Perpetua 40: The Castle Eschatonica 08

Transcriber: robotchangeling

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Recap

Janine (as **Brontë**): You all just go around doing jobs? What is it—? [Austin laughs]

Ali (as **Veile**): No! [Ali, Art, and Sylvia laugh distantly]

Jack (as **Elena**): [indignant] No!

Ali (as **Veile**): We're quite important, you know!

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Sorry, you said that you guys are important?

Jack (as **Elena**): Yes! We have a— we have a gifted mission!

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): What?

Art (as **Nicky**): A gifted mission? Who would call it that?

Jack (as **Elena**): We've been granted—

Janine (as **Brontë**): Like someone gave— okay.

Jack (as **Elena**): We've been granted a mission.

Art (as **Nicky**): I don't think that's what you call that.

Jack (as **Elena**): Now *you're* turning against—? [quietly, frustrated] Okay.

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

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): What are we doing here?

Austin (as **Gnova**): What are you doing here?

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): I don't know. We ended up here. We shouldn't be here. We would I—

Austin (as **Gnova**): Well, you would have fallen to your deaths if not landing here.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): But why here?

Austin (as **Gnova**): Why not? Where else?

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Well, I guess— the path we were on or our deaths.

Austin (as **Gnova**): You can only put out a ladder from where you stand. [amused] Or perhaps you have some talent I haven't yet seen!

Dre (as **Jonathan**): What is here? Like, what is this place?

Austin (as **Gnova**): Oh, this is my home. This is the Castle Eschatonica. The first last place there is.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): What does that mean?

Austin (as **Gnova**): I built this place, when my world ended, so that there'd be…something left, of all the worlds that would end after.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): The first last place?

Austin (as **Gnova**): Well, there were last places before, but this is the first one that exists.

Jack (as **Elena**): I just, I knew the world was going to get destroyed, and I think there was a bit of me that was hoping there would be some sort of process. That, you know, the gods can experience a transposition, and I thought that maybe the citizens of Perpetua would be transposed into the citizens of the new place, but they die. It's death.

Austin (as **Gnova**): Oh, my dear, the gods die too. They simply live a little longer.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): How did you do this?

Austin (as **Gnova**): It was my final wish when my time was done on the Ennead.

Ali (as **Veile**): You were a member of the Ennead?

Austin (as **Gnova**): You wouldn't be the first fated adventurers who came to spend their time with old Gnova and, in the end, felt they hadn't done enough to stop the inevitable. And there are no words I can say to ease such guilt.

Ali (as **Veile**): Others have come?

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

Ali (as **Veile**): In similar circumstances as ours?

Austin (as **Gnova**): Yes. Oh, it's so funny you say. Some of them were just like you. Full of pep and vigor and the surprise at how big the world is. And yes, some were of course canny and cunning and craven, but most of them were like you in more ways than you know. There are members of the Ennead who first visited me in previous cycles.

Sylvia (as **Caoimhe**): Maybe we can compare notes on the various gods we run into, because it seems like doing some mediation between them might end up being our best chance for saving Perpetua.

Jack (as **Elena**): [sighs] Yeah. Yeah, that might…yeah, that might be a good idea. What is—

Sylvia (as **Caoimhe**): Huh?

Jack (as **Elena**): Silly question, and maybe this is more for Nicky. [Sylvia laughs quietly] What is soda?

[song ends]

Grouping Up [0:03:06]

Austin (as **Gnova**): Well, onward. There are two ways to exit here. I wouldn't worry too much about who goes where. You will end up together again eventually, but there will be a little time when you are separated from each other.

Austin: One is marked with the moon, and one is marked with the sun again, although kind of the opposite sides as before. The sun is on the right, and the moon is on the left.

Ali: Oh, opposite from the…

Austin: The previous, the front. Yeah, the front room.

Dre: Gotcha.

Austin: You see what I mean? The moon had been on the east, and the sun was on the west before, in terms of, like, the sides of the dungeon.

Dre: Mm.

Austin: And now it seems reversed. But there's no puzzle here, you know?

Jack: But this is puzzling, though, because it produces the question: do I want to go with the same symbol but the different side of the dungeon or the different symbol but the same side of the dungeon?

Janine: Or is it a thing where it’s, like, going to spit— well, I don't know. Is it going to

spit us out on different continents, or like…?

Jack: I think Elena, still rankled, is going to stride towards the sun icon on the right hand side and say—

Austin: Yeah, place yourselves where you're going.

Jack (as **Elena**): Who's coming with me?

Art: Hmm.

Sylvia: This is… Sorry, did I miss? Is this taking us out of Eschatonica, or is this more Eschatonica to go?

Austin: It is more Eschatonica, seemingly.

Sylvia: Okay.

Janine: Hmm.

Austin: Moving onwards is what you've been told.

Sylvia: Okay.

Austin: Because what you were told is you'll have to get through the other half of Eschatonica to reach the end, which would let you get back to [**Sylvia:** Right.] your home or your original path.

Keith: I'm happy to go where I'm needed.

Austin: Ali, you seemed like you had a concern or question?

Ali: Yeah. I think the thing that I've been thinking in my mind is, like, what is keeping these people—or at least Veile—from being like, "Well, we go with the people we came with." [laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And maybe bonds have forged such that…

Austin: Yeah, I think that's kind of part of why this seems open-ended to me, [**Sylvia:** Yeah...] is I wanted it just, okay, do you just revert back to the groups you were in before?

Sylvia: Oh, I don't know.

Art: I was having a really fun time with…

Austin: Also, we should just have this in character. I'd rather us talk through how do you decide who's going where.

Art: All right.

Austin: In fact, I think this is a classic. Maebela goes, like, you know,

> (as **Maebela**): Jonathan, could I go with the other side? I want to meet some new people.
>
> Dre (as **Jonathan**): Yeah. I mean, I'll go with whichever side you want to go with, Mae.
>
> Austin (as **Maebela**): No, I want to go by myself.
>
> Art (as **Nicky**): Well, no, some people— more than one person should go to each side.
>
> Austin (as **Maebela**): No, but just not with my— not with Jonathan. [Sylvia and Keith laugh]

Ali: [quietly] Wow.

Keith: Wow, rough.

> Austin (as **Maebela**): Well, I love you, Jonathan, I just…I want to see if I can be an adventurer by myself. But with trusted allies! Like these fine folks here.

Dre: I need to know who she's going with so I know who to address. [Austin and Dre laugh]

Art (as **Nicky**): I can take care of… I can look after her.

Janine: Brontë's going with Caoimhe, because Brontë misses spending time with Caoimhe and wants to spend, you know.

Sylvia: Aww.

Art: Aww.

Janine: So I think that's naturally where he will gravitate.

Sylvia: Cool. [Austin chuckles]

Janine: So, Caoimhe, ball's in your court.

Sylvia: Now, here's the thing that makes this really funny, is I was like, "Oh, it'd be fun to get more screentime with Elena after that conversation." [Janine and Art laugh]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: So like, if we do that, that's a hell of a group right there already.

Ali: Yeah, because Veile's following Elena.

Sylvia: Oh my god! [Ali laughs]

Austin: So that is Brontë, Elena, Veile, Caoimhe?

Keith: All right, well, that's that group.

Austin: All right.

Sylvia: I think we have to now.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Are you going moon side or sun side? [Ali and Janine laugh] And place yourself there please.

Dre: Elena already went sun side, so.

Austin: You mean Veile.

Sylvia: Yeah, sun side.

Austin: Oh, is Elena up there already? Oh, damn, okay.

Jack: Yeah. I went stomping off and loaded myself like a pinball into the…

Janine: Wow.

Austin: I see. Oh.

Ali: And then Veile was kind of standing outside of that hallway to sort of, like, “I'll go there, but who else is going to be in the party?” but no. [laughs quietly]

Austin: Okay.

Art: Okay.

Austin: So then Maebela wants to go with that group, then?

Dre: I think so.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Okay.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Wow.

Art: And that means…

Janine: Wow. This is the best thing that’s ever happened to Brontë.

Sylvia: Yeah. Brontë's in a dating sim all of a sudden. [Ali laughs]

Austin: And Waylon I guess is going to go with the Nicky-Jonathan side.

Keith: Waylon should go with them.

Dre: No! [Keith and Janine laugh]

Austin: That would be very funny!

Sylvia: The vibe killer. [Ali laughs]

Austin: The vibe killer! [Waylon voice] I'm here to chaperone.

Dre: Yeah, no, yeah.

Art: Oh, that would be funny. Are you sure that's not?

Sylvia: That might actually— that is pretty funny.

Dre: That is very funny.

Keith: Really funny.

Austin: Yeah. Okay. NPCs with the sun side. [Ali sighs] And then Antistrophe, you're going?

Keith: I just head up to the moon door.

Sylvia: Wow, we really did just split between the… We made the squishiest party on one side, huh? [Ali laughs quietly]

Austin: Uh huh. You did.

Dre: What could go wrong?

Keith: But there's no combat. We just learned that there's not going to be combat.

Sylvia: No, there's no combat *today*, Keith.

Austin: No, I said that [**Janine:** Mm…] we're not going to do any more combat *today*.

Keith: Oh, right, sure. No combat *today*.

Austin: During this current recording session.

Keith: Right, fair.

Austin: So that we could schedule around that, you know?

Art: And we've also broken up into a group of three and a group of seven?

Austin: That happened last time too.

Sylvia: Yeah, that did happen last time.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Because of the NPCs.

Dre: Only, yeah, four PCs.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Oh, I hope I get to go to a ball this time.

Keith: I count for three. [Austin laughs quietly]

Austin: All right.

Sylvia: Yeah, is he not just chilling with Gnova?

Janine: Also, this is a party of eight, to be clear.

Keith: Waylon thinks all of it seems annoying, so.

Sylvia: Oh yeah, because of…

Austin: [sighs] Because Waylon’s actually here this time.

Art: Oh right, because Waylon didn't come.

Austin: Yeah, Waylon didn't come before.

Janine: And Efta and Zolfta are too.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: It was seven last time, I think.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Right, he didn't come with. Yeah.

Austin (as **Waylon**): Are we going or not?

Austin: Says Waylon.

Sylvia (as **Caoimhe**): Oh. Yep. I guess we are.

Austin: And as you move through the hallways, you hear Gnova call out.

(as **Gnova**): And remember: ignore the beckonings!

Sylvia: Oh, I'm also going to do the wave and be like,

Sylvia (as **Caoimhe**): Stay safe!

Keith: There's going to be beckonings in here? Fuck!

Sylvia: To the other team.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Bye. Yeah, good luck.

Ali (as **Veile**): [quietly] I think they're a beckoning. I think we've all been

beckoned.

Sylvia (as **Caoimhe**): You think *we're* a beckoning?

Ali (as **Veile**): No.

Sylvia (as **Caoimhe**): Oh, Gnova.

Ali (as **Veile**): Yeah, the strange things.

Sylvia (as **Caoimhe**): I guess.

The Beckonings [0:09:26]

Austin: As you go through the door, you are, in fact, on the sun side, met with bright light, and with the moon side, met with a deep dark. And as you're speaking, as you're saying, “I think that they were the beckoning,” “What?” “Them,” you find the voices of your compatriots fading away, and you find yourself walking down a thin floating pathway in the Dragon Path, alone. And there is a door in the distance attached to a free-floating building, a free-floating part of Castle Eschatonica, and as you look around, you don't see any of your people. You are traveling alone through the Ether. The light on the east kind of fades away, and you can see that you are under the light of Lucena’s sun—that is the light from that side—and you're cast in the sort of shadow of Caliginia’s moon on the west, but otherwise you are just out in the Dragon Path. Let’s start on the eastern side, because there's four of you, and then we can go one, two, three, four, five. You know what I mean? We can bounce between without, from side to side.

Jack: Oh, I see. Yes.

Austin: Who wants to go first on the east?

Ali: I could go.

Sylvia: Yeah, go for it.

Veile [0:10:58]

Austin: All right, Veile. What do you do, as you see this thin pathway over the abyss below in front of you and a doorway ahead?

Ali: And still alone, obviously, yeah.

Austin: Totally alone, yeah.

Ali: Uh, okay. [laughs] Not freaking out about how this is a trick, because she's right. Walking very confidently forward.

Austin: Yeah, okay.

Ali: These are trials.

Austin: These are trials.

Ali: One faces trials.

Austin: One faces trials. One foot after the other, you find your way to the kind of doorway in the kind of small, you know, castle. It almost looks like a castle tower or something, but it looks not that big, rather. It doesn't feel like it's a whole, like, interior structure. From the outside looking at it, you look like you're looking at, like, the tower at the corner of a castle. You know what I mean? That style of, like the rook chess piece, like that style of structure, but it's been, like, smashed in half. You know, it doesn't have a top. It looks like you're just going to walk into an empty ruined kind of circular room, but as you open the door, you instead see a familiar sight. You see Vinnor Jekk's home. [Ali gasps] What do you do?

Ali: Uh, ooh.

(as **Veile**): Hello?

Austin: Your voice hangs in the air here like it's an abandoned home, kind of echoes around. It's quiet. It's dusty.

Ali: Uh, *Resident Evil* time. Is there anything to, like— [laughs quietly] I think she's looking to see if there's, like, anything on the tabletops that look particularly interesting. In the like, oh, we just— she's letterpilled. Remember how she was letterpilled? [laughs]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Ali: I think she's like, "Oh, obviously I'm here for some great secret."

Austin: Mm.

Ali: Can I find something written by him or what looks out of place?

Austin: You don't find a letter, but you do find a book of prayers that has been thumbed through, and there are certain pages that seem to have been, like, dogeared.

Ali: Oh. Cool. Can I, like, stop and read one?

Austin: Yeah. Give me a Study Check.

Ali: Like, out loud? Yeah.

Austin: Difficulty is 7.

Ali: Okay. Insight + Insight. That should be great for me.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Hey, there's a crit.

Ali: That's a crit.

Sylvia: Wow!

Austin: There's a crit.

Ali: God loves me.

Austin: Seemingly. [Sylvia, Dre, and Jack laugh]

Keith: Big ups to God.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: [singing] Lucena loves me, this I know. [Ali laughs quietly]

Austin: So what you were going to find with just the regular one was a spell, a ritual spell to bring Vinnor Jekk back. Now, he would still be in stasis, but you would find him in his bedroom, on his bed—in this version of his bedroom—right here, and he would be, eh, you could drag him out and you could, I don't know, teleport him out. You got some other spells you could do some stuff with. But with a crit, you begin to read the prayer aloud and realize that if you intone the chant a certain way, you can clear him of that stasis. It will only cost you one thing: the black ring around your finger, your birthmark.

Ali: Whoa.

Austin: But you can have him. This is not a joke. It's not going to not be him. It's not going to be an apparition. He will reenter the story in this moment, and you will lose that ring.

Ali: [pained] Aaooo. [laughs] Does Veile think that she needs the ring for the next part of it?

Austin: You tell me.

Jack: Oh, for the prophecy!

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: The ring is specifically part of the prophecy, right?

Ali: Yeah. Well, it's at least how she was recognized.

Austin: I mean, you have— that's right.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: She was recognized by the ring, but I don't think Vinnor ever said… You know, I'm just going to be quiet. [Art laughs quietly]

Ali: Right. Well, you know, this is the first time she's considering that the ring has some sort of power, right?

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, as a reminder, Veile has a sort of birthmark that looks like a black ring around one of her fingers.

Ali: Oh man. [chuckles] Oh man! I feel like she thinks this is a test. I feel like when she thinks about what it would be like to interact with Vinnor again, she remembers that he was, like, following them the last time. Like, that was the one thing that she wanted to talk to him about, [laughs] to be like, "Why did you do that?"

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And now she's, like, understanding [laughs] like the value of supposed cruelty. Like, that was not him being cruel. That was him understanding decisions.

Austin: Mm.

Ali: And I think maybe she thinks that she has to understand decisions too. Boy. But this is from the crit. Would I still—? Like, does she have an understanding—

Austin: You get your crit too, I guess, right? You can do an option. I was just giving you the he would be, like, resurrected. Not resurrected; woken up, right? Also.

Ali: Right.

Austin: So I guess you also have a crit here, but that is the offer I'm making you. You can't undo that part of the offer with the crit, but if you want to add something to it with one of the crit options, you totally could.

Ali: Okay. But it's not like, oh, well she knows the spell for, like, the lower version of what this offer was, right?

Austin: The lower version— I mean, you actually do know this spell. This is what you used on Waylon, right? It's just a better version of it. It's how you summoned Waylon before. Remember that?

Ali: Ohhh.

Austin: It's the same spell, effectively. It's just a more powerful version of it.

Ali: [chuckles] Can I spend a Fabula Point to get, like, a Calciginia voice clip? [laughs]

Austin: You can do a— also, it's Caliginia. But yes.

Ali: Is that changing the story? Is that what that is? [laughs quietly]

Austin: You can change the story. You can't undo something that has been established, so again, there's no way around the cost.

Ali: Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: But if you want to, like, hear what Caliginia thinks in this moment. Oh, actually, you can't, because you're on the sun side. [Ali laughs] You can hear what Lucena thinks in this moment.

Ali: That would probably be great. [laughs]

Jack: The person we're trying to broker with?

Ali: Have not spoken to her at all. That would probably actually be great for me.

Austin: What's this look like?

Ali: I think it's Veile praying, right? Like, I think she comes to understanding what the spell is because of, like, wanting to ground herself in this moment.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And then, like, contextualizing that these decisions are bigger than herself.

Austin: Mm.

Ali: And, like, if most of her Rituals are just her saying out loud, like, “Hey, Calciginia, can you help me out here? There's this turtle guy.” I think that there's, like, I think that it is her praying out loud. It is her asking this question of like, what would the Ennead have me do?

Austin: Mm. You know, I think there is a beam of light enters this room through one of Vinnor Jekk’s windows. And, you know, it’s so powerful it moves the curtains like it’s wind. And there is a lilting voice that says,

> (as **Lucena**): Perpetua needs you as you are, my dear. You were made perfect, and your perfection will save us.

Ali: [weakly] Okay. Cool. [laughs] Okay. Weird. Interesting.

Austin: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Jack: She specifically said, “us,” not, “you,” right?

Ali: Hmm?

Austin: When?

Jack: “Your perfection will save *us*,” said Lucena.

Austin: Yeah. That's an inclusive “us”.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: “Us,” the world, you know?

Jack: Okay.

Austin: Intentionally, like, I'm happy to clarify that that is— Whether you believe that or not is up to you, but if we were speaking a different language that had an— Like, if we ever get translated into another language and there is an inclusive “us” and an exclusive

“us,” she is using the inclusive “us”. Veile is included in the “us”. The world in included in the “us”.

Jack: Right.

Austin: All right. So, what do you do?

Ali: I think Veile closes the book and says,

> (as **Veile**): It’s as I thought. Sir Vinnor, if there's a piece of you out there that can hear me through this, I thank you for taking me on this path, and I know that you'll come to understand this decision. You are not abandoned in this moment.

Ali: And then I think she moves on.

Austin: All right, yeah. You head out the back door, which fills with light as before. All right, west side. Nicky, Jonathan, or Antistrophe. [Sylvia chuckles] Who’s up?

Sylvia: [quietly] God sent you a text with a voice memo.

Keith: I'll go. I'll go.

Antistrophe [0:20:05]

Austin: All right, Antistrophe. Similar situation as before. A pathway to a ruin. You walk it normal? I'm going to assume everyone’s going to walk it normal style, and if you don't, you need to tell me that you don't.

Keith: Yeah, I'm going to do this one normal style.

Austin: Okay, cool. You walk— you don't do the John Lennon walk across the road with the funny legs? [Ali laughs quietly] Okay.

Keith: No. No, I'm not doing the John Lennon walk today.

Sylvia: Do the Jessica Knappett falling off the stairs. [Austin chuckles]

Keith: Oh, yeah. [laughs] I'm going to fall off, right into a beckoning.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Right into a beckoning. Okay. You open the door, and you see a familiar room as well. It was your home study from when you were still a mage, filled with your notes and your supplies and whatever manuscript you were working on. Very familiar stuff.

Keith: Yeah, wouldn't have been that long ago.

Austin: No.

Keith: We've never seen it, but it wouldn't have been many more weeks before the campaign started.

Austin: Yeah. Pretty early on.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You recognize most of the things here, but you do see some new stuff.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: One is a small model of the bronze telescope from the observatory and a piece of paper with a sort of magic formula jotted on it.

Keith: Okay. What kind of formula? Can I tell?

Austin: Give me a Study.

Keith: I can do that.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: And I also get a +3 bonus to this, I think.

Austin: Sure. 7 is the difficulty.

Keith: Oh, this is an easy one.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Everything's changing sizes on me. Okay. Study, +3.

Austin: Hey, there's a 14.

Keith: That's a 14.

Austin: Yeah. The components are pretty simple. They're stuff that you have around the house. You know, there's a number of simple alchemical components, and the process is to, like, put it in a little…not a…what's the thing called that's like a tiny dish cup thing that you can, like, that's used in magical rituals sometimes?

Janine: Ramekin? Oh.

Austin: Yeah, ramekin. Is that right? Is that right?

Keith: Okay.

Austin: [typing] Yeah.

Janine: Used in what?

Austin: Like magical— no, like in magical rituals.

Janine: Oh.

Austin: Not a ramekin.

Janine: No.

Keith: Not in restaurants?

Austin: Not in restaurants. Not in magical restaurants. [Art laughs quietly] I want to say it's like the thing that the pentacle actually, or the…actually is in occult work. What is that called? Why am I blanking on this? Well, you get what I'm talking about.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: It’s kind of like a low dish, you know, or like a low bowl basically, that you put it on there and then you light a match. It’s one of these special matches with kind of a blue matchhead, and you light it in front of the telescope. And when you do that, you can take a level of any class you want.

Keith: Whoa.

Austin: Your magic will return to you. In exchange, we'll advance your Ruin counter by 5.

Keith: Oh. [laughs]

Austin: But you'll get it.

Keith: For one level?

Austin: Well, no. you'll have unlocked the class. You can advance the class. You will get your magic back, fully.

Keith: So I get my magic back fully, and I gain a—

Austin: Well, you know, you're not get to be a level 10 wizard or whatever again, but you can—

Keith: Right. I get full access to magic.

Austin: You get, yes, exactly.

Keith: And a level.

Austin: And I should be clear: this will count as whatever your fourth class would have been. You're not going to unlock another extra class, so you'll have to, like… You know how this game works where you can only have three classes until you get one to 10? I don't think you've done that yet, I don't believe.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: So you'd be getting—

Keith: No, I have two, plus Riant.

Austin: Oh, you only have two right now.

Keith: I only have two. So I totally could take another.

Austin: So you could totally take one. So then, yeah, you could—

Keith: Oh, no, wait. I'm lying. I have three.

Austin: I thought so. I thought you had three.

Keith: I have three. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So you could take your fourth early, because you're not supposed to be able to take it yet, [**Keith:** Yeah.] and it would be this magic one. And you wouldn't be able to get a fifth one until you have two classes at 10, but it could be a magic one.

Keith: Right.

Austin: You could start learning magic again.

Keith: It could be a magic one. And so, just to be clear, this trade-off is understood by Antistrophe.

Austin: You realize that—

Keith: I have internalized the disaster, and I know that I would be advancing it by 5. Or by, you know.

Austin: Yeah, you would— When you look through the telescope, you see the burning of the kind of Ether, and you're like, oh, yeah, this would— what you're doing is like,

when you read the ritual over again, you see that like, what you would be doing is sort of kickstarting your own magic but, in the process, adding to the burning that's happening in the distance, you know?

Keith: Mm-hmm. Okay. No. I don't do that.

Austin: You put it down. I just want to be super clear. You would get it, for sure for sure. None of this is trickery, in the sense of, [**Keith:** Yeah.] "Ah, hahaha! You made the bad choice, blah blah blah blah blah."

Keith: I believe it.

Austin: Okay. Just making sure.

Keith: I believe it, yeah. I believe it.

Austin: All right.

Keith: But the reality is still that I would advance Ruinbringer to…

Austin: 7.

Keith: 7. Or 6.

Austin: Maybe 6.

Keith: Yeah, 7.

Austin: 7? Okay. I think it was 7. Yeah.

Keith: Is there something else that I can do with it?

Austin: No.

Keith: Okay. Then no, I don't do it.

Austin: Mm-mm. Do you do anything else here in your old study before you leave?

Keith: Um… Yeah, you said that there was more than one new thing. Can I look around for other new things?

Austin: Yeah, it's the collections for this ritual. It's the stuff for this.

Keith: Okay. It's all of that stuff. Okay.

Austin: It's the components and yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Okay. Yeah, then no, I don't think I— I think if I'm not doing this thing, [**Austin:** Yeah.] then nothing in here I need.

Austin: All right. You open the door, and—

Keith: Oh, sorry, you said there was a letter. Oh, that was the magic. That was the spell.

Austin: That was the magic. Yeah. There's nothing else.

Keith: Yeah. I don't need that.

Austin: Yeah, there's the thing, and that's it, yeah. The darkness takes you over, and you return to somewhere else.

Keith: Uh oh, not the darkness.

Austin: Back east. Who's up?

Sylvia: I'm good to go if nobody else is, like, chomping at the bit.

Jack: Yeah, go for it.

Sylvia: Okay.

Caoimhe [0:25:54]

Austin: You walk across regular style?

Sylvia: I walk across regular style [Ali laughs quietly] [**Austin:** Okay.] but probably with

my hand on my sword.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Mm.

Keith: Oh, so cool style.

Austin: That's cool style. Yeah.

Sylvia: It's kind of cool style.

Austin: Yeah. You head in. What was it like, the place you trained to be a Hexcloak? What was, like, the training facility like?

Sylvia: Oh. I've always pictured sort of a, like, academy with a barracks built in and stuff. Like, this is a touchstone I don't know if anybody else has ever played *Radiata Stories* has been a really big influence.

Austin: Yeah. Cool game.

Sylvia: Yeah. The, like, castle in that is kind of always what I pictured where the Hexcloaks are based out of.

Austin: That makes sense to me.

Sylvia: Yeah. So like, kind of fancy when you come in, but then when you get down into the basement levels and stuff, it's just like rooms filled with bunkbeds for recruits and training rooms and stuff.

Austin: Yeah. Cool. Yeah. We come into, then, one of the training rooms then at the lower levels.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And, you know, you've trained here for years and years and years, and there is a— One of the things that you learn is how to summon, you know, elemental power

here, and so there are a number of kind of technique scrolls and manuals in this room, for swordplay but also for elemental use, right? And you know all the how they're set up, right? Because there's like one for summoning magic, for summoning the elements. There's one for attacking, and there's one for, like, defense. And you see that on the defensive one, the defensive side of the room where these scrolls are, there's like a new one hanging from the wall, and when you inspect it, you see that it's different from the other ones. Normally it's like, oh, this is a technique you would use to, you know, fend of lightning magic; this is a technique you would use to absorb fire, right?

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Some of these are really high level. You can't do all of them, as you know. I don't think you just straight up have absorb fire. But this one would teach you how to absorb some stuff. This one… I'm just going to read what I've written here. The power to beat Therius Aeger. You will always absorb magic he attacks you with, and your magic will always act as a— He'll always be weak to your magic across all elements. In exchange—

Sylvia: This is fucked up. Yeah?

Austin: You may see but never speak to Kley Kaina again. The cost of this sort of power over someone is to give up connection to someone else.

Sylvia: I think that makes it a pretty easy "no," honestly, because that sounds like giving Kley a death sentence at this point.

Austin: So you would give up Kley Kaina. You would choose to let— Sorry, I want to be clear. You could save Kley Kaina. You just could never literally speak to them again.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: You physically could not speak to them.

Sylvia: I—

Austin: But you could save them, and you could kill Therius.

Sylvia: Yeah. But I think straight up leaving things the way they are between Kley and Caoimhe would kill Caoimhe inside.

Austin: Okay.

Sylvia: Like, that would really fuck with her.

Austin: What decision do you think Kley would make in this scenario?

Sylvia: This is the thing. I think Kley would make the decision.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: But I'm not Kley.

Austin: Mm-hmm. All right.

Sylvia: Yeah, I think, you know, she hesitates a lot, but then I think she's… [laughs quietly] There's a real, like, talking herself into being like, "No, I can do this myself. I don't need this."

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: I'm not taking any steroids. I'm hitting these home runs.

Austin: [laughs quietly] Oh, okay.

Sylvia: I'm hitting these dingers by myself. I'm not taking— I'm not— [Austin and Dre laugh]

Austin: No asterisks next to Caoimhe's name in the record books.

Sylvia: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: All right. And you move forward, climbing the stairs out of the training room and back out into the light. All right, back west. I gotta tell you: you could not beat that guy

right now, Keith.

Sylvia: Not right now!

Austin: Keith in the chat said, “We could beat that guy.” That guy is, like, dozens of levels above you right now.

Sylvia: But someday.

Keith: I'm just talking.

Austin: Okay. Did you say, “I'm just talking”?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Oh, okay!

Sylvia: That’s so real, man. [Jack, Dre, and Sylvia laugh]

Austin: Ahh. All right.

Jack: I'm just talking.

Austin: And Nicky or Jonathan.

Dre: I'm ready.

Austin: All right.

Art: All right, go for it.

Jonathan [0:30:37]

Austin: Jonathan, you know what’s at the end of this thing, right? You open the door, you know where you're going to be.

Dre: Mm-mm.

Austin: You don't? Okay.

Jack: I do.

Dre: I mean, I—

Austin: Where do you think it's going to be, Elena?

Jack: Jonathan's house, Jonathan's parents' house.

Austin: It's not Jonathan's parents' house, no. It's the top of the damn Little Snail. It's in your workshop.

Jack: Ohh.

Austin: And it comes to you in a flash: you know how to build it. I don't know what it is. You might not know what it is yet. But it's anything you want. If I take a look here at the rules, there's all this stuff about, like, permanence versus temporary and, like, scale and potency. Huge, extreme, perfectly potent, permanent. Anything you want. You can have it for the rest of the campaign. You cannot go home again. [Dre groans]

Art: That's where the Snail is.

Austin: Anything you want, but you know you won't be able to go home again. You'll give something of yourself that every time you see home you have to turn away. [Dre groans again]

Jack: You did spend a lot of time not going home, Jonathan, so, you know.

Dre: Yeah, no, the problem is that Jonathan very dearly loves his home. He just thinks he's not good enough for it. But I think there's also a part of Jonathan that, like, as part of this journey, also has started to bristle at home.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Kind of based on that conversation with his friend that runs the newspaper.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Dre: This thought of, like, they're not even going to try? Like, they're not even going to try to save the world? Like, they're okay with it all ending without even trying?

Austin: Yeah. That was what Theolonius was saying about the rest of the people there, right?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: That was not his perspective. His perspective was “they're not even going to fucking try,” right?

Dre: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: [thoughtful exhale]

Austin: And, you know, we're in a strange magical place here.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: The materials are at hand, you know?

Dre: Can I get a big airship?

Austin: Sure. Extreme, huge, permanent. Extreme: alter the nature of an area for a long time, contain the power of a demon, prevent a catastrophe, possess a full intelligence and personality. Huge: a fortress, a lake, the top of a mountain, a village or a city block. Permanent: remains available for multiple uses and different situations. Their sample airship in the book—I believe there is one in here.

Dre: There is, yeah.

Austin: The Discovery: major, large, permanent. It’s not even huge. Yours could be bigger than the Discovery, and that’s a large airship that can transport up to 50 people. So you could, yeah, you could build a large one. You could build a huge one. You just could never fly it home yourself.

Dre: Yeah, let’s do it.

Art: All right, let’s go!

Austin: All right. We'll come back to that and what that all looks like and means.

Dre: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I gotta figure that out. [chuckles]

Austin: Though, what’s the moment look like as it hits your head that you're going to do it? Like, what’s the expression on your face? [Dre sighs] And what’s the action that we see that communicates that you're going to do it?

Dre: It is before— mm. The first thing Jonathan does is he starts to write the draft of a book for Mae.

Austin: Interesting.

Dre: That’s like everything he has ever learned that would be important for her to know if she also, like, wants to be an adventurer, wants to wander the world, wants to see what is out there.

Austin: Yeah. All right. Back east.

Jack: Yeah, I can go.

Elena [0:34:23]

Austin: All right. Cross over normal style.

Jack: Cross over angry style.

Dre: Oh. Stomp.

Jack: I think as soon as I realize that I'm on my own, Elena kind of just, like, you know. Her shoulders slump.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: Frustration and anger, and, I think, fear. I think that this is all…these are big fucking stakes, and Elena is someone who has gone into the dungeon both feeling that she's confident about dungeons and that also that she's on, like, a righteous quest that is going to come to some sort of resolution. And then, I think in a similar way that Veile was like, "The gods are here and they can't fucking do anything?" that is worming at her. And I think that she is too proud and too obstinate to show that in front of the parties, but now that she's on the bridge on her own, [**Austin:** Yeah.] she's just, you know, frustrated and angry and, you know, is letting that out a little.

Austin: Yeah. As you open the door, you see a place that at first feels familiar, but you quickly realize it's a new place. It is Passikan, though. It is the interior of some other Passikan temple, some other megadungeon like the one you were from, and you recognize the mosaics on the wall, or at least you recognize the mosaics on one of the walls. I believe it's pentagonal in shape. Let me check that I'm right about this. Easy way to tell for me. Let's see. One, two, three, four, five. Yes, pentagonal in shape. And each wall has a different elemental kind of theming to it and a little pool of the element below it, so like, there's very very clearly the hanging gardens wall, right? Which has the plant life above and, like, the pool of water below, right? And then there's is clearly one towards the south that is a Passikan, you know, temple of light and so on. And across them all, you begin to recognize the sort of, some of the similar symbols that you saw when you went to the Redolencia Celestial Echo and you saw the map, remember?

Jack: Oh, Atlas.

Austin: Atlas's map, yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And you think that you're in…you think that you're in the first or the center or the core of some ancient Passikan temple, and there is a— because you recognize that kind of map again, and there is a kind of long stone…I'll call it a key. It doesn't look like a key. It looks like a pillar, but it's very clearly designed to fit into a sort of— maybe you've seen these actually in Rillspur. It's the type of thing that can open up, [chuckles]

for lack of a better word, like a boss door, you know? [Jack chuckles] It can open up the deep secrets of these places. Sometimes you need one to even get into a dungeon to begin with or one of these big structures to begin with. And this seems to be like the Passikan skeleton key.

Jack: Oh my god.

Austin: And it's simple. As you touch it, you can feel that the elements around you begin to kind of nip at you. You can take this, and you can, you know, gain knowledge of where this center Passikan, you know, control temple is, in exchange for a new elemental weakness. You already got one, but you get a second one.

Jack: [chuckles] What does that crown I picked up again do?

Austin: Oh yeah. That's right. Are you wearing it right now?

Jack: I am, yeah. Well, I was wearing it. Yeah, I was wearing it when we left.

Austin: Yeah. You could become the elemental weirdo. [Ali and Dre laugh quietly] Right, you're already vulnerable to bolt and earth, and you now resist wind and fire and ice.

Art: I hate when I have to become the elemental weirdo. [quiet laughter]

Jack: Oh my god.

Austin: This is permanent. You know, it does what it says on the tin.

Keith: Sorry, it's a vulnerability in exchange for what?

Austin: A key that could unlock any door tied to the Passikans, the kind of ancient precursor race that built the dungeon that Elena is from.

Keith: Any one door?

Austin: No. It's a skeleton key. It keeps on working.

Keith: It keeps? Okay. Wow. That's big. I mean, I'll say this: you'd be even, which is, if you think about it, also neutral.

Jack: Yes. The issue— so, there's that. There's also the fact that Elena is a glass cannon, and so you might look at this and say weakening Elena further is actually a bad thing to do, but an optimist would look at it and say, "Look, Elena already goes down like a paper tiger." [laughs] You know. So, what's one more? The hesitation that I'm having narratively is am in a… It's the same thing that Veile thought, right? Of like, is this a test? And I don't know whether or not I am being tested by…by dark forces, you know? I'm being tempted, right? And am I saying something about myself to the world by giving into this temptation, you know? No, I don't think I can take it, because I went into this room saying Elena is angry and afraid of the dungeons.

Austin: Interesting.

Jack: And I think if she… I'm trying to think. If I am in a position of weakness, if I'm in a position of uncertainty and frustration, and I find myself in a dungeon that already has given me a kind of— remember there was that whole bit with the person who drowned?

Austin: I do remember.

Jack: Like, Elena's got this deep fear of her own dungeon past a certain floor or whatever. And now I'm like, am I being tested by divinity? And am I going to be found wanting if I take this? And even if I do take it… [tempted] But then again, what's behind those doors? [Sylvia chuckles]

Keith: Mm, what's behind those doors?

Austin: That's how Monty Hall gets you.

Jack: That's how Monty Hall gets you. And often what's behind those doors are loads and loads of Pala-din [Austin laughs] appearing two and a half seasons before they appear.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Actually, I believe that the optimal strategy for Monty Hall is to be more interested in different doors.

Austin: You're right. That is true.

Jack: I've never seen him do that. I've watched a lot of *Let's Make a Deal*, and I've never seen him do the goat car, the famous one.

Art: Oh, he was famously kind of mad about the naming of that problem.

Austin: The Monty Hall problem? Really?

Keith: The Monty Hall problem? Because it ruined his show?

Art: In a "it's weird that he didn't have a better sense of humor about it" kind of way.

Austin: That's really funny.

Jack: Oh, no, it does not surprise me at all. Monty Hall seems like someone who he gets to decide what the joke is, and as soon as someone else…

Austin: Yeah, he seems like an asshole.

Sylvia: Can I be, like, vulnerable here with my friends?

Austin: Yes.

Keith: Yes.

Sylvia: I thought Monty Hall was a place [**Austin:** Oh!] where this, like, dilemma was come up with.

Keith: [laughs] That's very funny.

Janine: Are you thinking of the Halls of Montezuma?

Keith: Welcome to Monty Hall.

Jack: [chuckles] Monty Hall.

Sylvia: No. [laughing quietly] I thought it was, like, a Stanford prison experiment thing. [Janine and Art laugh]

Austin: I see. Monty Hall at Harvard. Yeah.

Janine: Oh, the Monty Hall problem. Right.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, it's like a room you would get in the *Blue Prince*. I drew the Monty Hall.

Janine: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah. [laughs]

Sylvia: Yeah.

Jack: This also means that there's a chance that, had this not come up, one day Sylvi would have watched an episode of *Let's Make a Deal* and gone, "Oh, he's named after the problem." [Austin and Keith laugh]

Sylvia: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I would have been like, "Oh, that's fun!"

Keith: Or the place is named after him.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. For people who don't know, the Monty Hall problem is a probability thing. I guess it's kind of like a brain teaser that comes from *Let's Make a Deal*, an old game show that Monty Hall used to host, where there would regularly be a situation where there'd be three doors, and he would say you can open one door and then lets you open the door and there could be a prize behind it. There's supposedly prizes behind each door. Behind the first door you open, there's a goat, and you go, "Ah, fuck. I didn't want the goat. I wanted the car." And he says, "All right. Do you want to open one of the other doors?" and is it to your advantage to keep the door that you already have?

Keith: Wait, there's a part—

Austin: I guess that's not true, right?

Keith: Yes, because it's not revealed yet.

Art: Once you have the goat, the game…once you get it wrong, the game's over.

Austin: The game is already solved. You're right. You don't get—

Keith: The key is that you pick your door, and then he offers you the chance to swap before revealing it.

Austin: You're right. You're right. Before seeing what's behind it. That's right. Yes.

Keith: And the part that teases is that it is completely unintuitive that the reality is that it is always the better odds to switch.

Austin: To switch.

Art: Yes.

Austin: Door one, two, and three. You've picked one. He goes, "Are you sure you want one? You don't want two or three?" you should always take two or three.

Keith: Because the idea is that you're changing—

Art: Well, it's only in the scenario in the Monty Hall problem, which is not ever in the show.

Austin: Wait, what's that mean?

Art: That like, that was Monty Hall's response is that you can't switch doors either.

Austin: I see. Is that true? You can't switch doors?

Art: There are often times you can switch prizes, but they never actually give you more information, as per the problem.

Austin: I see. I see.

Keith: Sure.

Art: I say this as both a person who likes math and a person who likes *Let's Make a Deal*.

Janine: Anyway, the important thing here is that basically Sylvi just found out that the original host of *Jeopardy* was Schrödinger.

Austin: [laughs] That's right.

Sylvia: Kinda, yeah, yeah, yeah. [Jack laughs]

Austin: All right.

Sylvia: Who is Schrödinger? There we go.

Jack: I'm not going to take it. It is so much better if Elena doesn't take this and regrets it for the rest of her life and can't articulate it than does take it and has to deal with, like, an elemental vulnerability.

Keith: Dying more. Dying every day.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Not knowing what is behind the door is going to kill this poor girl. Let's do it.

Austin: And that's what you want to do. I see. Kill her in a way that simply a weakness to poison would never kill her.

Keith: Oh, sorry. I thought you were going the other way. I thought you were saying I'm not going to take the key, but you are going to take the key.

Austin: No.

Jack: No, I'm not going to take the key. I'm going to kill her emotionally, as opposed to killing her with her vulnerabilities.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Got it. I got it, I got it, I got it.

Austin: Yeah. All right.

Jack: I'm going to kill her with *her* vulnerabilities.

Keith: Yeah.

Nicky [0:45:10]

Austin: I think that brings us over to Nicky.

Art: Yep.

Austin: Walk over normal style.

Art: Yep, walking in a normal fashion.

Austin: Normal. Normal door. Walk in. Normal life. What's normal life look like for Nicky?

Art: Like, just like a regular schmuck?

Austin: Like a regular schmuck. Or like a good schmuck, a schmuck who has it made. Not a made man, importantly. [laughs quietly]

Art: Yeah, yeah, I got you, I got you. Yeah, I think it's like, it's a nice place to live. It's a good respectable job, honest.

Austin: You still cooking? You doing something else?

Art: Yeah, it's probably cooking. It's probably being a chef at a— owning a nice restaurant, a modest restaurant. I'm not like—

Austin: Yeah. You got the newspaper clipping of the place on the wall, you know?

Art: Yeah, and a signed dollar bill behind the counter, you know?

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You got a family?

Art: Uh, yeah, probably?

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Nicky… Oh, it's tricky, because Nicky had a rough family experience.

Austin: Sure.

Art: But I think Nicky understands that people do settle down.

Austin: Yeah, well, and sometimes you end up, you know, getting into someone else's family in a way that can make you feel really like, wow! Like, I didn't have this with my people, but you welcomed me in, you know?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: So it doesn't even have to be your old people.

Art: Sure, yeah.

Austin: In fact, it couldn't be your old people.

Art: No, it probably couldn't. Explicitly not the old people.

Austin: No, like, very explicitly. You could leave right now. I know you like these people.

Art: Uh huh. I do.

Austin: But this life is a lot.

Art: It is.

Austin: And you could have this life. I've written down here, "witness of fate protection." You've witnessed a lot here.

Art: [laughs] Yeah.

Austin: You are a chef who is trying to get your life right. You could have it back.

Art: Uh huh.

Austin: You could live a life wherever you want, however you want it.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You could live, guaranteed to be happy, and everyone here who knows you would forget you'd ever existed.

Art: Oh no!

Austin: They wouldn't be sad about it, because they wouldn't have ever known.

Art: Aww.

Austin: There's no one who's sad in this. And if you want to, you could forget them too, which means you wouldn't miss them. [Art laughs quietly] You'd miss them right now in this moment, but going forward, you would just be—

Janine: It's revealing, what you find sad about this.

Austin: Oh, I think it's very sad. I'm just saying the phenomenological experience that Nicky will have and that the characters will have. There will not be extended remorse or regret. It's sad to me, Austin, the person telling the story.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: But to the people in the world, it will have been like nothing ever happened.

Keith: Jonathan gets to never go home, and Nicky says, "You can only go home."

Austin: You can go to a new home.

Art: A new home and forget about all of this.

Austin: Forget about all of this. This fate stuff. You'd live a normal life. You'd die happy, surrounded by people who love you, who get to love you.

Jack: And they're real people, the new people.

Austin: Oh yeah.

Keith: It’s not a trick.

Austin: Not a trick.

Art: No. No, I can't.

Austin: Okay.

Art: I can't.

Austin: And here’s where we get into the real tricky stuff, which is like, are you now going to walk away from— in walking away from the happiness you would provide to other people, are you now denying those people a joyful life with you? And I don't know, because magic doesn't exist in our real world, so I never have to deal with this bullshit.

Art: Yeah, I mean, I just hope that those people are also fine how they are now.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: [laughs] The hypothetical people that you would know if you did do this, you mean?

Art: Yeah. It’s hard to prove that they're not.

Austin: They're not happy anyway.

Art: Right.

Austin: They'll meet some other great chef.

Art: Like, what are they doing now? They're probably basically fine.

Austin: Probably basically fine.

Jack: Let’s tune into the orphanage and find out. [Austin laughs]

Keith: [in a cartoonish child voice] I wish we had a big chef around!

[joining in simultaneously]

Austin: [child voice] I wish [inaudible 0:48:54]

Keith: [child voice] I sure wish!

Sylvia: [child voice] I want an Italian dad! [Keith laughs]

Austin: [child voice] No one makes me a good cheeseburger!

Sylvia: [child voice] So, what? No fucking ziti?

Keith: [child voice] I don't have any exotic ingredients, and I'm sad. There's no tall men in my life. [regular voice] Nicky’s tall, right? He’s big.

Austin: [laughs] I guess. I don't know. He’s big.

Keith: He just seems like a huge big Chef Boyardee guy.

Austin: He does.

Art: Yeah. Chef Boyardee, Wario. These are all ways he’s been described.

Austin: [child voice] I wish I had a father figure to teach me right from wrong.

Sylvia: [child voice] I wish I had a father figure to make microgames. [Austin and Jack laugh quietly]

Keith: [child voice] Our local economy needs a food truck. [Austin and Jack laugh]

Jack: Oh dear.

Sylvia: [child voice] We're trying to keep Perpetua weird.

Jack: [child voice] I've been waiting for the check to clear.

Austin: [chuckles] I've been waiting for the check to clear.

Keith: [child voice] My one wish is for someone to show me the biggest knife. [Austin, Jack, and Keith laugh]

Sylvia: [child voice] And if they had a fork? That would just be even better.

Art: Well, the point is Nicky *doesn't* hear this.

Austin: Yes. [Keith laughs]

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: No. That's correct.

Art: So we all…

Austin: I mean, you see the evidence of it, right? Yeah. You've decided your own little group of hooligan orphans is the one for you.

Art: They sure are.

Austin: Okay. All right, back over east for our last one over here, I think. Is that right? Brontë?

Brontë [0:50:11]

Janine: I think so. I mean, I'm a little curious about the offer that Efta and Zolfta will get, but yeah.

Austin: Well, except for the NPCs. I mean, I can tell you Efta's and Zolfta's, which is they can get a higher rank heir. They can leave you for a higher rank heir. They could be number one and number two. Their cost is they won't be able to talk to each other ever again.

Janine: Yeah. I figured that would be the cost with them.

Austin: Gotta break them up.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: I think I know the answer for them, but.

Janine: Also, wait, would it be like *number one* number one? Or like…

Austin: I guess it would be, yeah, it would be…

Janine: Because remember, we talked about it starts at zero, and then it's one two, three four, five six, seven eight.

Austin: It starts at zero, right. Then it would be zero. Yeah, it would be zero and one. I don't know who would get zero and who would get one.

Janine: And that would necessitate them not talking, so that would make sense.

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Janine: One of them would have a new partner.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Yeah. I guess I don't know, but I feel like they wouldn't go for that.

Austin: I don't think they would. Brontë, as you open the door, you move into a space that is somewhat familiar, though I would say it seems different than the last time you were here. When you first arrived to this continent—we talked a little bit about this, but I think maybe time to bring some of it into deeper focus—you spent some time in the northwest of the Elevana League in a place called Glaishora. It says here, Glaishora, frosted port town, which is the furthest west.

Janine: I love my port frosted.

Austin: We all love a nice frosted glass.

Janine: Yum.

Austin: You know, maybe it is actually a port town. Like, maybe they're actually making port to drink. That’s kind of fun.

Janine: I'm just saying Brontë would have absolutely made that joke.

Austin: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Janine: The wine prince makes that joke.

Austin: The wine prince definitely makes that joke. Does the wine prince make that joke to the ice town princess?

Janine: Yes.

Austin: Okay. Because you spent some time with a princess in the town of Glaishora. I think we've mentioned this before, but we haven't actually given good detail. You were there kind of as…in a sort of political diplomatic purpose, but not as like a permanent envoy or anything. You were kind of coming to the Elevana League to… You're the sixth in line. [Janine chuckles] You're not the second in line or the third in line, right?

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: So like, they can send you to—

Janine: There's not a goal. It’s like an awareness thing.

Austin: That’s right. That’s right. And intercontinental relations is, like, a kind of rare thing.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Kind of it was the whole point of the prologue, right, or the prelude.

Janine: And risky.

Austin: And risky. You have to go far way. You have to cross territory where the Valte might be, or as we learned from the other side of the game, pirates.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So, risky. So you spent a little bit of time there before you became an adventurer, and in fact, there's some— can you remind us of your reason for becoming an adventurer?

Janine: Yeah. [laughs quietly] It was because I met a cute person who was like, “Do something. Do anything.”

Austin: You don't do anything.

Janine: “You're cute, but you're useless. Maybe do something.”

Austin: You're cute, but you're useless. Yeah. You know, many such cases. I have her name now.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: It is Theia. Theia Galani. She is the ice princess of Glaishora, the Frosted Port Town of the northwest. She’s not in this room, so don't worry, you're not going to see her right this second. She’s an elf. She has kind of bronze skin and long dark blue hair. She wears a sort of simple silver circlet. She is the heir of the kind of citystate of Glaishora’s royal family. You know, this is a— she lives in a palace, but as far as palaces go inside of the Elevana League, it is, you know, it’s not floating in the sky. It’s not built on a moon that’s, like, landed in the earth. And in some ways, it means it’s more like one of the many palaces you bounced between as a kid, so you're fairly familiar with that type of living.

Janine: It’s like hunting lodge style palace.

Austin: Yeah, exactly, yeah. And in fact, the room you see in front of you is the room

you stayed in when you visited as a diplomat, but it seems more lived-in when you come in. More of your stuff is here, in a way that's like, you would have had to have, like, had it delivered, you know?

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Maybe there's like a special chair you really like from home that someone put on a boat and brought out here.

Janine: Oh.

Austin: And it just feels more lived in, you know? While you were staying here as a diplomat for the week or whatever—or for the month, whatever the more limited time was—you know, you were getting daily laundry service, obviously. Now you have a little pile of laundry in a basket, and they come and get it every three days, but it's not every day, you know?

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: You live here, seemingly. And, you know, as you look around the room, there's a couple of little details that you can kind of pick up on. There is a calendar, and it seems like the calendar has a date marked on it, circled, which is the winter feast day. There is a sort of schedule of events for that day that includes mostly vague stuff, where it's like, you know, the opening ceremony; you know, the dance begins. One of the things there is betrothal announcement, but there's no details about that. And then there's like a feast, and then there's a speech, and there's like a draft of a speech kind of written nearby that seems like it's in your handwriting. Other weird clues about what this life looks like for you: on one of the walls, there's a local newspaper that says, "Hero of Cenn Arrives," and then the kind of subhead is, "Grande Sonnerian noble appointed as permanent envoy to Glaishora."

Janine: Hmm.

Austin: And here's kind of where you get some of what the beckoning is for you. You would be assigned here permanently as the envoy to Glaishora, this town you came

from. Or you didn't come from, but you came from once you landed here. This town you came to.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: And as you read, as your eyes, you know, go down this article that's been posted up, it does note one thing that's different, which is it says that you are second in line to the throne. You're not the heir, but you are the spare. And so there's a question as to how long you would be here. And I don't know, you and I have talked a little bit about what the different responsibilities are, depending on how far in the line you are. We were just talking about if you're sixth in line you get to kind of just bounce around.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: But as the spare and as the permanent envoy, there are, like, different requirements. For one, you probably couldn't adventure around and investigate Sourcerot or help your friends, but more importantly, you have to kind of— you have to be both entertaining and charming but also ready to go if— and I guess I'll ask you this. Who would be the one—? What would have happened to get you to second in line instead of sixth in line? Because that sounds like, you know, some other people would have had to have…

Janine: Mm-hmm. A big jump.

Austin: Yeah, it's a big jump.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: What would that take?

Janine: I mean, you know, the obvious one, you know, is death, someone dying. But I think the less obvious and more likely one is a sort of reversal of what got Brontë into the sixth slot to begin with, [**Austin:** Interesting.] which was just general incompetence.

Austin: Right.

Janine: And a lack of responsibility. So for him to get bumped up, he would either need to… I guess theoretically if he demonstrated, if he did something really really really impressive and long term, [**Austin:** Right.] that might impress them enough to get him bumped up, but that seems less likely than someone higher up from him in the line of succession fucking up.

Austin: One of his siblings, presumably. One of his sisters.

Janine: Yes. Some of them, you know, I've talked before about his younger sister who he's very fond of. She's ahead of him in line.

Austin: Right.

Janine: So if she messed up in a big way, she might get bumped down, and then he would, you know, get bumped up.

Austin: Right. And, you know, there's no evidence to the particulars of that in this news article. It's not like, "And he got that promotion last year when blah blah blah." But notably, it does just call you the Hero of Cenn, which is a thing you've done already. You did help save Cenn from a dragon attack. So it's not like you went off and then saved the world in this vision of reality.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: And there's just like a lot that's not necessarily clear. You know, we described this a little bit as like a hunting lodge more than a traditional palace, but, you know, it is a place that I think you felt comfortable in and feel like there's a lot of space to be you here. There's a lot of songs to sing and lots of dances to dance, lots of people who pass through because it's a port town, so lots of room to celebrate or to throw parties. A lot of hosting events, a lot of going to other events and being the kind of, if not the guest of honor, the guest that everybody turns their heads at. But there are multiple open questions about what this life actually looks like.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: And I say that to contrast it maybe with some of the other things we have talked about and will talk about. Part of the beckoning here is a…it's a draw into a life where you don't necessarily know some of the details. You told me that Theia kind of sent you off to say, "Go do something with your life."

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You know, maybe there's a moment here as you're moving around this space where you see her out of the window, like down, you know, outside of the palace walls or something, you know? Like talking to someone or strolling through the town. And I think maybe, you know, with the long blue hair, she kind of moves it aside and looks up and sees you in the far distance in the window and then keeps moving. You lock eyes for a second, but it's really hard to tell if you've done something yet.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: And I'm not saying that to push you— like, you might have. Maybe being the Hero of Cenn is doing something.

Janine: That's what I was going to say, is like, the Cenn thing, I think his impression would be like, you know, because the conversation went to "figure out Sourcerot," [**Austin:** Right.] it kind of feels like the Cenn thing wouldn't be enough. It might be enough in, like, the political sense of like, [**Austin:** Mm.] you know, someone around her being like, "Well, he did this. We should probably recognize that contribution to whatever," but is that enough to actually impress her? Probably not. He would guess not.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Likewise, he would guess that it seems weird for that to be the thing alone that would get him bumped up, so it's definitely stuff that makes him a little bit, like, definitely asking some questions internally.

Austin: Yeah. Well, and so then here's the— I guess the thing that I think is interesting that I'm curious about is, instead of being offered one really good thing and then one

really bad thing, which I guess being second in line to the throne is kind of a bad thing for him, but I'm trying to get, for Brontë, kind of two different, two competing good things. Because on one hand, you are currently living a life where maybe one day you could be the sort of hero that impresses someone like Theia.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: On the other hand, you could have the life that that would lead you to now. You could be the party boy, political positioned, not quite the heir, you know, live the life of maybe not leisure but—

Janine: Cash in your chips or keep rolling.

Austin: Right. Right. That's exactly it. You could cash in your chips.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: And, you know, maybe you are betrothed to her, and maybe over a long time— the paper doesn't say if it's your betrothal or not. It just says there is a betrothal, right?

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And you have a speech ready to give, which I don't know if that makes it sound more or less like it is your betrothal. And the speech is just kind of generic, "We all gather here on the feast day. I'm a guest. I'm so happy to be brought in."

Janine: But it could also be that, like, whatever made him be second in line [**Austin:** Yes.] made him more politically advantageous [**Austin:** Yes.] to have a match with, and then it has nothing to do with actual shit that he's earned.

Austin: Exactly.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: But maybe it has turned into— but maybe that's an opportunity. So yeah, it is. It's the cash in your chips moment for Brontë or double down and, you know. And, you

know, you wouldn't be swooped out of this particular adventure. You're not, like, leaving the party right this second. But when you get home, when you get back to the continent, you would know in your heart you have to get home to Glaishora. You have to go meet up with Theia, you know? And see how things are going.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: And that would go from being a kind of background thing to a foreground thing with all of the responsibilities, you know, connected to it. You would probably take letters every week from Grande Sonnerie about the goings on there. You would probably have an appointed tutor, right?

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Not that you're not grown already, but you know, there's still you have to be honed to become the next king, if it comes to that.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: And I want to say it feels, you know, I can't tell you what you'll do, but I want to emphasize that it feels like a space you built in this room.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: It doesn't feel like a…you know, the difference between a hotel room and a home.

Janine: Well, my Poäng is here.

Austin: I'm sorry, your—?

Janine: They brought my IKEA Poäng from… [laughs quietly]

Austin: Right, exactly, yes. [laughs] Right, exactly! They brought your Poäng.

Janine: [laughs] I can tell it’s mine, because it’s worn in the right ways.

Austin: Yeah, what is something that's here that you're like, this is actually a comfort? Because you have been gone from home for a long time now.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: What is the furniture or the object that is like, "Oh shit."

Janine: I really think it would— like, the chair you mentioned is a good pull, because I feel like it would be… I don't know what it's called, because it's not a chaise. It's sort of a chaise, but it's like when there's a chaise and it has two arms instead of just the side and back.

Austin: Right, yeah, yeah.

Janine: You know, it's like an armchair but long, [laughs quietly] like, long bottomed.

Austin: Yeah, long bottomed, yeah. It's an armchair the long way, yeah.

Janine: Is that, like, a…? [typing] What's a divan? Is that a divan?

Austin: I don't know, but I'm writing that down as a character name. [laughs] It says here it's a ceremonial county in South West England. I think I've spelled it wrong.

Janine: I think you've written "Devon".

Austin: I did. I wrote "Devon". I did write "Devon".

Janine: Yeah. A divan chair seems to just be like a chaise or a settee. But, you know, that's still relevant, you know? It's a long couchlike thing you can recline on.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Damn, there's some really cool divans out there. [Austin chuckles]

Austin: Okay, a…recomier? has two raised ends and no arms. That's not what we're talking about.

Janine: No.

Austin: Mm. I don't know. Anyway. I like that.

Janine: It’s like a nonconvertible recliner, you know? It’s like always reclined. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It’s always reclined. Yeah. So, yeah. Do you sit in it to think this over? Is Brontë taking a more direct action? What’s even thinking about all of this look like?

Janine: I think he’d be scared to sit on it.

Austin: [chuckles] Yeah.

Janine: Because that feels like…that feels like it’s harder to walk away from.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: That feels, to some extent, like you're accepting an offer.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Or preparing to accept an offer, and I think he’s a little on edge about the beckonings, as, you know, he’s not immune to a warning. He's susceptible to temptation but not, you know.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, it’s interesting, because like, Brontë is such a funny character in some ways, because he is nobility who doesn't want to rule but does like being noble, does like the luxury that comes with that.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: You haven't been playing him as the sort of— One way you could play a character like this is like, “Oh my goodness! All this danger!” and that’s not him either, right? He’s not that type of noble.

Janine: No. Because I mean, that’s the thing, is like, a noble son who’s further down the

line still has uses, and those uses are: be good at talking to people [**Austin:** Right.] or be good at fighting people.

Austin: Yeah. Totally.

Janine: Like, you know, his education was, I think once his nature maybe became obvious or something to that nature.

Austin: Scintillation. Yeah.

Janine: Yeah, once his proclivity for scintillation became obvious, [Austin chuckles] it was probably more a thing of like, well, do we want to spend time teaching him every language? Or do we want to spend time teaching him how to use a bow in case we get attacked and, you know?

Austin: Right. Right. Yeah. So, does the proclivity not to sit here suggest you're going to double down and you're going to keep your chips in the game, you're not going to cash out?

Janine: I think it does. I think it, to him, just doesn't feel right.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Like, I think a big part of it is like, he wants to be able to brag.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Like, he wants to get to this point in his life, but he wants to be able to brag about it. He wants to have, like, good stories and stuff.

Austin: Yeah. It’s so funny you say that. Oh, go ahead; finish your thought.

Janine: And “I was at a big fight,” kind of doesn't…isnt there. [laughs quietly]

Austin: Yeah. It’s funny, because the first version I prepped for this version of it was like, and you don't know what— it was just like, “Hero Arrives,” but it doesn't say what you've done, and you don't remember.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You did something great, you'll learn what it is, but you can't tell the stories. I kind of knew that that would be…

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: But I was like, “That’s too easy. Brontë would never accept that, because…”

Janine: No.

Austin: And instead, I was like, “Wait a second. Brontë has done something kind of remarkable.” In fact, Brontë has done a couple of pretty remarkable things so far.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: That’s not…you know, that’s not nothing. Saving Cenn from a big dragon is heroic. There are many people for whom that would be the most heroic thing they've ever done in their entire lives, and they would be called heroes for the rest of their lives.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: But we're playing *Fabula Ultima*. We're playing Perpetua, and Brontë is a protagonist, and maybe that isn't enough for him.

Janine: And also, like, that’s the other side of being part of, like, a noble lineage, is like, there's kind of… I mean, you know, to one extent, there is an expectation that you're going to kind of be useless and rich, but also, there is a sort of legendary quality to a fantasy noble line.

Austin: Right. Right.

Janine: Where like, you know, you have, I'm 100% sure—I haven't sat down and figured it out, but I'm 100% sure—there are stories that Brontë has heard since he was a child about his great great grandmother who, you know, picked up a hoe to till the field [**Austin:** Right.] and swung it once and there was a mountain of gold or whatever.

Austin: [chuckles] Right.

Janine: You know, there is a quality there where, like, no one is talking about the uncle who fought a guy once and won.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. Totally. There is a real what do you do with it.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: You were born with a huge advantage. What do you then do with it, and how much do you have to do before it actually even moves the needle on being heroic or legendary? And that's kind of interesting. The fact that that is something that Brontë is interested in. Would Brontë be interested in that if a pretty girl didn't tell him to go make something of himself?

Janine: Probably not.

Austin: Or was that a clarifying moment?

Janine: I think that was a clarifying moment. I think he, you know, at home, was a big fish in a…not necessarily a small pond but a familiar pond.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: And the pond here is bigger and kind of doesn't give a shit about him in the same way.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: So he's sort of having to reckon with the limits of his own self as an individual.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: And, you know, what he wants is still kind of the same, but, you know, it's a perspective shift. It's a, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: I also think— I don't think he thinks of himself as having done heroic stuff.

Austin: Huh.

Janine: Like, in terms of being the savior of Cenn, I think if someone said to him, “Hey, have you heard about the Savior of Cenn?” I think he would probably think of that as, I mean, to be honest, default probably Caoimhe, but Caoimhe and Antistrophe. Like, I think he, in that triad, sort of places himself as an also-ran.

Austin: Interesting. Huh. As you are heading for the door out, presumably?

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: It sounds like you are rejecting this. You've rejected the beckoning, but there is a mail slot in the— or maybe not a slot, but a little envelope slides under the door as you head towards the door.

Janine: Does it have a puppy? Oh, it’s an envelope you said. Okay. Fine.

Austin: It’s an envelope. Yeah. [Janine laughs] Wait, what would have had the puppy?

Janine: I don't know. I just, remember I wanted the puppy before? I asked the guy to get a puppy up there?

Austin: Oh, right, because of, yeah, Gnova’s puppy, of course. No, just an envelope. Just at the right—

Janine: If there was a puppy in here and we had a puppy together, that would be a whole different story.

Austin: Oh, that might be the— that would have moved the needle. That’s what the beckoning should have been. Dammit!

Janine: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: You pick up the envelope? You look at the envelope?

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: It says “Brontë.” It is written in, I would say, a princess’s hand. Inside is a little note card, and it says, “Brontë, I heard about your endeavors in the City of Iron Chains. I am unsure where you will be in the coming days, but I have been sent on a political mission to Lumai, the Gleaming Fortress. Perhaps, if you are passing through, we could spend some time catching up.” And it is signed Theia Galani and somehow seems to be a real letter, not part of the beckoning.

Janine: Oh. Am I allowed to take it? [laughs quietly]

Austin: Sure.

Janine: How is it here?

Austin: You know, the Dragon Path has strange ways.

Janine: Am I going to get cursed if I take it out of here?

Austin: I mean, you know. Sometimes when a pretty lady sends you a letter, you *are* cursed, you know? [laughs quietly]

Janine: Yeah. That’s true.

Austin: But it’s a different type of curse, so. All right.

After the Beckonings [1:14:18]

Ali: Jonathan was beckoned!

Austin: Jonathan was beckoned.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Was Jonathan the only beckoned? Jonathan was the only one of the player characters beckoned?

Sylvia: I respect it so much. I was almost beckoned. I really was almost beckoned, but.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: You're supposed to ignore the beckonings.

Austin: It says that.

Dre: Mm. You know what really clinched it for me?

Austin: What's that?

Dre: We know where the White Lectern is, and it's very far away.

Austin: That's true. [Ali chuckles] It is true.

Sylvia: Oh, I thought it was because you wanted an airship to come visit your cool new friends.

Austin: Aww.

Dre: That too, but…

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Jonathan's really only spent time with Brontë, which is…and I don't think likes him very much.

Austin: Yeah. On the west side here—let me bring us back over to Eschatonica—Nicky and Antistrophe, you are out on another little platform in front of another kind of castle gate, having come through a door. You've come out of the same door somehow, even though you were in different places. Magic. Jonathan's not here yet.

Keith: Okay. I'm not concerned yet.

Art: [more concerned] Yeah, I'm not concerned yet.

Austin: Y'all talk about anything?

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Where'd you get that knife? [quiet laughter]

Austin: Oh.

Dre: Good question, good question.

Art (as **Nicky**): The shop back in Jonathan's hometown.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Oh, it's not, like… Is it custom made? It's huge.

Art (as **Nicky**): Eh, they just had it for sale.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Is it for big people?

Janine: [laughs quietly] What?

Art (as **Nicky**): I didn't ask.

Dre: Is it for big boys? [Janine and Keith laugh]

Art (as **Nicky**): So, two shields. [Austin and Dre laugh]

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Yep. [laughter]

Art (as **Nicky**): You don't see that a lot.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): I wasn't really good with the sword.

Sylvia: This is the most, like, "meeting at a work party" energy we've had this entire time. [Keith laughs]

Austin: It really is.

Keith: Kind of is.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: It's just, you know, it's a guy from another branch.

Art (as **Nicky**): Hey, did anything super weird happen to you in there?

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Uh, I got teleported back. Or, you know, I was inside my old study, when I worked at the university, and there was a spell there that I could cast to get some power, but in exchange, it was a bad trade. So, that's what happened to me.

Art (as **Nicky**): Hmm. I saw, like, a whole 'nother life.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Oh. I just saw my old life.

Art (as **Nicky**): [subdued] Oh, no. I saw something different.

Austin: On the eastern side.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Is your friend okay?

Austin: Still not out.

Art (as **Nicky**): I don't know. I don't think we can go back and get him.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Is Jonathan, like…is he always, like, last?

Art (as **Nicky**): No.

Keith (as **Antistrophe**): Okay. Well, I'm sure it's fine. As long as, you know, you ignore the beckonings, it shouldn't be a problem.

Art (as **Nicky**): [quietly] Yeah, how 'bout that.

Austin: Over on the eastern side, the bulk of you have come through.

Sylvia: That sounds like some people didn't.

Ali: [quietly] Oh boy.

Austin: There's a real theme on who failed to ignore the beckonings here. [Ali gasps] [Keith laughs loudly]

Dre: Ah, hell yeah. Perfect.

Sylvia: Oh no.

Janine: Turtles are susceptible to summonings, beckonings, whisperings.

Keith: [laughing] Turtles are very susceptible to beckonings.

Janine: It’s because they're a little bit slower, so it takes them longer to get away from the beckonings.

Austin: Oh, it catches up.

Janine: Giving the beckonings longer time to take hold.

Austin: I see.

Dre: To be like, “Eh, come on!” [Jack laughs]

Keith: That’s rough. That’s rough stuff.

Austin: You see two terrapine who come through, and at first, you don't recognize either of them.

Sylvia: Oh my—

Keith: Efta and Zolfta?

Ali: What? [laughs]

Sylvia: Oh, I think I know what’s going on.

Austin: One of them, you don't recognize. Or actually, one of them you recognize in a way you didn't know that you recognized yet, because of course one of them is famed adventurer Maebela, who you've heard stories about but you had never really met in person.

Jack: Oh my god.

Austin: You'd only ever been intimidated by her appearance at a distance. She sheathes a sword after cleaning off some, I don't know, some slime. She'd killed a slime on the other side of this.

Ali: She is such a loser.

Austin: Huh?

Ali: I'm sorry. [laughs] She is such a loser!

Austin: Wow.

Ali: What is wrong with her?

Sylvia: Get her ass.

Keith: She is a bit of a loser.

Ali: "Oh, I want to be an adventurer, but I'm not even going to go on one adventure"? What a loser!

Austin: She just did. She just went on a big adventure.

Ali: No.

Austin: She lived an adventurer's life.

Ali: [sarcastic] Yeah, sure.

Austin: And she's fucking built now, by the way.

Jack: Austin, did she go on more adventures than us?

Austin: Oh yeah. She's waaay better than you at adventuring. She's, like, level 20.

Jack: Is she like a sort of Hella Varal tier adventurer? [Ali laughs]

Austin: Yes. 100%.

Jack: Okay. Fuck.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: If she says so.

Keith: Sorry, are we thinking of the same Hella Varal?

Austin: And then there's… I can only describe this guy as a dapper and smooth young southern turtle.

Sylvia: Eugh…

Ali: Lord in heaven.

Austin (as **Waylon**): Now, where am I?

Austin: He says.

Keith: He's young again.

Austin (as **Waylon**): Who are all you people?

Dre: [southern gentleman voice] I do declare!

Sylvia (as **Caoimhe**): Who are you?

Austin (as **Waylon**): My name's Waylon. Who are you? And where the hell am I? [Sylvia laughs]

Dre: Oh, let's go!

Sylvia: Caoimhe starts laughing in character.

Art: One of Waylon's non-negotiables was not remembering any of us losers.

Austin: His non-negotiables was forgetting everything he knew before.

Ali: Whoa.

Austin: He is eternally young, but he doesn't know anything about the world anymore.

Sylvia: Oh.

Keith: Does he know about his camera?

Austin: He’s looking down, and he’s like,

> (as **Waylon**): I don't even know what this thing is! Any of y'all know how this thing works? [Ali laughs]

Keith: Wow.

Ali: Wait, is it the—

Dre: Did he forget the racism, though?

Art: Posed on that job board.

Ali: I need to know if it’s the same Maebela clause that we are like, “Oh, who’s this dashing young man?”

Austin: No, I think you all remember Waylon, actually. [Keith laughs]

Ali: Oh, that’s so sad. [laughs]

Austin: He got eternal youth but forgot everything, whereas she became a famed adventurer that everyone knows about.

Keith: This is like a different person.

Austin: That’s right.

Sylvia: [quietly] It’s so funny.

Jack: I think Elena is like,

> (as **Elena**): [intimidated] I'm sorry, Maebela, I don't mean to… Have you

encountered—? Sorry, this man seems to have forgotten everything.

Austin (as **Maebela**): Well, that's a shame by him.

Jack (as **Elena**): Is there a cure? Have you seen something like this before?

Austin (as **Maebela**): Hmm. I'll give it some thought, but I don't think so. I think once a man makes a choice like that, you're stuck with it.

Jack: Elena looks around at Veile and Brontë and just mouths, like, "Maebela!" Like, "Wow!" [Dre and Keith laugh]

Ali (as **Veile**): [quietly] I've read about her all my life!

Jack (as **Elena**): You haven't heard of her?

Ali (as **Veile**): No, I've read about her all my life. [Ali laughs]

Jack (as **Elena**): Oh, you've read about her! [quietly] I know!

Ali: Pulling out, like, a book.

Austin: Yeah. You remember the story.

Ali: Opening the chapter to the Maebela chapter.

Austin: She had a huge blowup with her family—who didn't believe that she could become an adventurer—and swore to never go home again and went off to become a famed adventurer.

Jack: What's her signature weapon?

Austin: I described her as having a sword. I think it's like a cool scimitar, you know? [cross] Maybe it's a pair of scimitars, actually, you know?

Jack: [cross] What's it called?

Keith: So, does Jonathan still have a sister?

Austin: Yeah, it’s her.

Dre: Yeah, she’s right there.

Keith: Okay. I wasn't sure if this is, like, a new person.

Austin: Nope. Not a new person.

Keith: Okay. So…

Austin: Yeah, she didn't become a famous adventurer that she read about once. She is…the world seems to have shifted through powerful Aether magicks to create in her…

Keith: Right. So, none of us have met her, except Jonathan will see cool Maebela and be like, “Holy shit. It’s my sister.”

Austin: I think you…yeah. I think it’s really fuzzy in your brains, right? Because it’s like…

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: It’s like you've been traveling with her, but you couldn't possibly have talked to her before, because she’s Maebela, you know?

Jack: She was going ahead.

Austin: In fact, I think people just call her Bela now.

Keith: M.B.

Austin: M.B.

Art: Something like Bela the Brave or something.

Austin: Bela the Brave! Now we're talking.

Sylvia: Oh, B.B. [Ali laughs quietly]

Austin: Bela the Brave.

Art: If she needs a publicist or something, I…

Austin: Yeah, do you want a new job? [Austin, Dre, and Jack laugh]

Keith: There was a place where you could have wished for that a second ago.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ali: She wasn't even beckoned by people believing in her. She was beckoned by stolen valor.

Austin: [quietly] Wow.

Sylvia: Get her ass!

Dre: I think part of the stolen valor was people believing in her.

Art: It’s not stolen, though. Isn't it real?

Austin: It’s like you've never been 19, you know, and wished it could all just be easy.

Ali: I know. [laughs]

Jack: But it turns out that it was! Sort of.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Dre: If you go down the Dragon Path, yeah.

Austin: If you go down the Dragon Path.

Jack: And you never want to go home again.

Austin: Yeah. She was in a better situation with that home stuff than you were too, Jonathan, so.

Art: Well, we don't know what her thing is.

Austin: No, we do. I guess we don't actually, but yeah, she also cannot go home again.

Dre: Mm.

Keith: Their parents should maybe take a look at themselves.

Austin: Yeah. [Ali snorts]

Sylvia: Get ‘em.

Keith: Two kids with the same wish where the monkey’s paw is that they can never look and [**Austin:** You know?] talk to you again or think about you, and then they both immediately take it?

Ali: They had a lot going on.

Austin: You can think about them. You can think and talk.

Dre: You didn't say never talk to you. They could come visit.

Austin: They could come visit. Yeah. Yeah.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Yeah, I think the only person who had “you can never talk to the person again” was…

Sylvia: That was me.

Austin: Yeah, was Caoimhe.

Keith: That’s fair.

Austin: And could see.

Keith: Let’s see how long until Maebela fucking calls her parents. [Ali laughs]

Austin: We'll see. Maybe send a letter. No, it sounds like part of it also is the story is

about her leaving in a huff, in a big fight, in a big tantrum, you know? Like, “I'll prove it to them!” and then did.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: When she must have been at a very young age, even for a terrapine.

Jack: And then later in her life, she’s going to send her two children to go and stay with her parents, and they'll make a movie about their parents.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. And it won't actually be them. They'll be different old turtles.

Jack: They'll be different old turtles. [laughs quietly]

Sylvia: And one of her kids will rap. [Ali laughs]

Austin: I can't do it. Oh, M. Night, stay away from my podcast! [Jack laughs]

Sylvia: Get out of our company!

Austin: Out of our company! Go to the beach now! [Sylvia, Keith, and Jack laugh]

Jack: Oh god. So.

Austin: But everyone else is here, and there is another doorway in front of you, on both sides. Jonathan, where are you going to leave? How are we going to get you this thing out of here? Is it waiting for you at the end? Do you know this? Do you, like, set it up to pick you up at the end of this thing?

Dre: Oh, yeah, for sure, yes.

Austin: Okay. Yeah. But you're not on it. You've set it to, like, autopilot.

Dre: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I'm so curious about what you're going to have built here.

Dre: Me too.

Austin: I'm so curious.

Dre: I'm taking a lot of notes and doing a lot of Pinterest Board searching. [laughs]

Austin: Oh, I love it. Damn.

Jack: It’s going to be Icebreaker Prime again.

Austin: Oh. [laughter] All right.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Let’s stop here and come back next time with the rest of this little dungeon.

Jack: Yeah. Sort of shaking off the, like, dream fugue and steeling ourselves to progress.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Did the NPCs have a roll to see if they were going to be beckoned?

Austin: No, I just kind of thought through what they would want.

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Wasn't hard for Maebela. I mean Bela, the famed adventurer.

Austin: The hardest one for me was— right, Bela, Bela the Brave.

Art: Bela the Brave.

Austin: The hardest one for me really was Efta and Zolfta to think about. Because I can't tell if they like this.

Janine: Because they don't talk and…

Austin: Right, yeah, because they don't talk. They act.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You and I have both acted as them sometimes.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: But I actually don't have a complete understanding of their interiority, because sometimes when you're, like, half controlling a character, you don't want to, like, overstep bounds controlling them.

Janine: Mm-hmm. I think you got the— like, I had been thinking about if I'm asked to name stuff for them for what their bargain would be, [**Austin:** Yeah.] I think, yeah, it would have to be "and they can never work together, talk to each other, whatever again."

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: And then the particularities of that are kind of whatever. There's a lot of stuff that could be on the table there.

["The Castle Eschatonica" by Jack de Quidt plays]