Twilight Mirage 06: We Want You To Come Home

Transcribed by: Iris (@sacredwhim)

[00:00]

[MUSIC - "The Twilight Mirage" by Jack de Quidt begins]

> AUSTIN (as PRIMARY): Dispatch 92.
>
> You asked me a question last week, Satellite. You asked what it meant to be part of something larger than yourself. Let me ask you a question back. What does it mean when the thing you're a part of is so distant from everything else?
>
> Their culture... it's a fleet, right? It's always been a fleet. Not a commonwealth, not an empire, not a principality, or a demarchy, or a coalition of free states. The Divine Fleet. The Resonant Orbit. For thirty thousand years they defined themselves through their devotion to beautiful, ceaseless flight. Their little utopia has always been built on the premise that the hundreds of millions who lived in it could continue with unbroken momentum to find their own pristine paths through the stars.
>
> There is real irony here, Satellite. It's easy to live a peaceful life away from others. Just ask any monk in a mountain, or any woman alone in a floating box, like me. But the Fleet doesn't do that. It soars through the sky even as it is whittled down. And when you're always moving, when you make momentum not only your goal, but your very notion of the good... collisions are inevitable.

[MUSIC - "The Twilight Mirage" by Jack de Quidt ends]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker. Joining me today, Ali Acampora.

ALI: Hi! My name is Alicia Acampora, you can find me @ali_west on Twitter, or you can follow the show over @Friends_Table.

AUSTIN: You can also follow us on Patreon at Patreon.com/... Friends at the Table?

ALI: Friends_Table.

AUSTIN: Friends_Table. Okay.

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: We just set that up today. That sounds ridiculous if you're hearing this in the future, but just trust us, we just set it up today. Also joining us, Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: Hi, I'm Janine Hawkins. I'm @bleatingheart on Twitter.

AUSTIN: And Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi, I'm Jack de Quidt. You can find me on Twitter @notquitereal, or buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com. And also, on the Patreon, see some music that no one else will see?

AUSTIN: That's true, we're gonna—

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: One of the Patreon levels is that you can listen to some demos of the music that you hear on the show. And I think—

JACK: Yeah, it's a tier called like, "Jack appears to be able to play the clarinet, but he actually can't!"

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN: We're actually sharing that—

JACK: It's just computer magic!

AUSTIN: We're sharing that tier, Jack, because it's also GM notes and some other like, behind the scenes rough sketches.

JACK: Oh, really? So it's both of us revealing that we—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Revealing that when I look at this thing right now, there's, you know, there's a thing here that I've written down, for instance, that says just "hyper-saturated". I don't—Okay.

[ALI laughs]

JACK: Oh yeah, sure, just… that's how I feel.

AUSTIN: I don't know. I don't know when I'm gonna say that. I literally don't. There's a note here that just says "Tone and color: hyper-saturated". There's no reference to when I mean to do that. Maybe I'll stumble onto it and be like "Ah, this is the part that's hyper-saturated".

JACK: Thank you so much for supporting us with your money.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN: Thank you.

Today we are continuing our game of The Veil by Fraser Simons, and our agenda is as always to make the world feel real, to make it high-tech and make it personal, to make the protagonists' lives interesting and interconnected, and to play to find out what happens.

So, one of those things is to make the protagonists' lives interconnected and, I don't know, like, observant listeners may have noted that while the first episode of the Planetside Game—the game that takes place on the planet of Quire—started with all the player characters like huddled around each other in the dirt and muck, the first game that took place in space on the city-ship of Seance did not. It kind of left you all completely separate. And so today I want to start with a scene that is the three of you together, and I think the place I want it to be is—like, I think it's probably been a month since that last game, right? That you all played. A month since Gumption died. And I want to see you together for the first time since that happened at The Steady? Which is the bar where—the lounge, Ali?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Where Tender Sky has her jam. Which is—can you talk a little bit about what your jam is? And also where is The Steady? What ship is it on?

[5:23]

ALI: It's—it's like a Mesh environment, so I guess it's—

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: —attached to the Empyrean, but like, I—I guess we haven't discussed about how interconnected the Mesh is? Like...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: I don't know that like someone from another ship would be able to log in?

AUSTIN: No, I don't think so. I think like, the thing that we've talked about a lot has been like, there's a good separation between these ships. The only reason that there's any overlap is because of the Twilight Mirage, but that it's like, again, you have to go to a phone booth to make a call to a different ship. Right?

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: And that's like a big deal, it's—it takes resources, you know? So—

ALI: Yeah, I like the idea, because we've also been talking about, like, kind of a physicality to connect into the Mesh?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: I like the idea of there being like, places where you go to connect, but like, on that ship everything is connected.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: So you don't have to go to like The Steady to go to the Mesh environment, but if you go to like—

AUSTIN: I see.

ALI: [laughing] Mesh zone, and there's like five of them—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right, I guess that's a—that's a question, right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Are there, like, in the city are there like a couple of—are there places where you can go where it's just like, wherever you're going to connect to you can go that central place and then that'll route you to the right Mesh zone? Like, we only saw the lobby for the colosseum that we were in before. The colosseum of… the name that I wrote down earlier. Um… Contr—no, no, god, what was it?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: It was… [audible typing] This is gonna kill me 'cause I forgot it.

JACK: It’s just in the chat, right? It’s, um…

AUSTIN: Oh, Composure. Composure was the name of the Divine that had built that colosseum in the first game. The first session. So like, they had their own lobby, but you’re saying there are a bunch of lobbies—

ALI: [overlapping] Yeah, it’s kind of like—right, like, sort of like internet cafés?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: But if you were connecting to like—I don’t know, if you like went to an internet café to actually go to the mall.

AUSTIN: Right. And also that café was just like, a waiting room.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And you just sat down until suddenly you appeared somewhere else.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I love it. So, tell me about The Steady and what it looks like and kind of restate what your job is.

ALI: Yeah, so my job is actually that I sort of like develop it.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: And then like host the place for like that one night or for like a week or whatever, because the appearance of it changes every time.

AUSTIN: Mm.

ALI: I—we discussed a little bit because like, the stuff that she does on the missions is kind of like I have to roll for that because she… she’s doing it on the fly whereas this she like—

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: —gets to connect to a server and it’s steady and like a bunch of people can come in and it’s fine. And like, this is kind of regulated.

AUSTIN: Yeah, this is just like, you're kind of—in general, the book is very clear that like I should defer to a character who, or to a player who has a playbook about the way a thing works. Like about the kind of rules of that world, and also to like let you do the thing when it's not a high-intensity situation where failure isn't interesting.

ALI: Right?

AUSTIN: And I think that's just generally a good rule for tabletop roleplaying games, GMs out there. Related, there's a new advice level. If you—

[ALI and JACK laugh]

AUSTIN: At a certain stretch goal, there'll be an advice podcast.

ALI: [overlapping, laughing] We can't do this—We like—

AUSTIN: Sorry, sorry, sorry. But—

ALI: [laughing] We decided all this stuff like a week ago, that's why we're gonna keep doing this, but we also can't do this.

AUSTIN: I know, but.

JACK: A podcast about capitalism.

[ALI and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: But what I'll say is—listen. Make rent, make art, help others do the same. Shoutout to Scott Benson. But the thing that it does say is like, you know. Don't—or the thing that I'll say is don't make people roll for things when the failure side of it isn't really interesting. And kicking off a game with making you roll to see if you can do your job isn't that interesting.

[ALI and JACK laugh]

AUSTIN: There might be a time when I think that that's the case, right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And we'll get to that down the road, maybe. But right now—so just tell me what it's like right now. What's The Steady look like in this occasion?

ALI: So I think that it’s like, you know those like—okay, so it’s like on a hill.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: But you know how sometimes there’s like, when you see pictures of people’s backyards or like restaurants or stuff—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: —but it’s like a slate of concrete on a patch of grass?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And it’s on kind of like, not like a cliff, but like on a hill overlooking the ocean. And it’s night-time, and there are separated tables, with like, there’s a candle on each table, and white furniture.

AUSTIN: Okay. Like patio furniture?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or like heavier than that…?

ALI: Um—

AUSTIN: I’m asking, I don’t know.

ALI: [laughs] Well, I think it’s like more of a futuristic setting, but if they made patio furniture in like two thousand years?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Okay. Sure.

ALI: So like, it’s that same kind of aesthetic and like that same sort of comfort level—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: —but like, probably harder edges. And like—

AUSTIN: How many people are like in this place at this point?

ALI: Um... I think it’s fairly intimate, so probably like maybe thirty people can be there at once and maybe there’s like ten right now.

[10:16]

AUSTIN: Okay. Are there multiple shards a la like an MMO?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Or is thirty the max? Also can I turn off other users?

[ALI and JACK laugh]

ALI: Um, you… You can.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Because like, if you went to a bar you would wanna be able to turn off another user. I don't know what you mean by shards. [laughing] I haven't played a lot of MMOs.

AUSTIN: So this existence of The Steady has thirty. Is there also—what happens if I'm the thirty-first person that wants to go there? I walk into my internet café, and I sit down on their like, their little couch or whatever, I sit down in their chair, and then like I fade off into Mesh sleep—

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: —and then I wake up and then I just see a sign that says "Sorry, bud." Like, "We're maxxed out, you gotta go down the hill."

ALI: Oh, no, there has to be like—like, a personal channel and a private channel?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: So like, in one version of this there's like someone having their bachelorette party, and there's like twenty of her best friends there.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: [laughs] But then like, on another version of this it's just like people hanging out.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: ‘Cause they went to the public channel and just were like, “Oh, well, on me tonight.” And then it’s like, another one.

AUSTIN: But, so my question is—if there are thirty people in this public channel, is there a second public channel with another thirty people in it?

ALI: Probably?

AUSTIN: Or is there just the one? This is just like one of those things I’m curious about in terms of like… In real life, one of the reasons that clubs get to be exclusive is there’s only enough room for X amount of people and they have to decide who gets in and who doesn’t. And I’m curious if that plays out here, or if it’s more open.

ALI: I don’t think it’s that vibe. I think the vibe that I kind of set up with this is that it’s elusive in the way that like… I think that it’s—I wanted it to be a little like a speakeasy in that like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: The like, server number maybe changes every week ‘cause it’s like different, so you have to like know a person who already knows it, and like that kind of thing?

AUSTIN. Right. Oh, what if there—

ALI: [overlapping] But I think—

AUSTIN: What if you could only get there through—sorry, I don’t mean to—you can go ahead. You finish and then I’ll have my idea. My idea can wait.

ALI: [laughs] I forget what my idea was, but I think it’s just that like, as many people as they want go in, right? But like…

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: The thing is like knowing someone who knows how to get there.

AUSTIN: Totally. So the thing I was gonna suggest is what if there are only certain cafés, like, Mesh lobbies, that can actually connect to The Steady?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: So you can’t just go to any—Maybe there’s like, you know, this is a big ship, this is a city-ship with—I have a note, I have it somewhere written down, but

like I think a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand people, something like that. There might be a dozen or two dozen internet cafés, right? But what if only three every week have access to The Steady? And it's about knowing which one.

ALI: [overlapping] Oh, and then they would like rotate. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, they would rotate. Exactly.

ALI: That would be very cool. I think she'd be up for that. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. Which is like ironic given that the name of it is The Steady, but, you know. Good.

ALI: [laughing] Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's always there if you are.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: So, what are the rest of you—what's, what are your—also is there any entertainment, is there music?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or is it just like a—Okay. Is someone singing?

ALI: Probably? You can probably set the radio, but I think like the vibe is probably set by her.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: So it's probably like, kind of like—

AUSTIN: Do you book it?

ALI: [laughing] Um… Is she like making the bar and someone else is running like a mixer playlist?

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a good idea.

ALI: And she has to like hire them every week.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. I think that's a good idea.

ALI: I like that because then it would be way more authentic, right?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ‘Cause then like, you have to hand it off to that other person who is the one who like handles what entertainment looks like that night. Okay, what’s that person’s name? I’m just gonna write this down.

ALI: Oh, um… Yeah, that’s on you. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay. Um… That person’s name is… I have all this—I have these names, I have these names written down. No, that’s too good. I don’t—it’s not wasting, but like…

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: No, Janine, it’s not Beff Mirstman.

[AUSTIN and ALI laugh]

AUSTIN: Beff is kind of okay. I kind of like Beff. No, I don’t. I don’t want Beff.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I walked my way out of it. All the way. That was a bad—

JACK: That took like under a second.

AUSTIN: It was bad!

ALI: He just wanted to say it out loud and see how it felt.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I thought it would sound more like Biff and it wasn’t.

ALI: No.

AUSTIN: Like a good Biff?

JACK: Biff?

AUSTIN: I thought it would be a good Biff.

JACK: Good Biff.

JANINE: There's no such thing.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Well, there is now and he runs the Mixlr.

[ALI sighs]

AUSTIN: His name is, um… Good… Biff… I want a double B, I want a double B… Um… Burstman. No, it's not Burstman.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: His name is Good Biff Briar. His name is Biff Briar.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like a briar patch.

JACK: And he's sort of a DJ.

AUSTIN: He's like a—

JANINE: A halfling.

AUSTIN: [laughing] He's not a halfling, no.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

[15:02]

AUSTIN: I have to add this to new characters introduced. Which is my new sheet that makes sure that I get to remember which characters got introduced. "Good"—I'm putting "Good" in quotes—Biff Briar.

ALI: He's actually good, she wouldn't have hired him if he's not good.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: The quotes are to throw people off.

AUSTIN: I put “Good” and then in parentheses and quotation marks “Good” Biff Briar.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: I wrote down The Steady’s Mixlr. Good. Okay.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: So I think the vibe tonight is pretty laid-back. I think in general their business has been good this month, after the death of one of the last Divines. It’s been a very—it’s been a long time in pure human years since the last Divine died probably, but like, that still just means like a decade or two. Do you know—So it’s like, I think for a lot of people this is the second or third that they remember dying. And they always just like “I hope this is the last one, I don’t know what to do.” The rest of you, what’s it—paint me a picture of what you’re doing. Are you at the same table? Are you taking a break right now, Tender?

ALI: Yeah, I mean, I think one of the benefits of having a digital café that you run is that you can kind of like mingle with people? ‘Cause it’s like being a moderator in a chatroom? So you—yeah.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: So like, I don’t know. She’s probably like talking to people.

AUSTIN: Signet and Fourteen, paint me a picture of what you’re up to.

JACK: I’m playing some sort of gambling game with two people.

AUSTIN: Signet, how do you feel about gambling? Are you gambling with Fourteen?

JANINE: I’m definitely not gambling with Fourteen, but I also probably don’t care that much.

AUSTIN: Okay. Also, what are you all wearing? I need to know.

ALI: So, Tender is wearing like a—it’s like a velour long-sleeved bodysuit, but there’s no legs, so it’s as if it was like a long-sleeved bathing suit made out of velour fabric, I guess? And I think that she’s wearing that with like thigh-high stockings that are like teal, but aren’t fully opaque. And like white heels. And she also has a cape on, but it has one of those like built-in collars that kind of—that’s

like stiff, and has pieces that come out and sit on her shoulders so it just falls behind her and not like over her shoulder as well.

And there's kind of like a light embroidery, or like a little bejewelling on the collar itself. And the lining of the cape is kind of like a—it's like a pastel color that kind of transitions slowly, so it starts as kind of like a yellow and then goes to like a pink, and then to like a purple, then to like a green. And it just kind of filters through, really slowly. And I think that her hair is like pulled back. Again, she has like lilac, really thick curly hair, and I think that's like pulled back into a big, single round bun that's kind of high on the back of her head and is wrapped up in a ribbon with a bejewelled clip that kind of sits there.

AUSTIN: Okay. Signet, what about you? What do you wear to a place like this? Because normally you're in like super fancy mode.

JANINE: Yeah, this is definitely not the place that Signet—that I would wear the full regalia and stuff, even if full regalia is like street-appropriate in Signet's case.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: For a place like this, probably much more subdued clothing. Especially because we're coming out of a period of mourning and I feel like Signet would be in her regalia a lot more often trying to make her presence visible, but that gets to be kind of exhausting.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: So, those—even though she's not one for casual wear, is probably a little more eager than usual to like, not have a huge crown thing on and stuff like that.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: So Signet's probably in—her hair's probably up to, like, she's got all her blonde hair really tightly wrapped, like, not just in a clip but like, French twist, lots of little pins in there, like, very well-kept. And she's probably wearing like a dark blue coat, but she's wearing it kind of like a cape in that style from her home ship.

AUSTIN: Yep.

JANINE: And then I think probably like a very very simple, very plain dress in a similar very dark blue color. Maybe with like some cream accents or gold accents. Some tights, like very… [laughing] This is casual wear for her.

[20:00]

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. Sure.

JANINE: It’s still very, very groomed…

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: ...and very proper, but this to her is like, slummin’ around at your not-quite-friend’s bar kind of outfit.

AUSTIN: Jeez, not-quite-friend. Okay Fourteen, what do you look like, and then also we’ll talk about beliefs really quick.

JACK: I am wearing a white shirt, a very crisp white shirt, with a fancy collar and dark trousers. It’s like absurdly simple to the point where I think Fourteen is dressing like they think a bounty hunter should look in a bar. They’re wearing sunglasses but they’ve pushed them up onto their head, so they can see the game, they have like a ring with a jewel in it on one hand, they have… I think they probably still have a holster but don’t have a gun in it.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Probably because it’s not clear whether or not guns aren’t allowed—are guns allowed in here?

ALI: I—You can’t use them.

JACK: Oh, okay, yeah. Yeah. Then, it’s a holster without a gun in.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Fourteen has sort of decided that like a cowboy should leave it outs—you know.

AUSTIN: Leave it in the lobby, yeah.

[ALI laughs]

ALI: Yeah, like cowboys do, they leave their gun and their horse.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

JACK: Quick, let me go get it! Runs outside…

AUSTIN: No saloon shoot-outs for me.

JACK: Don’t worry, I just need to get my gun.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Alright, let’s talk beliefs—

JACK: [overlapping] And I—

AUSTIN: Sorry.

JACK: No, I think that like, the gambling game is not going great.

AUSTIN: Okay. Good.

JACK: And Fourteen is sitting back from the table with their elbows on their knees kind of looking really nervously at what’s going on, on the table. Beliefs, I have a new belief.

AUSTIN: You do.

JACK: It’s about dying.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: My belief is: “I am not afraid of death, but others are. I will never manipulate someone with a deadly but empty threat.” And I think the important stuff here is “deadly” and “threat”. Fourteen is not a pacifist, by far.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And is also not above threats, but won’t use someone’s fear of death to try and get them to do something. That is to say, if Fourteen says “do this or I’m gonna kill you”, I have to mean it.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: It’s not something that I can throw around lightly.

AUSTIN: Mhm. That’s exciting. What are your other two? Beliefs?

JACK: My other two are: “I don’t know why, but Tender is important. Always keep her in my sights.” [whispering] That’s because I was supposed to kill her.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And “Always shine a light into shadowed corners”, which is the belief that I got from curiosity and The Sky Reflected in Mirrors. Which is the same reason that I’m currently wearing sunglasses, because it’s a bit bright, even here in the club.

AUSTIN: Even here in the club at night.

JACK: Even here in the club at night. Look, it took us a long time to get electricity working in the district where I grew up.

AUSTIN: Fair, fair. Signet, beliefs?

JANINE: My beliefs are—my new one, I tweaked my...

AUSTIN: Oh, did you?

JANINE: My Tender-related one, yeah. Because it wasn’t super actionable for me the way it was before.

AUSTIN: Oh, right, right, right.

JANINE: So, now it’s—before it was something about like, her path to redemption needs to be like a pursuit, and like that’s not a thing I can act on or that can really be… So, now it’s “Tender should use her divine gift only in service of the Fleet and the Orbit. I will not entertain its abuse.”

AUSTIN: I like that. A lot. That seems a lot more actionable.

JANINE: [overlapping] Seems a lot more actionable. And challengeable. My other two beliefs are “There’s no excuse to leave someone in a situation that will inevitably lead to their death”, and “Improvisation leads to oblivion. Routines, rituals, processes, and practices exist and endure for good reason.”

AUSTIN: I’m excited about that one, too. Alright, Tender.

ALI: My beliefs are “Never take a shortcut”, which I got from Anticipation; “Fourteen feels like they owe me something; I’ll take whatever they’re offering”—that was switched up from last week, ‘cause I—

AUSTIN: That’s also better, yeah.

ALI: It’s way better, it’s way better. My final belief I still haven’t like fine-tuned yet, but it’s basically just, she kind of believes that her ability to control the Mesh is, like, a divine blessing. Or, you know, something that’s her purpose and that will lead her to take an action at some point.

AUSTIN: Okay. We’ll try to hammer that out by next recording.

ALI: Yep.

AUSTIN: Okay. What are your relationships like? I kind of just want to see you all onscreen literally together. Maybe we see—we see Fourteen lose some money, and you see some people who have like talked to Signet a little longer than is necessary, and like kind of an obnoxious grab for attention and emotional labor, but now things have cleared out a little bit. And it’s like the three of you and maybe some regulars and they’re all off in their own groups and it’s the three of you just at a table, and again it’s been a month since the last time you’ve seen each other and spent any time together at all, which is probably right after the last mission. Like, in a brief bit of debriefing.

[25:27]

ALI: I think that if like Fourteen loses a bit of money she kind of offers to get them a drink in like kind of a playful way, like a… “If you’re having a bad time, I’m gonna make you something.”

> JACK (as FOURTEEN FIFTEEN): Sure, I’ll take one. Yeah.
>
> ALI (as TENDER SKY): Yeah. What are you drinking?
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): A, uh… I’m drinking a… reversed mango slinger.
>
> ALI (as TENDER): A mango s—
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Hold the tonic.
>
> ALI (as TENDER): You sure?

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Yeah, I can handle it.

ALI (as TENDER): Okay, yeah, I'll get that right at—The tonic helps a lot, though.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): It doesn't agree with me.

ALI (as TENDER): Okay. I'll find another citrus to put in there. And I'll be right back.

AUSTIN: Nothing from Signet?

JACK: [laughing] Signet is just sitting there.

JANINE: [laughs] I mean, honestly, she probably is. Like, I think Signet would probably order something like, when she first comes in, but like... You know, you mentioned her doing emotional labor and stuff for people, like that's probably—that's why she's there.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Like, some people probably—she's probably very aware that some people don't like to come up to her when she's in her full shit.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: And like, in her proper place, and there's a line, and et cetera. So sometimes you go to slightly different locations and you listen and that's like your thing. So that's—she's probably just been quite contently like sipping some tea or something and talking with people and just kind of off to one side.

AUSTIN: Right. Kind of like, not engaging even with her own crew.

JANINE: Absolutely.

AUSTIN: Okay. That's good. So I think maybe it's when you bring back the drink, Tender, that someone else walks into The Steady. And there's a sort of like—I think you probably recognize their, kind of the way they hold themselves, first, which is—there's a sort of service that you can buy from a sort of—or not buy, even, but can—that's available for people on the Seance, which is that you can send somebody basically from lobby to lobby looking for someone because you can't just find them. Like, you're in the lobby at that point. So, you're in the Mesh at that

point. And so you need someone to find people if you want to like get their attention or deliver a message or something.

And a little—you know what, maybe it's actually just like a—it's almost like a vision of the person who sent the message, and so you see Cascara kind of roll herself in on her wheelchair, but she doesn't—she's just a vision of Cascara. She isn't Cascara. And you can tell that based on like, the kind of mechanical animation of the way she moves. Like actually, I think she maybe even jumps a little bit. Like, she does the animation—it's almost like a really badly cut animated gif, right? So she does the animation and then she's a little bit further, and then she does the animation and then she like jumps ahead a little bit, it's not synced right, you know? It doesn't loop correctly. And then she places a letter, like an envelope, on the table. And then turns and begins to wheel away.

JACK: Huh. Can I open it?

AUSTIN: Totally. And I think it opens—I almost said it opens like a Blizzard loot box. In that you begin to open it, and then it does the rest of the job of opening itself, and kind of unfolds itself, as if—it unfolds itself like it was origami, but the origami had a bunch of hidden folds in it, so it isn't just the envelope, it's like, somehow the envelope had been—it's like reverse origami actually, right? In that it unfolds until it is an origami of the spaceship that you work out of. Out of the—did you name that spaceship? I forget if we ever did.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: I think we got close and then didn't do it. I remember now.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN: And it's that spaceship—

JACK: [overlapping] The thing that's like a—

AUSTIN: —with a big sail and, the kind of one that the Beloved work out of. And it just kind of floats above the table, and you've gotten this before. This is a call to come back to base.

> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Better get my gun. I left it outside.

[AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: Biff Briar says "If you're not gonna drink that reversed mango slinger, I'll take it!"

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Can I take it out of here, Tender?

AUSTIN: No. It's in the Mesh.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I think that's where we have to draw the line, right?

ALI: Yeah, like—

JACK: Apparently this is…

[30:00]

AUSTIN: Maybe you could walk around with a thing that looks like it, right? But…

JACK: It's not the sa—

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Biff, look, you did a great job tonight, it's not got any tonic in, but that's just me.

AUSTIN (as BIFF BRIAR): Oh, you know what? I'm good actually. Nevermind, I'm good.

ALI (as TENDER): Right?

AUSTIN (as BIFF): I don't like that—you have to have a layer of tonic on the bottom and then you get the mangos, you mash 'em up, you get the good—and then—

JACK (as FOURTEEN): It's just—it doesn't agree with me.

AUSTIN (as BIFF): I understand. Listen, I'm not here to judge what you do. You do you, bounty hunter.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): That's me. Okay, well—

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Time to be off, I think. I'll just put this down… here… next to all that money I lost.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN: As you put it down, Biff starts playing, like, it's timed perfectly for the sax to hit in this like slow jazz number that escorts the group of you out, basically. And he just kind of nods like "I got you. You livin' your bounty hunter life, I'm on it. You know." Biff has a card that says like, "the score of your life". You know, "the soundtrack to your life, Good Biff Briar".

How do you get back to the ship? Does it come pick you up? Do you take like a little transport out to it? Are there like automated transports?

ALI: I like the idea of it being like, kind of disconnected. Like that there's almost like, piers that you go to.

JACK: Yeah. I've been going out to the little rowboat to the big ship.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we described Seance as having piers that stick out of it as if they're skyscrapers but are piers, or like tall buildings, and then also—but I do like the notion of "okay, well then you have to get in a little boat", basically. Or another little ship that then takes you out to…

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...your home ship.

JANINE: I bet like ships have a certain size they maybe don't want coming too close to those.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: 'Cause like, if you miscalculate a little you fuck up a whole pier and then that's just like…

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: That's someone's week.

AUSTIN: Totally.

JACK: What if they're balloons?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: Little crafts with balloons on top. Back where I lived there were some people who tried to get into space with a balloon? It was like a whole big project, and then they realized that that was like monumentally dangerous. And difficult. So they stopped. But if you look at photographs of the sort of balloons that are used in space, they look amazing. They don't look like earth balloons at all.

AUSTIN: I've never looked at space balloons. I believe you. There's like a high-altitude balloon, is that what you're talking about?

JACK: Yeah. The mold.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah. But higher. In space. And you're not going that far away from Seance. Like, you're going far enough away to get onto the ship, but not so far that you are like, leaving—like, going to a different solar system, right?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Oh, yeah, these are cool, I like these a lot. The space balloons I'm looking at. Okay, so, when you get there—I mean, I guess we'll have to talk a little bit about what the ship looks like on the inside, the big ship here. So, I guess as you get in, as you enter the ship—you kind of dock with this balloon and go into your spaceship that has a big sail on it—I guess my first question is actually like, what is the color tone of inside your ship? Like when I think about the Normandy it's that blue with orange, right? From Mass Effect. When I think about the Enterprise, it's kind of cream-colored inside, from Next Generation. What is the visual, like, key tone for the inside of your home ship? Anybody can answer this, I'm not like—this is just, like, someone paint me a picture really quick.

JANINE: Do we know where the ship like, came from?

AUSTIN: I don't know, you tell me. Probably one of the other ships, right? At some point. Cascara and the Beloved report to Empyrean at this point, but Empyrean is just the last Divine left. My suspicion is that this group, that the Beloved belonged to another Divine, you know, three hundred, four hundred years ago who died, but I don't know which one right now. And one day we'll figure that out, but we don't need to figure it out this moment. So probably a dead Divine. Probably was designed by a dead Divine, like maybe there were a bunch of groups like the Beloved who did this. Or who did this sort of thing, the sort of like investigation, and, you know, intercession into dangers and problems. You know, the same way

that there might have been more or less secret agents in any period of history. Except in this case, their spaceship was built by a machine god who is now dead.

JACK: What if it has tiles?

ALI: Ooh.

AUSTIN: I like that.

JACK: Like I don't think of tiles as being in a spaceship, but I was trying to think what is the opposite of a spaceship in Firefly? And it's one that probably has tiles.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Like, thick—sorry, wide tiles? Or little tiny—like, bathroom tiles? Or like… Byzantine tiles, or like diamond tiles?

JACK: Like Byzantine tiles, I think.

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay. I like that.

[35:03]

JACK: Maybe not everywhere, maybe just in like the cockpit or something.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Or just like, here and there throughout—I think throughout every room there's probably like, a little flair, right? Like a little, what's the word I'm looking for—

JANINE: Accent?

AUSTIN: Like, not just an accent, but like there's a specific shape I'm looking for. Of like a feather curling upwards, or something. Do you know what I mean? There's a specific word—

JANINE: Flourish?

AUSTIN: Not—Well that's what I said, a flourish. That's where I started at. I started with flourish.

JACK: Have you considered "flourish"?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And I think these are like, blue and white, or gold and white, or, um…

ALI: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah.

ALI: I think, like… I like the idea of a lot of the lighting being really low.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Me too.

JACK: Mhm.

ALI: So like, you know, if it's from the bottom, unless you're in a kind of like heavily visited area or like a—if you're in the hallways or something the lights are kind of mid-level or on the floor so like, you get a cool shadow.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, Cascara—you all come back and are able to go to your rooms, basically. And put your stuff away, or whatever kind of—this is probably the first time you've actually been back on the ship since everything happened? I think kind of protocol was kind of probably like a decompression protocol after the death of a Divine, after that mission that was just like, "You're under observation for the next two and a half weeks. And you'll be taken care of, but like, we also have to keep you protected—like, things went bad and we just want to make sure everyone is completely, like, working through what just happened?" And so, this is the first time you've been back to the ship. And you get like, the buzz comes over the speaker and it's Cascara and she says: "Everyone in the common room. We have to have a talk."

And when you come out of the common room, there are three people you've never met before there, along with two other people who you—there are four people you've never met before, along with one person that Tender has met, and one person that Signet has met. They are all sitting on couches, there's like probably a—I guess this is kind of the common room, right? So I think the common room has layers, right? So I think that there's like a low-down layer that has a little theatre screen in it, and then like three or four couches kind of that are adjacent to each other.

And then there's a higher layer above that that you can take some stairs up to and on that layer is a pool table, and a couple of steps higher than that—or like, some other sort of, you know, card table, there's like a table that you can do different sorts of games and maps and all sorts of other stuff. And a couple levels higher

than that is the kitchen. Or a couple stairs higher than that is the kitchen. And so you kind of get this like, three levels of this big lounge area.

And the other people—so the two that you recognize immediately, you recognize, Signet, Chiron, who is that greenish and yellow robot in the suit who you rescued, who had previously been the Cadent's bodyguard. He is here for some reason. And then, the one that you recognize, is in handcuffs currently, Tender, and that is Morning's Observation. Who is like, a—he just kind of looks shitty. He just looks like a shitty boy.

He's a white dude with—this is maybe the first time you've actually—I mean, you arrested him and brought him out into the real world out of the Mesh, so—or not the real world, but brought him out of the Mesh into the physical world. So you saw him then, but he's kind of cleaned up a little bit from then? He has—he's very thin and has tattoos on his face and on the top of his neck. He has like, half of his hair is pink and the other half is dyed black. It's just kind of messy, and kind of like—not shoulder-length, it's longish but not like shoulder-length, it's just—he's kind of a messy boy.

He has on super close handcuffs, like his hands—it's basically like his knuckles are touching each other. He can't like, undo that.

And he's also being kept, like—you look at the couch that he's being kept at—or, he's like on his own chair. He's in like a loveseat. And if you look close you can see that the air around him is kind of like wavering, like he's behind some sort of shielding device that prevents people from actually getting close to him.

And then, the other people. So, these are the people who are called—I don't know, did we decide if you knew about the other group before? The other group of Beloved?

ALI: Um, I mean we—

AUSTIN: In my mind—Go ahead.

ALI: —probably do, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, in my mind they'd been like operators who—you'd known that there were other Beloved groups, but maybe hadn't done much meeting them? But if you want to establish that they've been here for a while and that y'all have worked together, then you can all know them.

[40:04]

ALI: Not like worked together, but like seen at a company party or whatever. Like you know what I mean?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Company party for secret agents, got it.

[ALI and JANINE laugh]

AUSTIN: I don’t know, maybe fuckin’ James Bond has—listen, I don’t know—

JANINE: It would totally make sense if we like knew, okay, there are other active groups, ‘cause like sometimes a thing gets—a thing would get handled and we’d be like “Hm, that looks like…” You know.

AUSTIN: Right. Yes. Totally. So, there’s—

JANINE: “That looks like there was a hand on there.” But I don’t know that we would like…

JACK: “Did we do that? We didn’t do that.”

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

ALI: I like the idea of not us really knowing them, but like knowing names and reputations, but not like a close, personal...

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: So now we’re like, putting names to faces?

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: Well, so the thing is they’ve also been on this ship the whole time. And Cascara’s gone out of her way to not let you interact. Much. Like, there have been—she has timed it such that there isn’t more than one group on the ship at once. Partially because—

JANINE: Sorry, do you mean our cute little ship or like the city-ship?

AUSTIN: The cute little ship. The ship that you—

JANINE: Oh.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Because it's dangerous to put all of you in one place at once because if that ship blows up, guess what? You're all dead.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so, I think that it's like—otherwise you would know each other much better, right? Otherwise it would be like, yeah, you've been doing this for a while, of course you know Massalia.

And so there are, again, five people here who you—or, four people here who you don't know—not that you don't know, but four people other than the two I just described. So, there is… One of them, who is a—they have gills, is probably the first thing you notice about them, they have scales coming up the side of their neck, and then little gills.

And I think Cascara probably does an introduction for everyone, right? She kind of comes down the—the stairs turn into a ramp, they kind of flatten in on themselves so she can roll herself down. And when she gets down there she says, you know, "Thank you everyone for attending. Let me do introductions." And she introduces all of you. "Here is Tender Sky, the Fleet's greatest architect, whose control over the Mesh is unmatched. Here is Fourteen Fifteen, an assassin whose reputation and name speak for themselves." She doesn't explain why your name should speak for itself, that's not in there at all, I don't—

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: It's just, you know, I don't know, maybe that's a thing that other people know, I don't—

JACK: I'm just gonna nod.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. And then she nods to Signet and says, "They marked scars of light in pitch; born in fiercest purpose, and beheld as the signet sealed upon our pact; it is always good to have an Excerpt among us." She nods to Chiron and says "The latest on our ship, Chiron, who did duty in protecting the Cadent during the terrible attack on the colosseum."

And then she goes over these new people. So, the first one is the person with gills and scales on their neck, and Cascara says "Massalia d'Arjent." d'Arjen? Is that right?

JANINE: d'Argent.

AUSTIN: d'Argent. There it is. "Massalia d'Argent. One of the greatest pilots I've ever had the honor to fly with."

Massalia is from an alien culture that has some fish-style stuff happening on their face? It's hard to—I don't know that you all know the biological history of this culture or not, but they definitely have gills and scales and stuff that are kind of like bluish-green with like a little bit of rainbow—what's that called, on like a fish? Do you know what I'm talking about?

JACK: Iridescence?

AUSTIN: Iridescence, thank you. And it's—I'm trying to describe how they hold themselves. They at once seem incredibly dedicated in being there, but their attention is to Cascara and not to you at all. They have this very high forehead and very straight eyebrows, their hair is really high up top and it's slicked backwards, short on the sides, very small, focused facial features. There's an Asian actress who would play this character probably named Fan Bingbing, who has done some great stuff where she is dressed in men's clothing and like has these exact features that I had in my mind.

And in this case, Massalia has like dress pants on with really thick suspenders, and then a kind of lacy blouse with wide cuffs that kind of open up, and then a black cape with silver inside. And then kind of a ribbon tie that's like tied in a bow, but like with the long ends hanging at uneven spaces. And Massalia, let me tell you, they don't wanna—they, again, are not interested in you in any way.

[45:25]

Cascara then nods to a, sort of a, I guess he looks like a robot? But I think you probably know that he is not a robot. He goes by Waltz Tango Cache, C-A-C-H-E, and you believe that that's like a weird joke because he's dead and this is like the back-up of his mind or something? Like, he's the cached version of the person who is named Waltz Tango? You've also heard his real name is not Waltz Tango, but that's some bullshit name he came up with.

[ALI laughs]

JACK: Waltz? Waltz as in the dance?

AUSTIN: Waltz as in the dance and then Tango as in the dance, yes.

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: Waltz Tango Cache.

ALI: God.

AUSTIN: His head is like a companion cube from Portal except if each of the four corners—like, look straight ahead at the cube, and then open it, from—in four directions. Do you know what I mean? Like, as if each one came off, and then in the middle of that there is a glowing center that blinks in kind of a white light when he speaks.

JACK: Is this your Destiny OC, Austin?

AUSTIN: No, this is not. You'll meet him later in the season.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: This is just a guy named Waltz Tango Cache, like that's not—my Destiny OC is just a person who—it's just a whole other thing.

[ALI and JACK laugh]

AUSTIN: We'll get back to—Triptych might show up this season, who knows?

Waltz Tango doesn't have any clothes on at all. It's this kind of tan metal that covers—like, plates that cover their* body. You can see servos in their* arms, and you can hear them* as they* move, their* feet have like—or, his feet have these sharp talons, his hands have sharp claws, and is just wearing a bunch of guns. Just like, has an assault rifle on his back, and two pistols on his hips, and also you're pretty sure probably has gun hands. It's hard to say.

And then there is another person who—there is something strange with the way she moves, and maybe you recognize this as she moves into place. It's like when she's sitting down it's fine, but she sort of stutters, similar to the way that the messenger that Cascara sent stuttered. She kind of like steps forward and then rewinds and is backwards again and has to re-step forward, and other times she fast forwards past where she is to where she is in two seconds, and it's like—it's a little nauseating to look at. But once she gets to where she's at, she's better able to kind of like control

what she does. Except she, when she's sitting still, looks like a looping gif. Like a perfectly looping gif that she just like, has running, basically.

And I guess Cascara first introduces Waltz Tango as the greatest mercenary on the Fleet with a mission complete record that doesn't even make any sense when you look at the numbers, and then she says "And this is Acre Seven. And Acre was recovered from the planet Acre, where Potency gave their life." And Potency was one of the other Divines who died while trying to evacuate a planet that they mistakenly put in the line of basically a nova. In trying to terraform Acre, the—things went bad, and the sun nearby was going to explode and kill everybody, Acre Seven is one of the things that—one of the people, in this case, that managed to escape.

And so, there is Acre Seven. I think right now she has kind of a long, solid-color dress, but the color changes in unpredictable ways. When you're not looking it goes from being this solid mute blue to being this solid mute red. And it isn't like a—if you look at it, it does not change. But if you look away and look again, it has changed. And you'll disagree. If the three of you go "what color is that dress", you'll have seen a different dress on her.

"And this," and Cascara's voice kind of gets happier, and a girl comes down the stairs, and she says "And this is Shoghig Salon." And then this girl comes down who has on a headscarf and this really beautiful lolita dress that has a floral pattern on it, it's very—it's like a cream color with budding flowers on it, a nice bow on her headscarf, and she has like a crooked little scar that runs from the bottom right of her lip down to her neck. But she like curtsies when she gets to the bottom, and she says like, "I'm really happy to be here."

[50:40]

Cascara says "Sho and Chiron are the newest members of the Beloved, and I hope that you will all welcome them with open arms. It is a time of great tragedy, but that also means that it is a time for all of us to step up and do what's necessary to right the ship." I think Massalia probably just like pulls their cape a little tighter, as if like "Yeah, of course. Of course that's what I'm gonna do."

> AUSTIN (as CASCARA): Empyrean and their Exarch... don't want anyone else investigating the death of Gumption. And I understand why the two of them believe that. But I also believe in redundancy, and I have the authority to investigate whatever I want. So, what all of you are going to do is help to figure out what exactly happened. Now we know that there was an attack from the Earth Cult—

AUSTIN: —and her eyes quickly jut over to Morning's Observation, who kind of just like, "Tch", and like turns and crosses his arms and looks away at the—where the theatre, where the big projection screen is.

> AUSTIN (as CASCARA): But we've been attacked by the Earth Cult before. We've never seen anything with such precision and with such deadly effect. Not so quickly. Most of the fights have been drawn out, most of them have been inelegant. But here they struck in multiple places at once. They distracted us and hurt us where we were weakest. And we need to get to the bottom of that. However, because Empyrean knows how I am, we've also been fed with a number of other tasks to deal with. As we deal with those because it is our duty, I want you all to remember what our core objective is. Find out who killed Gumption, and find out who is holding the puppet strings. I will be sending you all dossiers on relevant individuals and information on your next missions by end of night. Are there any questions?
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): I have one.
>
> AUSTIN (as CASCARA): Hm? Fourteen.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Are we expected to work in conjunction with the secondary Beloved team?

AUSTIN: "Secondary?" says Massalia.

> JACK (as FOURTEEN): I mean second. Second.
>
> AUSTIN (as MASSALIA D'ARGENT): We were first.

[ALI sighs]

> JANINE (as SIGNET): This isn't a competition.

AUSTIN: "Everything's a competition," says Waltz Tango.

> JANINE (as SIGNET): No it's not. Working toward the same goal, it's not a competition.
>
> AUSTIN (as WALTZ TANGO CACHE): Listen. You do things the way you wanna do 'em, and I'll do 'em my way.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Sorry Cascara, this is just why I wanted to check this, at this point.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN (as CASCARA): Yes.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay.

AUSTIN (as CASCARA): You'll be working together, and in the near future you'll each be assigned two of our new trainees. One of our new trainees each. Beloved Dust—

AUSTIN: That's your group. I'm saying that out of character. In-character everyone knows that you guys are the Beloved Dust—

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: —and that that other group is the Beloved Ivy.

AUSTIN (as CASCARA): You'll take Sho—

AUSTIN: —who is the woman who just curtsied earlier—

AUSTIN (as CASCARA): —and show her the ropes.

AUSTIN: "That wasn't—I didn't mean that pun," she says. Sho laughs, and says like "Don't worry, I get it a lot."

AUSTIN (as CASCARA): And Chiron will be with the Beloved Ivy.

AUSTIN: And Chiron just sort of like, nods then does like a [exasperated trill] sound, and as he does it light shows up in his cheeks—his cheeks flutter on with light, like, "I got that team, huh?" You know, very much like a "Good, I got the assholes. Thanks."

[55:00]

AUSTIN (as CASCARA): Is there anything else?

ALI (as TENDER): Yeah, um, is it a competition?

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Oh, yeah, good question.

AUSTIN (as CASCARA): You know if I answer that I've made it a competition, right?

[ALI laughs]

JACK (as FOURTEEN): We're giving you an opportunity to.

AUSTIN: Cascara shakes her head. "Dinner in thirty." And rolls up the ramp, and it turns into stairs behind her where she rolls away.

JACK: Are we just left here with these people?

AUSTIN: Yeah. And also with this prisoner.

[ALI laughs]

JACK: Is the prisoner here? I'm actually gonna ask—Is the prisoner here, or is this—

AUSTIN: He's like—

JACK: —the Mesh?

AUSTIN: Oh, oh, oh. That's him. That's him. I think this has happened before. This is like, out in the open, here is a prisoner who is kind of caught in limbo, like needs to be turned over to an authority at some point, or is under interrogation, and who is kind of kept in the most public space. Which is at once a way of protecting them, and also a way of intimidating them. And also, and also, if you recall, he is also kind of an engineer who can do Mesh stuff, and probably shouldn't be left alone.

If there aren't other questions or interactions here, I think this other team is—I actually think Acre Seven moves over to the prisoner and begins to kind of like hover around him—not literally hover, though she moves strangely, but kind of like flicker back and forth and kind of strafe around him, and like look in at him in different ways, like as if he were an exhibit or a zoo animal. He is not a fan of this.

JANINE: That sounds really fucking unnerving.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's pretty unnerving. I think right now she has short brown hair that's like in a pixie cut, and she has tan, kind of white skin. And her eyebrows are like really bushy. And her fingernails are long, but they're not colored, they're like, lacquered or something, but they're not like, there's no like—

JANINE: Like a clear top coat.

AUSTIN: Yeah, like a clear top coat, exactly. And at one point she does like put them on the kind of energy glass that's keeping Observation in and does like the rattle, you know, with like—taps it a few times.

JANINE: Okay. Okay. That's—

AUSTIN: And then just kind of moves away, like, no questions asked. She's seen what she wants to see.

JANINE: I feel like at the glass-tapping Signet is—Signet probably walks up… Should we—Okay, here's a question I have. Is first person or third person better? Because I can never make up my mind.

AUSTIN: It's really what you're comfortable with.

JANINE: Yeah, that's fair.

AUSTIN: And that's not a great answer. But...

JANINE: No, but I get it. So, Signet probably like, as soon as Cascara left, probably was immediately thinking like "I should go talk to this person." And then when Acre approaches, Signet kind of hangs back to just watch, and then is just like, so—

[ALI and JANINE laugh]

JANINE: She's very—she doesn't think that Acre was doing anything deliberately like, mean, necessarily, but she's like also slightly rattled by what Acre does instead of what she was hoping, which was like, "Oh, she's gonna like, talk to this person, and get the ball rolling," and, nope, that's not what happened, okay. How about—okay.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

JANINE: So, Signet sort of approaches them and sits on the nearest, like, surface? If there's a chair, or like...

AUSTIN: Sure, there's like a—I think the nearest surface is the arm of the couch, and then after that there is a little like end table, and then there's a couch facing the other direction, basically.

JANINE: Oh, those are all bad.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's not a great place to…

JANINE: Okay, she probably stands, then.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: I don't think she's a sit on the arm of the couch kind of girl.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I gotcha. I just want the image of her like looking for a place to sit and then not finding one—

JANINE: Oh, yes.

AUSTIN: —because she's not a sit on the arm of the couch kind of girl.

JANINE: Well, I can't—I'm not sitting on a table, either, because a table—that's where you put stuff. That's not where you sit, that's not a sitting place.

AUSTIN: I guess as you approach at that point Acre kind of like—we just probably get the image of Acre stopping with the tapping and kind of like, again, jitters her head around this kind of little prison cell and looks at you, like, around it—even though it's kind of see-through she still looks around it at you, and just kind of tilts her head, and doesn't say anything.

JANINE: I don't think—I'm not gonna like confront her or anything, because again I don't think—Signet doesn't think that she meant any like harm or anything, but just, you know. Needs to take control of this situation.

[60:02]

AUSTIN: Observation inside is like, "If I can't get any privacy, can I at least get like, the lights turned off? I'm tired."

> JANINE (as SIGNET): Why do you need the lights turned off? Are you just tired? They hurt your eyes?
>
> AUSTIN (as MORNING'S OBSERVATION): Yeah, they hurt my eyes. I'm trying to sleep and you drag me out into this stupid living room.

JANINE: Can we like tint the glass? Is that an option?

AUSTIN: Yeah, sure.

JANINE: Okay. We can do that a little bit. We don't need to—we're not gonna make it totally dark, because we still need to do our business here, but we can—

AUSTIN: You can probably tint it so that it's basically dark inside, but also you can still see inside, at him.

JANINE: I just mean we don't want it like, too dark.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: We don't—like, it's not useful to us if he falls asleep.

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay. I got you. So it just tints a little bit?

JANINE: We just want to take some of the strain off.

AUSTIN: Right. Okay.

JANINE: Yeah, just like, you know, take the edge off. That's the goal here.

AUSTIN: He has on like a denim jacket and a white T-shirt, and the denim is—if you actually look closer at the denim, you realize that it's actually a bunch of little denim scales from two different types of jean coloring. So it's as if it's like denim—like scalemail, or something, and it's just not—it's the corniest shit you've ever seen in your life. Also the back of it has, just like the—I guess, maybe he—does he even—he wouldn't be allowed. Okay. No, it's just the denim. It's just that. I had to think through how that culture works and what his rank was and shit. So just that.

JANINE: How is he like—is he sitting, is he on the ground, is he standing?

AUSTIN: He's like curled up in this chair. This chair is too big for him. It's like a loveseat, and he's not a big—he's a little boy. He's not a little boy—he's a man who is thin and probably underfed, frankly.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Not underfed by you, but has historically not been—he isn't thick, you know? He has a really shitty little like, peach fuzz on his face. And is just trying to ignore everyone at this point.

JANINE: Yeah. Since she doesn't really have anywhere to sit but also like, standing over a person who's huddled up is not ideal, I think Signet probably like kneels very like, primly.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: By the chair. To like, face him, but still not be like, towering over him or anything. Like, kneeling very like, knees together, hands folded in lap, like… And I think she just asks, like, "Is there anything else within reason that we can do to make you more comfortable?"

> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Do whatever it is you do with prisoners. Trade me back, or let me go, or put me in a place where I'm gonna live for a thousand years or whatever bullshit it is you do. But just don't leave me here. This place sucks.
>
> JANINE (as SIGNET): Why not?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): 'Cause like, I'm not in a real place, I can't get used to life like this.
>
> ALI (as TENDER): Wait, what's a "real place"?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Like, a place that a person lives in for a while. Like, people need a home, and my home can't be the couch on a weird spaceship next to some weird flickering woman. That ain't a home.
>
> ALI (as TENDER): First of all, that's super rude towards her, but okay.
>
> JANINE (as SIGNET): That is pretty rude, yeah.
>
> AUSTIN (as ACRE SEVEN): I'm… I'm fine, fine. I'm fine.
>
> JANINE (as SIGNET): You know, we're treating you with respect now, I'd appreciate if you treated all of us with the same respect.
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Alright. So what sort of weird glass prisons do you live in, then, if that's the respect I'm supposed to give you?

[ALI laughs]

JANINE (as SIGNET): I mean, sometimes I have a—it's complicated, we don't need to get into it.

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI (as TENDER): [laughing] We all live in our own glass prisons.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Alright, word. Okay. Sure.

ALI: I think at this point Tender has walked over to the table and sat down on it and crossed her legs like in front of him.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Okay. Good.

JANINE: Wait, crossed her legs like up on the table, or like, with her feet on the floor?

ALI: With like her feet on the floor. Like over her knees, yeah.

JANINE: There's two different kinds of—okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. She's not sitting cross-legged on the table like a cat. Okay.

ALI: No, no, no.

JANINE: That's what I was thinking.

AUSTIN: Good. "You're wasting your time," says Massalia. "I'll be in my quarters until dinner." And then they kind of like very arrogantly walk away through the side door that leads to their side of the ship quarters.

JACK (as "FOURTEEN"): [exasperated] Oh my god. The—what are they called? They're called Ivy?

AUSTIN: They're called Ivy.

JACK: Beloved Ivy?

AUSTIN: They're The Beloved Ivy.

JACK (as "FOURTEEN"): They suck.

ALI (as “TENDER”): They’re the worst.

JANINE (as “SIGNET”): Acre might be okay.

AUSTIN: “Acre might be okay,” she leans closer to the glass, and like places her forehead on the glass—

JACK: No, no, no, stop that…

AUSTIN: —and it like passes through for a—like it flickers the way she flickers, and then her head is just inside for a moment and then it’s back outside. Of the glass. Of the fake energy glass or whatever the fuck I’m calling it.

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: Also I think Waltz Tango Cache goes up to the kitchen at this point and has begun like, cutting onions. And prepping a meal.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Can I have some?

[65:00]

AUSTIN (as WALTZ): You wanna help me cook—

AUSTIN: Wait, what was his voice? His voice was a little like, um… I have to find it again.

ALI: It was like spaced out.

AUSTIN: It was spaced out but it was like Christian Slater a little bit. But like mean—meaner Christian Slater? It was like gravellier? No, it wasn’t gravellier. He’s like, um…

AUSTIN (as WALTZ): Yeah, you can help. And then you can have some.

JACK: I was gonna talk to the guy.

AUSTIN: Oh you were gonna help them, not me cooking. I thought you were asking to help cook, not help talk.

JACK: No, well, I was asking for some food, but—

AUSTIN: Oh, right, sorry.

JANINE: Some raw onions?

AUSTIN: Some raw onions. Is that—

JACK: Well, he's preparing the onions…

> AUSTIN (as WALTZ): I'm makin', uh—
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): [overlapping] Make sure there are enough onions for me. What'cha makin'?
>
> AUSTIN (as WALTZ): You just want raw onions?
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): No, I mean—You know what I—Frickin' Ivy, man...
>
> AUSTIN (as WALTZ TANGO): [overlapping] I'm makin' pasta. I'm makin' pasta, I want my sauce to have that little kick.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): I think onions are like a fairly standard base for a sauce, Waltz.
>
> AUSTIN (as WALTZ): My taste buds are different.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay.

ALI: Oh god, now his taste buds are different.

AUSTIN: And then his robot head goes like [imitates beeping]—

JACK: [whispering] His taste buds are different.

AUSTIN: And then just like takes a little spoon of the sauce, and like drops it into his hand. And then squeezes, and then is like, "Okay. Just about there." And tosses in some spices.

JANINE: Does he taste with his hands?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Tastes with a lot of things. He doesn't have a mouth, he has like a weird orb inside of a weird cube head that's all exploded.

JANINE: I mean, it does beg the question why or how he eats pasta sauce at all, then.

> JACK (as "FOURTEEN"): [laughing] Signet, I don't think that—This is not the time.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN: For what it's worth, he's making everybody pasta. Like.

JANINE: Yeah, that was my assumption, was that it was like a group meal thing that was gonna happen.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Okay, I'm gonna sit down in front of the prisoner. Whose name is…

AUSTIN: Morning's Observation.

JACK: Morning's Observation. Is that Morning as in—I'm asking you, actually.

> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Is that "morning" as in the time of the day or "mourning" as in the other one?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): [sarcastically] What's the difference, we're all in mourning, ha ha ha. It's the day.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): [overlapping] How do you spell it? It's the day, okay.
>
> AUSTIN: (as OBSERVATION): [overlapping] With an "O".
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Look. We can do this the easy way or the hard way.
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I am locked in like a weird glass energy tube. This is not the hard way?
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Is this the hard way?
>
> ALI (as TENDER): I don't think so.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): No? There's room?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): What is it you people waaaant?

ALI (as TENDER): Information, mostly.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Yeah, information. We call you the Earth Cult, or the Earth Cultists, but you don't call yourself that, right? We heard that there's a different name.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): It's not my job to educate you people. That's a different person's job.

ALI (as TENDER): You're a prisoner.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Well, this is an interrogation, so… it kind of…

ALI (as TENDER): It kind of, right now, that's kind of all you're here for.

JANINE (as SIGNET): Okay, what's gonna happen is, you don't like being here because it's not a place for a person to live, that's totally fair, you're right. A glass tube around a couch is not—

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Is not good.

JANINE (as SIGNET): —is not a good place for a person to live. But the thing is, we need certain things from you, and once we have those certain things you will be transferred to a place where a person can absolutely live. Until then…

AUSTIN: Wait, is this a thing that you're actually offering?

JANINE: Isn't this just a matter of—like this is just the protocol, you said, right? Like, this is just—this person is behind held until they're like—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, this is me, Austin—Cascara did not explain what her plan with this dude was.

JANINE: Oh, I thought that's what you had said. Like, this was a thing like before someone is formally arrested and—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] This is a thing that has happen—Yes. That is a thing that happens normally. I'm saying, are you now saying that you will push for him to be transferred if he answers questions? Because otherwise that's Cascara who decides when that happens.

JANINE: I mean, I thought this was already—like, what's the protocol in place right now? Is it just that this person is in a tube and—

AUSTIN: Yep.

JANINE: —things may or may not happen to them?

AUSTIN: I mean traditionally, what happens normally is, Cascara finishes interrogations and then moves that person to a prison or, you know, releases them into someone else's custody, or frees them because they were just needed to be interrogated but not because they were under arrest, or weren't a danger or whatever. So that does happen, but there's not like a "within a week, blah blah blah." And Cascara has not promised him anything. And also you're a weird off-the-grid secret agency, so.

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: There isn't a statute you can pull up that's like, "and then we will"—I guess the statute is just like, "don't keep anybody under lock and key indefinitely". Right? Like, in cases of extreme emergency, there is a—kind of a "you can't keep somebody who has done nothing wrong", especially. But this is a weird case where like you know he did something wrong, he was trying to kill a bunch of people. So.

JANINE: Yeah. Um... I mean, yes, I think that is the thing Signet is saying. 'Cause like, if the alternative is like, oh, he gets like shot in the head or something, that's not a thing she would be okay with.

AUSTIN: No, no, no. Yeah. Totally. Okay—

JANINE: Like, the thing that she wants is—her ideal situation here is they get some information from him, and then he is moved off to a place where people who break rules go.

AUSTIN: Yep. Totally. I think that that's Sway. I think what you're doing is trying to Sway here.

[70:24]

JANINE: Okay. So.

AUSTIN: So, how are you feeling and—let me actually take a look at Sway and see if there's like, anything else that you need to do. "When you want to get an NPC to do something you want, and their motivations don't line up with yours, roll." So how are you feeling?

JANINE: Um… I think in this moment, I'm feeling Peaceful 'cause it's—you know, this is just like, kind of what Signet does.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Yeah.

JANINE: You just talk to people and you try and feel them out and like learn what you can, and you know. This is kind of her thing, so.

AUSTIN: Alright, cool. Go ahead and give me a Sway. That is a seven. Okay, so on a seven to nine you have to choose two of the following: "You're gonna owe them some serious cred; your own giri, your own faith is in question now", so that means you have to give—like, he would have faith on you. And I would say until you succeed at freeing him, right? "You're gonna need to give them something now instead of later; you need to do them a favor first", or "you need to give a piece of yourself to them, body or heart."

JANINE: How about—Okay. I—it's like a big thing to be totally okay with, but I think he should absolutely have faith on her.

AUSTIN: Okay. Sure.

JANINE: For this, because I definitely want that weight of, like, if a bad thing does happen to him—

AUSTIN: Yep. Totally.

JANINE: That should make her—like, that's very much against what she wants.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: So I'm gonna add that to my—

AUSTIN: Mhm. Me too.

JANINE: —list of faith stuff.

AUSTIN: Got it.

JANINE: The other thing is I want to offer him a plate of dinner.

AUSTIN: That's a good idea.

JANINE: Can we get a plate of dinner in there?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Or you're going to in twenty minutes or whatever, right? Like that's—yeah.

JANINE: Yeah, yeah. Get him a nice warm meal.

JACK: When the onions are salted.

JANINE: A warm meal makes everyone feel better.

> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Alright. But you owe me. What do you wanna know?
>
> JANINE (as SIGNET): I mean… honestly, you can probably guess what we wanna know.
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): [frustrated] I can't. I'm not interrogating me. I don't know what you already know. How would I know what you wanna know?
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): What do you think you're here for? Why do you think we've got you?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): For helping killing Gumption or whatever.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay, right. Why did you do that?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): 'Cause it was my job. Like, why does a soldier anywhere do anything? 'Cause they got the order to do it and then they did it.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): So you work for an organization that made its mission to kill Gumption?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): It was one of our missions, yes, that was the mission I was on. I was grateful to be part of it.
>
> ALI (as TENDER): Well, then who do you work for?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Earth, the New Earth Hegemony? Like… you people…

JACK (as FOURTEEN): We call you the New Earth Cult.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Okay. That's good.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Why do you think we call you cult instead of hegemony?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): 'Cause it's really convenient to fight a cult?

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay. That's a good answer. That's a good—yeah. That's a good one. Um… Why did you kill one of our gods?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): [overlapping] You don't know anything about—we've killed a bunch of 'em. That's—they're not gods, they're big robots.

AUSTIN: This is like a thing he just said out—like I mean, you don't believe they're gods either. You think they're super—you do think that they're big robots. Like, the status quo belief is not that they are capital G Gods. But it is also—the status quo belief is they are to be respected because they are incredibly powerful big robots who make our lives better.

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: And who love us, and who protect us, and who, like, are categorically different things than we are.

JACK: Can I check something out of character here?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: We talk a lot about this season not being a dystopia, and I think it's worth mentioning that again. When you say that these things look after us and protect us—

AUSTIN: I mean that genuinely.

JACK: By and large that's true, right? Yeah.

AUSTIN: It has been true for thirty thousand years, yes. And part of the thing that I'm excited about is filling in how that happens. And I mean that sincerely. Like, what are the ways in which—we'll get into one of those things I think in a little bit today. So.

JACK: I think it's important to head off the past that, you know.

AUSTIN: Yep. That was not irony, that was not—yes. Totally.

JACK: Yeah. Okay, well I think I'll—yeah.

> JACK (as FOURTEEN): You know, Gumption was protecting us. And you killed it. So it's not doing that anymore.
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Yeah, that's fair.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Have you got anything to say about that?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): We are two cultures that fight each other. I'm not gonna apologize for doing the job I had.
>
> ALI (as TENDER): Yeah, but why do it?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I don't—I'm not a general, I'm not the hegemon—
>
> ALI (as TENDER): Okay, but—Okay.
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I'm not one of the—I'm not in the Blue Path, like, I don't make the rules. I am a citizen—
>
> ALI (as TENDER): You said you were proud to do it.

JANINE: Blue…

AUSTIN: Path.

JANINE: Blue Path.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

[75:09]

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Yeah, I was proud to do it ‘cause I had a job to do and I did a decent job, I’m not gonna say—like, look, cat, you got a one up on me. That’s great. But I think I held my own, and at the end of the day the mission was a success. That’s something to be proud of if you’re a soldier.

JANINE (as SIGNET): Sorry, were you referring to a person named Cat or were you calling my companion here “cat”?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I don’t know what her name is, so I’m gonna call her cat.

ALI (as TENDER): It’s Tender Sky, nice to meet you.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Tender Sky. You guys have crazy names.

JANINE (as SIGNET): Also you were here when we were introduced, so you did know her name.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I wasn’t paying attention. Also, like—your names are— [incredulous] How was I supposed to remember Tender Sky when there’s a guy named Waltz Tango Jack?

JACK (as FOURTEEN): It’s—Okay.

JANINE (as SIGNET): Cache. It’s cache.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): The Blue Path? The Blue Path? No. Back a step. The hegemon. Who is the hegemon? Where are they?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): On Earth?

JANINE (as SIGNET): That doesn’t—

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): The hegemon is like a—I guess he’s like the Cadent? Is that what you—Cadent whatever?

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Like the head of—he’s like the head of the—everyone listens to the hegemon. The hegemon is a powerful dude and he looks out for us and helps figure out what we’re all doing. He’s like—

JACK (as FOURTEEN): [overlapping] On Earth.

JANINE (as SIGNET): [overlapping] How is he on Earth?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): What do you mean how is he on Earth? He's on Earth. That's where we're all from.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): How far away is Earth from where we are right now?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Do you have a map?

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Just checking, we're talking about the same Earth, right? The solar system?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): You're in the dark! Oh, shit! Give me a map.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay.

[76:45]

[MUSIC - "On Sleep Detachment" by Jack de Quidt begins]

JACK: I'm gonna bring up a map of the galaxy on my phone—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: And it has like a projector—

AUSTIN: Oh, wait. In-game, you mean?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. I thought you meant in real life. I have to move this back to the galaxy.

JACK: Oh, I mean, we can also do this.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh.

JACK: Yeah. So it's like a projector and it like unfolds out from my phone.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): So, we're in the red circle.

JACK: I'm pointing at it.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Yeah, I gotcha.

JACK (as FOURTEEN) So the Earth is like… it's all the way… So the solar system is here, right? That's where Earth is, right? It's in this bit?

AUSTIN: He says like… "Yeah, that's where the *solar* system is."

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Uh… Could you point where Earth is please, on the map?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Yeah, I got you.

AUSTIN: And he points to the center of the map.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): It's in the middle?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Yeah, of course. And the Milky Way will revolve around the Earth as it always should have been.

AUSTIN: And he's like, quoting.

JANINE (as SIGNET): Okay, so this is like an Earth Two.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): No.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): It's the same earth?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): [sighs]

JACK (as FOURTEEN): These are like really basic questions, aren't they?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Yeah. It's like insulting, actually. Like we know about your Divines, we know about, like—

JANINE (as SIGNET): You didn't know what the Cadent was, so forgive me if we're both on some basic shit right now.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): [overlapping] I don't know the name of your weird whatever—

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay, how did it get there?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): We moved it.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): How did you move it?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Very carefully. I wasn't alive. It's like one of those things that's like, you know. Rockets, or a big engine—I don't know. But we moved it.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): And you're from there? You've been there? Or is this all remote?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I was born there. So, yeah. I miss it a lot.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): So you work for this—for this, for Earth?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): New Earth Hegemony, yes.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Where are you from on Earth, just so I have a picture of this?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Seattle.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): It's a city. It's an island city. I don't know, it's like rainy, and cold, good music.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Right, so you're from Seattle in the center of the Milky Way galaxy? And you came all the way here to kill a Divine?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Like a lot of other people before me, yeah. It's not that far. You go into sleep for a little while, and you wake up. And you're in a different part of the galaxy, and… you're together with the other people. And you all belong to each other, and you have a mission. And you do the mission. And you get training, and you're fed well, and you got a thing to believe in. I don't know, it was like that or wash dishes, right?

ALI (as TENDER): But what do you have against Divines specifically?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I’m not a philosopher or a politician. I’m barely a patriot, this was a good way for me to live a life.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): So what you’re saying is we’re at war, right? Is your argument?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Yeah.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): And you’re just—you’re not even us on the other side. You’re just a guy who’s come here to kill a god.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I mean I’m not—I’m not you, but I’m pretty good.

JACK: (as FOURTEEN): Okay.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Listen, they don’t send just anybody out on these sleep detachments. You know? Like it—most people, they gotta come slow.

[80:23]

JACK (as FOURTEEN): [sighs] Okay. I’m gonna go get dinner for me, and I’m gonna go get dinner for you.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Listen, I’m sorry I was being shitty. Apologies, okay? It’s just not—you know, I had a crew. Like you guys have a crew, I had a crew. I don’t know if they’re okay. Y’all might have killed them. Did you kill them?

ALI: [whispering] Did we kill any of them?

JACK: Um…

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You killed—like just for a reminder—

JACK: I left the robot to die.

AUSTIN: Robot wasn’t with them. Robot wasn’t one of them.

JACK: Oh, good.

AUSTIN: Mother's Story, who fled, was one of them. Star's Window was killed by the Mariposa, which was Signet's mech. And that's the only ones that you've dealt with. So you killed Star's Window.

ALI: Did people die during Gumption's death as a result of that?

AUSTIN: Wh—Yeah. Yes.

ALI: Okay.

JACK: Civilians.

AUSTIN: Civilians, yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: When Gumption's big weird hand fell into Seance, yes. It crushed people.

JACK: Into a stadium.

AUSTIN: And also just like, fighting. Like, there was fighting in space.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: There was fighting in space and the whatever space-side forces that Earth had sent also got some kills in. And then like—let me just give you background that's actually clear background. You fought the Earth Cult your whole lives. Like every seven years there's an attack or something, you know what I mean? Every three years. Like it's not like it doesn't happen? It doesn't happen daily, there isn't a front, they just show up sometimes. And normally they aren't that good.

Like, they show up every few years and don't get a kill in. Don't get a Divine kill in. Maybe they hurt some people, there's a skirmish. And then they flee. And you've always assumed that they fled back to like, a nearby base or something. And maybe they do, you don't know. There might be a base in the overall kind of star sector. But you don't—there hasn't been, like, you're not under a state of siege, you know? And there isn't a front with them where you have, you know, huge military vessels poised ready for assault. They just kind of—they're kind of harriers, right? Like they kind of show up, and—or like kind of guerrilla fighters, but really intermittent ones. They show up with a specific objective, they try to carry it out,

and then they move on. But they've never been good like this. They've never like pulled it off.

ALI: Is there like a back and forth?

AUSTIN: Not that you—like, are you sending people to Earth? To kill?

ALI: Yeah, like, do I know any of, like…?

AUSTIN: You don't know any.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: And you probably would. Signet, you would definitely know.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Signet, while you were an Exarch to a living Divine, you never okayed, like, sending people to go kill people on Earth.

ALI: 'Cause there is a flippancy that this guy is speaking about his job with that's like… I'm like a secret police officer and I don't super agree with everything but like… I don't know, there's just like…

AUSTIN: He knows there—he believes there to be a war, to be clear.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: He believes that Earth is at war with the Divine Fleet.

JACK: Actually, can I check this real quick?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: And I'm coming down the stairs after having gone up with—to get the food.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And I got sidetracked hearing that.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): You say we're at war.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Yeah.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): This is gonna sound like a really—I'm sorry about how this is gonna sound, but like… what have we done to you?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): It's a long war. And, you know, I'm not here because you killed my dad or whatever. That's—I've definitely had family members go off to fight, and you know what? They don't come back. So… But uh, I don't know what you're looking for here.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): I'm looking for a reason why you're attacking us.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): [muttering] Oh my god, I swear. You're talking to the wrong guy.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): No, no, I know, you've said this, you're just a—you know, you're not the general. But you should at least know why you're—

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Because you don't have—Okay. Okay. Here's what I can do is I can tell you what we have on Earth. And why it would be better if you had it, too. We got a family, alright? We have like, people who care for us and we're—you know, we don't have to rely on big…

AUSTIN: And he like looks up at Waltz Tango, and is like…

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): ...like, machines who might decide to kill us tomorrow, or whatever. And I'm not—I don't—we have robots in the world, but like, the whole culture isn't built around that shit. And—Sorry, around that stuff. And... I don't know, I'm not good at this part, man. I'm not here to convert people into believers or whatever. But the Blue Path has been around a long time and every time I go to church, I'm reminded that we have a place in the universe. You know? Like when I talk to the chaplain on our attack ship, he... like… he made me feel like we had a home that was really ours, not just like a place we lived in. Do you know what I mean? Like it wasn't just a place where people happened to be. We had a home. And you're floating around in space, and like… you don't got it anymore. We want you to come home. And you won't.

[85:56]

JANINE (as SIGNET): You don't know anything about us.

ALI (as TENDER): Yeah, dude, this is...

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): [overlapping] It takes two, so.

JANINE (as SIGNET): You don't know anything about our place.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): [overlapping] Again, I'm not a—you don't look at me, I'm not gonna make the convincing argument. I'm a guy who knows how to paint pictures. Okay? I'm not the one who can explain this shit to you.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): But you're all we've got.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I've told you what I can tell you.

ALI (as TENDER): [sighs]

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): You wanna know something else, ask me something else, but I—this is it.

ALI (as TENDER): Okay. Fine. Whatever. When you're out on a mission, how do you—is there a way that you get in touch with people back in Earth?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): We are like complete package units. We show up with a mission, we have all the supplies we need already—every now and then we hook up with another unit that gives us something. You know, they've already shipped ahead, or our flight suits or whatever, but like… There isn't—we don't need to be in contact with home. We come out here with a mission.

ALI (as TENDER): Was there anyone like that for you with this mission?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): No. It was the whole unit came together on a single ship. The Salamander.

ALI (as TENDER): Okay. And since you're clearly not the leader, who were you reporting to?

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): [exhales] Robin's Song.

ALI (as TENDER): Okay.

AUSTIN: And like does the thing where like—he moves his tongue inside of his mouth and catches one of his teeth, do you know what I mean? "This fucking guy." Like that, kind of?

ALI: Mhm.

> JACK (as FOURTEEN): You don’t like him?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): No, I love him, he’s great. It’s just tough sometimes.
>
> ALI (as TENDER): What’s tough about it?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): This is getting personal, this is—can I get some spaghetti or what?
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Yeah, okay. Sure. Right. I’m gonna get you some spaghetti.

JACK: And I give him some spaghetti.

AUSTIN: Do you like—how does it pass through? Does it just pass through the weird energy wall?

JACK: I think that it’s passed through, and as it’s passed through, you can see by the surface of spaghetti that it gets cold as it goes through. And that’s not something that I’m doing.

AUSTIN: No, no—well, here’s the thing is Signet’s whole thing was that she was going to give him a warm meal.

JACK: Oh, damn it.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That won’t count. He’s like, “This is cold.” And he like holds up his hands that have the handcuffs on. And he says “And also,” and like, hits them together.

> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I’m—let me come out and eat with you, and then I’ll go back in my weird glass tube. I’ll answer all your questions. And also it’ll be warm spaghetti instead of cold spaghetti. Cold spaghetti is gross.
>
> JANINE (as SIGNET): Alright.

AUSTIN: All this time, Acre Seven has just been like, head against the glass, watching.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

AUSTIN: And then she just like—at you saying "alright", she like, stands back, and then flicker-walks away up to where the dinner table is and just sits down. Cascara rolls back in and just like rolls up to the dinner table. And like sees you letting this dude out and doesn't say anything. Like eyes on it, but like is clearly able to let you do the thing.

I think her uniform, by the way—I've described her before as being kind of—I guess I've described her as like Zoë Kravitz with close blonde hair, right, so kind of light-skinned black with light blonde hair, very close cropped. But her uniform I think is this like khaki-colored military uniform with black shoulders and a couple of pins. And the pins are all orbits. They're various types of orbits. So there's like an elliptical pin that's like an elliptical orbit, there's like a perfectly circular pin, there's like a bunch of different things from different actions that she's been part of. And she lets you bring this guy up to the dining room table. And she even says like, "Observation. Glad you're joining us." And everyone kind of comes back together for this big family dinner.

Massalia—The name of the culture that Massalia is from is Apostolosian, Apostolos, which is this kind of like ancient space empire that's had its ups and downs and I don't know where they're quite at right this moment, but they're an ancient culture that used to be like—I guess like space Rome is the closest comparison that we've ever described them as? People who've listened to some other stuff have dealt with them before here or there. But this person, they are—so they are Apostolosian, and they are not here for this at all. But also sees that Cascara isn't causing any shit, and so, like, if their commander isn't upset then they can't be upset either.

[90:47]

I think Waltz Tango Cache gives Observation less to eat. Like, a smaller plate of food.

> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Yeah, that's… no, don't—
>
> AUSTIN (as WALTZ): I didn't know I was making for eight, or nine, or however many people are at this table. I thought I was making for *us.*
>
> JANINE (as SIGNET): You can take from mine.
>
> AUSTIN (as WALTZ): If you say so, lady.

JANINE (as SIGNET): I don’t need as much.

AUSTIN (as WALTZ): Fine.

AUSTIN: And then like, gives some of yours to Observation. And then also, I’m just gonna describe how Waltz Tango eats. A little hole opens in his hand and then like, piece by piece feeds spaghetti into it. And sucks it in.

ALI: Wait, is it like the little—is it like how crabs eat where they have like the two… where it like slowly puts it in?

AUSTIN: I don’t know. Wait, how do crabs eat?

ALI: [laughs] Crabs—

JANINE: No, crabs like feed their mouths, they still eat through their mouth. They don’t eat through their claws.

AUSTIN: Oh, I was very confused.

[ALI and JANINE laugh]

ALI: No, I know, but like—there’s like a thing that he puts it in. Like little bites.

AUSTIN: Is there?

ALI: Yeah, they take their two big claws and like break off tiny little pieces?

JACK: Crab eating gif.

AUSTIN: I’m on it. Oh, look at these crabs. Oh, yes yes yes, I see what you’re saying, yes.

JANINE: Oh.

AUSTIN: There’s like—Oh, I see. You’re saying like these weird little hands. Like mouth hands.

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: I thought you were saying he had a hole in his hand that he was like feeding the spaghetti through.

AUSTIN: No. Yes, correct. He has a hole in his hand that he feeds the spaghetti through. It's like a vacuum.

JACK: Like a crab.

AUSTIN: Not like a crab.

[GROUP LAUGHTER]

JANINE: Like his hand is a crab.

ALI: I thought the hole had like another part that was putting stuff into it, I'm sorry. It was like—I've had a weird day.

AUSTIN: No. I mean, kind of. That could be kind of cool, though, like two little pincers that came out. Yeah, let's do that. That sounds good.

JACK: Back our Patreon on this level and we'll give you a weekly animal talk podcast.

JANINE: So his hand is like reverse spider.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's great. No, not the whole hand.

JANINE: Instead of extruding, it—

AUSTIN: Just the palm. Just the palm of his hand is a reverse spider. Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

JACK: We do not have an animal talk podcast. I mean, we do, it's called Fishteen Minutes.

AUSTIN: That's a real thing.

ALI: Every Tuesday on twitch.com/FishteenMinutes.

AUSTIN: Sorry. Okay. Alright, so you have this meal. Do you have other questions for this guy?

JACK: Yeah, well, he was—

AUSTIN: [overlapping] You were asking something, what were you—Oh, Robin's Song.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Yeah, tell us about Robin Song. And tell us why you did that gesture with your tongue.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): That's very—

ALI (as TENDER): [overlapping] You don't ask like that.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Again, that's pretty—don't, come on.

AUSTIN: And he's like eating the spaghetti.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): He's like this hotshot pilot guy or whatever.

AUSTIN: He is definitely not telling you the whole truth about this guy.

ALI: God, I'm so torn by how much I don't like this guy to how much I want him to like me so I can get information from him.

AUSTIN: "I can—I can—I can show you him," says Acre Seven.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): What does that mean?

JANINE (as SIGNET): Alright.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): No, no, no, wait—

AUSTIN: Acre like, turns her head sideways, and then the boy sitting at the table—Morning's Observation, his hair gets really clean-cut, it's still half-pink and half-black, and it's like smooth, and it's still like at the same length, it still like comes down to like the top of his neck, but it's like—it's very carefully combed so that the—it kind of has like a pink—the top part is pink and the undercut is black. With like some black mixed in there, too. And just like, he's wearing the same jean jacket but on the back there is a picture of—or there is like a Robin kind of glitter spray-painted on the back of this jacket.

And then instead of wearing like, shitty ripped up jean shorts, he is wearing like crisp khaki pants. And underneath instead of this kind of like dirty messy white T-shirt, he is wearing like a white dress shirt. But he's still wearing the shitty glitter jean jacket, also. And instead of having the peach fuzz he has like, a very well-shaped goatee, that connects up to the top of his lips. And he has like,

different tattoos that don't look like they were done by someone in the back of a shop somewhere. They are little musical notes that come across from the top of his forehead down the side of his face, that if anybody played music, would know that it is like some sort of, little bar of music that could be played on something.

[95:31]

And then he turns back to himself. And he goes "Fine, he's my brother. He's my brother, Robin's Song is my brother. I don't wanna talk about him, okay?" And just eats spaghetti, eats spaghetti, eats spaghetti.

> JACK (as FOURTEEN): I'm gonna kick myself if I don't ask this, and I know that your answer—I don't know what your answer's gonna be. The Blue Path. What is it?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): It's like, church. You know? That's—
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay. What's the tenet? What's the core tenet?
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): It isn't soul, it isn't terra, it is Earth. It is our home. There is nothing else like it. Origins mean something. They're how we know that we are each other's. It's like—
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay, that's an alright tenet.
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): You can't make it up as you go along, you know what I mean? There's lineage, there's—this is why I don't wanna talk about my brother, I'm not supposed to talk shit about family.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay. Thanks for telling me that.
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Do you have anything to drink?
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Yeah, we got water.
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): What about milk?
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): Uh, yeah, it's synthesized.
>
> AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Nah, I'm good. I'll take the water.
>
> JACK (as FOURTEEN): There's a thing we've gotta do, which I don't know if you're gonna—I don't think you're gonna want to help us with, but um…

we've got moves to make. You know? We have to make a move next. And I'm giving you an opportunity to make that easier for us. I'm not expecting you to take it.

AUSTIN: Cascara says like, "Fourteen?" Question mark. "Where's this going?"

JACK (as FOURTEEN): [exhales] We need to work out what to do next.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): I can't tell you.

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Okay.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): That's not—I'm not the guy, you know? You'd have to talk to somebody else. I got sent here—

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Like your brother?

AUSTIN: He kinda like, again, tongue under the front lip. And you see when he does that, you can see his teeth, and he definitely has a fucking grill in.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Yeah, maybe him.

ALI (as TENDER): He's our only lead right now. You understand that, right?

[97:52]

[MUSIC - "The Twilight Mirage" by Jack de Quidt begins]

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Let me think about it. Okay? Let me think about it, 'cause this is a big deal. Okay? Like, family. Right?

JACK (as FOURTEEN): Yeah. Everyone comes from somewhere.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Yeah. You said I'd get out of here, um—what was your—you had a long name.

JANINE (as SIGNET): People just call me Signet.

AUSTIN (as OBSERVATION): Cool. Signet, you said I'd get out of here if I helped, and you fed me, and that's cool, and I've told you everything I know, like—as far as I know, there's no other—I mean, well—I've told you the stuff you asked. And I can't just tell you this. Okay? Let me think on this. Please. Let me just weigh some options, and—just give me some time, okay?

AUSTIN: And Cascara nods her head, and she says, “We can give him time. We have something else. I’ll tell you about it after dinner.”

[100:00]

[MUSIC - “The Twilight Mirage” by Jack de Quidt ends]