie where they get to the hatchery?

Sylvi: Sure.

Art: Uh huh.

Austin: And there's just like a bunch of aliens and it's just kind of like low mist. It's like that, but it's not an alien hatchery so the eggs are very- are much smaller. They're not big, gross eggs, they're smaller gross eggs as you move through this larval hatchery. But there's a similar sort of sense of openness and space, and instead of having the sense that there is a big open air room above you, you gaze up and see through the dark to the degree that you can, and it is dark, that there are many many many layers of this kind of hive that you are in. You are in, I will just reveal it up here, the Ruined Hive.

Sylvi: Ew.

Austin: [quietly] Where did it go?

Art: I think it's weird that the sun area is—

Keith: Larval Hatchery colon Ruined Hive.

Art: Dark and full of larva and the moon area is full of elaborate parties.

Austin: Yeah, it's kind of weird.

Art: That just isn't how I would name these.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Damn, is this where the snack is?

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: As you move through this place, you hear the sound of a- something moving around. And in a few more seconds you can see the shape of a giant bee person. Kind of- maybe it looks like they're attending to one of the eggs, maybe it looks like they're lost? It's not really clear. What do you do?

Sylvi (as **Caoimhe**): Hello, are you okay?

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): [whispering] Shh! What?!

Sylvi (as **Caoimhe**): What the fuck? Why not?

Austin: It turns slowly to face you. And one of its antennae kind of tilts upwards almost like an eyebrow being raised.

Sylvi: I wave? [laughs] I'm not trying to look- there's no reason we should assume it's hostile! It's not snarling at us like the Blood-Starved were.

Austin: Mhm. It approaches you—

Sylvi: You said it looked lost!

Austin: It does- it does—hm.

Art: Hey, are we stamping on this thing's children?

Keith: [laughs]

Austin: You- I mean, you tell me. I- it- hm. This does not seem—

Sylvi: Can I watch—

Austin: Like a hatchery that has had a lot of success lately. So you're not standing on anything- certainly not anything alive.

Art: Okay, great.

Austin: Mhm. Caoimhe?

Sylvi: I just wanna like, you know, appear friendly. Not like, hey buddy what's going on! But like show that I'm not here to like pull my weapon out and immediately start bashing shit up, you know?

Austin: It's so funny that you say that.

Sylvi: Oh great.

Austin: What's your defense?

Sylvi: Oh noo! Physical or magical?

Austin: Physical.

Sylvi: 13.

Austin: Okay it misses you with Buzzing Bash as you get close to it. It sort of shambles toward you and kind of tries to like double- double claw you? They're not really claws. They're, you know, the big arm- the front- the most front arms of this standing hornet being. Kind of slam down and miss you.

Sylvi: Uh, that was an even number so I get a counter attack for free.

Austin: Oh, okay. Go for it. Wow.

Sylvi: [laughs] "After an enemy hits or misses you with a melee attack—"

Austin: There it is.

Sylvi: “If the result of the accuracy check was an even number, you may perform a free attack against the enemy.”

Austin: Go for it!

Sylvi: But it— “this attack must be a melee attack and must have the enemy as its only target. Treat your high roll as 0 when calculating damage dealt by this attack.” So it’s not gonna do a lot of damage.

Austin: Okay so you don’t get any bonus damage. Yeah, sure, sure.

Sylvi: No, in fact it’s going to do at most 4 damage.

Austin: And this is dark damage? Because it’s your sword, right? Okay.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Um—

Sylvi: 16.

Austin: Wait, how is it at most 4?

Sylvi: Cause high roll is treated as 0 on counter attacks.

Austin: Oh, I see, I see, I see.

Sylvi: Yeah, so it’s 4 damage, not 14 there.

Austin: Damn, that’s a shame.

Sylvi: It is a shame, but you know.

Austin: Okay! Antistrophe—

Sylvi: If it has any spells affecting it, no- not anymore!

Austin: Oh that’s interesting.

Sylvi: You may choose a single spell with a duration of the scene, so I guess one of them.

Austin: Yeah, I will—um, it doesn't have a spell, but it does have a special rule that I think I'm going to trigger so that- because I think it's an interesting way to use that Spell Sever ability.

Sylvi: Mhm.

Austin: And it will mean it doesn't get to use this later. What do you do as you counter attack here? You know, it tries to come down with both of its forward limbs to smash you, but instead it- you counter it. What's the counter look like?

Sylvi: I think it's a sidestep and then a sort of like—because it's low damaging, I kind of think it's not even a hit with the blade, it's more like- sort of like the hilt-butt thing that people do sometimes? [**Austin:** Yeah.] Where it just kind of like back-fist it in the stomach.

Austin: Yeah. Alright, as you do that it crumples to the ground and then,

[Untitled Track by Jack de Quidt starts playing] [0:40:45]

[cont.] as if lifted up by an outside force, returns to its feet. It has an ability called Just A Puppet: "when the Strange Hornet is reduced to 0 hit points for the first time in a scene, instead it is reduced exactly to 1 hit point." And you see why. In the little bit of light that is coming from the very top of this place, down through each of the layers of the hive, you see a thin, thin web that is puppeting this Strange Hornet. There is something else in here with you and you hear it cackling in the dark.

[Untitled Track by Jack de Quidt ends] [0:41:25]

I am now going to reveal the shape of this place, of the Ruined Hive, and give you a little set up. There are four tiers to this place! But unlike—

Art: [sarcastically] Oh great!

Austin: The tiers of the High Masque, the Tower of the Wind, these are not like a delicious cake, they are a lot like if you tried to build a bee hive out of the sort of like, detritus of a decayed forest. They are arranged in ways that are confusing, it's not clear how you get from tier to tier. In fact, there is a four step objective clock on each tier that you will need to complete to move from one tier to the next. Imagine if in your mind something like Blight Town from the original Dark Souls.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: Or the- is it the valley of the- the desecrated? That's not right. [typing] Demon Souls, Valley of...Defilement! The Valley of Defilement, obviously. [laughs]

Dre: Obviously.

Austin: The depraved chasm, you know. Obviously. This sort of like barely held together, completely ruined and yet deeply inconvenient kind of layering of organic materials that are starting to fall apart, but are dangerous to just try to punch through. I mean you can get through them how you want to. There are three four-step clocks that you'll have to complete to get to the top level. And there are- that's one, two, three, four. This one is kind of the top level. There is a side door on the kind of the third level, that's kind of where I intended that to be, here. But you could maybe squeeze through from the second level here.

Art: Kind of looks like—

Austin: And there is this hornet, this Strange Hornet in front of you. Uh huh, what were you gonna say, Art?

Art: Hey, it looks like these might link up though. We might solve our previous mystery.

Austin: It does look like those might link up. You might solve your previous mystery, this is true.

Art: Assuming whatever weird spider monster is in here doesn't kill us.

Austin: Assuming whatever sort of strange spider monster that's in here doesn't kill you. Let's get one more clock out here. And I'll move—

Sylvi: Oh hell yeah.

Austin: Let me make this—

Art: [laughs] It's our death by weird spider monster.

Austin: It's not, but it is a weird spider monster clock. It is in fact a pursuit clock with eight sections. Let me get—

Keith: One per leg.

Austin: One per leg! Wow, that's really good. It isn't- that's not why I did it that way, but that is very good. Originally I had it at ten sections, but I thought- I don't have a- I don't have a ten-section clock ready to go, I have an eight-section clock ready to go. And for what this is, that will be fine. This is a—I'm gonna write down pursuit clock here. Then I'll- I'll send the thing. Can you all see...uh, da da da da da. You might not be able to see. Ah, it's fine. This is the pursuit clock. Does it say pursuit clock for you?

Art: No.

Austin: This long- the big one?

Sylvi: No.

Austin: You'll know it's the big one though, right?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: That's fine.

Art: I will know that, yes.

Austin: Alright, this is the pursuit clock of Malathornia, Wicked Weaver. Who has an ability called Catch Me If You Can. That should say eight sections instead of ten

sections. “Malathornia enters the conflict accompanied by a pursuit clock with ten sections. Enemies cannot see Malathornia unless half or more of the pursuit clock sections are filled.” So you’ll have to take the objective action to reveal Malathornia, who is a big, weird spider. We kind of get the view of the spider looking down on you. I’ll do a full spider reveal, but it’s like bulky and carapiced in a way that’s very strange. It almost looks like it has horns built into its body?

And then- and then you’ll also have to—you know, your objective is your objective. To move between the tiers requires you to complete these travel clocks, these climbing clocks, these traversal clocks. And then to get- to be able to see Malathornia, you will have to advance this pursuit clock up past four. Which right now, it’s at four.

Keith: This is the perfect combat to not trigger my cool new move, which involves being able to see my enemy at the start of a conflict. [laughs]

Austin: Wow. Well, I didn’t know you had that!

Keith: It’s okay.

Austin: Thank you, thank you for adding “Pursuit!” [laughs] to the- to the board. Love it. Alright, we should enter into combat over here.

Ruined Hive Combat [0:46:01]

[“[Plant Life \(Redolencia Combat Begins\)](#)” by Jack de Quidt plays]

[cont.] Who is rolling for initiative?

Sylvi: I think last time we discovered that I have the best initiative roll modifier at zero? So... [**Art:** Mhm.] the other two go fir- it’s a team action, right?

Austin: It’s team so the other two go first and then [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] you get the bonuses, et cetera.

Keith: Mhm.

Austin: Okay, well that's a 5.

Sylvi: [sputters] Uh huh.

Keith: Is that good?

Austin: Not in this case.

Keith: [laughs]

Sylvi: It's better than it could be!

Austin: And Nicky. That's a 10! Alright, so you get a +1, presumably I don't- I didn't miss Nicky and Caoimhe getting bonded, right?

Sylvi: No.

Austin: Okay. So take a +1! Your goal here is 11.

Sylvi: [chuckles] I rolled a 10.

Austin: [sighs] With the +1?

Sylvi: That's—yeah.

Austin: Alright, well. [laughs]

Sylvi: You can't Fabula initiative, right?

Austin: Uh, no you cannot. It's not—ooh.

Sylvi: Okay, I didn't think so. [cross] I might wanna hold on to my one Fabula point actually.

Austin: [cross] I don't think so, it's not a skill—yeah, it's not a skill check, so.

Sylvi: I do have a subversion point...

Austin: As a reminder, if anyone has zero Fabula, you should have one now immediately. From starting a session with zero, as a reminder. Alright.

Sylvi: So they're going first?

Austin: They are going first.

Keith: This isn't a villain?

Austin: This is not a villain.

Keith: Yeah, I didn't think so.

Austin: I thought about it, but it's really not. What is your objective? Cause your objective might not be to kill Malathornia, Wicked Weaver, you know. What is your goal for this fight?

Keith: To leave.

Art: I mean, we should probably at least consider an objective of: get out of this room.

Austin: Sure.

Sylvi: Yeah...

Art: Cause I think a Wicked Weaver is probably limited by their ability to get through these doors.

Austin: Mm, interesting.

Art: I suspect this is a- this is a big'un.

Keith: Look, I hate to say it, I'm happy to kill the Wicked Weaver.

Art: I'm not unhappy to kill the Wicked Weaver, I'm just saying in the event [**Austin:** laughs] that that becomes untenable, [**Keith:** Sure.] I am open to fleeing.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Alright! You know, that sort of important step of setting up any sort of conflict is making sure we're all on the same page of what that goal is, but of course yes, even if what you said was, "we want to kill the Wicked Weaver" if at some point later you go, "I want to leave" that is fine. It's just a matter of saying what people want. The Wicked Weaver wants to kill you and puppet your corpses.

Sylvi: [sarcastically] Cool!

Austin: As weapons for whoever foolishly wanders in here next. But it doesn't go first, the Strange Hornet is gonna take another swing at you. And I think it's gonna swing—let's just roll- let's roll a 1d3. Let's do that. And this will be, according to the order of the bottom of the screen, Nicky then Antistrophe then Caoimhe. Antistrophe! It's gonna take another swing, this time at you. Oh my god.

Keith: Wow.

Austin: It got a 19, holy shit.

Sylvi: Woah!

Keith: That hits!

Austin: Holy shit, it hits for 20 damage!

Keith: Wow.

Sylvi: That's fucked. [laughs]

Austin: It slams both of its big, you know, four legs down, piercing your armor and doing 20 damage to you.

Keith: Holy moly.

Art: That's so much damage.

Austin: That's so much damage. [laughs] But then it's to y'all.

Keith: [cross] Um, can I—

Sylvi: [cross] You want me to blast this thing? Oh, go ahead.

Keith: What's that?

Sylvi: If you have an action, go ahead. Cause you just took the hit, so.

Keith: Yeah, so I guess I can still use my new move on this thing. I think that it only has 1 HP, but why not.

Austin: No, it does not only have 1 HP. I let that happen because of- I revealed that early cause—

Keith: Oh.

Sylvi: The spell.

Austin: Caoimhe has a special ability with her sword that lets—

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: That breaks spells, so I was like [**Keith:** Okay.] that's close enough to a spell, let's break that. You know?

Keith: Well I have a new move, it's called Quick Assessment. "At the start of a conflict, you may spend up to SL x5 mind points—" This is my first mind point move.

Austin: Wow!

Keith: "For every 5 mind points you spend this way, choose one option. Choose a creature you can see and the GM reveals one of their traits or name a damage type and choose a creature you can see and the GM reveals that creature's affinity towards that damage type."

Austin: Alright, which are you doing? And how much SL are you spending?

Keith: Uh, I—

Austin: Or, sorry, how much MP are you spending?

Keith: I'm spending 5, I can only spend 5 right now.

Austin: Oh, because it's the first level of the skill that you have. Got it.

Keith: Cause it's the first level.

Austin: It's a cool ability.

Keith: It is a cool ability.

Austin: I just wanna- I do wanna say something else though, really quick, because it sounded like you thought that the only time you could use a- the only time you could do this type of thing was [**Keith:** Uh huh.] at the start of a combat, which—you can do it for free at the start of the combat, but study is one of the abilities everybody has access to. You can do like an insight, insight check to learn about [**Keith:** Yes, totally.] something in combat. Just wanted to make sure everyone remembered that.

Keith: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. We can study, but it seems like such a waste to study. Why not attack?

Austin: [laughs] Okay.

Jack: [laughs]

Keith: And if I can study for free, at the start of combat—

Austin: I get it, no, this is a great ability.

Keith: Then all of a sudden study becomes really valuable.

Austin: I love this ability, it's really fun. [**Keith:** Yeah.] So what are you doing? What are you checking for?

Keith: So we already know that it's not resistant to Dark.

Austin: That's right.

Keith: Because Sylvi hit it for Dark.

Austin: That's right.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: So—

Austin: Nor is it vulnerable, but yeah.

Keith: Nor is it vulnerable, right exactly. So I need to check its affinity toward physical attacks.

Austin: It is not resistant to physical attacks, nor is it vulnerable. Nor does that absorb.

Keith: Okay, that's great.

Austin: It is normal towards physical attacks.

Keith: And I'm spending mind points for the first time.

Austin: Wow.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: They said it couldn't be done.

Keith: Yeah. Well so many of them are magic and this is a Lore Master move and it really just seems like a nerd. Nerd points.

Austin: [laughs]

Sylvi: I mean, yeah. That is- your mind is what you use to be a nerd, so.

Austin: It's true.

Sylvi: [laughs]

Keith: But who knows, there's been some—

Art: The mind, or the nerd maker as we—

Sylvi: Mhm!

Keith: There's some sort of magic happening around me, I don't know.

Austin: So you're doing an attack or what?

Keith: I am gonna do an attack.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: I'm going to attack with my mighty shields.

Austin: Mm!

Keith: Here we go...

Austin: And that is going to hit for 22 damage, it is well into crisis. What do you- you just slam it back? [laughs] It slams you, you slam it back?

Keith: Yeah, it gets close enough to get squished, and I squish.

Austin: Interesting. Love it. The- as you do that, a- you feel—or actually let's see if this actually hits first. What is your defense and then Nicky, what is your defense? Regular defense.

Keith: 15.

Austin: 15, okay. Nicky?

Art: Um, physical defense is...11.

Austin: Alright, this hits both of you!

Keith: Oh my god.

Austin: Malathornia—you both feel all too late, the sensation of webs, you know, coming maybe like around your side? [**Keith:** Mhm.] You both take 13 damage, physical. And you both lose an IP as Malathornia has snuck something out of your backpack, away from you.

Keith: Oh no. The Wicked Weaver...

Art: Okay, but I have now taken damage.

Austin: It's true!

Jack: [laughs]

Art: And so I would like to use Painful Lesson which lets me do the study action for free.

Austin: Tell me- read me the text of that?

Art: "After another creature causes you to lose hit points [**Austin:** Yup.] with an attack, a spell, or any other method, you may immediately perform the study action on that creature (see page 74) for free. If you do, gain a bonus equal to skill level to your check. Remember you can study the same aspect of a creature only once."

Austin: Alright! This is interesting because you'll be studying it—you know, it has not become not invisible to you, but I do think that it- maybe you catch a glimpse of it and get a look as you follow whatever has been stolen away from you back up through the layers of the hive. Give me your study check, this is definitely I think insight, insight.

Art: That's just what- yeah, that's what- the study button on the sheet says insight, insight.

Austin: Does that, yeah. What'd you roll, here? A 9.

Keith: It's a 1 and a 7.

Austin: So you get some—

Art: It's a 1 and a 7.

Austin: So that's uh- a 7 right now is a basic amount of information. A subtle hint, useful but a bit too broad. Oh, but actually this is in combat so let's see. You actually would get nothing from that. You don't even get the NPC's rank, species, maximum HP, and maximum MP.

Keith: You gonna roll that- reroll that 1?

Sylvi: That might be worth doing.

Art: Yeah, I think I'm gonna reroll that 1.

Austin: Hell yeah. So this would be an 8 plus whatever your new roll is.

Sylvi: [snorts]

Keith: [laughs]

Austin: Oh. Art's written "Reroll: mad." Ooh, 4. So that's a 12, right?

Art: 12.

Austin: So that's above a 10. So that means you'll get its rank, species, maximum HP, and maximum MP. This thing has the rank of champion 3, cause there's three of you.

[Jack: laughs] You get its maximum HP. Its maximum HP is 180. And its maximum MP is 100. And its species is Demon.

Keith: [grimly] Great.

Austin: Actually I think I can just—

Art: Oh, we're in trouble!

Austin: Can I just do this? There we go, look at that.

Jack: Do you remember off hand, Austin, how much HP those jellyfish had?

Austin: No. I mean, I can check. I have them in here.

Jack: I'm trying to like get a sense of where 180 HP is on the scale. And it- cause it seems like a lot.

Austin: It does seem like a lot. I will say, in contrast, the- the big Draconic Mole that the other side fought that time has 240. So it's less than that.

Keith: Okay.

Jack: Okay, okay.

Keith: And I got out of that pretty okay.

Sylvi: Yeah, you did great.

Keith: This thing's already- they've already hit me twice. Maybe it's just really good rolling.

Austin: Yeah, they don't have super- like, I have not juiced the stats. In fact, that hornet is like, kind of a pushover. So it's just- it has just rolled really [laughs] well shockingly, is what happened with that.

Dre: [laughs]

Keith: Yeah, even the Thieving Webs that hit, [**Austin:** Yeah.] it's 2d8 + 4? That's not—

Sylvi: Oh yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Crazy. It's just an 8 and a 6.

Sylvi: It just rolled max on two dice.

Austin: The +4 is very strong.

Keith: The +4 is good.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: It has high accuracy boost and then- and that's- **[Keith: Yeah.]** but the rest of it is normal.

Keith: Okay.

Sylvi: Yeah, it's been really nailing the high roll. Like, it got a 10 on the Buzzing Bash **[Austin: Yeah.]** and then it got an 8 high roll on the Thieving Webs.

Austin: Yeah. The thing it has is, it is level 10 so it gets a +1 to accuracy and then it has specifically another +3 accuracy **[Keith: Mhm.]** from the type of creature it is basically.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Anyway, it's back to y'all. Or wait—yeah. Cause, Nicky, that was free cause you got hit, right?

Sylvi: That was free.

Art: That was free, yes.

Austin: Okay. And make sure you spend that- you get rid of that 1 IP.

Art: Yeah, done.

Austin: Cool.

Sylvi: And we have to fill this pursuit clock before we can target Malathornia?

Austin: That is correct. You cannot see it **[Sylvi: Okay.]** without it being halfway full, so you need at least four marks. You can do- you can fill that with objective, in fact I would say that successfully doing a study check fills it by one. I think that makes sense, right?

Keith: Mm, mhm.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Sure.

Austin: In fact, you might fill it by two because it's—no, I think it fills it by one. If you had done an objective check and gotten a—

Keith: [quietly] No, I think two...

Austin: And gotten a 12- or gotten a, yeah, over 10, I would've filled it by two. But you explicitly- part of what you got already is, you got information. So I'm marking it by one.

Sylvi: I think I want to do an objective roll, but Art, if you have an action you want to do before I can let you take this turn in the order.

Art: Um, I had a- I had a theory that I don't like anymore.

Sylvi: Okay.

Keith: Okay.

Art: Let me just—which was that these Strange Hornets might be weak to fire, [**Sylvi:** Uh huh.] because they're dead and therefore kind of like dried out?

Sylvi: Mm.

Art: So I was gonna use the free equip action from my good sleeping.

Austin: Ohh!

Art: Sleeping Soundly to switch to my fire weapon and hit one of these as like a test, but it just feels like a demon is not going to be weak to fire, [**Keith:** Mhm.] and then I'll just- might even be resistant to fire, and I might be just setting myself up for—

Keith: I'll say this, it's a free action which is great, but the counter point is that it's deep in crisis and we already know it's not resistant to dark or physical damage.

Art: Sure, but we do also know it's gonna pop back to life.

Austin: No, that has been severed.

Keith: It can't. Yeah, because of Sylvi's thing.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Art: Oh.

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah. I was revealing that and ruin—

Sylvi: [mischievously] Hehehe.

Austin: Despelling it, effectively.

Keith: Which is great, it really helps.

Art: Alright, well then that thing can't go again, right? That thing's gone this round?

Austin: That's right. Malathornia has two more actions this turn though.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Champions get as many—yeah.

Art: So then I do think that the- the objective action is the correct one to take.

Pursuing Malathornia [0:59:13]

Sylvi: Okay. So I should go first? Austin, I was gonna ask if I could use the—I love finding uses for my magical reagent.

Austin: Oh sure!

Sylvi: Everybody knows this about me.

Austin: I do.

Sylvi: It's my famous move! There is an idea in my head of Caoimhe using it almost as like a—in my head it's a metal detector, but like a sonar or something like that, and seeing if it reacts stronger when she holds it [**Austin:** Yeah.] in different directions to find Malathornia.

Austin: Sure.

Sylvi: Does that make sense?

Austin: I think that makes sense. Give me an insight, insight, probably?

Sylvi: Yeah, so I get the +2 on that, though from the reagent, right?

Austin: From using the reagent, yeah. I think so.

Sylvi: Cool.

Austin: Specifically it's like, this is a demonic being, this is a magical being. This is not just a big spider.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: And what's demonic mean? Go play Redolencia to find out. There's a whole deep lore about demons over there.

Sylvi: Yeah. It's on the NES, you should pick it up.

Austin: [laughs] That's right.

Jack: You can also get it on the Internet Archive.

Sylvi: Critical success.

Austin: Holy—

Dre: Oohohoho!

Sylvi: I rolled two 8s.

Jack: Woah!

Dre: Damn!

Austin: You critted, alright.

Keith: Oh my god, that's a crit crit.

Sylvi: I'm the smartest elf alive.

Austin: That's a crit crit. Alright, so the way this is gonna work before you get your critical things, again, is each tier of success is a mark so 7 is one, 10 is another, 13 is another, and 16 would be the third or the fifth—

Keith: Oh my god.

Austin: So you can now see Malathornia. What's this look like? Are you channeling magic through the magical reagent? What's that part of it look like and what is your crit, uh, bonus?

Sylvi: I really—this might sound silly, but I really love the idea of her looking through it like it's almost like binoculars. [**Austin:** laughs] We've described it as being sort of like pneumatic tube shaped thing—

Austin: Yeah, we have. Yeah.

Sylvi: So having her hold it up while the reagent inside is like freaking out [**Austin:** Yeah.] and doing things and then getting the outline of Malathornia through that [**Austin:** Totally.] sounds really cool to me.

Austin: Yeah, and you see it. And so now I can tell you that it has a pretty—I'll give you the shape, I'll show you what type of spider it is.

Sylvi: Mhm.

Austin: I'm gonna let people- I'm gonna link to a picture, but I'm gonna put it behind spoilers, does that sound okay? I don't know how people are about spiders.

Jack: Yeah.

Sylvi: Cause it's freaky, freaky spider?

Austin: It's freaky spiders

Dre: Oh man.

Austin: This is modeled after a particular type of spider called the *Micrathena sagittata*. Which is a type of—

Keith: Oh hell yeah.

Sylvi: Oh that's cool looking.

Dre: Ohoho!

Austin: Yeah, it's really fucking sick.

Art: Oh that's not so bad.

Austin: Yeah, I think that that- yeah, I'm pretty good at looking at these. It is a type of—

Sylvi: [laughs]

Austin: [laughs]

Keith: Brag. Brag.

Dre: It looks like it has a giant pineapple on its back

Austin: It does, it's a type of *Gasteracantha* spider which is the type of orb-weaver spider that has like all sorts of wild spines and shit on it. I will link y'all to just like the Wikipedia page on these and you can scroll down and look at the rest of these. They're like spiders that have big weird spiny thorn-like hides or like shells almost? **[Sylvi:** Uh huh.] And this one specifically is a kind of darkish red and then at the- kind of on its rear,

it kind of lifts up to almost like a- almost like a devil imp [laughs] emoji shape with the horns.

Jack: [laughs]

Sylvi: [delighted] Oh it does!

Austin: And in fact, that is where the face of this creature is.

Sylvi: Oh!

Janine: Ohh.

Austin: The front of it has a mouth and- or has like a- what are they called?

Sylvi: It's like the, uh—

Austin: What are the little mouth—mandibles, it has mandibles there.

Janine: Mandibles?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: But its actual- it has like big, weird burning demon eyes up in its big, weird rear fake head thing.

Janine: It's actually—

Sylvi: It's kind of like the skulltulas from Zelda.

Austin: It is! You're right!

Sylvi: Except the head is not like, a fake head, it's the real head.

Austin: It's the real head.

Janine: It's like that, but instead of a skull it's a prickly pear.

Austin: Yeah! Yeah, exactly.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: And it is- it is—yeah, you have identified it, you can point it to people, you’ve filled this clock past halfway, which means it is visible effectively for everybody. **[Sylvi: Well—]** Whether that’s literally visible or not that’s up to you to describe.

Sylvi: Well, cause I could also use Progress here and just fill that clock as my opportunity, right?

Austin: You could- it will- you absolutely could. This is like a tug of war clock, **[Sylvi: Okay.]** finishing this clock doesn’t do anything. It just makes—

Sylvi: Ookay.

Austin: Well the more filled it is, the harder it will be to become invisible again.

Sylvi: Mm, so you’re saying it’s Faux Pas time.

Austin: It can slowly make itself invisible again, I will tell you outright.

Sylvi: Mhm, okay. [sharp inhale] I am torn between an Affliction or Information. So to read what those would do, Afflictions pretty straightforward, “a creature suffers dazed, shaken, slow, or weak.” Information is, “you spot a useful clue or detail, the Game Master may tell you what it is or ask you to introduce that detail yourself.” Let me just- I just want to look back at—I’m kinda tempted to do something that lowers its dex dice? Yeah man, I do too. I love my magical reagent.

Keith and Dre: [laugh]

Sylvi: That’s a great shirt, can we make that?

Austin: [laughs]

Sylvi: Can that be merch?

Austin: Keith has placed a, presumably hastily made, “I love magical—“

Keith: [laughs] Yeah.

Sylvi: Well you can still see the “I love New York” tag on it.

Austin: [laughs] You can!

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: [laughing] See the “I love New York” tag.

Keith: It’s- no, they sell it in New York, it’s a sub-brand.

Dre: Yeah yeah yeah yeah.

Austin: I see. It’s “I heart magical reagent” [laughs] is what it says.

Keith: Sorry, if I had noticed that there was a tag there I would have changed the NY to MR.

Sylvi: I like it.

Austin: Okay.

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: Or maybe just an MY, suggesting that [**Keith:** My.] the tag continues [laughs] below that point where it will say “reagent.”

Jack and Art: [laugh]

Sylvi: I love my magical reagent.

Dre: It’s a super long tag, it only has two letters per level. [laughs]

Austin: [laughs] It’s a super long tag, that’s right.

Sylvi: Um...

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: I'm trying to think of an in-fiction reason for it to be slowed after this.

Austin: Great question, I would love to know it.

Art: Wait, wait, can we just- can I pitch you a couple more opportunities?

Sylvi: Oh please.

Art: We could discover one vulnerability.

Sylvi: That is true, Scan would be useful.

Art: Or Plot Twist, "someone or something of your choice suddenly appears on the scene." Maybe just, who's the strongest person you know?

Austin: Oh! [laughs]

Dre: Mm!

Keith: I think it's me.

Austin: I think it's [laughs] Antistrophe.

Sylvi: It's Antistrophe. [laughing] Yeah, that's the thing!

Art: Who's the second strongest person you know? [laughs]

Dre: Oh, don't say Brontë. Don't say Brontë.

Keith: I think it's Caoimhe.

Sylvi: I think it's Kley, but they're in jail.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, well!

Sylvi: [laughs]

Janine: Brontë's at the bottom of that list in a big way. [laughs]

Sylvi: Yeah.

Keith: Can we- maybe we can—

Art: Don't say you haven't known them, if you've heard of them—

Sylvi: Strongest personality.

Keith: Can we summon the person who's at the Masque and gives us- lets us into the party?

Austin: [laughs]

Sylvi: Oh sorry, if you want me to summon the strongest person I know, I could have Thereus Aegir, [**Austin:** Oh—] the leader of the Hexcloaks show up which would go great for everybody.

Austin: Oh, it would go great for everybody.

Sylvi: Yeah, what if we got a new, worse boss to fight? The only reason why I'm leaning towards affliction over discovering a vulnerability is because the affliction would make it so its rolls are a little less lethal to us—

Keith: Oof, that's great.

Sylvi: And it's been rolling really well.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: So like bringing the- its dex is an 8 [**Austin:** Yep.] I believe, bringing that down to a 6 would make some of these like Thieving Webs and stuff not hit so bad.

Austin: You're not wrong! Yeah so far you've seen a roll—

Sylvi: So...

Austin: It's—

Keith: By the way, [**Austin:** Mhm.] I have my free action, same as Nicky, where I can use a- do an inventory thing for free and I could use that to target both of- or two of the three of us for Potion Rain.

Sylvi: Okay.

Keith: Which normally heals for half, but because it heals for double it will heal two people for 50. For free.

Sylvi: Ohh, that's pretty good.

Austin: That's good to know.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: I think I am going to take slow on it.

Austin: Okay! What's this look like? You have to tell me how you do this or what the success does.

Sylvi: Well I'm in a real Zelda mindset now, [**Austin:** Yeah.] so there's a part of me that's like the reagent like catches the light and because it's shone on it long enough, it like, is visible to us and it is- does not like that it's in the light.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: I don't know- necessarily know, Austin, if you pictured this as a like, shadow dwelling creature necessarily?

Austin: Oh that is a hundred percent what it is, yeah. Yeah.

Sylvi: So yeah, I think that just it's—

Austin: It has not cast invisibility, it is using [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] the architecture and shadows of this place to stay out of sight. Alright.

Sylvi: Yeah, so—yeah. I think I'm happy with that. If y'all are.

Austin: Yeah, so it's kind of like stunned by the bright light of the reagent [**Sylvi:** Yeah.] reflecting into its eyes. It's not dazed but it is moving slowly, it's moving carefully. You know, maybe there's a point at which it falls and like, injures its leg in the fall, you know.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: You've- almost like shining the light in its eyes, tripping it up and now—

Sylvi: [laughs] It twisted its ankle.

Austin: It twisted its ankle! It twisted one of its eight ankles and so now it's moving a little slower.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: Alright!

Sylvi: Okay.

Austin: Well it gets to go now.

Sylvi: I feel great about that. I know it's about to do something that's gonna make me not feel great about that, but I feel great about that roll.

Austin: You know, now that it- now that you- now that you've revealed it, [**Sylvi:** Mhm.] it has no reason not to just try to like directly attack you with a melee attack. It does 13 dark damage to you. Each target hit by this attack, right now it's only one, gains weakened.

Sylvi: Ow!

Austin: Also—oh sorry, what is your magic defense? Cause this attack actually does target magic defense.

Sylvi: [sheepishly] It's 11...

Austin: Okay well 18 hits that too.

Sylvi: It would- my physical defense is 13. [laughs]

Austin: Well there you go.

Sylvi: Yeah...

Austin: So take 13 dark damage and take weak. And it goes like, um,

(as **Malathornia**): You thought you were alone in being able to weaken your opponent?

Sylvi: Well I do get to- can I counterattack? Cause that's an even number.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: It's an even number—oh wait, is it an even number or an even number on a miss?

Keith: I think it's hit or a miss.

Sylvi: On a miss or a hit.

Austin: On a miss or a hit, you can counterattack! And you can- yeah, you can see it now, to be clear.

Sylvi: So that's a 12 to hit.

Austin: That hits!

Sylvi: Okay, and it's 4 damage. It's only 4 damage cause again, it's high roll equals zero.

Austin: I'm sorry—

Art: Alright, only 176 to go!

Sylvi: Hey, listen!

Austin: I'm sorry to tell you, it is only 2 damage because it is resistant to dark.

Dre: Mmm.

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: That makes a lot of sense.

Art: Only 178 to go!

Sylvi: Are there any spells affecting it that I stopped though?

Austin: Oh, great question.

Sylvi: Can I stop a spell that's affecting it?

Austin: Uh, another spell is not affecting it.

Sylvi: Oh okay. Well you know, it's something.

Austin: Yeah! Alright, back to y'all.

Sylvi: I like spi—in character, Caoimhe's says,

(as **Caoimhe**): I like spiders a lot more when they can't talk before you squish them.

Austin: [chuckles] This thing is huge, by the way. Now that it's like charged at you, it is bigger than you, [**Sylvi:** Uh huh!] it is- you know, it's like a floor tall. It's a gigantic spider. And as it like crunches and cracks its way across the kind of broken eggs and stuff of this place, you understand it moved here and ate everything. Right? Like it attacked this hive and won somehow, so. Maybe the way it did it was by manipulating the bodies of the dead, who could say. Back to y'all though.

Art: Alright, I'm the only person who hasn't gone, is that right?

Sylvi: Yep.

Art: And it's more useful to try to get rid of the add than to figure out if this thing's weak to physical? Or resistant to physical?

Sylvi: I think—yeah, I mean we already know it's resistant to dark, I don't know how many other resistances it's gonna have.

Art: Alright, so I will—

Sylvi: We'll figure it out.

Art: I will try to fork the- the—

Sylvi: Woah.

Dre: [laughs quietly]

Austin: The Strange Hornet?

Art: The Strange Hornet.

Austin: Let's do it. That hits!

Art: That's not great.

Austin: Even though it's an 8, [**Art:** Okay.] and you have forked the Strange Hornet. 20 damage is more than enough, the Strange Hornet falls to the ground earning a final rest and crumbles into, you know, kind of dust and pieces of its carapace. Nice job.

Malathornia is gonna get to go again. This is only the second? This the third, this is the final act of Malathornia this turn. Malathornia, still revealed, still in the light at this point. You are weakened now, Caoimhe, right? You didn't resist that somehow?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Alright, Malathornia—

Sylvi: No, but I don't know if it—can you go lower than 6 on a die in this game?

Austin: [darkly] Let me tell you, there are other ways to affect people who are weakened.

Sylvi: Okay cool.

Austin: Webs slip around your arms and legs, and you are puppeted. Malathornia's Marionette says: "spend 20 MP and choose a target suffering from weakened. Malathornia's webs puppet the target, forcing them to immediately perform a free attack with an equipped weapon or basic attack against a target chosen by this NPC." Choosing Nicky, who has just slain the hornet.

Sylvi: Sorry!

Austin: Yeah, you—

Sylvi: Sorry, sorry!

Austin: You have not lost like, your control of your vocal cords or—this isn't a thing you feel like you want to do. You are very literally just being wielded like a weapon.

Sylvi: Yeah and it's only for this one attack? Or do I have to like—

Austin: It's just this one attack.

Sylvi: Okay. [laughs] Sorry, Nicky. I rolled too good.

Austin: You rolled a 16! Which I think is higher than Nicky's defense.

Art: Sure is.

Austin: Take 14 damage, Nicky. And if you [laughs] have any positive spell effects going on, you lose them.

Art: I don't. Oh and I'm just not in crisis!

Sylvi: Apologizing the entire time she's doing this.

Austin: Yeah...

Keith: I mean we're a great pair to be attacked by Spell Sever.

Austin: That's true, that's true.

Keith: If anybody is gonna be attacked by Spell Sever it should be me and Nicky.

Sylvi: Yeah...

Keith: Is Jonathan doing spells? Jonathan are you doing spells?

Dre: Nah, not for real.

Art: Oh! But can I get a second—

Sylvi: But the thing is- oh—

Art: Do I—

Sylvi: The thing is, Keith, I'm usually- I usually do have some support spells that I cast, but they're not applicable in this scene so far which is really helpful.

Austin: [laughs]

Keith: Yeah.

Art: I believe I can study again.

Austin: Because you got hit again. But you didn't—

Sylvi: Study me??

Austin: But you didn't get hit by Malathornia.

Art: Oh.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Well I guess that was—

Austin: You could- if you wanna study Caoimhe, that's- you know, that's your prerogative I guess, but [laughs] that's what it would be. Alright, that's the end of the first round, right?

Sylvi and Art: [laughing uproariously]

Austin: Oh! Well, I mean, you did get a crit! Sorry, for the listener, Nicky rolled the study. We're sure you can do that, right? What's the name of that move?

Art: Um, Painful Lesson.

Austin: "After another creature causes you to lose hit points [**Sylvi:** sputters, laughs] with an attack, a spell, or any other method, you may immediately perform the study attack- or action or that creature (see page 74) for free! If you do gain a bonus equal to SL dadada, remember you can study the same aspect of a creature only once." Yeah, well okay. You did get a crit here, it's an open check.

Sylvi: [laughs]

Austin: That's very funny. It says here your result would get you literally everything one could possibly know [laughing] about them.

Keith: Wow.

Sylvi: My entire life story is beamed into your head.

Keith and Jack: [laugh]

Art: Weird! [laughs]

Austin: Yeah...

Sylvi: You see a young child running around the streets of Billough with her elf friends.

Jack: This is that bit in the second season of Bluff City where the two people come to know each other perfectly and it's horrible.

Austin: Oh my god it is, it is. What's the—

Sylvi: Except crucially I don't know Nicky like that!

Jack: Oh yeah. [laughs]

Sylvi: Nicky has just seen through me completely.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: That is actually very true, you're not wrong.

Keith: Running around wanting to be a cop with her best friend who hates cops...

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: Wanting to be a hero, and then became a cop because she doesn't really understand that that's not how you do that. [laughs]

Dre: Man.

Austin: Yeah, what do you- what do you learn about Caoimhe in this moment? And what are you using your crit on?? [laughs]

Keith: I guess the lesson—

Art: Well I'm gonna discover one vulnerability of a creature I can see.

Austin: Oh, interesting!

Sylvi: Oh that's fucking sick, actually!

Austin: You- you— [laughs]

Art: I'm studying so well, I'm studying someone else.

Dre: [laughs]

Sylvi: Well if I'm being puppeted by [**Austin:** Yeah!] the strings of the web—

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvi: It actually makes a lot of sense that you would be able to study it through those movements still.

Dre: Ohh.

Austin: Yeah! So you're looking for a- you learn a vulnerability, right?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: It is vulnerable to light.

Art: Doesn't help.

Sylvi: That helps a lot, dude.

Jack: [laughs]

Sylvi: That helps a lot!

Art: Doesn't help me.

Austin: Can I get this grounded in play a little bit? How do you discover that Malathornia is govern- or is vulnerable to light and how do you communicate this to the party?

Art: What about the—describe to me the puppeting.

Austin: Yeah, I think the thing you see here is there's not enough force in the way that the webs are working for it to just be physical. There is something darkly magical about this.

Art: Okay.

Austin: So there is something that is—

Art: And as someone who can do dark damage—

Austin: True. Yeah, well.

Art: I know that light's the opposite of that.

Austin: [chuckles] Yeah!

Dre: Mm.

Art: Unfortunately none of my- light isn't—you can't food someone into light damage.

Austin: There are other ways to do light damage in this world. Someone else in your party might—

Art: The way I can't food someone into air, bolt, earth, fire, ice or poison.

Austin: I see.

Janine: You could make them eat a glowstick.

Sylvi: Oh true!

Dre: Mmm!

Art: That's actually not on my list of things.

Austin: Maybe you have to discover that recipe still.

Janine: Something to work towards, you know.

Art: Mmm.

Sylvi: The magical reagent is sort of a glowstick.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: [laughs]

Four Winds Door [1:16:27]

Austin: Alright, let's take a break on that side for a second, with the end of round one. Over on the other side, I need to know something about y'all. Did anybody go check out that door? Before we get into anything else because I want- I want to be as forward as I can be with what the party knows and maybe needs to know, if that makes sense. Did anyone check out the door at the Tier of Spirit? And the answer might be no.

Dre: Does the door- what does that door look like again?

Austin: It's one of those big faces of the wind. If you look up like, "the four winds, Greek." Right, Greek mythology, you get those kind of like big- like the [blowing out] phew style. Maybe it's not actually Greek, maybe this is—

Janine: Cheeks puffed out.

Austin: Cheek puffed out.

Janine: Like a cherub but old.

Dre: Mmm.

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah, maybe this is actually not Greek. Maybe it's like architectural...

Janine: No, it's—

Austin: Like medieval?

Janine: It's like maps, you get 'em on maps.

Austin: Yeah, maps. Yeah.

Jack: Famous period of history, maps.

Austin: These guys. Oh, these guys suck, let me find a better one.

Janine: [quietly] Old map wind face...

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, old map wind face.

Janine: Old map wind face, that'll get you there.

Dre: Mmm.

Austin: That'll get you there. Yeah. These- you know, these guys. These motherfuckers.

Jack: Oh, yeah yeah yeah.

Austin: It's like one of those has been carved into the door itself.

Dre: Yeah, I'll check that motherfucker out. That looks cool.

Austin: It doesn't address you, you are a servant.

Dre: Oh that's right!

Ali: [cackling]

Janine: [laughs]

Sylvi: Oh, damn.

Jack: I suppose I see- I am on the tier of feasting, I have flown up to the tier of feasting and I'm looking. And I see Jonathan—

Austin: [laughs] Okay, yeah. Are you drinking anything? You pick up a drink on the way?

Jack: Oh yeah. I have got a, um...it's a World's End Martini.

Austin: Mmm!

Jack: This is a martini where the dirty part of the martini is sort of homeopathically apocalyptic.

Austin: Yeah!

Jack: By homeopathically apocalyptic, I mean [laughs] the like, the ghost of the ghost of the ghost of an apocalypse. And that has been used.

Austin: It's so funny you say that, because that is so perfect for this masque. You have learned as you've been overhearing things and getting drinks, the world ended. Outside. You look outside, you can look outside through some windows, and it's like the apocalypse out there. The clouds are in a constant terrible, like, hurricane, but everything's fine in here.

Jack: And this is part of the politicking, right?

Austin: That's exactly right, yeah.

Jack: There's a sort of Boccaccio's Decameron thing going on where it's like **[Austin:** Yeah.] once the plague leaves Florence, we'll—

Austin: It's- yeah, the thing that you kind of pick up here is the world was going to end in this version of the world, and through the power of their big storm, they have made an inside that is still safe and that inside is the eye of the storm. And every year, the eye of the storm collapses down to this tower and then expands back out to the whole of the world, keeping it safe for another year. [laughs] You can go back out there, you can repair what's left, you can politick over what's left and bring your things into a place that are safe in between each terrible year, and then it all collapses back down again. And the only people who survive are the people who are allowed into this ball.

Jack: Damn.

Austin: It's not good here in this world.

Jack: No.

Austin: So that is the world of Alteros, and yeah, you come to this door. And it begins to move as you approach it. Its face begins to animate in, I imagine, stop motion. And it says,

(as **Talking Door**): Oh, tap your casks and trade your masks to celebrate the year.

Backstab or bray, prey on or pray, to lift up your career.

But do not assume you'll see this room without a feat of wisdom.

You must display you know your way around our honored system.

To jar this door, a friend of four must demonstrate their love.

With facade fair and no face bare, this door the winds will shove.

So dance or chatter or bleat or batter to gather up those faces;

which I adore, though they abhor, to even share such spaces.

Jack: Okay...

Dre (as **Jonathan**): [sighs] Well, Elena you're the- you're the dungeonier. What, uh—that make sense to you?

Jack (as **Elena**): I mean, [sighs] there's some sort of- some sort of riddle being worked and I- I- can see, you know—

[Untitled Track by Jack de Quidt starts playing] [1:21:12]

Austin (as **Talking Door**): You've brought just one! Which is not none, but I will need three more.

Ali: [snorts]

Jack: Mm.

Austin (as **Talking Door**): Show that you know who's friend and foe, then wind will slip this door.

[Untitled Track by Jack de Quidt ends] [1:21:24]

Jack: [laughs] Okay, the door was starting to- the door responded well to quince. How many masks did you say earlier? Three hundred masks??

Austin: There are...more than that.

Jack: [laughing] Fuck!

Dre: Mm.

Austin: Three hundred and... three hundred and I guess, uh—it's a lot. It's a lot.

Dre: And if I'm understanding correctly, it's asking for a specific mask?

Austin: Three hundred sixty—I don't know, dude.

Jack: It seemed to be—

Dre: Yeah yeah yeah, fair fair fair.

Ali: [chuckles]

Jack: The—and I'm sure Austin will put this- put the riddle in the chat, but the—

Austin: I thought about not doing it. I thought about just having said it once.

Dre: Please do!!

Jack: [laughs]

Dre: [laughing] Please do! Please do, my audio processing disorder means please do!

Jack: It's like—

Austin: Yeah I got it, I got it.

Sylvi: [laughs]

Jack: We gotta find masks that the door likes but that the guests at the party seem to abhor or, um, [**Dre:** Mmm!] or are like— [laughs] okay, so this is one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten stanzas.

Sylvi: Guys I'm really glad we got the spider room.

Ali: [laughs]

Austin: It's eight stanzas and then there are two other stanzas.

Keith: I love riddles, I don't know.

Ali: Well we just have to be friends, right?

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ali: I don't know this mask thing, it just kinda— [laughs]

Keith: Oh, have you tried being friends?

Ali: I think we just have to demonstrate some love!

Jack: "To jar this door a friend of four must demonstrate their love." Right, Austin says there are bonus extra verses [**Dre:** Mmm.] cause invariably it's going to be like, "Here comes two, I see them now."

Ali: [laughs]

Jack: Uh, "to jar this door a friend of four must demonstrate their love. With facade fair and no face bare, this door the winds will shove. Gather up those faces which I adore, though they abhor to even share such spaces." [sighs] Okay.

Dre: Mm. "You must display you know our- your way around our honored system"?

Jack: So there's some sort of—I mean, we're in the Hitman or Dishonored level and I bet if we go down to the tier of art or whatever, some lady is gonna be like, "How I hate the treacherous Grasker family! And their symbol of the unicorn." And then we can go hunting for the unicorn. [laughs] We don't do dungeon crawls super often on Friends at the Table, so my dungeon crawl instinct may be at—

Dre: Mm.

Ali: [laughs]

Austin: Mhm! Mmm.

Jack: [laughing] May be atrophied.

Janine: [laughs]

Dre: Well like a Hitman level, the best way to figure out how it works is to just fuck around and poke things, so.

Ali: Yeah. I was gonna say, I- I deeply love and appreciate Austin and Dre here, but to think that Veile is noticing a door in this room? [laughs]

Janine: Yeah, no. Uh uh.

Austin: No, I get it. That's why I—we could spend six hours just doing open ended party conversation and we can do that! But I want to make sure that the objective was clear right away [**Ali:** Uh huh.] so that while doing that stuff, you might pick up some things that are useful to the puzzle.

Ali: Yeah.

Keith: It does say "dance or chatter or bleat or batter—" [**Ali:** Yeah.] I can't tell you what bleat is—

Ali: You know, the— [laughs]

Keith: But I can tell you what dance, chatter, and batter are. In the duel room, that's bat-you can—maybe you can win masks fighting?

Ali: I believe bleat is what goats do. [**Dre:** Yeah.] So, I think we're getting well covered. [laughs]

Keith: Sure, I just don't know how it helps get a mask. I can see how talking to someone or dancing with them might get you their mask, but bleating with them I don't know.

Janine: It's goats and sheep.

Ali: Well...

Keith: Sure, yeah.

Dre: Mhm, mhm, mhm.

Jack: Uh, just- just double checking, Taskmaster rules, [**Ali:** snorts] there's not like four masks written on the ceiling or something? Just spelled out very clearly?

Sylvi: All the information is on the riddle.

Austin: All the information is on the- [laughing] is on the wall, yeah!

Ali: [laughs]

Sylvi: Yeah.

Tier of Music [1:24:50]

Austin: All the information is in the poem. So, what are you doing if not talking to a door, Brontë and Veile?

Sylvi: [laughs]

Janine: Mhm, mhm, mhm. Um, I- so I want to say I think the very first thing that happens is Brontë immediately starts to fly towards the tier of music and Efta and Zolfta have to stop him [**Austin:** laughs] to heal him, specifically.

Austin: Oh, interesting!

Janine: I want to use some IP and just take a little- get a little potion.

Austin: Smart.

Janine: But I think narratively, that's Efta and Zolfta being like, give us your hand that was horribly bitten, [**Austin:** Yeah.] we're gonna bandage it up—

Ali: Awe. [laughs]

Austin: Good, good.

Janine: And then you can go play.

Austin: [laughs]

Sylvi: [snickers]

Janine: So you spend IP— [laughs]

Austin: Not go play your music, go play in the—

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: Yeah.

Austin: It's recess mode, yeah.

Janine: Yeah, in the recess way.

Sylvi: You can go in the ballpit after!

Austin: Yeah, got it. Alright, go ahead and spend your IP.

Janine: Hitting that remedy button and then...

Austin: There it is. Get yourself some 50 hit points back.

Janine: Oh that doesn't automatically take the IP.

Austin: It does not automatically do it, no.

Janine: Okay, well.

Austin: This whole system we're using is- is in super beta and I think even more in beta now—

Janine: Yes, yeah yeah yeah.

Austin: Because a thing that maybe has become clear to the eagle eared listener? That's not—do eagles have good ears?

Sylvi: The bat eared listener?

Jack: Yeah!

Dre: Yeahh!

Austin: The bat eared listener and also the Fabula reading listener, is that creatures now are different. Creatures there—the bestiary that was Kickstarted last year has a new mode of building monsters and NPCs and so they have been sort of different in ways that are hard to explain if you don't build creatures in Fabula. [**Janine:** Mhm.] They're a lot quicker to build which is really nice, and there's like—the way that they work is just different.

And so this system, there are things—remember last time when I was like, oh we just have to add +1 to this because the system doesn't let me add +1? That is an example of some stuff I'll have to do sometimes as we play, so. Just heads up on that.

Alright, so you've been bandaged up and you're heading to the tier of music?

Janine: Mhm, music. I want to immediately find someone to flirt with. I'm assuming you have prepared for this eventuality and have a list of possible people that that could be with, [**Jack:** chuckles] so if you need me to roll some kinda die to see— [laughs] [cross] to see who catches my eye—

Austin: [cross] I sure do. I need you to roll a d—

Dre: [laughs]

Ali: [cross] Is there a chart?? [laughs]

Austin: I need you to roll a d12 and a d30.

Sylvi: Twelve??

Ali: Woah! Wait.

Janine: Okay.

Sylvi: Oh, the d30 is for their mask.

Jack: This person's mask, right?

Sylvi: Yeah.

Janine: Separately or together?

Austin: Two separate rolls.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: Probably need 'em both, but I mean, you know.

Janine: 1d12...and 1d30... 9, 20.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: God, I hope he gets shithead Alexander wearing the [laughs] dumbass mask.

Janine: Well then I just go flirt with someone else! [laughs]

Keith: [laughs]

Dre: Nope, nope, you only get one choice. That's how flirting works. [laughs]

Keith: You rolled, yeah!

Janine: [laughs]

Austin: Ah, let's see here...

Janine: This in my head is a roll to see like—cause there's a lot of people Brontë could flirt with here, so it's a roll of like **[Jack: laughs]** who catches his eye. To me, anyway.

Austin: What type of person are you looking for? What's the vibe you're looking for?

Janine: Um...energetic, cute, not too energetic, probably a girl? I wouldn't rule out, you know, but—

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah.

Sylvi: [laughs]

Janine: I think generally he favors girls.

Austin: Yeah. [laughs] Many such cases.

Janine: Yeah, he favors- he favors femme. He favors high femme.

Sylvi: We're gonna be able to plot him on the Kinsey.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvi: [quietly] Oh my god!

Janine: But, you know, also Caoimhe counts too. Caoimhe's also good.

Sylvi: The fuck are you trying to say! [laughs]

Janine: You know, just- different- you know, it's like—

Austin: Different energy.

Sylvi: Nah, I get you.

Janine: Yeah, yeah.

Sylvi: Uh huh, uh huh.

Janine: I think here he would probably be attracted to someone who's like fancy dress mode, you know. Having a good time.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Probably dancing or enjoying music in some way.

Austin: Okay, the person you find here has at first you think kind of green hair in a- up in a braid, but actually—with really cute little bangs, but actually it's the mask. The mask is a maidenhair fern mask and is this kind of like floofy green—I think the mask itself is like a half mask that's gold, but then has this kind of like, these kind of green fern leaves serving as bangs and then braids behind.

And is very clearly looking for a dancing partner, but doesn't know who- like, doesn't know who to talk to. Really cute facial features, you know speaking of Caoimhe, pretty built. This is someone who seems like they do [**Sylvi:** laughs] physical labor, but is presenting high femme. You know, is not—high femme can have muscles and this—

Janine: Yeah.

Sylvi: That's true.

Austin: Maidenhair fern can have high muscles.

Janine: I did not say daintiness as a prerequisite.

Austin: You did not say daintiness, no. And so she's kind of floating alone as the music plays. What is- what is the music here? What is—anyone have thoughts on what the music of Alteros sounds like?

For me, touchstones for what this game is; is like a little Suikoden, very politics, very like Valkyria, like that style. But also you get stuff that's in the- some of the Xenoblade and Xenogear stuff, where it gets really like angelic? Less the- less the weird, cosmic, galactic stuff, and more the sometimes people have angel wings on their bodies and sometimes the like- you can still get to Catholicism through that, you know. And also maybe a little bit of- I actually think there's a little bit of wuxia, like Chinese martial folk tale, fairytale stuff happening here visually too. Each of the- you know each of the winds, each of the major winds, kind of has its own aesthetic.

What's the- what's the musical vibe here? I have so many musicians around me who know more than me, as I learned during the break we took, that you know, someone could help.

Jack: What about a string decet? It's like a string quartet, except it has ten members instead of four and outside of the, what, like a viola, two violins, and a cello, there's a bunch of additional weird new string instruments. And it's—

Austin: That's fun. Can we make it a duodecet instead? Which is twelve.

Jack: Ooh, with twelve? [laughs]

Austin: Yeah. Which fits- **[Jack: Yeah.]** which fits the fact that I just made Janine roll a d12.

Jack: Yeah, but you do have to say what the two new string instruments are.

Austin: Uh, there's a triple bass.

Sylvi: Woah.

Jack: [laughs] Woah.

Austin: What are the other ones? Cause I don't want to double, you know.

Jack: Oh right, it's viola, violin, cello, double bass, two string violin, one string violin, something called the chairesset, a violin that has a bunch of bells attached to the body of the violin, a violin that has a bunch of bells attached to the bow, something that just looks like someone holding a bow? You can't really see where there's an instrument, but sound is coming out. Then of course we've got the triple bass, as you mentioned.

Austin: As I mentioned. The—

Keith: Is the triple bassist appropriately gigantic or comically small?

Austin: Appropriately gigantic. Appropriately- like absolutely. Um and then, uhh a concertina.

Jack: [laughs] Not a violin at all.

Austin: No. Really changes the character of the sound here, you know?

Jack: What was the- there's that great bit with the band in Poor Things and they also have that really weird concertina that they're playing at some point.

Austin: Oh they do, you're right. This whole place kind of has a Poor Things vibe, now that I think about it a little bit, yeah.

Jack: He's like stamping on it. [laughs]

A Winged Dance [1:32:52]

Austin: Yeah so that's the music that's playing, I think that this is a very slow, simple, danceable thing right now. Nothing too hectic, nothing where you need to know any particular moves. Which is good cause you haven't been taught any of these dances. What do you do?

Janine: Uh, I fly up and say,

(as **Brontë**): It seems that you're looking for a partner.

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): Oh...yes, Sir Handcart.

Keith: [laughs]

Janine: [chuckles]

Austin: And like bows. Bows her head, is a little like, um...cautious? There's a little like, she doesn't like the- there's something about you that is putting her off.

Janine: My mask's a lower number than hers, I get it.

Austin: Something like that.

Janine: [laughs]

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): Have you danced much yet? This occasion.

Janine (as **Brontë**): I have not, no. You would be my first.

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): Oh! Your first, I see. Well, um, I'm still learning, but I'll do my best to keep up and I'll take the lead since you haven't danced yet. As is custom.

Janine (as **Brontë**): There is no shame in learning together. I would say it's the best way.

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): There is some. No, there is some shame in such a thing.

Janine: [chuckles]

Sylvi: [laughs]

Dre: [laughs]

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): As the veteran, I will lead.

Sylvi: [quietly] Brutal...

Austin: And takes your hand, and begins to try to lead you in an aerial dance which has way more vertical elements than you might be used to, though you are of course, a dancer.

Janine: A dancer. [laughs] Mhm.

Austin: So, what's this- what's this look like? And I am gonna need a roll here.

Janine: Yeah, I think—oh, I don't know how to- hm. I think the way that this makes the most sense in my head, is that it is sort of like recognizable as ballroom dancing except there are also elements of it that are more like swimming. Like I can imagine there are some moments where there is, you know, spinning and dipping and that kind of thing. But there are moments where you are flying diagonally in a sort of like long breast stroke kind of motion and sort of using that to—I imagine going straight up and down is a little bit gauche, but going diagonally [**Austin:** Mm.] is more elegant, you know.
[laughs]

Austin: Yeah, yeah that makes sense. Especially for the type of music that's playing, let's say.

Janine: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Let's say there is a sort of like faster, like line dance that requires up and down motion, but because it's coordinated with neighboring dancers, you know. [**Janine:** Mhm.] But doing it in a free dance like this, that would be- that would be gauche. That's a little bit like trying to get in the middle of everybody and get a ring around you and you're like, no. Don't- no no no, no up and down please.

Janine: [laughs] It's not that kind of party.

Austin: Real quick, can I get— [laughs] that's right. Can I get the other- the other people's masks? I have Elena written down as the quince and then I can't remember which- who got the other- which ones.

Janine: Veile was limestone.

Ali: Mm.

Austin: Limestone.

Janine: I had saltpeter, right?

Austin: Yeah, saltpeter. Yeah yeah yeah, okay great. Alright, I'm gonna need a dancing roll for you. I'm gonna say this out loud and it- I'm signaling something, but it's also kind of a funny one to say out loud, you don't get any pluses or minuses to this roll.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: Beyond whatever your normal ones would be.

Janine: So what is this roll?

Austin: I don't know, you tell me. I think this is probably- my guess is it's dex for the dancing and then probably willpower because willpower is the one that's tied to like interacting with other people.

Janine: Yeah I was gonna say, I think when I did this before, I wanna say I did it as captivate?

Austin: Yeah, again those are fake in the sense that those are—

Janine: I know, I know, but they are helpful. [laughs] They're fake but they're helpful.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Hang on, didn't we find multiple—those are in the book. They're from the book.

Austin: Okay, but they're not- they're not, um—

Keith: The words aren't literal.

Janine: They're suggestions, not—

Austin: The words are not limiting. They're suggestions, that's right.

Keith: Okay, okay.

Austin: We at all times can—

Janine: They are helpful though, to frame like, yeah what does it mean to do dexterity, willpower? You know.

Austin: That's right, and notably I actually don't see captivate here, for instance. You know.

Keith: Okay.

Janine: Anyway, I think that's—

Austin: But yeah, let's do that. I think that makes perfect sense.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: What are those dice for you?

Janine: My dex is 10, my willpower is 8.

Austin: Alright. As always, 7, 10—this is an open check, I think. Though, what do you want from this roll? You just want to—oh brother.

Janine: Uhhh.

Austin: That's a 4.

Janine: I would like to—

Austin: If you were in the other place, that would be a critical fumble, but you're not in the other place, you're over here. [laughs]

Janine: I would like to spend a point to reroll that.

Austin: I bet you would! Spend your Fabula Point.

Janine: Because that's not good...

Austin: [laughs] No, you gotta do better than that.

Janine: I'm- I'm looking to just have a fun time.

Austin: Okay, yeah.

Janine: I'm Brontë, I'm scintillation—

Austin: I get it!

Ali: [chuckles]

Janine: That's what I'm spending my point on, basically.

Sylvi: [laughs]

Janine: I'm trying to scintillate over here!

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah, I just wanted to make sure. Yeah, that's fine.

Janine: Declare and spend...

Austin: Alright, is that our first Fab- it's our second Fabula.

Janine: Okay. C'monnnn captivate.

Jack: What's this mask? Meadow—what?

Austin: Maidenhair fern.

Jack: Maidenhair fern.

Janine: Okay that's better, that's a 13.

Austin: 13, there we go! That's pretty good. Yeah, I think that you—I mean, you tell me how the dance goes, but it goes more than good- it goes like the level 3 success. You know, 10 is your kind of default, 13 is your next level up, so you're impressive in some way. What's that- what's the impressiveness look like? What's like- do you do a particular maneuver?

Janine: One second, I have to quickly- I wanna paste a song that [**Austin:** Oh.] it's from the Ys VIII Lacrimosa of Dana OST—

Austin: Shout outs.

Janine: It's called "Everlasting Transeunt [trans-unt]"? Transeunt? [trans-i-unt]

Ali: [giggles]

Sylvi: Sure.

Austin: Please. Shout outs to Ys. One day I will become an Ys guy. I keep trying.

Janine: Yeah, one day. [laughs]

Austin: I keep trying!

Janine: No time soon, but someday, sure.

Austin: One day. That's a fun song.

Janine: Yeah, I think this is a thing where like—I mentioned the diagonal motions that are sort of like swimming, I think when you have an airborne dance it has to be kind of big. Like a little bit sweeping. So I imagine a lot of things where it's like the two people kind of go up diagonal in opposite directions then come back down, kind of like they're- not quite like they're tracing butterfly wings, but if I'm trying to explain the motion.

Austin: Ohhh, sure.

Janine: That they're making, it's like you go up diagonally sort of across paths [**Austin:** Yeah!] and then you swoop down to rejoin, that kind of thing. I think Brontë catches on to that very quickly.

Austin: Love it. And then I- then yeah! I think the dance finishes and Maidenhair Fern says to you—like, does a little bow and says,

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): I thought you said that you hadn't danced yet.

Janine (as **Brontë**): Not here. [laughs] In my life, quite a bit.

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): I see!

Austin: This seems to confuse her.

(as **Maidenhair Fern**): When would you find time for dancing? In a year like ours?

Janine (as **Brontë**): [sighs] I work it into the everyday routine, it's not always an affair like this. Sometimes it's just a pleasant little step on your way down the road.

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): But your duties with the Hexes.

Janine: [laughs]

(as **Brontë**): Well, other people take care of most of that.

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): I see. Th—

Janine: Thinking she's just referring to Caoimhe.

Austin and Ali: [laugh]

Janine: That stuff.

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah, I see. Yeah yeah yeah.

Janine: You know, I'm here- I- whatever, I got a badge or something. I don't know,
[Austin: Mhm.] I don't keep track of it.

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): I see. Then the mask is not your own.

Austin: With an eyebrow poking up behind the mask. Which I guess you can't see because it's behind the mask.

Janine (as **Brontë**): The mask is as much my own as anyone's. I showed up, I was offered a mask, I'm wearing it.

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): Would you care to trade?

Austin: This seems like a moment of- [sighs] there's a moment of trust here. One, because trading would mean seeing her real face. And then two, she would be taking a mask that she seemed to suggest was not as good as her mask, **[Janine:** Mhm.] but you have made it somehow more valuable? Or have proven that it's useful in some way to her.

Janine: Um, I think Brontë is probably like visibly interested—I don't want the question he's going to ask to seem like he's skeptical.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: I think he is very much in the mode of like, this a fun party, I'm having fun.

(as **Brontë**): May I ask why? What is it about my mask that intrigues you?

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): Is this- is this the first Masque you've attended? Oh you are new! Have you just made age? You don't seem so young.

Janine (as **Brontë**): I wouldn't describe myself as young necessarily, no.

Ali: [chuckles quietly]

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): Oh perhaps you are too weak to attend as a true attendant and only as a servant until now?

Dre: [laughs]

Sylvi: Wow.

Janine (as **Brontë**): Oh no, not as a servant, no.

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): No, of course not. Because even as a servant you would know the exchange of masks is core to—no, that doesn't make sense...where are you from, exactly? Sir Handcart?

Janine: This is such a unique situation because I have always played characters who in this moment would specifically be like, why is this person asking this? What should I say to throw them off? Is it smart if I say- if I tell the truth? You know, I've always played a character who to some extent is going to interrogate why is this person asking me this question in this tone.

Austin: [laughs]

Janine: Brontë just fucking says [laughs] where he's from. Brontë just says that he's from Grande Sonnerie.

Austin: Empty eyes.

(as **Maidenhair Fern**): [amused] Oh, you jest with me. You are a joker. You aren't from House Deadwind at all, in fact I doubt you're even from the Empire of the West Wind! Hm, a comics tongue like that...I would guess, I would guess you are from House Sun, our cousins.

Janine (as **Brontë**): Well I suppose I can't speak to direct connections, but I doubt we are cousins.

Austin (as **Maidenhair Fern**): Not cousins, but you know. Of the same dynasty. In any case, yes, let us exchange masks. As is custom, upon such a skillful demonstration of dance.

Janine: I think that's probably enough to satisfy him. Of like, this is a thing because your dancing was good. Alright, sure.

Austin: That's right, yeah.

Janine: [laughs] Shit, here! I'll take a fern mask.

Austin: Uh huh. And yeah, you- you know, removes her mask and there's like this moment of, you would think all the green would go away because the green of the mask is coming off, but these- it almost wasn't noticeable before because of how the mask was so overbearing, but she actually has really bright green eyes under there. And so the green continues, even as she puts on your full handcart mask [laughs] over her face, and you get the fern mask. I would keep note of this. I'm gonna keep note of it on my big weird backend also.

Janine (as **Brontë**): If I may say, Madam, the new mask suits your eyes much better.

Austin: You can't see it, but she is blushing.

Janine: I can feel it.

Austin: You can feel- oh, you can feel it.

Ali: [giggles]

Janine: [laughs]

Austin: Oh I think she says,

(as **Maidenhair Fern**): Another dance, then?

Austin: Which is very, like, you've done the dance you're supposed to do. You know what I mean? You've done your one dance, so to ask for a second dance.

Janine: Mhm. At a party like—yeah, yeah, that's the- [**Austin:** Yeah.] that's the classic Jane Austen thing, right? Is like—

Austin: Yes.

Janine: You wanna dance with everyone, it's okay to dance with someone you really like a couple times, if you fill up your dance card with just one person it's deeply rude.
[laughs]

Austin: That's right, yeah.

Janine: And likewise if you see people who are on the sidelines who want to dance but don't and you don't dance with them then that's also rude, you know.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: But yes, absolutely he will dance with her again.

[["The Castle Eschatonica"](#) by Jack de Quidt plays]