

[Twilight Mirage 39: Staying Neutral](#)

Transcribed by @robotchangeling

DRE: Previously, on Twilight Mirage.

AUSTIN: You have been sent here by Cascara, to help reconnect a group of refugees with another group of refugees, the two sides of the disconnected Tides of Harmony. [*"The Twilight Mirage" by Jack de Quidt begins playing*] And the first step was to figure out where the hell that stitch was. And again, we're using the word "stitch" to talk about these weird anomalies, that are kind of like gates between different planets that exist on both planets at once and kind of allow you to fast travel between them. And you found it, which is great. Less great, is where you found it is a place that is under lockdown by someone else already. Advent Discovery and Salvage Society. They are kind of galactic grave diggers? [*chuckles*] Grave robbers? And you know that your job, your actual job is to then meet back up sometime soon with Graft 2, and eventually to lead him, another pathfinder, and a small family, a family of three, to that stitch and get them through. That's like your A objective. Your B objective is to like, get that thing in the hands of people you trust, get that whole stitch in the hands of someone you trust, so that you can actually use it to ferry people back and forth and reconnect the Tides of Harmony.

AUSTIN: You hear like the [*hover vehicle foley, increasing in intensity*] and he turns on the hoverspeed a little faster, and like rushes out to y'all, and does like a drift turn to stop in front of you. And like gets out and runs over to you and gives you a huge hug.

SYLVIA: Yeah, the second he's out of that car, Echo's running towards him too.

AUSTIN: He is wearing an OD green, like, M-65 army jacket, and around his left arm he has an armband that has VOS, V-O-S, and you know that that is the armband signifying the Volunteers of Seiche.

SYLVIA (as Echo): We're looking into the stitches between the different planets, and we found one out there.

AUSTIN: You can see that his second-in-command, like, her eyes quickly connect with his.

SYLVIA: Oh.

AUSTIN: Like she looks away from you really quick to look at his, and they make eye contact for a second.

SYLVIA: I'm not really sure what the relationship between VOS and Advent is.

AUSTIN: It's negative, as soon as you say their name you can hear the people in the room be like [*negative mumbling*].

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: The woman who is his second-in-command, she's like,

AUSTIN (as second-in-command): *[scoffs]* They're just as bad as Earth, as far as I'm concerned.

[song plays to the end]

AUSTIN (as Ballard): They'd really appreciate it if you went by the chapel, it's attached to the doc's house. But, no pressure, alright? I know that...the world, we make big asks to you all the time, and I don't want to assume. I know you have big important work to do here as an excerpt.

JANINE: I think Signet just says, like,

JANINE (as Signet): I'm here to work, but I'm not here on vacation. You know, I can certainly make time to visit.

AUSTIN (as Ballard): Cool. Well, thank you, again. And...

AUSTIN: He kind of makes like a fist pump. *[Austin and Janine laugh]* Not a pump but like a shake, you know what I mean? Like, we're in it together, you know.

AUSTIN (as Ballard): Anything you need just let us know.

AUSTIN: And he gives you a salute, a very military salute.

JANINE: Ah...

AUSTIN: And then leaves. So yeah, maybe we'll get a shot of Signet in that chapel, which is like definitely just attached to the town doctor's house, basically? And now we are in this weird middle moment, which is...we need to figure out how you're gonna do the thing you're here to do. The way that this works is, we kind of have, not downtime but we kind of have a moment for legwork and stuff now, but also, because of the flashback system, you can always go back and do legwork even in the middle of a mission. Someone's like, "ah, shit, I should have had this thing with me", you can always just do that? Sometimes at the cost of stress, sometimes not.

SYLVIA: I think the only limitation on that type of thing is like load, right? Like, you can't change your load.

AUSTIN: Yes. Your load, totally.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: But it can...there's things that are like, zero-load objects that you can—

SYLVIA: Mmhmm.

AUSTIN: —that you could end up with, right? So, the big thing here is, and I'm just gonna read this from the book really quick, 'cause it's useful. *[reading]* “Your crew spends time planning each job. They stand in the ship's galley and review flickering holo displays of terrain, look at stolen schematics, whisper plots and schemes while pointing to makeshift figurines placed on haphazardly sketched notes, bicker about the best approach, lament the dangers ahead, and lust after the cred they know is waiting at the end of the job. But you, the players, don't have to do the nitty gritty planning. The characters take care of that offscreen. All you have to do is choose what type of plan the characters have already made. There is no need to sweat all the little details and try to cover every eventuality ahead of time, because the engagement roll ultimately determines how much trouble you're in when the plan is put into motion. No plan is ever perfect. You can't account for everything. The system assumes that there's always some unknown factors and trouble, major or minor, in every operation. After all, why look at an operation if everything always goes smoothly? You just have to make the best of it. There are six different plans, each with a missing detail you need to provide—see the list below. To plan an operation, simply choose a plan and supply the detail. Then, the GM will cut to the action as the early moments of the operation unfold. Those six types are...” and I'll say the type and also the detail that you would need to fill in. You could try to assault this place, and the type of detail is the point of attack. There's deception, which is to lure, trick, or manipulate your way in. And that detail would be the method of deception. Infiltration, trespass unseen, and that detail is the method of deception. *[laughs]* Sorry, is the point of infiltration. Don't know what my eyes just did, there. Mystic, engage mystic, Way, or other sources of uncanny power, in our case divine power or using some sort of axiomatic thing, who knows. And the detail there is which arcane power you would be using. Social, which would be to negotiate, bargain, or persuade, and the detail you need there is your social connection. Transport, which is “carry cargo or people through danger”, and your detail there would be the route and means. The thing again to know here is that you have time here to do some research, like if people like, “oh, I want to know more about what stuff is”, we can totally do that now, but there will be a point at which the thing that we need to do is just say, okay, what is our plan, and how are we—what is the detail of that plan.

DRE: I mean, so it seems like...I mean, our plan has to somehow involve getting the Advent basically to either agree—

AUSTIN: Well...

DRE: —or to leave this place.

AUSTIN: So one of the things that's interesting...yeah, so that is definitely the case, right. Yeah, one hundred percent, it has to be get them out of there or else get them to agree to let people through. Which, those all have—there are all costs to all of those different things, you know what I mean? Just so you know, at the very bottom of your...*[quietly, to self]* it was at the bottom of your page, is it not at the bottom? No, it's kind of at the middle of your page, under your load? Is where the planning and styles are. Styles of plan, basically. So yeah, that is what you have to do. One thing that I'll say, is, and this is not *[laughs]* this is by no means my actual suggestion, but one of the things that Ballard is kind of communicating, or would have communicated to you, Echo, is like, if you need us to just roll in and fight these guys, we'll do that for you. But then we'll control it. And so, maybe one of the things that you should think about doing, is thinking about what that looks like, what's it look like if the Volunteers of Seiche have this versus you having it, versus somebody else having access to it. And so, let's take a break, and then we can investigate what your worries are, what your plans are, what things you want to know more about before you commit to one of these plans are.

AUSTIN: Okay. So, I think we get like, it's daybreak the next day. Again, there is...I'm trying to walk the line, here, because I want to make sure that you have time to gather information and do other little scenes that you want to do before we do the plan, but the focus of those scenes should be investigation or characterization and not planning. Does that make sense? I think that's maybe the nice way to think about separating out what to do with these sequences, so. So what do you all do, as you kind of figure out what to do next?

DRE: The only gathering information thing that I can think of doing...

AUSTIN: Mmhmm?

DRE: And again, this is probably like, borderlining into something that would be better as a flashback, so I'm kind of more like spitballing this with you than anything, but.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm!

DRE: I mean, we are in the same kind of system planet thing as Cascabel.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm!

DRE: So I could see Even like going to Cascabel to like, you know, get information, or like just a general sense of like, you know, what does it look like to approach this space elevator that's nearby or something.

AUSTIN: Hmm. Mmhmm!

DRE: But I can also see whereas you would want that to be—where that would fit better as like a flashback. Or something like that.

AUSTIN: Let's do the first part of that scene now, and it can be a thing that you did while you were...maybe Cascabel came out to meet you here, you know, like...Cascabel's like "ah, I'll take the day off, I'll come out to Seiche, I haven't been to Seiche in, you know, a couple of months" or something like that, you know? Where does he meet you?

DRE: Does Cascabel have like a relationship with the Volunteers at all? Because I mean I can imagine this dude who makes like, you know, equipment and weapon-related stuff—

AUSTIN: *[crosstalk]* He actually does have a relationship with them, and it's he doesn't want to meet you at Echo's brother's house.

DRE: Ah, okay! So it's that, okay.

AUSTIN: Oh, you know where he meets you? I know where he meets you. He meets you at a place we've already been to, which is that diner. *[Dre laughs]* Where you met him, where his old...he's like,

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): Ah, I'll meet you at the old workshop!

AUSTIN: And so there's a—for Signet, Grand and Even went to Cascabel's place back before the miracle, and at the time he worked out of the basement of a diner *[laughs]* that he was renting. *[crosstalk]* He had a little...

DRE: *[crosstalk]* Oh, god, I forgot about that, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, he had like a little workshop set up, separate from...like, presumably surrounded by, you know, pancake mix and rice and like bags of food, you know? Just various foodstuffs, basically. *[quietly]* Trying to remember if that diner had...the Olympic!

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It was the Olympic Diner. And I definitely think the Olympic Diner wound up near Seiche, in this new world with the Mandati. It's definitely like in that vibe. So like, it's outside of town, you're able to like take a bus there or something. *[laughs]* So, yeah, you can be there, anybody who wants to be in that sequence can be there, but let's just open with the roll so that we know what sort of information I can give you, and then we'll just have that conversation.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: How are you getting this information from him? Or is it...are you just like chatting? Basically?

DRE: Yeah, I think so. I mean, Cascabel is like marked as like, my friend on my sheet, so.

AUSTIN: Totally. Totally. For that reason I would say I'd take +1 dice with him, 'cause he's like...not just, you have a good status with him, he is your friend, like he has that. So that sounds like consort to me?

DRE: Yeah, that sounds right.

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AUSTIN: Which is like, oh, I'm hanging. I'm hanging with my friends.

DRE: What sort of position are we looking at here?

AUSTIN: It's non-positional, so it doesn't matter what you put there. 'Cause this is just a gather information roll. 5!

DRE: 5, alright.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's not bad. So when you gather information, on a 5 you get—oh, roll another die. Or wait, was that your die from knowing him?

DRE: Yeah, that was with the bonus, yeah.

AUSTIN: Gotcha, gotcha, gotcha. Okay.

DRE: 'Cause I have 0 in consort, so. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Cool, cool, cool. Alright, so I know—I know what you can get from him for 5. You just like catch him on the, like...he's already there when you show up, in a...he's taken his duster off, he has like a dark red, like a...kind of tight fitting button up shirt. He has put on some muscle since you last saw him. Or, I guess—yeah, last time you saw him was on Volition, right?

DRE: Yep.

AUSTIN: Signet, you saw him there too, obviously. And he's definitely like, he's like toned more than he was then. But not...not like MMA fighter toned. Like, 'goes to the gym' toned, *[laughs]* do you know what I mean? Like he isn't...

DRE: Sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: He doesn't look like he's been in a lot of fights lately, but he looks like he's like keeping himself fit. And he's sipping black coffee when you all come in. Who else is there, is this a whole crew thing or is this just Even?

DRE: I mean, everyone's welcome to come. *[Austin laughs]*

SYLVIA: I mean— *[sighs]* Yeah, why not. I'll be there.

AUSTIN: Signet?

JANINE: I don't really know if I see a reason why Signet would.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: So I don't know, this might be when she's at the...

AUSTIN: *[crosstalk]* At the church, like the next day?

JANINE: *[crosstalk]* At the church or whatever, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: I feel like there's like, because they didn't want to meet, like...

AUSTIN: Right. Right. I mean, well, the question—

SYLVIA: There's like a worry there, that like, I want to make sure that everyone's best interests are here, you know?

AUSTIN: Okay, gotcha. Cool. Yeah. So then yeah, you meet him at the diner, and I think it's like pleasantries, and you order food. What's everybody order from this diner?

DRE: Disco fries.

AUSTIN: *[amused]* Okay, good.

SYLVIA: *[quietly]* Jesus.

AUSTIN: Good afternoon disco fries. What about you, Echo?

SYLVIA: I think I just get like a milkshake and that's it.

AUSTIN: Nice, good. *[Dre laughs]*

SYLVIA: Strawberry.

AUSTIN: Strawberry milkshake, that's good. Cascabel has some sort of burger.

SYLVIA: Still wearing my eyepatch while drinking the strawberry milkshake, I want everyone to know that.

AUSTIN: Good. Good.

SYLVIA: *[crosstalk]* Not taking the eyepatch off.

DRE: *[crosstalk]* Yeah no, make sure the fanartists know how to do this.

SYLVIA: Yep! *[Austin and Dre laugh]* Always wearing the eyepatch.

AUSTIN: Good. The food arrives, you eat more, you've talked about the year of Cascabel's life. Cascabel runs one of the most successful like, *[amused]* startup tech companies in the system now. Is known as being like an expert gunsmith. His guns don't break when you fire them. But also, they only fire rounds that he makes, and he does not make many of those. He is very...you need to have a very—he has to trust you, for him to make those for you. And so they're very rare. And he has...when you first met him, he did not have much of a sense of, kind of, morality? He was a very like, "oh I can do this project!" and so he's gonna figure out how to do that project, and not very interested in what the sociological impact would be. Now, after what happened on Volition and after the miracle, he has become like a lot more...a lot more concerned with what the results of what he does, of what comes from what he creates, basically. *[laughs at chat]* He is not Jeff Bezos.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I was just saying, oh he cares now, so never mind. *[Dre laughs]*

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly, that's the big difference, totally, one hundred percent.

SYLVIA: Just when you described him as like, goes to the gym, but not in a lot of fights—

AUSTIN: *[crosstalk]* Yes, definitely. God.

SYLVIA: —I saw that weird picture of Jeff Bezos, where he looks like a gun runner.

AUSTIN: Oh my god, yeah. Cascabel's still young, right, like Cascabel's still younger than both of you—maybe about your—how old is Echo?

SYLVIA: Echo's like...early twenties, I think is what I described them as?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think Cascabel's probably late twenties at this point, so a little bit older than you. And so finally, that's, he finishes—you're coming towards the end of the meal, he's gotten his second refill on coffee, and is like...you explain the mission, you explain what you're here for, and he's like,

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): Whoo. Hmm. Advent's no joke. That big tower that they have, that elevator, it connects them up to their HQ, or their HQ here anyway, which means reinforcements, it means, you know, extraction, stuff going in and out is pretty quick once they get it there, which makes sense if...I wonder if they built it there because they knew the stitch was there and it's pretty close? It's not right on it, but it's close. Actually, it's probably killin' them. I bet you they built it first and they found the stitch nearby, and now they're like, I wonder if we can move the space elevator, but you can't, it's a space elevator. It would take so—they've already spent a fortune putting it where it is. I bet it's driving them crazy.

DRE (as Even): Well, if they know the stitch is there, why aren't they using it?

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): Well, they probably are using it. They're probably...they have a base on Brighton, so they're probably moving stuff between Brighton and here using the switch- the stitch. Using the nintendo switch. Big fans. Love that mario. *[Dre laughs]*

SYLVIA: They found this ancient technology. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Yeah. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): Yeah, they probably are using it. My bet would be that they are doing something with whatever they found on Brighton and mixing it with whatever they have here. I'm thinking, I'm thinking, I'm thinking. Their Brighton research center is all biological. There are fish on Brighton? Maybe they're doing some sort of fish robots? Maybe they're...I don't know, I don't know. It's tech here, it's biology there.

DRE (as Even): So we know we have to secure it here, but then we probably also have to secure it on Brighton's side as well.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): That's probably right, yeah. Though...I don't know, it could be...I don't know much about stitches. Maybe- maybe the version of it over there is hidden in some way where it doesn't have to be locked down in the same way? Or maybe it's...I'm not sure, I can't say for sure, so I won't say anything.

DRE (as Even): That's definitely more than we knew going in.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): So, you get this thing, you clear them out or you...what's the plan, do you convince them to let people through for a fee? Do you hand it over to somebody else?

DRE (as Even): I mean, that's the thing. I feel like in order to hold this thing, somebody has to hold it. But the second that somebody holds it, that somebody gets to dictate what it's used for.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): *[sighs slightly]* Yeah.

SYLVIA (as Echo): I mean...I think we have a pretty safe bet with who could take care of this, right?

DRE (as Even): Yeah, but what happens when, you know, somebody from the New Earth Hegemony needs to use that stitch to get, like, medical supplies through?

SYLVIA (as Echo): I mean...

DRE (as Even): Don't get me wrong, it's better than Advent who has it right now, but...

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cascabel's definitely like, not saying a thing, you know? Like holding back a bit.

SYLVIA: *[amused]* Even, do you want to address that, or do you want Echo to go full Echo and just be super blunt about it?

DRE: Ah, no, you go for it, yeah, no.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Do you have something to say there, buddy?

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): No, don't...*[hesitates]* just be real thoughtful about all your options.

AUSTIN: If you want him to say more, you—there are rolls you can make to do that.

SYLVIA: Yeah, for sure. I was just—the very awkward, and I wanted to go for that.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh huh!

SYLVIA: I don't really feel comfortable making a move to get him to talk more. Just putting that out there, Dre, so you know where my head's at.

DRE: Sure.

SYLVIA: If you want to, go ahead, I just would like Echo's...whole situation

DRE: Oh, yeah, you're in a weird place.

SYLVIA: Yeah. It's like, both like...Echo's too close for this, and then as a player I'm looking at my character sheet and like, oy [*tense inhale*]

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like the one you have is command, which is not—

SYLVIA: [*crosstalk*] Not what I want to do here.

AUSTIN: —a thing you do to someone you're being friendly with, yeah.

DRE: Right. I guess the only thing that I would ask here would be, like...is there somebody that we're not thinking of, that could hold this thing, besides like, you know the two kind of things we have on the table now between Advent and the Volunteers. Like is there some other group that we don't know about.

AUSTIN: Yeah. He says,

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): I mean, there's as many options as there are people, to some degree, right? Like, you could get in touch with Apogee.

AUSTIN: Which is, you know, out of character now, is like the military arm of the Divine Free States at this point. And they could lock it down totally for them, but again that would run into the problem of like what happens if the Hegemony needs it, if that's a thing you care about. So that's one.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): Two, I mean, the Mandati could maybe come out and hold it? But, you know, they are mostly in Big Garage, and Big Garage is far. Like, Big Garage is, you know, if you don't have the sort of vehicles that I have? If they wanted to move a whole group in to lock the place down, it's a day's travel. And so, you know, you'd have to hold onto it for a little while, and I don't know if that's really great. I mean, there's Graph. Graph's family is not a military family, they are farmers. And, you know, I don't know that they could hold it indefinitely from a military threat, but I bet the Volunteers of Seiche would not try to take it from...

DRE (as Even): Wait. How big is this family?

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): They have seven ranches.

DRE (as Even): Alright, that's a big family.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): They've done well. They were here before I knew any of you. *[laughs]* They were on Quire, I mean. They're an old Quire family, and so they pulled the right strings and made the right cases that they should get to keep a lot of the land that they had before Seiche landed, and so they hold a bunch of different ranches around here. And, you know, if it was their territory? Then I can imagine that the Volunteers would actually be in a position to where they'd wanna protect it from other people? For now, at least.

AUSTIN: And he kind of looks at you and then looks away, Echo.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): Other than that, you know.

DRE (as Even): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): I don't really have the power to lock a place like that down, and I don't think that the Volunteers would ignore me for a long time.

DRE: I was really thinking you two would get along better.

SYLVIA: *[laughs]* Wait, who do you mean?

DRE: *[laughs]* Echo and Cascabel.

SYLVIA: Cascabel? Yeah, well, you know. Family makes things complicated.

DRE: I mean, it does, but like, I don't know. I thought like, you know, I'd go get a refill and you guys would be talking about swords and stuff.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): Swords are cool. I like swords.

SYLVIA: *[crosstalk]* Down to talk about swords.

DRE: See? *[Austin laughs]*

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): I can make a sword that like, breaks—it's like a razor blade sword, you like...

AUSTIN: And then he like...I realized, me, Austin just realized he was gonna describe the Attack on Titan swords. *[Dre laughs]* And then I think, Cascabel goes like,

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): Oh no, no, no, it's trite. Someone else has done it already. *[Sylvia snickers]* Swords are cool, though. I'm gonna figure out how to make a cool sword one of these days.

SYLVIA (as Echo): I mean, give me a call when you do.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): It's a deal.

AUSTIN: And he lifts the coffee up and like, cheers-es your strawberry milkshake.

SYLVIA: Hell yeah he does. *[Dre laughs]*

AUSTIN: Cool.

SYLVIA: No, I'm open to the Graph family, Graph clan, I don't know what to call them.

AUSTIN: Family's right.

SYLVIA: Graph family, yeah. I'm open to them being like the main group here, with like getting support *[AUSTIN: Right]* from other groups that want to use the stitch.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

SYLVIA: Like, if you help protect this, you get some more access to it, *[AUSTIN: Right]* like that's how we get the VOS in here, and that's how we get like...but without them having complete control over it.

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AUSTIN: Mmhmm. Cool. Let's do this church scene. I want to know what it is, and I actually think that we can get some information there too, so Signet, *[amused]* what's it like when an excerpt comes to your town chapel?

JANINE: A lot of the fanfare that Signet sometimes has around her is not fanfare that she herself is particularly involved in placing.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: I think like, she is perfectly content to be the excerpt who just walks in.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Like, I don't know that she would even call ahead or anything, specifically because in situations where she calls ahead, people sometimes get weird, and like, it's I think a less desirable situation to her than just showing up and interacting with people.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: Like she doesn't want anyone to set up, or to think they need to set up a special like chair or like, get a special crowd, or fuckin', she doesn't want that stuff.

AUSTIN: Right, right, right.

JANINE: If it would be...like, with some people I don't think that would be a thing, [AUSTIN: Mmhmm] but with some people it would, so. I think it is just very much like she walks in the front door, [AUSTIN: Okay] which is probably like the house more than anything, and then you have to like walk through maybe like some sort of shared room to the actual [AUSTIN: Yeah] worship space because of how it's set up.

AUSTIN: Cool. So, there is a person giving basically, leading a sermon, and then like silent meditation basically, who...I think that Ballard probably sent word ahead without you doing it? Not to like expect—not to do anything when you arrive, but what you do notice immediately is that the sermon is very much about taking care of people in a very Signet-like manner, the responsibility we all have not to leave each other behind, things like that, and so it definitely feels like...it feels sort of like you are in a room and people are talking about you without calling you by name. But then the kind of meditation- the leaded meditation ends, and then, you know, there's a couple prayers and recitation of those, and then we get like the post-church mingle, and then people start to come up and talk to you. And...I guess like part of my question here is...I think you do well by this. I'm not gonna make you roll to like be a good excerpt, you've done this bit a lot. But I am curious if you use the opportunity to get the low down on anything here or find out more about the world or about what's happening here. Or if you're just kind of like in excerpt mode, or in like your old excerpt mode, your kind of like living relic mode, versus your 'I'm going out and doing things' mode *[laughs]* you know.

JANINE: Mmhmm. I think in this particular case there's a lot of overlap.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

JANINE: Because—specifically because like, I think one of the things that Signet is overly concerned with knowing in this place is the thing that she is usually concerned with knowing, which is like, are there people who are like wanting for things? But specifically in this case, like...

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: And you know with the divine situation wanting means something different, like no one's starving, really, but.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I think her concern is with the Advent in particular—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: But also, you know, people in general, but specifically I think she's trying to find out if people know or have heard anything about...their leader, or...

AUSTIN: Yeah, anything.

JANINE: You know, if there's some sort of like hole there.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm. I like that a lot. And I think that that's a doctor roll also, because it's—doctor is a weird skill. Obviously doctoring is about stitching people up literally, but it is also about—and you can tell me, maybe this is consort instead, like maybe the thing you're doing is more about chatting, but the doctor says, “doctor someone who's been injured; handle and identify substances through science; comfort, support, or and elicit sympathy”, and to me that sounds like the thing that you're focusing on is this empathy thing, it's like figuring out how can you support people, what is missing, thinking about care. Whereas consort is “gain access to resources information and places; consort with connections from your heritage, background, friends, or rivals”. And so that feels more just like, oh we're talking, you know?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What happened with Cascabel was consort, so.

JANINE: Also, given the kind of quote unquote “doctor” that Signet is, like—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: I think that's probably gonna be a distinction we have to make often, is like when a thing is consort and when it is doctor, because—

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

JANINE: —she's usually not like, taking out a needle and thread and sewing up a wound—

AUSTIN: Right, right right right.

JANINE: —like that's not really the kind of care she gives.

AUSTIN: Yep, yep. I would say, I will give you a potency bonus from having the kind of combination of your garb, your holy garb, and also whatever we're translating fine bedside manner to.

JANINE: I think fine bedside manner is still, eeh.

AUSTIN: Still...

JANINE: Just like, you're good at talking to people about—

AUSTIN: *[crosstalk]* About this or, yeah.

JANINE: —when they're not great or whatever, like. *[laughs slightly]*

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. So then—so increase the effect of this to great, basically. It's not—you can put risky but it's not risky, this is just a gather information roll, basically.

JANINE: What's the position?

AUSTIN: It doesn't matter. There is no position to it 'cause it's just a gather information roll, it's not a—

JANINE: Oh.

AUSTIN: There's no risk here. It's a fortune roll, which is, when you need to make a determination about a situation that the outcome is uncertain, but there is no risk basically, it's a fortune roll. So your effect is going to go up here based on what you roll.

JANINE: So, great?

AUSTIN: Yep.

JANINE: *[after rolling]* What the fuck, like I...

AUSTIN: You have really bad luck right now.

JANINE: I have not had one good roll. I've had no good rolls whatsoever tonight.

AUSTIN: No good rolls.

SYLVIA: Welcome to this system.

JANINE: It's fucking great.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, here's the thing that actually happens that you still get something from. The thing that's missing is...there should be a bigger church here to some degree. There isn't, because there's a big military base here. The people who come here, what they tell you is that the Volunteers of Seiche have kind of—or like what you gather from this conversation is, the Volunteers of Seiche have kind of decentered the divines from the Divine Free States, and have focused on...and I don't even mean that as like, in the way you and I have talked about how Signet has done that. Signet has also thought about like, hey what does a post-divine world look like? They have filled that gap. Instead of filling it with compassion, they have filled it with this like, by defining themselves negatively against the New Earth Hegemony. And so resources that would traditionally be going to kind of community centers and to the needs of smaller families and those who did not inherit seven ranches *[laughs]*, are instead going into military buildup, into trade, into preparation for what they feel like is an inevitable conflict. There's a lot of—and maybe you even catch this in some of the sermon, there's a lot of like...there's a lot of...finality in the sermon. There's a lot of like, “the reason we need compassion is because the end times are coming” type shit. The Miracle almost didn't happen here, in that all...you hear them say “the miracle” with a little bit of skepticism, because to them the old world was better. We used to be on a spaceship. We used to have more—or we used to have Quire. If you were from Quire, it was yours. It was your place. There were no people from Earth, there were no people from Gumption's Gambit, there was no divine anything. And if you were in space, you were in space! And so in a weird way, they're joined with their like, “things used to be better”, and they all think that like, something bad is coming. The reason I'm giving you this, by the way, is because the potency raises your effect, and that means that instead of getting a 1 to 3 poor-limited effect, you got a 4 to 5 limited-partial effect. Which is why you still get like something here. So yeah, that is the gist of it. You did not get more information about like, what's happening with the stitch or anything, but you do know that like—you get this very specific picture of this place, and like, it is...it is not a very warm town. So, any other investigation stuff, or do we want to start talking about what this plan is?

SYLVIA: I don't have any more investigation stuff, so.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: No, I don't either. It might be plan time.

AUSTIN: Alright. So you have six plans. Six potential plans. Assault, deception, infiltration, mystic, social, transport.

SYLVIA: Alright, so...what might be handy for us here is to like, pick stuff we know for sure we don't want to do.

AUSTIN: That's a good call.

JANINE: Yeah.

SYLVIA: So I don't think transport is gonna work here, of the top of my head.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that transport...

SYLVIA: That seems very like specific.

AUSTIN: Yeah, or like, it could work, but like the end result of it working would be that you get the people through but not necessarily that you get...

SYLVIA: Control.

AUSTIN: The control of it, right.

SYLVIA: I don't know about you guys, but I'm not entirely comfortable social-ing this, through the social connection idea. That seems...risky, in a way that I'm not cool with.

JANINE: It's all gonna be risky. *[Austin and Dre laugh]*

SYLVIA: But like—

JANINE: The thing I'll say—I have a thing we could do if we wanted to consider social connection, so it's...

SYLVIA: Okay, I mean, we could like do...

JANINE: There's a degree of possibility.

AUSTIN: We should talk about whatever that is.

SYLVIA: Yeah, let's talk about...

AUSTIN: What is the thing that you have there?

JANINE: I mean, I have the special ability "welcome anywhere".

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JANINE: Where, while I'm wearing my medic garb, I am welcome even in dangerous places. Gain +1d to consort and sway [AUSTIN: Right] when offering tending to anyone who is in need or has family slash friends in need.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: You should have rolled another die on that last roll.

JANINE: Well, I didn't, so.

AUSTIN: It's fine.

JANINE: Yeah.

SYLVIA: I like that idea, actually, as a foot in the door.

AUSTIN: Right, and then if things go sideways from there, they go sideways from there, but like you're in.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm just gonna read a little bit briefly from the way engagement works so that you know—I don't want this to be a thing where it's like, you get in over your heads in terms of like—or not get in over your heads, 'cause that would be fine, you can fail an engagement roll and still be fine. But the thing that I want to be clear is like, how the dice work, basically. So, *[reading]* "Once the player chooses a plan and provides the detail, the GM cuts to the action, describing the scene as the crew engages their first obstacle. How is this established? The way the GM describes the starting situation seriously impacts how simple or not the operation turns out to be. Rather than expecting the GM simply to," quote, "'get it right each time', we use a dice roll instead. This is the engagement roll. The engagement roll is a fortune roll starting with one dice for sheer luck. Then modify the dice pool for major advantages or disadvantages that apply. Is this operation particularly bold or daring? If so, take plus one die. Is it overly complex or contingent on too many factors? Take minus one die. Does it expose a weakness? Take plus one. Is, in fact, the target strong against it? Take minus one." All of this is on page 150 of the book, by the way. "Can any of your friends or contacts provide aid or insight? Take plus one. Are any enemies or rivals specifically interfering?" And by that I think that they really mean like, enemies or rivals, not just there are bad guys there. *[laughs]* "Take minus one. Are there any other elements you want to consider? Maybe a lower tier target gives you plus one, maybe a

higher tier target gives you minus one, stuff like that.” So, we would build basically a dice pool before we roll your engagement. So yeah. The social plan is interesting. Any other thoughts?

SYLVIA: Nothing’s really jumping out at me.

DRE: Right, yeah. The only other thing I can see would be like, assault or infiltration.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

SYLVIA: Assault is just something I don’t really want to do, from a character standpoint less than a mechanic one.

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVIA: ‘Cause I don’t see Echo immediately being like, yeah I just saw my brother for the first time in over a year, let’s get his people in danger immediately.

DRE: Right, yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

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DRE: I think social works. I mean, especially with Signet’s—her reputation and her precedent to get, you know, herself and other people into a room.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm. Cool. Oh, I should note before we begin this, Seiche has a special bonus. All the places in this game have bonuses that you put together. Seiche, if you need to acquire an asset before going—acquire asset is a move you can do that lets you like get something temporary for like this mission, basically. In this game, when you acquire an asset, in that sort of temporary sense, you can roll—normally you roll crew quality to do that, and it’s kind of like, I have enough money on hand to get this thing. Here, you can also use consort, ‘cause it’s about like who you know, strings you can pull, and just like general...it’s more about credit, it’s more about a sort of like, do people trust that you will do good by them on this thing. And so, if you did want to acquire anything before you went, or if you want to acquire something in a flashback, that’s a thing you can do. The way that works is, you roll one of those things, and then you can get a contractor, like an expert or a gang. They will show up with a reasonable gear equivalent to their tier, a ground vehicle or a legal ship module, a special item or a set of common items for the whole crew, or a service, like transport or use of a warehouse or legal representation or something like that. That’s kind of how you do that, oh I need this thing for this plan I have, but I can’t because I don’t have it. I don’t think that that’s the situation we’re in, but, you know. If that was a thing you needed, we could do that. Again, if it comes up in a flashback, this is how we do it, so. So you’re doing the social plan, it sounds like?

SYLVIA: Mmhmm.

AUSTIN: And the missing detail, again with social, is the social connection, and the thing that we're using is Signet's kind of uniform, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The notion of like, you're welcome anywhere because people know that you're kind of a...not just like a- not a big deal...

JANINE: You go out of your way to like be helpful, even.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. Is there like a special version of your outfit that you wear or is it just your robes? Like is there an effect that you put on them, or like a color change or something like that that's kind of the equivalent of like, a white flag or a cross on a helmet or something?

JANINE: So, I've kind of been like...I guess I've kind of been imagining the opposite thing, like for the purposes of what we're doing, where like there's a piece that she puts on that makes her less recognizable.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: And I was thinking of that as being like a sort of helmet with a sort of face guard, that when put on makes her hair black.

AUSTIN: Oh, interesting.

JANINE: Specifically.

AUSTIN: Is the face guard like a thing that other people—like I know that there is that faction, the Synod—*[testing pronunciation]* Sin-od? Sigh-nod?—that is like a group of literal traveling doctors who are based off of Thyrsus. Is that a similar thing? Is that a...

JANINE: Do they have face masks?

AUSTIN: That's what I'm asking, yeah.

JANINE: Oh.

AUSTIN: I'm asking like, is that the thing that you have?

JANINE: No, I meant that like that was the thing that she wears so it's not immediately obvious that—I was thinking of that as like a—not a disguise, 'cause we kind of I think got away from that idea, of people having to be disguised, [AUSTIN: Mmhmm] but like a thing that she wears when she doesn't want people to immediately know stuff.

AUSTIN: Right, but my question is how does that—because the thing that you have, the thing that your thing says, is like, “common red medic outfit bearing the official white medic seal of the hegemony, recognizable from a distance”. That's not what yours is, obviously. So I'm curious, what is the equivalent in Twilight Mirage, that anybody in the entire system would see and recognize and be like, okay, that person is not someone I fight right now. It's like an—it's a blank space that I want to fill in, basically.

JANINE: Yeah. Uhh...god, I don't know, because we've established that they all dress really differently...so...

AUSTIN: Right, that's what I'm saying, like is there an aura that you can turn on, is there like a sound or something that you can set to happen, like be as extra as you want here, again, like that's the thing, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or like again, it doesn't have to be just an excerpt thing, it can be...you know, maybe it's something to do with the...you know, some other sort of like, a thing that people agreed upon in a truce was like, people that have things that do this thing or that wear this thing are, you know, in a—not political immunity, but like a similar sort of...again, it's like having a white flag, or waving a flag to parley, or something like that. That is like, one of the things—

JANINE: *[into her hands]* Oh, I just got the fucking stupidest idea. *[Sylvia laughs]*

AUSTIN: Okay, good, always good.

DRE: Hell yeah.

JANINE: What's that stuff called when you have lights that go under your car?

AUSTIN: I think it's just under lighting, is that what it's called?

JANINE: I thought it had a slightly more specific name than that.

AUSTIN: *[googling]* Underglow?

JANINE: Is that it?

AUSTIN: Wikipedia says underglow or ground effects, ground effects lighting.

JANINE: None of those sound right, but I guess I'm basing that purely on like what car games would call it. *[Austin and Dre laugh]*

AUSTIN: Fair.

JANINE: I think *[laughs]* I think the thing it is, is it's like fuckin' light effects on a car but on a person.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: So it's just like, you don't know where the lights are? It's not like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: It's not like christmas lights or whatever, it's just like, oh the ground beneath you is just a color now. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* What color is it?

JANINE: I think maybe like a...like a nice goldish color.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool.

JANINE: Like a, you know, a sort of warm end of yellow, like a rich yellow color.

AUSTIN: Okay. So, I think that this is a fair—so start with one die, then you get another one from me saying that I think this is a pretty daring plan. I think walking up and being like, hey, we're gonna talk this through, *[laughs]* is fairly daring, all said. Let me see what else. I don't think it details a vulnerability...no, I think it just, they're not especially vulnerable to it, but they're also not especially strong against defense, they're not like machines who don't care about norms or something like that, but they're also not—like if this was the Brighton lineage, this would super work against them, because they would be like *[Brighton voice]* "oh, we have to listen to any polite request, of course". I don't think any friends or contacts can provide additional aid or insight for this...I think that's it, I think it's two dice. As always, one, I will offer you a devil's bargain, which is I will increase the heat again to give you another die if you'd like, or you can push yourself to take two stress and add another die. Two dice right now.

JANINE: *[resigned]* I'm gonna push myself. I've had really—I don't want to fuck this up.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm!

JANINE: I want to just have one thing work. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Alright, so put—give me two—or, advance your stress by two and do three dice.

JANINE: Why is this called notes, that's so confusing. Okay.

AUSTIN: That's, yeah.

JANINE: Or wait, no, number of dice is different. So what the fuck is notes? *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Oh that's just like, that's what we're rolling for then probably.

JANINE: Okay. *[pause to roll]* Fuckin', like seriously!

AUSTIN: Okay, bad rolls again. *[laughs]* Janine has had the worst luck today, it is really bad.

JANINE: Uugh.

AUSTIN: I'm glad you wrote engagement in underglow kit potency. Okay. So, let's talk through what happens, and also I'm gonna move you to a new page really quick. Here is this place. So, you get led to the—so you walk through the scrapyards, through the crashyards, and eventually you find your way back to this place. You've avoided all the amprunners, you've avoided the drones, you get up to this overlook looking down to the guard station, you're like, alright, time to turn on the underglow. You turn on the underglow. And, you walk up by yourself or with the rest of the crew?

JANINE: I'd like to walk up with the crew, it depends on what they do. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: *[crosstalk]* Okay, so everybody walks up...yeah, yeah yeah. So everybody walks up. The group that you're with is you. It is Even and Echo, obviously. It is Graph-2, who is a robot, who has on a cowboy hat and a vest, has like glowy synthetic biceps and muscles, talks with a little bit of a southern accent. Also with him is another pathfinder named Evangel, who is not from Seiche, is not from Gift-3 at all, is actually just wound up here by chance, was on Seiche when it crash landed, basically? Or was on Gumption's Gambit, I forget which one he was on. On one of the two, and has been working with the Graph family to kind of get this opportunity for a long time. And then you also have a small family that is with you. They are the—there's a mom, there's a daughter, and there is a robot. It is Fountain, Fountain Facade, who is like a late thirties mom, with like her hair in a bun, tan skin, like works in the fields. You know, probably works at one of the Graph farms, is my guess. Her daughter who is named Melange. And then they have a synthetic named June 3, they just call her Junie. Or, maybe it's actually Juniper? It might be Juniper 3, but they just call her June, Junie. Who is a synthetic, who is part of the family, who is like...they found her here *[laughs]* she is not, she was not like 'theirs' on Seiche, they found her in the scrapyard here and she joined the family and is like, you know, helps raise

the kid and helps work in the fields and is just like, another person in the family. But the rest of their family is on the other side of this stitch. So that is the crew you are with. And I think the guy at the gate, the guard station, sees your color and is like,

AUSTIN (as guard): *[sighs]* What's your name?

JANINE (as Signet): They marked scars of light in pitch; born in fiercest purpose and beheld as the signet sealed upon our pact,

AUSTIN (as guard): Uh. *[buzzer foley]* Boss, we got a...weird one. Showin' gold.

AUSTIN: And he's like,

AUSTIN (as guard): Alright, you wait right there.

AUSTIN: And this woman in a long black, or long brown duster, like trench coat, kind of comes out, who has on this like, heavy black mask that covers her whole head, and like shiny black armor. Actually, it's probably gray, now that I think about it. It's like gray with strips of black and white. That is like, very...it's very shell-like, it almost feels like it's made out of like tortoiseshell or something like that. Huge pauldrons, that like are placed over the top of the duster, that then like loop down and connect under her arms. She has on a gas mask, like her mask is not just like hard plastic, it also has this kind of gas mask thing, and every few sentences you hear her go like *[mechanical air release sound]*, and it almost like releases. You never hear her breathe in through it, it just like, as she speaks, every once in a while it has to vent, and so you hear it venting. And she says,

AUSTIN (as masked woman): *[gruff voice]* Only the gold one comes through. *[gas mask air release sound]*

AUSTIN: And they show you in, Signet, and lead you to the logistics and comms building, which is kind of right in front of you. What you see as you approach is a fenced off place, this huge silo in the middle that you can't see in. It's like a four story tall silo. A building that, Even, you're pretty sure is a barracks, because you know what a barracks looks like. You can pretty immediately be like, okay, the doors are here, I can see it's like built for bunks, stuff like that. There's a garage that you know is a garage 'cause it has big garage doors in it, and you can see people working on drones inside, like literally fixing them up and stuff like that. And then in the far distance, like in the back right corner, there is a research station, which has like a big satellite dish on it, pointed up towards the tech main, the space elevator. And they lead you into- they begin to lead you, alone, into the logistics and comms station, which is like right away, right inside of the front door. There's a kind of squat, modular building. It's almost like a really big trailer, you know what I mean? Like you can totally see that they just dropped this whole pre-fab building here, that has like some antennas and stuff on it, and is kind of the HQ of this little compound. But they don't bring anybody else in with you. The guard is like,

AUSTIN (as guard): Hey! Only she's showin' gold. Everyone else can wait out here.

AUSTIN: And so, you are in a desperate position, and that is how we begin. I think the family—I think at this point we see Melange kind of pull on her mother's sleeve a little bit. Melange is young, she's a teenager, but is like keeping to the back of this group. And both Fountain, her mother, and Junie are kind of shielding her. And then in front of them are Evangel and Graph-2, and then in front of them are Echo and Even. On the outside, before we get into what goes on inside—I mean, first of all, do you walk in with them, Signet?

JANINE: I think so, honestly, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. So on the outside, do y'all just chill?

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SYLVIA: Eh...probably not.

DRE: I was gonna say for now, but what do you want to do? *[Dre and Austin laugh]*

SYLVIA: I mean like, we can look like we're chilling but we should be trying to figure something out, is what I'm saying.

DRE: Okay, fair.

SYLVIA: Like we should be trying to think of a way to get in there somehow.

DRE: I kind of want to...I mean, what happens if I like, not even try to walk off, but am not like, you know...is there a guard still with us I assume?

AUSTIN: Yeah, so I think that Cat's Cradle, who is the person in the gas mask, assigns a guard to you, like that's part of why it's a desperate position, is like, she's like,

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Alright. Goldy, you come with me.

AUSTIN: And then she's like, you know,

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Jenkins, stay on them.

AUSTIN: And so Jenkins is with you.

DRE: Is Jenkins also wearing like a gas mask *[crosstalk, indistinct]*?

AUSTIN: *[crosstalk]* No, Jenkins is not. Jenkins has on like a pair of khakis with a brown belt and a blue dress shirt- *[amused]* like a blue polo shirt. *[Sylvia snorts]* But then has like a baton basically, that is...it looks like it's made out of concrete, like the sort of concrete that goes into like a...you know those barriers that pop up out of the ground, or that like separate to make it so cars can't drive through? Like that sort of smoothed concrete?

DRE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: It's like that. It's like an extendable baton that's made out of that sort of weird concrete material. And then you can see he also has a pistol that's holstered, and you know from the world that that's a thing he could shoot once and then it doesn't work anymore.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: And he doesn't seem to have any sort of additional stuff to—he doesn't have like another secret gun, as far as you can tell. This is- he is definitely like, a make—he is not like a top of the line guard. *[Austin and Dre laugh]* He is definitely more like security guard than military person.

DRE: Gotcha.

AUSTIN: And you can see there are other military-type people in this facility, but they're not at the guard—like they are busy being inside and keeping like, whatever the silo—you see two people at the silo, you see people in the barracks, you see people like guarding the research station. But the front gate in the middle of this crashyard, like there's not—no one's really worried, this is the first time anybody's even come close to coming through, you know? So.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: So yeah. So you're being watched. And he has a communication device, he could tell them if you do something, you know.

DRE: Okay. I'm gonna try and chum it up with this guy.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah? Okay.

DRE: Yeah. So I think I kinda give him like a look and I say,

DRE (as Even): Aw. What'd you lose?

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): What did I lose, what did I lose? What...

DRE (as Even): Ah, no man, listen. I served for a long time, and I know that if you are doing babysitting duty, you lost at something to somebody. So what'd you lose?

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): Oh, ha ha, ha, I get you. Like, okay, like I messed up a thing. No, I'm good, I—

DRE (as Even): No, not that you messed up, but like, you know, game of cards, like you pulled the short straw...

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): *[stutters for a moment]* Poker's not my game. *[nervous laugh]*

DRE (as Even): Ah, me neither, I feel you. I'm Even, by the way.

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): *[nervous]* Jenkins. You stay over there, okay? Like I'm...

AUSTIN: He points at you with the stick- or with the baton. *[laughing]* With a stick, he picks up a stick, he points a stick at you. *[Dre laughs]* No, he points at you with this baton.

DRE (as Even): Whoa! Okay, hey.

SYLVIA: Draws a line in the ground and says, hey don't go past this. *[Dre laughs]*

AUSTIN: I mean, yeah, exactly, he's like...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: He has to bend over to do that, too, like he does not keep his eyes on you necessarily, but like, does draw the line, and he says,

DRE (as Even): Okay!

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): I just, you know? It's a job, I gotta...

DRE (as Even): No no no, I get it! Hey, I've been there. Look, there's kids back here, man. I'm not gonna try and start a—

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): Why'd you bring kids out here?

DRE (as Even): Because we're tr- we thought we would get to talk.

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): Well, she's talkin', let her talk, it's gonna be fine. You guys just hang out here, do you need, uh—I can call in and get you some lemonade, but then that's it, I can't...

AUSTIN: And then gives you a look, like turns his head a little bit and like raises his eyebrows as if to say, that's the most I can ever give anybody, is lemonade. *[Dre laughs]*

DRE (as Even): It's a good offer, I mean...yeah, I'll take some. Echo, do you want some? This is my buddy Echo, by the way.

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): Hi Echo.

AUSTIN: Like, takes the baton from his right hand, puts it in his left hand, and then waves with his right hand, and then puts the baton back in his right hand. *[Austin, Sylvia, and Dre laugh]*

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): I'm gonna need, uh...one, two, three...

AUSTIN: He's like pointing the baton at each of you as he counts. *[laughs]*
[quiet laughter]

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): *[counting quietly]* One, two, three, four...four lemonades.

AUSTIN: And then you hear like, *[drone whirring foley]* brrrr, and one of those like little *[laughs slightly]* frisbee drones comes out of the barracks with lemonades balanced on its rings. And then we get like, we get a shot of Evangel and Graph looking at each other, and like, okay, sure. And then we cut to inside of the logistics and comms room. And the first thing that you see, Signet, the first thing you notice, is that it's really cold in here, and that the floor is actually made out of the same concrete that the baton was made out of, and once you step in you hear like *[gas mask air release sound]*, and the woman who came out to get you, Cat's Cradle, removes her mask now that she's inside here and puts it down on a table, and she has like...I'm picturing her as like, very mom from Texas. White lady with like light brown hair that's up in a bun or something, or not up in a bun because it wouldn't fit in the helmet, but like, maybe just cut really short. And, you know, very plain, very like...no makeup on or anything like that. Very strong face, very strong facial features, very like- very wide facial features. And she leads you into...it feels like an interrogation room...it feels like half of an interrogation room, it's like a small room, where there's a long card- not even a card table, there's like a long table that's just pushed up against the side of a wall—it's like a very long hallway has been converted into a room. Do you know what I mean? There's just the table against the wall with three chairs, you know, one on each end and one in the middle, facing the wall. And she has you sit down, and then she like knocks twice on what is clearly, you know, a double sided mirror, or a screen or something, and then someone comes in with two cups of tea, and then she like, she unstraps—she has like a larger rifle, and now that you can see her close, she also does have—or it's a longarm of some kind, and she also has things that she could quickly, like two of these extra...it's, again, it's like the whole top of the gun that could strap onto the gun to replace it and then fire it again, like with a bullet already in there. And she has two of those and she puts this gun down, it's like a short-barrelled, almost like a sawed-off shotgun or something of that length, and puts that on the

table, and she also has one of these concrete batons and she pulls that off and puts it on the table. And she sits down across from you, and she says,

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): *[sighs]* They marked...*[grumbles]* what do I call you for short?

JANINE (as Signet): Signet.

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Signet. This is a big plan you have, Signet. You walk right through the front door.

JANINE: I think Signet sort of, right after giving her name, like pulls her sash out and lays it on the table as well. *[Austin laughs]* But lays it kind of as if it was like a runner along the end, so like it's smooth instead of folded and [AUSTIN: Mmhmm] the ends sort of hang down and almost hit the floor.

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Fancy.

JANINE (as Signet): Well, it's a weapon, so.

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Ah.

JANINE (as Signet): It seems fair that if you lay yours out I should lay mine out as well.

AUSTIN: She nods.

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): What's it you want?

JANINE (as Signet): I...as I'm sure you know, my role, and the role of people like me, is to help. And from what I've seen, being here, there are several factions that need help. And if all of those factions don't get the help they need, you stand to lose a lot more than I do, and I would rather leave this place in a way where no one loses anything and everyone gains something.

AUSTIN: This sounds like a roll to me. I'm trying to decide if it's time yet for that, though. No, I don't think it's risk yet, I think this is still kind of setting up the stakes and standards, so that's fine. She says,

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Not sure I believe in any exchange where there's only winners. Always a winner, always a loser. Sometimes someone neutral. Don't plan on being neutral.

AUSTIN: She taps the glass that's like a mirror—she actually, she doesn't. She puts her thumb on it, or she puts her like whole hand on it, and then like holds it there for a second, and then

like taps her left finger twice, and it like shimmers and goes black. And when she pulls her hand away it's almost sticky, like you can see her hand—like not sticky, but like sticky the way play-doh or something is sticky, do you know what I mean? Like it's not a touchscreen, it's like made of some other material that is actually changing what it is, and so now you can see like, it is opaque. And she leans forward, and she says,

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Frankly, you're lucky it's me. If it was just these people here, they would've seen you and killed you on sight. But I'm not with Advent, I'm a freelancer they hired. If you give me details, and a little something extra, I'll run it up the chain and see what we can get, but I will not let them know it's you. You have my word.

AUSTIN: And her offer here is, like, bribe her, give her whatever request you want, and she will see if she can get it approved. That is a big ask. *[laughs slightly]* The reason she's hiding your identity is because Advent does not like you very much. But, you know, one of the things that I said is that they are not in charge of this facility. She is running this facility for them because she's an expert in these things, which was a plus for y'all. *[laughs]* So that is the offer she is making you as-is. You can agree to that offer, at which point I think I would take money from you, I would take, I think it's like a cred, and then make some sort of social or sway roll or something to see if we can step this forward, or it would be...or you can, you know, make some other demand, I don't know, it's up to you.

JANINE: I think...well. *[sighs]* This is weird, because a thing I always do is—a thing I do probably too much is define Signet against Adaire. So it's difficult for me to see Signet as a character who says, here's a gold coin in exchange for your cooperation. I don't think that means she wouldn't do it, but I think that means that she would...*[sighs]* I think it means she would like try and offer like, what can I do for this person.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JANINE: Like, as another person who does this kind of shit, you know, like, [AUSTIN: Yep, yep] do you want...one of those things where it's like, what is worth more to you, the gold coin or a possible resolution to maybe some problem, or, you know.

AUSTIN: Sure. Yeah, you can bring that up. So is that basically what you ask her?

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: And can you—what do you tell her, what is the ask? Is the ask that they vacate this place, or that they can keep using this but then so can everybody else? Is it that it gets turned over to somebody else's hands? Like what is the proper ask.

JANINE: I think the like, ideal sort of situation from Signet's point of view would be that maybe Advent still holds this place, because it is still like super useful to them and getting them to give

that up seems very unlikely if we're just doing this whole like let's talk it out approach. But I think having them hold it but also have sort of balanced forces representing the other concerns in the area also present, like having some people from the Volunteers, like having a couple of them have a spot on the base or whatever, [AUSTIN: Mmhmm] and a couple of farmers have a spot on the base so that there is sort of a semi-democratic [AUSTIN: Mmhmm] locking down of the area.

AUSTIN: Right.

[TIMESTAMP: 1:08:52]

AUSTIN: Okay, well, she kind of like grins at that. She says,

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Bit of a problem, there.

AUSTIN: *[still in the voice]* That's the wrong accent. Now she's Irish. It's not right. *[quiet laughter]*

AUSTIN: I stopped talking as her and now I've lost her.

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Bit of a problem. You ask me what I want instead of money. It's a foothold in Seiche for me and mine. Not the Advent, Particulars.

AUSTIN: And she like taps the baton, which is made of this weird concrete. And like when she does it, actually, there is something—you can feel it. Like there's this like bwoaaaa feeling in your head from being near this weird concrete. You like can't feel Belgard for a minute. Like normally, no matter what, you can feel Belgard, even, you know, there's a huge distance between you. But, when she does that, there's this sense...and then you realize like, oh the floor is made of this too, and you feel like there's a brief moment of claustrophobia, because you feel disconnected. And so the thing she wants you to do, if she's going to go be your advocate with them, is to be her advocate with Seiche, and let this group that is like, *[laughs slightly]* they're similar in some ways, which is they are a citizen militia, but they are Earth, they are earthlings, get a foothold in Seiche, and that is what she wants. And maybe she is showing her hand a little bit too much, which is like, oh is that why she took this job. Is this whole job a cover to be the Concrete Town Particulars' first like foothold on a Divine Free State world.

JANINE: Mmm.

AUSTIN: So that is what her counter-request is.

JANINE (as Signet): Well, this plan does offer exactly that, doesn't it. Or it offers a...

JANINE: I don't want to say plan, actually, I want to take that back.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* This plan I've built to get what I want.

JANINE: *[laughs]* Mmm. "This outcome" is maybe a better way to go about it.

JANINE (as Signet): This outcome does offer room for exactly that in a way that...would be less obtrusive than maybe some alternatives. If, you know, if the particulars were among the groups that had representation here at this particular site, that's a foothold.

AUSTIN: She can't stop from grinning.

JANINE: That's creepy.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Alright. You set up the parley, and I will be your advocate.

AUSTIN: And then she says,

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Map, crashyards.

AUSTIN: And turns the weird black play-doh screen *[laughs slightly]* into a tactile—like, it actually bubbles up the weird like clay stuff, so that the screen ends up having a—I think it goes inwards, it's almost like, you know the 3D effect on a 3DS, where it can't come out of the screen but it can go in. It does that but physically, so that it becomes a topographical map of the scrapyards. And finds a place that is like equidistant between Seiche and here, and she says,

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Two days time. Meet me there. I'll have word from Advent. And bring the boy Ballad.

JANINE (as Signet): *[doubtful]* Why?

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): We'll negotiate. You can't agree for him.

JANINE (as Signet): That's a fair point.

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Is that all? No more pressing concerns?

AUSTIN: There is the notion of the family that's here now.

JANINE: Is there—like what, I don't understand what...

AUSTIN: Like, could they pass through now? Is maybe a thing that Signet might want.

JANINE: Oh.

AUSTIN: Right? Like.

JANINE: I didn't know that that was what they were here for specifically.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. They are like the first family to—for whatever reason, which we didn't get into, they have earned the right to be the first group to get passed through.

JANINE: I think that's a thing worth asking, then.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think that would probably be a roll of some kind, right? Like, alright, we've agreed on this parley.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Then, second, can we agree on like, let me get a little more, is definitely *[laughs slightly]*.

JANINE: Yeah

AUSTIN: How do you go about that?

JANINE: Do you mean which like thing, or like what do I do?

AUSTIN: Yeah, but both, both.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like what's the case you make and also—or, do you make a case, do you, you know, yeah, both of those things.

JANINE: I think the case to be made would be that, you know, we brought this family that really, you know, they're split, right? Like they want to be reconnected and that lack of—that sort of distance and the obstacles in their way is very emblematic of a lot of the [AUSTIN: Mmm] stress in the area, and it would be a very good show of faith on their part to let this family through.

AUSTIN: Okay. I think this is controlled standard basically. And that sounds like—I mean, sorry, it sounds like consort, and if it's consort it's controlled standard.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I don't think you're like swaying, you're not charming—uh, it's little bit of logic, I can see it being logic. Charm, logic, deception, disguise, or bluffing. But I think it's just like, you're gaining access to a place via just like a conversation—

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —and I think that's consort [CON-sort]. Consort [con-SORT].

JANINE: Do I get plus one because this is consort or sway being done in sort of a...*[sighs]* again the definition of tending is weird, [AUSTIN: Mmhmm] 'cause Signet doesn't like, [AUSTIN: Yep] give people cough medicine, she just like takes care of emotional welfare, and like...

AUSTIN: Yeah, this is—

JANINE: This is in service of that family's welfare.

AUSTIN: This is tending to someone who is in need, yeah, a hundred percent.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So yeah, a plus one to consort. So that's what, a two?

JANINE: Is it just bonus dice?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's a bonus die, yeah.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: +1d, yeah. So yeah, this is controlled.

JANINE: *[crosstalk]* Please just work. *[Austin laughs]*

JANINE: *[outraged at roll]* What? Like really though.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Janine just rolled two ones, I've never...this is like Marielda finale bad. The thing to remember is like, you have a fifty fifty chance on every die to get a success, and *[crosstalk]* you have not got one.

JANINE: *[crosstalk]* Haven't gotten a single one.

AUSTIN: No.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Not one. Not one! So, I mean, the thing that she says is like—and this is controlled, this isn't like—this is, you failed, which means that this opportunity is blocked.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The opportunity is like, she says like,

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Signet. Your words have gotten you far, but they will not give you something today. If you want them to come through, you pay.

AUSTIN: And she re-ups the offer, like give me a buck, give me a credit, and I'll let this family through. *[crosstalk]* You could now—

JANINE: *[crosstalk]* How much—do I have money, like...

AUSTIN: The ship does, the crew does, the crew has money. I think the crew has two credits in its vault. Or two credits total.

JANINE: God, that's like no fucking credits.

AUSTIN: Mm mmm. Don't worry, the other side of this game is gonna make money.

JANINE: That's how it worked last time too and it sucked! *[laughs slightly]* *[Sylvia laughs]*

AUSTIN: Well now you're one group, so it all goes in the same vault, you know.

JANINE: Fucking mountain party making six million dollars *[Austin laughs]* and the rest of us are eating fucking dirt and bark *[laughing]* in the damn woods.

AUSTIN: You know, you—

SYLVIA: I'm just saying, I'm a prince and I live like one, okay?

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* You could try sway or command here, like the thing that happens when you lose an opportunity, it means like, *[crosstalk]* okay you can try to make that roll again.

JANINE: *[crosstalk]* *[laughing]* I'm not going to make that roll again, there's no chance in hell, I don't have points in either of those and I have not been having a good night for rolls. No.

AUSTIN: Fair. Fair.

JANINE: I also just don't feel cool about using half of everyone's credits for this, [AUSTIN: Okay] so I think I'm just gonna thank her for the consideration and...

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Alright, alright.

AUSTIN: So then you leave. She sees you out, you see her reattach the mask, put the mask back on, and head back out with you, her weapons resheathed, basically.

[TIMESTAMP: 1:18:21]

AUSTIN: Back to the front. At this point we just jump back to Jenkins drinking lemonade, and like he is now giving you serious detail about this poker game.

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): Like I don't get it! I had a pair of eights. And I'd been counting the cards, there's no way someone else was gonna have a better hand than a pair of eights, you know? But, you know, he had a straight, so. *[sighs]* Now I'm babysitting.

DRE (as Even): How high was the straight?

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): I don't—mmm, it was...eight nine ten eleven...twelve...

DRE (as Even): I think you need to bring the deck next time.

AUSTIN (as Jenkins): That's a good idea. Oh!

AUSTIN: And like, jumps up into, you know, standing straight up position, salutes, salutes with the baton still in his hand, to Cat's Cradle. And she, you can see her shaking her head behind her like gas mask. And she just goes like,

AUSTIN (as Cat's Cradle): Pleasure. *[gas mask air release sound]*

AUSTIN: And the gate opens and lets Signet out. Signet's back, everybody.

DRE (as Even): Did you get lemonade? *[Austin laughs loudly]*

JANINE (as Signet): I got tea. *[Austin laughs]*

DRE (as Even): That sounds alright.

JANINE (as Signet): The room was cold.

DRE (as Even): Oh.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Hmm.

JANINE (as Signet): Lemonade would have been bad.

AUSTIN: And the girl kind of like peeks up behind her parents and says,

AUSTIN (as Melange): So are we going in now?

JANINE (as Signet): Uhh. I brought it up. We do need to have some more discussion with others to make sure that everyone's on the same page before we can proceed any further.

AUSTIN: She like nods and then steps back behind her parents and like, you can see her...

JANINE: Why didn't I take actual candies and treats.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Oh, dilemmas.

JANINE: Here's a peppermint. Don't be mad. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Don't be mad at me for not reconnecting you with your family. *[Dre laughs]* And she like rests her head on her mom's like, shoulder basically. From like behind, you know what I mean, from like the back basically. And her mom just like reaches back and grabs her hand. And I don't want to like do the walk through the crashlands, I want to do like...but I do want y'all to talk through everything—like, what the plan is. So maybe we are, maybe we're just like walking back through, like from the crashlands back across the plains, basically, or back in like a vehicle of some sort, like a little mini bus that everyone is in.

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): So let me get this straight.

AUSTIN: Says Graph-2.

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): The plan now is, two days to do a meet and greet between two different inter-galactic militias. And also a group of treasure hunters.

JANINE (as Signet): Yes.

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): *[sighs]* And those two militias, they are...

AUSTIN: And he does like the two, he does like a fingers crossed, as if like they're close together, but then like splits them apart really far. He's also doing this while driving this minivan *[laughs slightly]*. I'm picturing it like a sixties like volkswagen bus, basically, that hovers? And like he splits them into two, and he goes like,

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): Not exactly the best of friends.

JANINE (as Signet): No.

AUSTIN: Driving, driving, driving.

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): *[sighs]* Is there another plan? *[Janine laughs quietly]* We're just gonna trust that they're gonna work it out?

JANINE: *[laughing]* Do you have another plan, like. *[sighs]*

AUSTIN: I mean—

JANINE: I mean, honestly the thing that Signet says here is probably like,

JANINE (as Signet): A lot of communities continue to exist because they have learned to form some unlikely relationships, and if this community can form some unlikely relationships- *[laughs]* relationships...if this community can form some unlikely relationships, they will benefit.

AUSTIN: Evangel, who is, for people who have the postcards, is the bartender from the running postcards, is kind of like slouched over and is like,

AUSTIN (as Evangel): I assumed there would be a fight, and then, you know, a rallying cry, and then we would walk through some sort of strange tunnel, and then I would see my sister again. And instead we have a meeting in two days.

SYLVIA (as Echo): You're gonna see your sister again. Just, trust me, okay?

AUSTIN: He nods. *[Sylvia sighs]*

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): So, uh, how do you plan to convince the Volunteers of Seiche that this is a good idea?

JANINE: Oh, are you asking me? *[laughs quietly]*

SYLVIA: I mean...

AUSTIN: He's like asking the whole back of the van.

JANINE: Okay, okay.

DRE: Ahh.

JANINE (as Signet): I mean, I don't want to speak for anyone, but like, we've got an in there. I...

SYLVIA (as Echo): I mean, I guess, yeah. I just, I don't know.

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): Just 'cause you've got an in with the henhouse doesn't mean the fox is gonna play nice.

DRE: There's that folksy wisdom I was waiting on. *[Austin laughs]*

JANINE (as Signet): Who's the fox in this?

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): The particulars. Or the other way, if you have an in with the particulars, it's the Volunteers.

JANINE (as Signet): Okay...

DRE (as Even): I mean, I think at this point, it's kind of a "enemy of my enemy is my friend".

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): What's the third enemy?

JANINE: The fox. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): Wait, I'm losing it now. *[laughter]* How many...okay, so there's three groups there now. There's Volunteers of Seiche, anti-Earth, not big fans. There's the Concrete Town Particulars, a New Earth Hegemony citizens' militia *[laughs slightly]* dedicated to figuring out how all the weird shit in this system works and how to stop it or control it. There's Advent, who are a group of...treasure hunters and grave robbers, who I don't like very much at all. And there is the regular folks of this planet, who wanna be able to go visit the beaches and reconnect with their family and not have to wait for the seasonal interplanetary transport to come just to get a little sunshine in their lives. That's four.

AUSTIN: He says like,

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): Of course, there's more too, there's the Divine Free States military themselves, I'm sure they will not be happy if they find out that two different citizen militias on opposing sides decide to team up. There's the New Earth Hegemony military.

AUSTIN: He now has no hands on the wheel at this point, 'cause he has six up—six. He's like driving with his legs.

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): That's six. There is the Organized...there's OCOMM.

AUSTIN: Is what he actually says. He wouldn't say the whole name. There's OCOMM, which is the group of...it's like the communications unit union, basically, the organized telecom workers of Quire, which is also on Gift-3.

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): There's OCOMM, and you know, *[laughs slightly]* if there's gonna be a facility installed and they don't have a say in it, even they might want a cut of the action. There's...

AUSTIN: And he's just like...he's reaching now. He's thinking if there's anybody else.

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): I'm sure there's somebody. There's me! There's me! There's me! *[laughs]* I was supposed to have control of this place! *[sighs]* You really think we'll be able to work all this out. You put people together in a room, and you say *["The Twilight Mirage" by Jack de Quidt begins]* there's this resource that's good for everybody, if only y'all could work it out.

JANINE (as Signet): I want to believe that in a situation where the two choices are mutual benefit or mutual suffering, that people will pick benefit. And I know it's not always that simple, but in a situation where...in a situation where the benefit is so plain, and the suffering so much plainer, I do hope people will choose correctly.

AUSTIN (as Graph-2): Well, we will see. We will see. I just don't wanna become fried chicken. That doesn't make sense. Fox don't fry chicken.

[song plays out to the end]