

[00:00:00]

Kyle

Previously on Quest Friends.

[Opening theme, "Friends" by Miracle of Sound, begins.]

Kyle

The note says that currently Jagged Dream members from across the steadfast are implanting Easy Life brands on hundreds of thousands of bottles using parties, secret meetings, whatever they can to get this brand on whomever they can. And in one week, one week exactly, a message will be broadcast throughout the datasphere, activating the brands and funneling the energy, the life from the wearers, into the Breytnir battery, which will convert that energy into something Argent can use.

Hundreds of thousands of people will die, and the Jagged Dream will have the power to pull whatever horror they want from whatever part of time.

[Opening theme intensifies.]

[The music fades.]

The energy of Prom de Plume at its height is electrifying.

[The opening theme fades out. A slow but intense horn fanfare begins.]

It courses through every student in the room, from the bright joy of those dancing on the center floor to the quiet fear of those building the courage to ask their crushes to dance, to the steady anticipation of four adventurers, all of whom are ready to pounce on the prey they've been waiting almost four days to find.

In one song, you'll know for sure who Ezra is.

[The music intensifies.]

Will you be ready to act?

[The music ends abruptly.]

[Brightly.]

But that's not for another hour or so! That's like, part way through the dance. We got a flash back a bit to right before when the dance happens, because that's where we left off last episode.

[Upbeat, jazzy muzak begins to play.]

So we are now finally at the Prom de Plume episode! You're gonna dance with some hotties. You're gonna hang out with your friends! And you're gonna find out the person who's been under cover to systematically murder everyone on the ship and then everyone in the steadfast and potentially the whole world.

Typical dance.

So, uh, before we get started, I actually want to re go through all of the outstanding suspects for who Ezra is, and then also I think it'd be fun to get an idea of where all of you are at, who you think Ezra is, and then who your characters think Ezra is.

[The music fades.]

And if you are listening at home, write it down! Write down who you think Ezra is, and we'll find out in however long this episode is, whether or not you're right.

Tom

[Dryly.] Livetweet us.

Ari

[Laughter.]

Tom

At Quest underscore Friends to see if your predictions were right!

Kyle

Hashtag Who Is Ezra, and at Quest Friends, and we can, we can all see who you think it is.

Ari

I was gonna say that if many people that listen to these are like me, and listen to podcasts as they are walking and/or on public transport, feel free to write it on your hand if you don't have a piece of paper nearby for you to write things down. I guess you can do it on your phone, but...

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Ari

What a millennial thing to do, that's why you have your hands.

Hallie

Can you imagine being on a train and then seeing the person next to you write, like, "ANEENS," on their hand?

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle

Speaking of aneens, I'm gonna go through the suspects and I will go through them in the order that they're written on the suspect list. So we have...

[Jazzy music begins to play. It's upbeat and sounds a little like something you might hear in a '50s sitcom.]

Captain Jebediah Ishmael, the walrus captain of this vessel. You have the aneens, which there are many, many aneens. So is it just one of the aneens? Is it all of the aneens?

Tom

[Whispering.] It's not the aneens.

Kyle

Is it none of the aneens?

Tom

[Whispering.] It's none of them.

Kyle

Who knows?

Hallie

[Whispering.] It's a hive mind.

Tom

[Whispering.] It's the last option.

Kyle

We have Inspector Cecilos and L'Adrien, both of whom have been knocked off the suspect list. I have said that we have enough evidence to conclude that they are not, in fact, Ezra. We have Soe's best friend Meeghan. We have...

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Sir Kentrim, Esquire.

Kyle

I'm gonna miss doing this voice. We have Professor Gary Goldstone, whose voice I will not miss doing, and then our final suspect, the person whose voice I will least miss doing,

Kyle (as VIRGULE)

VIRGULE.

Kyle

So we have Captain Jebediah Ishmael, the aneens, Meeghan, Sir Kentrim, Professor Gary Goldstone and VIRGULE. Those are all outstanding suspects, write down who you think it is, and...

[The music fades.]

As for the players, who do y'all all think Ezra is?

Tom

So...so, obviously, I think that Ezra is Meeghan, and have been saying that for a long time now.

Kyle

I think you said it like, after...probably the first day, in game.

Tom

I think so. Xoc doesn't really have enough evidence to form a strong opinion? His knees are not sore from jumping to conclusions.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Tom

But if Xoc was leaning towards anything, it would probably be Sir Kentrim after the really sketchy incidents the day before.

Kyle

Okay. Emily...who, who...who's Elee suspecting?

Emily

Elee probably would suspect Sir Kentrim to some extent. She's probably still suspecting Meeghan, [00:05:00] but she really, really wants it to be VIRGULE.

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle

[Through laughter.] You fucking hate each other.

Emily

We gotta feud.

Kyle

All right, Hallie. What is, what is Hopper—what is our primary investigator thinking?

Hallie

Hop's not convinced Ezra is physically on the ship, actually. Hop thinks that Ezra is the patron for the Pro-dig-us. The Prodigious is the actual pronunciation, I guess I'll use that one. He thinks that Ezra is the datasphere patron for the Prodigious, but there's some connection he's missing to a physical location on the ship.

Tom

We have to destroy Ezra's blood seal.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie

Something like that. Oh, look, a magic circle that's written in chalk. That's like,

[Spooky intense voice.] Summoning!

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie

He thinks Ezra is somehow physically on the ship, but he's not convinced that he is a person. I, as Hallie, have a heist board on which all evidence points to Sir Kentrim. I have been saying it's Kentrim from the very beginning—not on the podcast, just to these knuckleheads.

Tom

[Laughter.]

Hallie

When they asked.

Kyle

And then finally, Ari.

Ari

Yeah.

Kyle

So Hallie's, I thought, was one of the most intriguing theories, but I also really am intrigued by your theory as well. So what are your and Misha's theories?

Ari

So I as a person, I've thought mostly that it's Meeghan, kind of like Tom. I also think that Vir-jewel—VIRGULE might be a sidekick of sorts, like a minion, but like an actual villain minion, not—not the meme, but the act—what it actually meant before.

Tom

Photoshops incoming.

Ari

[Laughter.] Because, ah, because—

Kyle

Just a minion as a globe.

Ari

I feel like there's a reason why VIRGULE speaks like that. It's very Iago-ish, and I feel like he has some Iago-ish things to it, but he might turn and actually help in the end, kind of like Iago does? I feel like he's following that arc, and I said that once and Kyle went really quiet, so I stand by that theory.

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle

Vir—for reference, I yell Iago to get into VIRGULE's voice, because I realized it's a really bad Gilbert Gottfried impression.

Ari

But Misha obviously thinks that it is Sir Kentrim, because, uh, they are not sure how Kentrim knows all of the things that he does about Misha? And it was oddly convenient that after the incident happened, bad things happened to Misha back to back. So they think it has something to do with that.

Kyle

I'm going to cut this from the episode, but **Tom** what the fuck is that globe you just sent us?

Tom

I—ever since you introduced VIRGULE, I'm like, oh it's Spin from Really Wild Animals.

Ari

[Distressed.] What is this thing?

Tom

[A little indignant.] A—a car—a cartoon character from my childhood!

Ari

I don't like that face!

Hallie

He looks like Clipart.

Tom

Have you ever—never watched National Geographic's Really Wild Animals?

Ari

No! I watched Zoboomafoo.

Hallie

Zoboomafoo!

Tom

That's some PBS stuff! This is—this is National Geographic.

Kyle

This looks like VIRGULE's stoner cousin.

Tom

[Laughter.] Well, there's a better version of, of Spin here. Let me get the version that's used for most of the episodes. I don't know why that design was ever used. But usually he looks like...

[A pause and a click as Tom sends them an image.] This.

Ari

Oh my God, I don't know which one's worse!

Kyle

Oh—

Hallie

[Strained noise.]

Kyle

That like, that's his very chipper cousin. Like the other one was on weed. This one's on some sort of like fucking crack or something. Hey kids, let's go learn about the environment! *[Frantic laughter.]*

Tom

[Pained.] Why are you so upset by this globe man from my childhood?

Ari

They are very scary.

Kyle

[Laughter.] I hate him.

Ari

I think that globe is Ezra.

Tom

It's fine.

Ari

Like, not VIR—ahh, oh my god, what is this? All right. I guess we're just sending...

Kyle

Oh, God, Emily, why did you—

Emily

[Crosstalking.] Globey!

Kyle

[Over Emily.] Share that?

Emily

It's Globey!

Hallie

[Intently.] I love him.

Emily

From, from, from Pee-wee's Playhouse.

Tom

What did you—oh no. Oh, uhh, yeah, that's unsettling.

Emily

[Laughter.]

Kyle

Oh God. I hate all of these.

Emily

[Through laughter.] We need to stop.

Tom

I'm so sorry that I've done this.

Kyle

Okay.

[A long pause.]

So.

[Snorting laughter from the party.]

[Muted poppy dance music can be heard in the background, muffled by the gymnasium doors.]

Okay, so we're going to start with Elee and Misha. Elee and Misha, you two are right outside of Prom de Plume. It's, it's like the outside of a school dance. So there are a couple of fold up tables with some students behind them, some human ones, mostly aneens. They're not taking tickets, but they are verifying people's WayPals for five heart points, because you have to have five heart points to go with somebody.

And they're also stamping Easy Life brands on folks. That's the way of recognizing that you're in the dance. And also, if you remember...

[The music fades.]

The way they're going to steal people's life force to power Argent.

Hallie

[Dryly.] Oh, that's convenient.

Tom

[Loud extended hissing noise.] Fuckin' nope!

Kyle

You're waiting outside. You are outside with Soe, Jesse, and Everett, and you're just waiting for Hop and Xoc. Because even though you're going with Rei, Elee, she's waiting for you inside there. Tom, you have your hand raised.

Tom

Can Xoc ... can Xoc appear doing that thing where you like, like the date goes down the stairs and they do that shot?

Ari

[Laughter.]

Tom

Of the date coming down the stairs? Can Xoc appear that way?

[Laughter from the party, mostly Ari.]

Kyle

[Over intensifying laughter from the party.] You beat me to the punch, Tom, but let's get right to that scene.

Tom

I'm sorry, okay? **[00:10:00]** I didn't have enough faith in you. I apologize.

Ari

[Strained, through laughter.] I told Kyle that I needed that scene with Xoc coming down the stairs. And now you had that idea too!

Kyle

Let's play this out. So you're sitting there, you're waiting for your dates. And then suddenly, you see Xoc in his new clothing start to walk down the staircase. And because there's a really strong sense of...I don't want to say male gaze, but that kind of thing in these shots, I feel like I shouldn't be the one to describe Xoc walking down the stairs and I don't think Xoc should either.

Tom

[Startled.] What?

Kyle

Misha!

[A bark of laughter from the party.]

What does Xoc look like, walking down the stairs.

Ari

Oh my God. I didn't want to—

Hallie

It's the Misha gaze!

Emily

[Laughter.]

Ari

I didn't—I didn't—that's not what I was planning to do!

[Laughter from the party.]

I don't know! I just had a plan on how they react to how they—he looks! Not to describe that!

Kyle

[Slyly.] Well now you get to do both. So...

[A romantic, '80s glam rock power ballad begins to play in the background. Cue a soft hazy camera shot focused on Xoc as he begins to descend from the top of the staircase.]

I'm going to put in the romantic music here.

Ari

Oh god. Okay, there's so much pressure. Basically, I want to say that Misha was waiting for Xoc, leaning on the cane and like, with their top hat a bit like, at an angle? Like, trying to look like really casual and really, like, oh, yeah. Here I am, being cool. Like they, they looked up previously how people look good? And so they are trying to imitate that.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Ari

They're standing.

Emily

[Indistinct, strained noise through laughter.]

Ari

And, and so, when they see Xoc coming down, they're just...shocked.

[Laughter from the party.]

Ari

Because...because to Misha, Xoc looks beautiful, and like it's something that—you're wearing like a star cape, right, Tom? And like a...

Tom

Yeah, it's like a, it's like a robe of star and moon patterns.

Kyle

[Dryly.] He's just dressed up like Vespari.

Emily

He's like, doing a Vespari cosplay.

Ari

To Misha, that robe of stars, on Xoc it looks like they actually just sparkle, and like they just make Xoc glow even more with that. And then they have like, the ascot that just makes—brings like, a lot of features to, to his face that Misha just finds really attractive. Uh, they will be leaning like really forward into the cane while looking at Xoc coming down, to the point that they are actually going to little bit too far into the front and lose their balance a bit.

[The music fades.]

And they're gonna like, fall forward a bit, and they're gonna be like,

Ari (as Misha)

[Stammering, overwhelmed.] Oh—Xoc! You...you look very...

Ari

And then at that point, they're gonna like, go forward.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Ari

Like, lose their balance and like catch their hat, and they're gonna be like,

Ari (as Misha)

Oh—hat! Oh, sm—my apologies. You look very hat—that is not, that is not a grammatically correct sentence, although I suppose it is not incorrect sentence either because I consider hats to be very beautiful. And well, I also consider you to be very...uh, hat. *[Strained laughter.]*

Kyle

[Intense laughter.]

Emily

[Laughter.]

Ari

[Sheepishly.] That's it.

Tom

So Xoc, as Misha stumbles a bit, will like try to hurry forward a bit like oh, oh! Reaching out as if to stabilize Misha, but then they're fine and then Xoc just sort of like awkwardly like, tries to pat down his robe a bit, as if that was the hand motion that he was always doing and is like,

Tom (as Xoc)

Oh! Uh, thank you, Misha Jarvis. I—I also think you were...look very beautiful this evening.

Ari

Their eyes are going to shine a lot because they're just really excited.

Tom (as Xoc)

You look very much like, like a noble ant!

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Ari

[Delighted.] Oh—oh, Misha is just glowing at that, at that compliment.

Ari (as Misha)

Oh, thank you, Xoc! You look like the prettiest of ants too!

Emily

[Laughter.]

Tom

And the, I, I imagine Xoc is just sort of going to like do those nervous smiles, while also like...like they, like, lock eyes for a few moments and just don't say anything else.

Ari

I feel like both of them are doing that.

Kyle

And then after that moment, you hear a set of wheels and a set of foot—feet?

Tom

Feets?

Kyle

Footsteps.

Hallie

Foots.

Ari

Feetsteps.

Hallie

A set of foots.

Kyle

You hear a set of—

[Laughter.]

You hear a set of wheels and a set of feets.

Tom

Step, step, step.

Kyle

Walking down the hall, and you see, uh, a few folks. You see Sera, wearing a beautiful denim dress. How a denim dress is beautiful, no one knows, but she makes it work. She also has I think it's called a brooch? Uh, you know the thing where like some person has a flower on one arm, and then, uh, the other person has like it pinned?

Hallie

Corsage is the arm, boutonniere.

Kyle

Yeah, so she is she is wearing a corsage, so it appears she is in fact going with a date, and next to her, you see wearing this very, like, formal like sweater vest and a boutonniere, Hopper Scotch. But while their outfits are very nice and they seem very excited as they're talking walking towards you, that's not what immediately draws your attention. Hallie, what draws their eye?

Hallie

The first thing you'll notice about Hopper Scotch's new hat...

[An upbeat kind of rock-western song begins to play. If Kid Rock was cool and not terrible.]

It's not [00:15:00] his signature brown! It is black, because black is all the colors.

Ari

[With a gasp.] Oh my God.

Hallie

His hat band, however, is his signature brown, like a really nice kind of reddish brown like what he's been wearing. His former hat kind of had a floppier brim? If you are vaguely familiar with types of cowboy hat, as I now am, he had more of a gambler style before. Now he has what is called a ridge or a brick, depending on which picture from the internet you are looking at.

[Laughter from the party.]

Hallie

The ridge, or the brick, has more of a dramatic curve to it, like a dramatic curve to the side, and the brim lifts up to reveal your face a little bit more? You can still do the dramatic hat covering the eyes thing, but it's just got more of a subtly dramatic tilt to it. It's a very classy, elegant, understated drama sort of a hat. It's very Hopper Scotch.

[The music fades.]

However!

[The music resumes and intensifies with a whistling melody.]

This hat did come from Misha Jarvis, and Clippy the Microsoft Word cipher. So you'll notice a little buckle on the left side of this hat that looks almost like a pilgrim buckle, but less gaudy and there. It's, it's pretty seamlessly blended into the, uh, the brown hat band, and if you press the side of it it goes—

[Fwip noise.]

And it flips up into a feather.

Emily

[Gasps.]

Hallie

For a look but I like to call Swashbuckler Light, trademark symbols.

Emily

[Delighted noise.]

Hallie

When did the feather is up, it can be removed to be used as a functioning quill that does not need an inkwell, and when it's up or off it reveals little compartments inside the hatband that are kind of reminiscent of a Microsoft Word home tab because they have office supplies in them, like paper clips and labels and tape.

Ari

[Loud delighted noise.]

Hallie

In conclusion, Hopper Scotch's new hat is a cowboy hat, a swashbuckler hat, and a reporter's hat, all in one.

Tom

You look like a man who knows his around stationary.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Yeah. So as he's walking, the feather is up because he's been playing with it. He kind of likes it. It's a, it's a small feather. It does not have Misha Jarvis feather, it's just there to evoke the spirit of the person who gave it to him.

Ari

Aww!

Tom

Oh—so good.

Ari

So Misha is going to turn around long enough for them to see Hop coming down with that hat, and it's basically, it's going to be like those cartoon moments where like, like the pupils have stars in them rather than like, the eyes, just like,

Ari (as Misha)

[Gasps in joy.] Simon Scotch! You're—you're wearing it! It's...it's so beautiful. I know I made this hat thinking of how it would look on you, but I haven't seen it on you yet, and it's even better than I would have imagined. I love it!

Hallie

Hopper...his face gets red a little bit, not like he's blushing, like when he was back in Roulettia. It's not in his ears. It's just like, a people are giving me attention type of a thing and he goes,

Hallie (as Hopper)

[A little sheepish.] Thanks Misha! I—I'm sorry I didn't it earlier, I just...I just, um...

Hallie

And he's kind of like, fidgeting with it a little bit now.

Hallie (as Hopper)

I just wanted to wait.

Ari (as Misha)

[Gently.] Oh, do not apologize. I totally understand. I was not expecting you to wear it right away. To be honest. I think this is the perfect time for you to wear it.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Thanks Misha. Misha, I...I can't remember if I ever thanked you so, um, thank you.

Ari (as Misha)

You're welcome, Simon Scotch.

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Clears his throat.]

I think Hop is fine.

Emily

[Intense "awwing."]

[Gentle piano music begins to play.]

Tom

And Xoc, Xoc will like—visibly light up a bit at that and be like,

Tom (as Xoc)

Okay, Hopper Scotch.

Hallie

[The music swells. Hallie's voice catches slightly.] Hopper—like, being called Hopper Scotch again? He also lights up a little bit. He looks pretty happy.

Ari

[Delighted.] Aww!

Emily

Elee's smiling at this. She's really happy to see Hop feeling like himself again. But her eyes definitely aren't like, proud watery. They're not—why, why is everyone else crying?

[Laughter from the party.]

It's raining inside!

Ari

It's raining inside of my eyes.

Kyle

Oh, of course everyone else is really excited about the hat too. Jesse's just fawning over it. They're so excited.

Emily

They're gonna put it in their biography.

Hallie

Oh, god.

Kyle

And Everett, for the first time you even get a little smile from him.

Hallie

[Taken aback.] What.

Tom

Just a single nod of approval.

Hallie

[More intently.] What!

Kyle

And you just hear him mumble,

Kyle (as Everett)

[Scoffing.] Ugh. Glad to see you picked a good color for once.

Hallie

Hop will smile and say,

Hallie (as Hopper)

Thanks Everett. It's all the colors.

Ari

Aww!

Kyle

And then Sera will...

[Clears throat.] Kind of slap your arm with her hand and say,

[The music fades.]

Hallie

Ouch.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Kyle (as Sera)

Ah, hey—hey! Show them—show them the thing.

Kyle

Because here's the thing, Hop. Here's the thing—your hat can normally store office supplies, but you're about to go into a battle. So it's stored with a little bit something extra.

[Fast paced, mischievous music begins to play.]

Sera has put together four ciphers, one for each of you to use in the upcoming fight, and I need each of you to roll a D12 to see what cipher you get.

Ari

D12...

Tom

Aw, yeah.

Ari

What is this madness?

Hallie

I don't have those prepared.

Tom

Aw, yeah, my D12!

Ari
D12?

Tom
My poor sweet boy!

Ari
[Dice roll.]

Aw, fuck, hang on.

[Dice roll.]

I didn't roll it.

[Dice roll.]

This is another die.

Tom
It's been so long.

Hallie
What is this, that's a ten.

Ari
[Rattling noises.] Ahhh...eh...I don't know where my D12 went. So I...

Hallie
Is this a twelve?

Ari
So I...

Hallie
[Crosstalking.] That's not a twelve.

Ari
I'm gonna do the thing. I'm gonna roll a D6 twice and add those numbers, because I don't know where my twelve is.

[The music fades.]

Tom
But what if you would have rolled a one?

Ari
[Frustrated.] Ahhh.

Hallie
Oh, I found my D12.

Tom

No, it's—

Hallie

Use a random number generator.

Ari

Yeah, I'll use a random number generator.

[Dice roll.]

Emily

I rolled a one.

[The music fades.]

Hallie

Eight!

Ari

Seven.

Tom

A seven!

Kyle

So Ari, you have a beam that separates a non-living object up to the size of a human into granular sand-sized duplicates. So for example, shooting a door will cause it to crumble into a pile of really, really, really tiny doors.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Kyle

Tom, you get a bass instrument that swirls with the energy of the sea.

[A pause.]

I wrote these a long time ago so I don't know what the fuck that means.

[Laughter from the party.]

But good luck figuring it out.

Tom

Are you sure you didn't write this after reading Link's Awake—playing Link's Awakening? Should—do I need to crack out Marin's lullaby?

Kyle

Uh, Hallie. Hallie, you get a small bird that opens its mouth and sends a non-boss target to next morning.

Tom

[Laughter.]

Hallie

Hah!

Kyle

So you can't use it on like, one of the Jagged Dream leaders, but you could use it on somebody else.

Hallie

This is like a small-time travel bird. I fucking love it! All right.

Kyle

And then finally, Emily. You can tell Sera got this gift just for you and put a lot of thought into it.

Emily

[Sighs.]

Kyle

You get a sack of live bees.

Ari

[Sincerely delighted.] Oh my god!

Hallie

[Gleefully.] Bees!

Kyle

Be careful that they don't sting you. The bag isn't tied super tight.

Emily

Elee ties it a little bit tighter.

Kyle

Meanwhile, Misha, I'm just assuming, just eyes it like, almost like the, the schoolyard like, hey, you want to trade some of your lunch from my lunch?

Ari

Basically. They're just like, ohh, they're like confused as to why she tightens it more instead of opening it.

Kyle

See my bee friends! Everyone starts screaming.

Tom

Misha is just like watching the bees, like, gather around them, start like, trying to build wax.

Kyle

The only person who doesn't mind is Ness, who's just excited to see so many bugs.

Hallie (as Ness)

Bugs, bugs, bugs!

Emily

Can I give the bees to Ness?

Ari

[Gasps.]

Kyle

Hallie, is Ness here?

Hallie

He is not.

Emily

Oh, okay.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie

I am sorry.

Kyle

[More intense rock music begins to play.]

Okay, so you all meet up. You all got your gift. You're ready to go. You're gonna go in, you're gonna find Ezra, you're gonna stop the Jagged Dream, and...

[The music ends.]

You gotta get the Easy Life brand before you go in. You just see an aneen look at you like,

Kyle (as aneen)

[More ominous music begins to play. It's not quite as intense and unsettling as the Jagged Dream theme, but has a very suspicious energy.]

Aneen? Aneen.

Ari

Well...

Tom

Hold on, hold on, hold on. Are the aneens administering the stamps?

Kyle

Yeah, it's random students, which typically means aneens. So it's not all the aneens, but it's some of the aneens.

Tom

Can I exploit my heart points thus far to smuggle us in without the brand?

Kyle

Um, how many heart points do you have with the aneens? I think it's two, right?

Tom

Probably.

Kyle

You have two heart points, which I will say is enough to get two of you in.

Tom

Can I...can I make a bargain? Can I bargain for three people in exchange for one step extra difficulty on my own roll to get myself in.

Kyle

Yes, but you need to push the aneens better. You need to show that you understand them, because these are tough PE aneens, so they're gonna be like,

Kyle (as aneen table attendant)

[Indignant.] Aneen.

Kyle

So how do you exploit your relationship with the aneens get in?

Tom

Trying to remember didn't I get those by giving a gift to the aneens, or was it just—no, wasn't it just through like...

Emily

[Beginning to whisper under Tom.] Regionals.

Tom

I did well enough at...in PE...

Emily

[Quietly.] Regionals.

Tom

That I got heart points?

Ari

Uh-huh.

Kyle

Yeah, you were you were bonding over them.

Ari

Yeah.

Kyle

You were bonding over regionals with them.

Ari

[Through laughter.] Regionals.

Hallie (as Ness)

Regionals, regionals!

Kyle

They were such a big fan of you that they gave you a gift because you rolled that well.

[The music fades.]

Tom

That's right. Xoc will...Xoc will meander up to the ticket booth and be like,

Tom (as Xoc)

Hello, old...old pals from gym class. I was wondering, since I have spent so much time with the PE students, if you wouldn't mind...letting a couple of my friends in without the stamp. It's okay. They'll make sure not to go in and out again, so there's no problems. They're just a little, a little uncomfortable about getting you know, the Easy Life brand. We've heard some weird stuff about Easy Life.

Kyle

The aneen is going to look at its own brand like, kind of concerned for a second, like,

Kyle (as aneen table attendant)

[Unsettled.] Aneen.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Trying to be reassuring, but not very hard.] It'll...it'll probably be okay, but they're just a little worried, and I wanted to make sure they could enjoy prom without the brand.

Kyle (as aneen table attendant)

[Reluctantly.] Aneen.

Tom

[Whispering.] Fuck.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Inspirational, dramatic music begins to swell as Xoc attempts to rally the aneens.]

Aneens. Are you going to give in to that Kentrim mindset? I know you—you're team players.

Kyle

And you hear just a bunch of like, muffled—

Kyle (as aneens)

[Whispering with increasing intensity.] Kentrim...Kentrim, Kentrim!

Kyle

Start to go through all the aneens.

Tom (as Xoc)

Look, aneens. Look. I know you all. You're team players. A team doesn't live by survival of the fittest. A team helps pick people back up when they're down. Helps people get through moments when they're scared, so that everybody makes it to the end.

Kyle (as aneen table attendant)

[Cautiously.] Regionals?

Hallie

[Wheezes out a laugh.]

Tom (as Xoc)

[Firmly.] Regionals.

Kyle (as aneens)

[With increasing volume and intensity.] Regionals. Regionals. Regionals!

Tom (as Xoc) and Kyle (as aneens)

[00:25:00] Regionals! Regionals!

Kyle

And, yeah, everyone except for you including the NPCs—it's not even that they're let through, it's just that the aneens are so fired up they don't even notice everyone go through.

[The music fades.]

And that's part of the reason you can't, is because they are really rallying around you.

Tom

Okay.

Kyle

So everyone has made their way inside, but we got to figure out how to get Xoc inside without issue as well.

Tom

Okay. All right, I've been training for this moment here, because you see...

[The slow, lumbering accordion music that typically accompanies Vespari begins to play.]

Xoc is specialized in sleight of hand.

So I would like to take a blank card. As they go to stamp Xoc's hand, he'll just slide a blank card out of his sleeve in between his hand and the stamp so that the card gets Easy Lived instead, and then just, like, can casually slip it away while no one is looking.

Hallie

Cards are notoriously similar to human flesh.

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle

It's a Vespari card, don't question it.

Hallie

[Strained noise.]

Kyle

You do realize that if you fail this you will get stamped.

Tom

[Resigned.] Yeah.

Kyle

Okay.

Tom

Yeah, I've well, let's be perfectly frank here. Xoc doesn't have that many points to be drained away by Argent.

Ari

[Faintly.] Oh my god.

Kyle

Give me a speed roll.

Tom

[The music fades.]

Okay, and so it will—it will be one step lower than normal, because my two steps from specialization, but then my devil's deal.

Kyle

Correct.

Tom

I would like...no. No, there's no point.

Emily

[Laughter.]

Tom

There's no point. I was like, I'll spend some effort! And then I thought, why bother.

[Nervously.] Ha, ha. Why bother!

[Weakly.] Heart of the cards...

[Whispering.] Jesus fuckin'...

A ten? *[Strained.]* A ten??

Kyle

Xoc now has a dozen glowing lines.

Hallie

[Startled, frantic laugh.]

Ari

[Groans.]

Kyle

On the back of his hand.

Ari

[Groans.]

Emily

Nooo!

Kyle

As the Easy Life stamps in with a bit of a sting, and comes out.

Hallie

Watch this like—the Jagged Dream didn't have enough, but now that Xoc is, has had his hand stamped, it's like, just barely enough to power Argent.

Tom

[Weakly.] Okay. That's fine. All of that training.

[Dramatically.] Years of Academy training!

Hallie and Tom

Wasted!

Kyle

Anyways. You have this brand, and you're in the prom now.

[Poppy dance music begins to play.]

You'd be impressed how a little creativity, a little sleight of hand, and a lot of buy-in can turn a functional yet drab gymnasium into an elegant ballroom.

Tom

Poor choice of words—sleight of hand.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

On the central dance floor...

Tom

[Crosstalking quietly.] It's too fucking soon.

Kyle

Students move with a confidence that begets grace, even for those lacking any. Other students sit on cheap metal folding chairs at the side of the room, gossiping with their friends over snacks obtained from the catering bar. This is a bar filled with food, punch, and many anxious dancers trying to avoid the dance floor, their crushes, or more, frequently, both.

Additionally, the pop-up stage used for the Proligarchy competition has been transformed into a long banquet table for the proligarchs to sit at, with a curtain masking the stage where the student performers will begin providing live music in about an hour.

[The music fades.]

And, since all dances need one, in the corner of the room there's...

[Brightly.] A photographer!

Kyle (as Loell)

[Playful, light-hearted music plays.]

Can we—can we, can we go get one? Can we get a picture?

Kyle

Uh, and Xoc, Loell starts tugging on your—

Tom

[Crosstalking in a barely audible whisper.] Oh, god.

Kyle

On your arm a little bit, and like pointing excitedly to the photographer. Like,

Kyle (as Loell)

Hey, can we get—can we get a picture?

Tom (as Xoc)

Um...No.

Tom

Xoc doesn't look or anything, just says no.

Kyle (as Loell)

[A little petulant.] But come on man!

Tom

That's not going to get a response from Xoc.

Kyle (as Loell)

What the hell? I can't like—I can't—

Kyle

And you're just gonna go off to the rest of the group while he's just rambling.

Kyle (as Loell)

I can't go there myself! Okay? Now listen, I'm sure I won't appear in the photo anyway, but like, you know, it's the fun of doing it. Come on!

Tom

Loell confirmed for a vampire.

Kyle (as Loell)

The Jagged Dream isn't gonna do their nonsense...

Tom (as Xoc)

Misha Jarvis, why don't—why don't we head over to this refreshment table where I can consume punch? I've never actually tasted what human punch is like!

[The music ends.]

Ari (as Misha)

Oh, certainly. I hope it doesn't taste as bad as a literal punch.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Ari (as Misha)

Because that sounds really painful.

Tom (as Xoc)

Indeed.

Kyle (as Loell)

[A little sullen.] Oh great. So now you're not doing one thing I can't do, but wanted to do, and now you're going to do another thing I can't do, but wanted to do! Yeah, yeah, real—real cool buddy, real cool.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Stammering a little.] Let's go...quickly.

Kyle

Um, you all make your way over to the punch table, which is in fact where, Elee, Hop and Rei are. As you make your way over, she turns over from Hop, who she was very excitedly talking to and she says,

Kyle (as Ramya)

Oh, you must be Xoc and Misha, correct?

Ari (as Misha)

Salutations! It is correct.

Kyle (as Ramya)

Well, it is a pleasure to meet both of you!

Kyle

And she goes to shake, ah, our hands.

Kyle (as Ramya)

My name is Professor Ramya Naomi Gabriella Brackleberry, but you can call me Rei.

Ari (as Misha)

A pleasure to meet you, Rei.

Kyle (as Ramya)

So I was just talking about your companions about this...Ezra situation you have.

Kyle

And she pulls out a massive fucking binder with, like, **[00:30:00]** a million tabs in it.

Kyle (as Ramya)

[Intense, low music begins to play as Rei slides into investigation mode.]

So I was talking with this Q-BO, and he filled me in on all the information you had about this Jagged Dream scenario. Now, based on my estimates, I have uncovered two pieces of information I think will be extremely useful in stopping their plot.

The first one is that it appears in order for this machine to be powered, as many people need to be branded as possible. We can't know how many have been branded already across the Steadfast, but we do know that the majority of students will be in this facility in about an hour when the student performances start. That would be my guess as to when they'll activate that device.

While it gives us a when, that doesn't give us a who. Now from what I've learned, you've interacted with Vera and the Blue Fairy and both of them seem like real true believers in their cause, Yes?

Tom (as Xoc)

I mean, as far as we could tell.

Hallie (as Hopper)

I'd say so.

Ari (as Misha)

Correct.

Kyle (as Ramya)

Well, I've investigated both of them, and it looks like both of them, in addition to already being here, have been granted that Easy Life brand. Ezra, however does not seem to be a true believer in their cause.

They seem to care more about themselves than about the actual conclusion of their plot. Therefore, I can only deduce that Ezra will be the only person on this ship not wearing...

[The music fades.]

Kyle

And she raises her hand, which has the dozen parallel lines on it.

Emily

Elee's panicking about that—

Kyle (as Ramya)

[Crosstalking.] One of these.

Emily

By the way.

Kyle (as Ramya)

Don't worry, dear. This one is a fake.

Ari

[Laughter.]

Tom

Hmm.

Hallie (as Hopper)

[A little startled.] We should of thought of that.

Emily (as Elee)

[Delighted.] I love you.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Damn it!

Tom

Xoc will look down at his hands.

Ari (as Misha)

[Weakly.] Is yours a fake too, Xoc?

Tom (as Xoc)

[Distracted.] Mm—what?

Ari (as Misha)

Is...is yours a fake too, Xoc?

Tom (as Xoc)

Oh, no. I messed up. *[Resigned.]* That's okay. Wouldn't be the first time that I've gotten something bad on my hand.

[A pause.]

Emily

[Laughter.]

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Emily

Hallie, your face.

Hallie

[Dryly.] What a weird way to phrase it.

Tom

It wasn't a great phrasing, but I couldn't think of—

[Laughter from the party.]

Like, I could have just said it wouldn't be the first time, but that would feel, like, too vague. I don't—I've made my choices. I can't undo who I am.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Emily (as Elee)

If worst comes to worst, Xoc, I can cut your arm off.

Ari (as Misha)

[Intensely.] No! No, no, that is—it is not going to happen. There's not going to be any chopped anything.

Emily (as Elee)

Well, it's not like I wanted to do it. It's just...it...it's an option.

Ari (as Misha)

[Anxiously.] I would like to not consider that option.

Tom

Xoc'll keep looking at his hand and say,

Tom (as Xoc)

Well, I guess we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

Kyle (as Ramya)

And if we work quickly enough, we won't have to.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Let's just work quickly, then.

Kyle (as Ramya)

We know our goal. We know our timeframe. So let's get out there and find Ezra—and of course, be sure to have fun while you're here. These dances are once-in-a-lifetime opportunities.

Ari

It maybe once in a lifetime for Xoc.

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle

Alright, so that's your plan.

[Driving rock music begins to play, pumping up the energy. It has a strong beat, but still has a slightly foreboding energy.]

You've got one hour to enjoy prom and find the one suspect that isn't wearing the Easy Life brand.

[The music intensifies.]

Kyle

Hello, and welcome to the announcement break for Quest Friends Episode 52, Crime and Courtship Part 17. I am Kyle, your GM, and our intro and outro song are "Friends" and "Hitoshio," both by Miracle of Sound. I've actually got another music credit to do today, because for the second time Quest Friends has an original vocal song!

We have an original song with vocals, and this time we actually have two vocalists. I don't want to go into too much of the details now, as you see there's a lot of episode left, but just know that the first vocalist is Hazel Stapp, and the second vocalist is Violet Kawi and if you enjoy their performances, I would encourage you to check out links to their Twitters below. Their song is the final song credit for this episode, so if you just scroll all the way to the bottom of the description, you won't be able to miss them.

As for announcements today, last episode I had mentioned that in anticipation for our C2E2 live show, which we're still doing, we're actually going to have a test stream that I said I had was going to schedule, and I have scheduled that. So I would love if you could join us from 8 to 9 p.m. Central Time on Friday, February 21st, at [twitch.tv/QuestFriends](https://www.twitch.tv/QuestFriends), where we're going to be doing a trial run of this very audience participatory show. So there's going to be a lot of interactions between us and the chat.

And if you can't make that time, **[00:35:00]** I'd still, you know, check out the stream, because once we're done doing that test stream, we're going to unwind by just playing some video games and hanging out with each other and having a good time. It's always fun to have people more around when you having a good time! So yeah, that's all I've got for announcements today.

As you can see, today's episode is I think our longest one so far. Our next episode, which is coming out in two weeks, is going to be a pretty, pretty short one. It's meant to fill in a few blanks of the story that you might not have noticed yet before we actually get our way to the proper finale two weeks after that.

So I hope you really enjoy this episode and don't forget to hashtag out who is Ezra at Quest underscore Friends. I'm going to be on a plane a lot today, but I will be checking Twitter.

[The rock music begins again.]

And we will see you for our next episode on Monday, February 24th.

I'll see you then.

[The music intensifies.]

[The music ends.]

Hallie

I have a question. Due to my, um, judgment ability, I have one called find the guilty. If you have designated someone as guilty, you are trained in tracking and spotting him when he is hidden, or otherwise finding him. Can I just be like, Ezra's guilty of being Ezra!

Emily

[Laughter.]

Kyle

We—

Hallie

[Crosstalking.] And...

Kyle

We have discussed this before, Hallie, and you can't put a target—it's, it's Death Note rules. You can't put a target on someone who you don't know who they are.

Hallie

Okay, but now I have information. I didn't have information before, now I have—I am looking for someone without stripes.

Kyle

I will say it will aid you?

Hallie

Okay.

Kyle

In like, rolls and stuff, but it's not good enough for you to be like...

Hallie

I don't want to just find them outright.

Kyle

Yeah.

Hallie

I, I just wanted it to help me.

Kyle

It'll, it'll help you.

Hallie

Okay.

Kyle

Like for example, if you're searching through the aneens, it'll, you'll get through it faster than other folks, for example. Because again, every single aneen is a suspect. This is how it's going to take up to an hour.

Hallie

That's fine.

Tom

We have the door aneen.

Ari

The door aneen had a brand.

Kyle

We've already marked off one, what—like one eight hundredth of a suspect.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Kyle

We at least know it's not all the aneens. We know that for sure.

Tom

It's all or none Kyle. No one believes it's the aneens.

Emily (as Elee)

Um—um. Um. Hopper?

Hallie (as Hopper)

Yes, Elee?

Emily (as Elee)

[Mischievous music begins to play.]

Um, so I noticed that you came in with someone. That's, that's real nice.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Yeah, Sera? She's great! Um...um.

[Laughter from the party.]

Hallie

Rei is still—Rei is still there, right? Like Rei's in the vicinity?

Kyle

Um, sure, why not?

Tom

[Through laughter.] Yes.

Kyle

And...

Hallie

She doesn't have to be.

Kyle

You know like, when Hopper is usually the one with like a, a pale sweat in fear? Just like, yeah, you're with Sera? Sera, she's great, and Rei's just like, mm. Mm-hmm! Rei's just very deliberately keeping quiet.

Hallie

Right. And now he's met Rei, so he knows that Rei is Sera's mom. He was probably like,

Hallie (as Hopper)

I helped Sera with the stationary that she gave you for your birthday!

Kyle

Uh, yeah, by the way, Hop helped Sera give Rei stationary for her birthday since we never resolved that plot arc because I cut it out.

Hallie

Oh, yeah.

Kyle

That is something that happened.

Hallie

That is something that happened. So that was probably a conversation topic. So Hop's gonna, he's gonna think about this one for a second.

Tom

[Laughter.]

Emily

Elee has worked really, really hard on a braid in her hair, but she's now like, picking it apart.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Emily

Little by little.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Oh, no, don't do that. Your hair looks really nice! Your whole outfit looks really nice. Do—do you like it?

Emily (as Elee)

[With uncharacteristic nervous enthusiasm.] Yeah, you did a great job with my outfit. I like your matching flowers with your—with your...date?

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Stammering.] Ah—yeah, uh, well, we're, well, we're here together. She's gonna help me investigate, you know, we've been doing that on the ship this whole time.

Emily (as Elee)

So she's...she's...so, just to check, like are...are...um...y'know?

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie

Hop's gonna,

Hallie (as Hopper)

Well, we just thought it would be fun to come together. But you know, I—

Emily (as Elee)

[With increasing anxiety.] That's how it starts out! That's how it starts out. You think it's gonna be fun together and the next thing you know, you're—you're—you're...

[Frantically.] You're bumping uglies!

Hallie

Does Hopper know. Does Hopper know that Elee is here on a date with Rei?

Emily

Uh, Hopper knew that she wanted to ask someone.

Hallie

I knew you had it—you know what, I knew you had a date. That's enough info for Hop to put these pieces together. Hop's gonna,

Hallie (as Hopper)

Well I—um—

Hallie

Um, hang on.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie

I have to think through Hop's thought process.

Emily

[Laughter.]

Hallie

It's a real weird one. He was kind of like, drinking some punch and does like, a little bit of a spit-take at that.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Well, I'm just—um, we're just here together **[00:40:00]** like, um, you're—you're here together, right?

Emily (as Elee)

What?

Hallie

He's gesturing at Elee and Rei.

Emily (as Elee)

Well, um.

Hallie (as Hopper)

You know, I'm just—I just—Sera seems to know you, is all, but she got kind of mad at me yesterday. Not kind of, really mad at me yesterday.

Emily (as Elee)

Um.

Hallie (as Hopper)

When I...

Kyle

Also it was this morning.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Mentioned you. She got really mad at me this morning.

[Awkward laugh.] And it was like, wow, Elee knows this person that I've been hanging out with the entire time on this ship!

Emily (as Elee)

[Startled.] Hanging out with the entire time on the ship?!

[Laughter from the party.]

Hallie (as Hopper)

Yeah. We met the first night? I helped her fix the engine, kind of.

Emily (as Elee)

[Crosstalking.] Oh!

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Bewildered by Elee's surprise.] I held her...I held her things.

Emily (as Elee)

[Frantically.] You held her things?!

Ari

Oh my god.

Hallie (as Hopper)

[A little panicked.] I held—I held—she calls them all things! I don't know. I held all her things and she—

Emily (as Elee)

You held all her things?!

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Crosstalking.] She fixed the thing, and then...what? Yeah—yeah? Is that okay?!

Emily (as Elee)

[Stammering.] Uh—I—

Did she offer?!

Why were you holding things!

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Clearly anxious about how anxious Elee is.] Because...she told me to!

Tom

[Laughter.]

Hallie

Hopper is very uncomfortable and very flustered at this moment. And he is just trying to figure out what the fuck is going on, because he doesn't want to straight up ask it, but then he's trying to think about Sera has referred to Soe as her sister, right?

Kyle

Soe has referred to Sera as her sister, but her kind of sister. It's the kind of thing where Sera would let Soe get away with it, but wouldn't be—feel comfortable saying it in her own right because, you know.

Tom

Hmm.

Hallie

So he's gonna think about that, and just flustered look because he's like, Rei and Elee are here together. And that's great! Happy for Elee.

Emily

[Laughter.]

Hallie

But Rei is Sera's mom. So I don't know how this all—why was she mad about? Oh.

And then he's gonna look at Elee, lean down a little bit, and whisper like,

Hallie (as Hopper)

Elee. How many kids do you have?

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle

[The poppy dance music begins again, no longer muted.]

All right. So we're going to cut away from them. We're gonna cut to Xoc and/or Misha. What, what have you been up to?

Tom

I feel like Xoc and Misha have mostly been wandering around people-watching to start? Because they don't really know what you're supposed to do.

Ari

Yeah.

Tom

So they're just like, observing everyone to try to see. I feel like at some point Xoc will just sort of be like,

Tom (as Xoc)

[Nervously.] Oh, um, Misha Jarvis, I was thinking maybe we could try holding—holding hands while we, while we walk around?

Ari (as Misha)

Oh! That sounds great. I was actually just that, because I see a lot of people doing that, and it has felt nice the other times we've done it and I think it probably will feel nice too, here.

Tom

[Through faint laughter.] Xoc will awkwardly reach out and hold Misha's hand.

Ari

Misha will do so.

Kyle

And Loell—

Ari

Oh, gosh.

Kyle

Will just take his hand and put it on top of your two.

[The music fades.]

Tom

And Xoc will just slowly turn.

Emily

[Laughter.]

Tom

Unblinking, at Loell's face.

Kyle

He'll just give you a shit-eating grin. He knows what the fuck he's doing. He's messing with you, like friends do. Also he's a little pissed, so his jokes are a little meaner.

Emily

[Laughter.]

Ari

Misha will turn around to that direction and say,

Ari (as Misha)

[A little confused.] What—what have you spotted, Xoc? Did you spot someone without the Easy Life? Was it something...

Tom (as Xoc)

[Resigned.] No, not yet. It's, um. Ah. Just. It...

[Stammering.]

Oh, it's just that Loell has started appearing again.

Kyle

And that's when you hear through the mental link, because he remembers he can communicate through that,

Kyle (as Loell)

[Brightly.] Hello again!

Ari (as Misha)

[Taken aback.] What are you doing here? What—how long has he been here, Xoc?

Tom (as Xoc)

Uh, I think this morning.

Ari (as Misha)

This morning! What, what is he saying to you right now? What—I was confused. I thought he had left! I was hoping he had left for good!

Kyle (as Loell)

[Dejected.] Well that stings.

Tom (as Xoc)

Ordinary things so far. I haven't really been talking to him.

Ari

Misha will try to mentally connect and be like,

Ari (as Misha)

[A little indignant.] Please leave.

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle (as Loell)

Wow. Okay! Rude. At least this is better than the silent treatment Xoc is giving. See, this is communication, Xoc, buddy.

Tom (as Xoc)

I think for now we should just try to...try to enjoy the evening and also, also stop the Jagged Dream.

Ari (as Misha)

Yes.

Kyle (as Loell)

You know, a great way to enjoy your evening and remember it forever? Taking a picture with the photographer!

Tom

Xoc scrunches up his face and looks away.

Kyle

All right, let's keep with you two for a little bit because I want to start marking off, uh, suspects or doing prom stuff. So you scrunch up your face. Uh, are you going anywhere in particular? Looking for anybody? Are you going to dance, or should I just plop someone in your way?

Tom

Uh, do we see Sir Kentrim around? Feels like a suitable target for us to verify.

Ari

Yeah, like Misha suspects him but Misha also doesn't want to look for him because they are still not...

Kyle

Yeah?

Ari

Yeah.

Kyle

[Ominous music begins to play—somebody is definitely up to something, but it's hard to tell just how serious the situation is.]

You see Sir Kentrim. You see him in the corner, he's talking with one of the aneens. Pulls out a bucket, and hands it to the aneen, and then walks away.

Tom

Fuck. Is this a Homestuck thing, Kyle?

[The music ends.]

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Tom

Did you read Homestuck in between these few sessions?

Emily

Is this Carrie? Is that what the movie is?

Ari

[With dawning realization.] Oh.

Hallie

[Chuckles.]

Tom

Ohhh. Yeah, that would make—that would be a reference that makes more sense.

Ari

Wow. How did I miss that?

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Yeah, and then he starts walking away into the crowd and he just looks at, uh, both of you.

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Hey, dudes, enjoy the dance.

[After a brief, threatening pause.] While you can.

Kyle

[00:45:00] And he um, he has big plastic gloves that you use when handling, like, waste?

Tom

[Dryly.] You gotta be fucking kidding me.

Kyle

And he just tugs on them and he walks into the crowd.

Tom (as Xoc)

No, wait—I had—dammit. He's gone already.

Ari

Misha is just silent at Sir Kentrim, they're like,

Ari (as Misha)

We should try and enjoy this, and...

Tom (as Xoc)

Hmm.

Ari (as Misha)

I highly suspect that Sir Kentrim is Ezra, but my apologies, Xoc. I just don't know if I can have a conversation with him.

Tom (as Xoc)

No, it's okay. We should probably let the others know, though, that he's wearing gloves and we need to get them off.

Ari (as Misha)

Oh—we should.

Kyle

And as you make your way over, you're suddenly kind of dogpiled on as you just feel a big flipper on your arm.

Kyle (as Captain Jebediah Ishmael)

[Imposing music with a nautical edge begins to play, sounding like a jaunty sea tune slowed down into more of a dirge.]

Xoc and Misha Jarvis! It is a pleasure to see you at the dance. Are you enjoying your time at the festivities?

Tom (as Xoc)

[Stammering slightly in surprise.] What—oh! Yes, sir.

Ari (as Misha)

Yes. We are certainly enjoying this. We are not entirely sure yet what dates are supposed to do in a prom, but I am enjoying it so far. Are you enjoying it as well?

Kyle (as Captain Jebediah Ishmael)

I am enjoying it and I will say...

Kyle

And he gets very thoughtful and he starts stroking his tusks.

Kyle (as Captain Jebediah Ishmael)

I will say, I have not actually enjoyed a dance since going with my wife many years ago, but it was an enjoyable time. The facility didn't survive it! *[Boisterous laughter.]*

Ari

When he stroked his face, were we able to see if he had the thing?

Kyle

Perfect thinking, Misha.

[The sea tune fades into the eerie music of the Jagged Dream.]

It's a bit faint, because walrus skin is very different from, like, human skin. So it doesn't quite look the same, but wow, it did look like there are twelve parallel lines on that flipper.

Tom

Unsurprising.

Ari

Yeah, unsurprising, but...you know.

Tom

We confirmed. But yeah, we, we note that, and meanwhile Xoc just has a moment of,

Tom (as Xoc)

What...what? Sir, I'm not sure if it I wish to know what happened to your facility.

Ari

[Laughter.]

Kyle (as Captain Jebediah Ishmael)

Well, that's what happens when you spend time with family. *[Laughter.]*

Kyle

And he walks off.

Tom (as Xoc)

He went to...was it a prom? Was...

[Laughter from the party.]

Tom

Xoc is going to...

[Laughter from the party continues.]

Tom

Xoc is just going to step aside for a minute like, ah.

Tom (as Xoc)

Too much to do, we gotta, we gotta focus.

Kyle

Meanwhile, Hop, you have returned back to Sera.

Hallie

Yes. Sera...Hop mentions nothing of what just transpired over at the punch table, and just hands her the punch.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Hey, do you want some?

Kyle (as Sera)

Oh, yeah, sure. I mean, you know. Not as good as olive juice but not everything can be.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Why don't you make some? You don't need a smoothie blender.

Kyle (as Sera)

I like the way you're thinking.

Kyle

And she pulls out the jar of olives and dumps the excess juice in there.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Kyle

And then just grabs a screwdriver and start stirring it with the screwdriver and takes a drink, and is like,

Kyle (as Sera)

Ah!...that was actually really gross.

[Laughter from the party.]

Hallie (as Hopper)

The recipe needs some work.

Kyle (as Sera)

Ah, it takes some work, you know, that's—that's engineering. So, who's our first suspect?

Hallie (as Hopper)

[A slightly eerie, thrumming tune begins to play.]

Well, your mom says that it's going to be the person without the Easy Life brand on their arm, excepting our current company. So I thought...

Hallie

And he takes out the shot glasses, which is a shot glass and a pair of glasses, and the technicolor noise earbuds.

Hallie (as Hopper)

I thought if we plant the shot glass somewhere, it gives us a...365 vision, which is technically five degrees more than a circle is, so these are really good shot glasses.

[Laughter from the party.]

And the other person can wear the glasses and see that area. It can be moved, but I don't think that's too much of a risk because we have so much ground to cover. And then these earbuds translate surrounding white noise into usable information. So I thought that might be good to get...useable information.

Kyle (as Sera)

Yeah, that sounds great. Let's go set it up! I'll talk to you later, Soe.

Kyle

And she, uh, looks over to Soe, who's just like looking up and is like,

[The music fades.]

Kyle (as Soe)

Okay!

Hallie

Oh, was Soe there?

Ari

Was Meeghan there?

Kyle

Soe—

Ari

Is Meeghan there?

Kyle

Soe is there, ah, next to where Sera was. She's watching Jesse and Everett just doing a real bad dance on the floor together, and she's just sitting there like, kicking her feet and like swinging back and forth and dancing to a tune that's definitely not the same tune that's playing. And Hop, can you roll me a...ah, just a perception.

Hallie

Okay, but can I—remember, I have find the guilty activated so I get something.

Kyle

[Wryly.] Yeah, that's not gonna help you with this one.

Hallie

[Dice roll.]

It's a nine.

Kyle

Okay, so it's a bit weird. Soe said she was going to come with all of you, and yet she isn't dancing with Jesse and Everett. In fact, she seems a little a little anxious.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Hey, Soe, are you okay?

Kyle (as Soe)

[A little frantically.] Yeah! No, I'm.

Kyle

She kind of gets knocked of her stupor.

Kyle (as Soe)

No, I'm okay. Yeah, I'm great.

Hallie

Are you sure? Do you want some punch or anything? Or a snack?

Kyle (as Soe)

No, punch would...

Kyle

And she starts ah, like, kind of grabbing her throat a little bit.

Kyle (as Soe)

Punch would make it worse.

Hallie

Make what worse?

Kyle (as Soe)

[Frantically.] I'm not supposed to tell you!

Kyle

And she runs away.

[Startled and anxious 'ohhs!' from the party.]

Hallie

I'm going to look at Meeghan—was Meeghan next to her?

Kyle

Meeghan is not next to her.

Hallie

Oh, well, shit. **[00:50:00]**

[Laughter from the party.]

Hallie

I—

[Frustrated noise.] Okay, couple things. I want to find Elee again. This is literally just, he's gonna like pop in sideways off screen and be like,

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Whispering.] Elee, Soe's upset about something.

Hallie

And then pop back out, because he's—just feels really weird about what happened at the lunch table. The only other thing I wanted to specify doing is, Sera already left, but when I meet up with her again, which presumably we will...

Kyle

Sera's still with you.

Hallie

Well if I'm still with Sera, then I'm going to ask,

Hallie (as Hopper)

Because Ezra is so tied to the data sphere, I'm not convinced they're a person. I mean they seem to be. I don't necessarily have any evidence that suggests otherwise, but I just think that a person-person also isn't what we're looking for. So if you see any technological things that look suspicious that wouldn't have an Easy Life brand, uh, just keep an eye out for that.

Kyle (as Sera)

Okay!

Kyle

And where you going to set up this shot glass?

Hallie

Oh! So I was wondering also if I could use analytical combat, because I can use that outside of combat. In universe, rule that he spends a while like, analyzing locations of dance floor and analyzing if there's any people specifically with sleeves pulled up over their hands or with outfits or gloves that would be covering that specific area.

Kyle

Okay.

Hallie

So wherever the concentration of that is highest is where he wants to plant the shot glass, and then he and Sera are going to do the one earbud thing where they share the earbuds, the technicolor noise earbuds.

Kyle

Yeah. So you think you see a spot and you go there. You don't see a whole lot of gloves on like, the aneens. Uh, at this point, maybe 75, 80 percent of the aneens have been cleared. And you go to place it down, and you do notice one gloved hand that also notices you.

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

[Bagpipes intensify.]

Hee-oppah Scotch!

Hallie

[Crosstalking.] Ah, dammit.

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

[Accusatory.] Up to your no-good shenanigans again!

Hallie

Augh, I forgot about him.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Uh, hello.

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

What kind of treacherous nonsense are you up to today?

Hallie (as Hopper)

I am...picking up this shot glass that someone carelessly left on the table!

Hallie

And he just picks it back up as if he wasn't just putting it back down.

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

Oh, just messing around with other people's property now! How like you.

Hallie (as Hopper)

Well, it's—

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

[Crosstalking.] You have any thumbtacks you're messing with as well?

Tom

That's a, that's an idea though.

Kyle

He's done in the past.

[The music ends.]

Emily

He already has tetanus!

Hallie

Hopper, um, presses the button on his hat and reaches into his office supply compartment and pulls out a small handful of thumbtacks and says,

Hallie (as Hopper)

Yeah, did you need them?

[Laughter from the party.]

Ari

Ohhhh!

Tom

What a power play.

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

[Frantic.] Get all those things away from me. I'm still surviving your last assault!

Kyle

Which...

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Crosstalking.] You're still surviving.

Kyle

If we remember, the last assault was the time Sera just threw Hop nails, and he threw them behind him and Goldstone stepped on them. And as Goldstone puts up his hands, you can see that one of his hands is wrapped around like a bandage.

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Slightly incredulous.] You stepped on them.

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

Yes, stepped on them and I kept stabbing myself trying to get them out!

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

The Zhev were no help for that, were busy fixing your mess over in the cafeteria. Nobody ever has time for Goldstone.

Hallie

[Through laughter.] Hopper does that like, pursed lips thing when you want to say more mean things, but he doesn't. He puts the thumbtacks back in his little compartment, pulls out a Band-Aid and antiseptic which I just decided he also has in his hat and says,

Hallie (as Hopper)

Look, I'm sorry if you were actually hurt. I was just really trying to get somewhere and find something out. But I have this if you need any more.

Kyle

He grabs it from you and he starts undoing his bandage so he can put it on and he says,

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

What even is your problem, Hee-opper Scotch? Why you have to come back after all this time?

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Soft, slightly melancholy music begins to play.]

Well, I didn't plan to, if that's any comfort. Um, I...was pretty high-strung in college, and I am sorry if I ever legitimately hurt you or hurt your feelings. I was trying to get the most out of the experience that I could, and if I see something wrong I try to fix it, but it's possible I wasn't as respectful as I needed to be, and I'm sorry.

Kyle

And as he takes it off and he rubs his hand, you get the nicest thing you've ever gotten from Goldstone: the lack of an insult.

Hallie

Aww.

Kyle

And he just says,

Kyle (as Professor Garry Goldstone)

Yeah, well...whatever.

Kyle

And he throws his bandage to the ground and walks away, rubbing the thing on his hand, which does in fact have a dozen glowing bands on it.

[The music fades.]

Hallie

Cool, man. I got a nod from Everett. No insult from Goldstone. It's a good night.

Kyle

[Poppy, upbeat music resumes—a fun top 40s pop song with a fast pace.]

Meanwhile, let's flash back to Elee. Elee you are dancing with Rei and it is—Rei is a beautiful dancer. She's wonderful and amazing and graceful and you know, so sometimes that helps overshadow other people's gracelessness. It doesn't, but you're having a lot of fun.

Emily

[Through laughter.] There's no fixing Elee's dancing.

Kyle

And at one point, Rei's doing an aerial and you have your hands in the position to make it look like you are helping with the aerial and—

Emily

[Crosstalking.] I'm helping, I'm buff!

Kyle

And Hop just slides—yeah, your aerials are you just pick her up, and then she makes it look good.

Hallie

I like to think that Hopper runs past in the background and then back tracks and like, sticks his head in Scooby-Doo style into the frame.

Kyle

And what exactly do you say Hop?

Hallie (as Hopper)

Hey Elee, Soe seems upset about something. You might want to check on her. She wouldn't talk to me about it bye!

[The music fades.]

Emily

[00:55:00] Elee—

Hallie

And then he pops right back out.

Emily

Almost drops Rei, but doesn't, and then sets her down carefully.

Emily (as Elee)

Ah—I really like dancing with you.

Kyle (as Ramya)

[Fondly.] Go do your work Elee. I'll be back when you're gone.

Kyle

Uh, sorry.

Emily

[Huffs out a laugh.]

Kyle (as Ramya)

Go do your work Elee. I'll be back when you're done.

Emily

[Laughter.]

Emily (as Elee)

Thank you, Rei.

Emily

And I want to go try to find Soe.

Kyle

Okay, so you go and you see Soe is just hiding behind one of the bleachers.

[Gentle music begins to play—it's not sad exactly, but feels a little anxious.]

Just like looking, is anyone there, is anyone there, and she just looks really nervous. Like, there aren't tears yet, but she's very anxious.

Emily (as Elee)

[Gently.] Soe?

Kyle (as Soe)

[Nervously, startled.] Oh, uh, hi Mom! Uh, what, what—what's up?

[The music ends.]

Emily (as Elee)

Hopper said you were upset.

Kyle (as Soe)

Oh!

Emily

[Mischievously.] Throwing Hopper under the bus.

Hallie

[Dryly.] Yeah. Wow.

Kyle (as Soe)

Oh no. No. No, I'm not, I'm not upset. I'm not upset at all.

Emily (as Elee)

Well, I don't want to negate what you're saying exactly, but you look very upset.

Kyle (as Soe)

Oh, no, I'm just...

[Sighs.] I'm just a little nervous. Can...can you...can you keep a secret?

Emily (as Elee)

[Fondly.] Yes, I can keep a secret.

Kyle (as Soe)

Okay, okay good, because there's something I gotta do but I don't know if I have the strength to do it.

Tom

[Faintly.] Go fuck yourself.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Tom

How dare you. And so soon after Sir Kentrim used a term that he has no, right to!

Kyle (as Soe)

Well, it was Meeghan's idea and, and we're both going to do it, but I just don't know. I'm just really nervous.

Emily (as Elee)

You're not into like...anything sketchy. Are you?

Kyle (as Soe)

[Insistently.] No, no. No, it's—

Emily (as Elee)

[Crosstalking.] Okay.

Kyle (as Soe)

Not sketchy at all. I don't know. She says it's gonna be a really big deal and everyone's gonna notice and I know she meant that to comfort me because you'll notice and and so will all my friends and they'll support me, but I just don't know if I'm going to be able to do it.

Emily (as Elee)

If you want to keep it a secret, you don't have to tell me what you're going to do. But Soe, I'm going to be here and you can do it.

Kyle (as Soe)

Thanks, Mom. I love you.

Emily (as Elee)

I love you too.

Kyle

[A more mischievous song with a rattling maraca beat begins to play.]

And she gets really excited and gives you a hug, and then you hear a, ding dong ding dong, or something the signal that you've got probably half an hour in your hour long time limit and she's like,

Kyle (as Soe)

[Startled.] Oh, no, no, I gotta go. I gotta go. I'm running late!

Emily (as Elee)

[Startled.] Okay, good luck!

Kyle (as Soe)

And I'll—thank you! Tell Jesse and Everett that I'm okay. I'm not dead. I'm just going someplace. I'll be back bye!

Kyle

And she runs out of the room.

Emily (as Elee)

Bye!

Kyle

And you just hear like the gymnasium door just like poof, like open and shut as she just barrels through them.

Emily

[Nervously.] Wait, if she comes back in is she gonna need the brand?

Kyle

[Quietly.] Fuckin'—

Emily

[The music fades.]

Did I just make you think that—did you not, were you not thinking that until I said it?

Kyle

I—

Emily

[Crosstalking.] Noo.

Kyle

I wasn't, and because of the nature of what she's doing she'll be able to get away without a brand.

Emily

Okay. Okay, I feel better now.

Kyle

Okay, so Hop. We're going to go back to you. You and Sera have set up your stuff. You've set up the glass once Goldstone has left. I'm assuming Sera's the one with the big glasses on, and the earpiece?

Hallie

Yeah, I gave the glasses to Sera.

Kyle

And she loves, she loves it, they're huge. She looks like a fucking dork. And where, where are you situated and doing your research?

Hallie

I imagine we found like—if there are a little like two person tables on the side of the gym floor, as there often are, we're sitting in one of those, or we're just camped out on the floor. Hopper can sit on the floor. Sera has a chair. Hopper's fine with this.

Kyle

[Laughter.] Let's say you're at one of the tables, and you're sitting there and you're doing the investigation. She's just continuously fidgeting with the white noise thing and with the glasses, like changing how focused it is.

Hallie

Yeah.

Kyle

She's just a, she's a fidgeter. So she's constantly fidgeting with the two, like.

Kyle (as Sera)

[Slightly frustrated noise as she adjusts the glasses.] Eh-hh.

Hallie

For flavor, did you—uh, this was so long ago, but you were going to have promboli at prom?

Kyle

Yeah. Thank you. That was in my notes, and I forgot. Is Hop eating a promboli?

Hallie

He fucking is. He's eating a promboli, and he's mentally recording the differences and the similarities to calzunes, and whether he likes the promboli.

Kyle

How, what's—

Hallie

[Crosstalking.] While he's looking around.

Kyle

What's the verdict on prombolis?

Hallie

Begrudgingly good.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Hallie

He's a little bit upset that it's not just a calzone, but he's like, wow, someone is serving a similar food to calzunes here. I don't even get similar foods to calzunes, and so this is a treat. So he's happy, but he's not happy that he's happy.

Kyle

Okay. And as you're sitting there thinking about prombolis, you hear,

Kyle (as Q-BO)

The promboli was originally invented in year Y minus 76 by Guigi Strombol!

Tom

[Strained.] No, please.

Kyle (as Sunny)

Oooh! That is a very interesting fact, but, well, eating that and hearing that does not give me any memories of what happened.

Kyle (as Mayra)

Yes, and I mean, I, I don't believe I was born by that time so I wouldn't have any memories from then, and I don't remember...it's too recent past for me to have researched.

Kyle

[A spooky, almost harpsichord-sounding melody kicks up—it's a little eerie, but not foreboding.]

And you turn over and you see that there is a big tray of all the different types of food, and you see that Sunny and Mayra are sampling it while learning facts about each of the foods from Q-BO on their continuous quest to learn more about themselves **[01:00:00]** and regain their memories.

Hallie

That's cute! Um, Hopper will greet them, and just be like,

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Brightly.] Hi! Are you having a good time?

Kyle (as Sunny)

[Delighted.] Oh, yes. We're having a very good time!

Kyle (as Mayra)

Well, yeah, I mean, it's, it's, uh, it's nice. We're all chaperoning.

Kyle

And you see that all of them have the chaperone badges, except for Sunny, who can't.

Hallie

[Wryly.] Because she's a ghost.

Kyle

But her gas has made the shape of like a chaperone—like a sash, is what I'm thinking.

Hallie

Eh.

Emily

[Quietly.] A sash-perone.

[The music fades.]

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Kyle (as Sunny)

We're—true, but we've learned a lot of new foods we like! Just like...

Kyle

And I'm gonna have them do the dialogue at the same time.

Kyle (as Sunny and Mayra)

[Questioningly.] Calzunes?

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Wistfully.] You—you've had calzunes?

Kyle (as Sunny)

Well, we haven't had them, but Q-BO filled us in on the differences between prombolis and calzunes. And calzunes just sound a little bit, I don't know, a little bit nicer and tighter. This is a little sloppy.

Kyle

And you can just see that all over and inside of Sunny is just tomato sauce.

Tom

[Faintly.] Oh, god.

Hallie

I should specify, Hopper's been taking very good care because he's wearing nice clothes. So he's got the fork and knife napkin schpiel because they're at a table. But in response to that he'll go,

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Jazzy infomercial music begins to play.]

[With the authoritative air of an experienced critic.] I agree. I find that this is delicious, but calzunes have a more effective ingredient to dough ratio, and that way you're able to close it a little bit more, making it just, just a nice pocket. It's a nicer, warm, warmer pocket than promboli.

Kyle

[Laughter.]

Kyle (as Mayra)

That's true. Being able to just calculate things a little better just leads to more reliable results!

Kyle (as Sunny)

But we both know it doesn't always work when you just do calculations.

[The music fades.]

Kyle (as Mayra)

Oh!

Kyle

And Mayra turns over to you.

Kyle (as Mayra)

Oh, I'm so sorry. I completely forgot! Uh, Simon?

Hallie (as Hopper)

Hopper, actually.

Kyle (as Mayra)

Oh, okay! Ahh, Hopper, this is Sunny. She is my...we're here together. And Sunny, this is Hopper.

Hallie (as Hopper)

It's nice to meet you, Sunny.

Hallie

And he'll extend his hand for a handshake.

Kyle

And Sunny extends her hand and like, makes the end, like, little icicles so she can shake it.

Kyle (as Sunny)

[Warmly.] A pleasure to meet you. Um, are these the companions of that adorable couple we've met?

Kyle (as Mayra)

Yes! He works with, ah, Xoc and Misha. Oh, speaking of, I completely forgot to mention! So our investigation is going, going very well. I think after the dance, if you all have a moment, I think we have a—a breakthrough! I think I think we might be able to help you figure out information about the Apocrita, but well, that whole Jagged Dream thing. How's that coming along?

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Uncertain.] Um.

Hallie

Hopper will steal a glance at Sera.

Kyle

Who is still fidgeting but really into it.

Hallie

And then turn back to Mayra and Sunny and be like,

Hallie (as Hopper)

We're working on it.

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle (as Mayra)

Well, that's that's fantastic. I'm afraid we can't be much help, but if there's anything you need just, just let us know.

Hallie (as Hopper)

We appreciate all the help that you've given so far. We'd love to know what else you found out about the Apocrita.

Hallie

Um, but then he's going to turn to Sera like,

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Whispering.] Hey, hey Sera, can you find Xoc and Misha on the dance floor? Because Mayra and Sunny just referred to them as a couple and I don't—are they going by a couple now? Is that a thing?

Kyle

[Laughter.]

And Sera's just going to grimace and say,

Kyle (as Sera)

[Surlly.] Yeah. Yeah, I see 'em.

Kyle

And she takes off the glasses and the earpiece and she hands it to you and says,

Kyle (as Sera)

I gotta...I gotta go do something.

Kyle

And she leaves.

Hallie (as Hopper)

[Uncertain.] Okay!

Kyle

[The dancing music kicks back up.]

And we're gonna flash back a little bit. So Elee, after you're done talking the Soe, you see Xoc and Misha awkwardly standing, holding hands on the edge of the dance floor. They look like they want to go out to do something, but for some reason they don't have the courage to go out there. So what are you what are you gonna do?

Emily (as Elee)

You know, you could...dance. At this dance.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Slightly startled.] Oh, yeah, we could dance. That's...a thing we could do.

Emily (as Elee)

[Uncertain.] Do you want to dance?

Tom (as Xoc)

[The music fades.]

[Quickly.] Oh, yes!

I'm, uh, a little uncertain exactly how it works. I was trying to watch some of the other, ah, other students and, and...

Emily (as Elee)

Oh, they're not...

[Scoffing slightly.] They don't know how to dance.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Ari (as Misha)

It, it all seems so disparate. They are all doing different things, so I do not know exactly what is it supposed...how is one supposed to do these movements?

Emily (as Elee)

If you haven't knocked anybody over, you're not dancing correctly.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Uncertain.] That sounds very aggressive, Elee Badge.

Ari (as Misha)

[Faintly.] I do not want to knock Xoc over.

Emily (as Elee)

[Reassuring.] I mean, it's never really on purpose. It's just like, you gotta barge through the crowd.

Ari (as Misha)

[Thoughtfully.] Hmm.

Emily (as Elee)

Gotta make your own way!

Ari (as Misha)

I suppose I could investigate more about this matter. I was trying to see if I could understand it just by watching, but I suppose I can look into the datasphere to see what I can find.

[Techno music begins to play.]

And I want to just look, like, "best prom dances".

Kyle

[The techno music turns into the chicken dance.]

Alright. You Google...you're putting into Google "best prom dances," and it's all a bunch of synchronized dances.

Ari

Oh, yeah.

Kyle

'cause it's all like the moments when, like, the whole dance floor does something together. So it's one of those synchronized lan—line dance style things that's very rehearsed.

Ari (as Misha)

Hmm. It is interesting, because when I look for it, everything looks like all the people in the dance floor are doing one thing, but what I looked at it in here, it appears if it's just the two [01:05:00] individuals usually doing things together.

Tom (as Xoc)

[The music fades.]

Ah, well, maybe it's okay if we don't know what we're doing. If everyone's doing something different, than surely whatever we do will be nice, as long as you're having fun.

Ari (as Misha)

Oh, yes! Certainly. I am having a lot of fun just being with you, Xoc.

Tom

And I guess Xoc will start like, leading Misha out onto the dance floor.

Emily

Elee calls after them as Xoc leads Misha out,

Emily (as Elee)

You can touch a little bit but leave room for Calaval!

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Tom (as Xoc)

I'm not entirely certain if all of this advice is particularly relevant to us, Misha Jarvis.

Ari (as Misha)

It appears there are several things contradicting. Also, I do not know what leaving a room is, for Calaval. Maybe that is a sort of dance move? But...

Tom (as Xoc)

I believe it's an ancient historical figure, but I'm not entirely certain how we would leave room for them.

Ari (as Misha)

Yeah, I mean, I heard him from when we saw the musical, but I mean...I suppose there is a number where things happen in a room in that musical. Are we supposed to dance to that song?

Tom (as Xoc)

Perhaps?

[As Tom is trying not to laugh.] Do you remember the tune of that song, Misha Jarvis?

Emily

[Strained, trying not to laugh.] Will you play it for me?

Ari (as Misha)

I...I believe I could remember it. I think it goes like this.

Ari

[An old fashioned waltz begins to play.]

And Misha is gonna start humming it while moving along and like, trying to lead Xoc while dancing to the song. Like, they're gonna be humming while moving.

Tom

But as they start humming, Xoc will go,

Tom (as Xoc)

Oh no, I, I think it was a bit more like this!

Tom

And start doing a different like, *[Tunelessly humming.]* Beep boop beep.

[Laughter from the party.]

Kyle

So you two are having conflicting dance beats, and conflicting dances as you just kind of keep colliding into each other on the dance floor, stepping on each other's feet, awkwardly moving around. Both of you are doing different tunes than the other, and neither of you are following the tuned everyone else is. But it's undeniable that you're having a ball.

Ari

Yeah, like, I want to say that like, I don't know, at some moves that Xoc does, Misha is going to like, clap. I don't know, just—

Emily

Oh my god.

Ari (as Misha)

[Delighted.] Oh, I love that Xoc!

Ari

And then Misha is gonna try and do something different, and like, they're just going to try to start...

Hallie

[Through wheezing laughter.] It's like a Sims reaction! In the Sims! When the Sims do something fun, the other Sim like, claps, and little exclamation points come up! They make those weird noises! *[Garbled, indistinct noises.]*

Ari

Yes!

Kyle

And meanwhile, Elee, what are you doing as you watch them dance?

Emily

Thinking,

Emily (as Elee)

Wow, they make me feel like such a good dancer.

Kyle

[Boisterous laughter.]

Emily

[The music fades.]

It's, it's—it's, it's cute. She's proud of the babies. She's happy for them. It's a little weird, but like she's happy enough for them.

Kyle

And you hear a voice next to you.

Kyle (as Sera)

[Clears her throat.] Hey

Emily

[Slow, melancholy music begins to play.]

Elee turns over.

Emily (as Elee)

[Quietly, slightly surprised but relieved Sera has approached her finally.] Hi...hi.

Kyle

Sera is looking forward, her arms crossed and not looking at you.

Kyle (as Sera)

You know, I, uh...it took me a while to figure out why you didn't come back. You know, I just thought, that was weird. That's strange. She seems to care, and then suddenly disappears.

And you know, you know what I ended up figuring out?

So I ended up figuring out that, ah, again. It made no sense. She cared and she never left, so clearly she never cared at all.

And so I, so I carry that for fifteen years, but then suddenly after ten years we start hearing of this lady who starts clearing out camps during my cousin's coup. And, and, and you know, we looked for you. Ana and I. We...

Kyle

And she pulls out the little glass orb that you can use to find people.

Kyle (as Sera)

You know, we did this! Finds anyone who wants to be found. And, and then you show up five years later, and you start actin' like...like you care again.

[The music fades.]

I...listen. I just can't pretend that something like that is real. I, I, I can't buy it. I have to go with what I see and what I, what I...what I experience. Practice by doing. That kid, Soe. She says you're her mom?

Emily (as Elee)

Yeah, she...she found me eight days ago. Uh, I didn't realize that Vacile men...um.

[A beat.]

[Slightly embarrassed.] I didn't know she existed.

Kyle (as Sera)

Well, you ah, you've been doing real good with her. She talks about you a lot.

Kyle

And she points to the, the shot glass and points to her eyes and she says,

Kyle (as Sera)

And I saw you talking with her just a few seconds ago.

She really loves you.

[Sounding a little annoyed about it.] Your whole group really loves you, and...and my mom.

[More hopeful guitar music begins to play.]

Listen, I can't pretend that I'm going to be able to forgive you now. I can't pretend that's something I'm ever going to be able to do.

Emily (as Elee)

[Gently.] I know, and I'm not going to ask you to. I...I'm sorry.

Emily

And then Elee's gonna pull out of her pocket **[01:10:00]** the jar of olives and stick her arm out to Sera, and not look at her because she's, she doesn't want to see if Sera rejects it.

Kyle

She's gonna sigh.

Kyle (as Sera)

[Exasperated sigh.] Acting like I'm so easily bribed.

Well, I am.

Kyle

She grabs the olives and opens the jar.

Kyle (as Sera)

We got a truce for right now?

Emily (as Elee)

[Genuinely happy in a way we don't often hear Elee.] Yeah, sounds good to me.

Kyle (as Sera)

Okay.

Kyle

And she starts wheeling back to Hopper, and you just see her yell, wave her hand as she's going away, and she just adds,

Kyle (as Sera)

By the way, you hurt my mom you're deaaaaaad.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Ari

[Through laughter.] Oh no.

Kyle

So. During this time, Xoc and Misha have been having their adorable dance-not-dance.

[The music fades.]

And it's not just not a dance because they're not very good at it. It's not a dance because it's partially a ruse.

[Heist music with a bit of a tango beat begins to play.]

Xoc and Misha, you went on to that dance floor in order to help find out who Ezra is. What is your plan to knock off more suspects?

Ari

Well, I don't know if this can work. I have a question that I probably should have asked before. Are there any like, cameras or something in the dance floor? Or some sort of like...like security cameras or something? Like, for you know, if they want to like check?

Kyle

Yeah, it's the Prodigious. There are security cameras all over the place.

Ari

Okay, because I have a thing that I realized I had it like a session ago, and I was like, oh shit, I could have been using this. But I never did. It's called, uh, datasphere spy and it says, by exploiting your connection to the direct datasphere, you can attempt to route your senses through it.

Tom

[Intrigued.] Ohh.

Ari

And look out through devices also connected to it up to a long distance away.

Tom

Power.

Ari

From—*[Faint laughter.]* I know. I should have realized I had this earlier. For up to ten minutes, you can see and hear through those devices, using their senses as if they were your own. So I was, ah, wondering if I could spend three intellect to kind of try and see through those cameras in the, in the, um, dance floor and see if I could see anybody that might not have the thing.

Kyle

Yeah, you go to take over the cameras on the dance floor. Your powers kind of emanate from you. Xoc, Misha's eye glows, but Misha almost most starts to go stiff a little bit as if they have less control over their own, own body.

[The music ends.]

Ari

[Weakly.] See, I was afraid of this.

Tom

[A slow humming begins to swell under Xoc.]

It's fine. Xoc will cradle their body gently to keep it from falling.

Kyle

[Over increasingly loud static.] And meanwhile, Misha, you you spread this like mist to the different cameras. And suddenly... *[Over loud rattling and clicking.]*

Something is stopping you from getting into the cameras.

[Louder clicks.] You feel something pushing back, and I need you to roll int.

Ari

[The sound and music stop.] Yeah. Okay. I'm gonna spend one level of effort for this. Yeah.

[Dice roll.]

Eighteen!

Kyle

How do you try to push through, Misha?

Ari

Ah, I just, I just want to say that like—maybe Misha at first feels, feels that barrier but then they are just like, too determined, and they're like still kind of upset about what happened the other night that they're just gonna just keep getting that, like, determination of like, no. This is not happening again! To just break it.

Kyle

Okay. You push and you push and you push, and it does not budge, and it seems to budge a little bit, but it pushes back at you.

And then suddenly you're in.

Ari

[Startled.] Hmm.

Kyle

It feels less like you pushed through and more like...if you're doing an arm wrestling match, the other person just gave up.

Ari

[Uncertain.] Oh, wow. Okay,

Kyle

And so you see a lot of things in the security cameras. You see Hop and Sera doing more investigating. You see Vera standing in the corner, her arms crossed with the chaperone sash, very patiently waiting for the hour to wrap up. You see more students coming in and you're able to cross off aneen, aneen, aneen, aneen, aneen, aneen, aneen, aneen.

In fact are able to cross off all the aneens except for the one who was talking to Kentrim.

And you see next to Xoc...

Vespari.

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Ari

[Faintly.] Fucking...

Kyle

And the Blue Fairy.

Ari

[Exasperated.] Okay.

Kyle

And Xoc, what you notice is on your end, you saw the cameras start to shake a little bit, as if there was a force acting on them, and then you just hear a little,

Kyle (as the Blue Fairy)

[Faint laugh.]

[The eerie, haunting music of the Jagged Dream begins to play.]

Kyle

From the Blue Fairy as she just coughs and pointedly looks at the cameras, which suddenly went still.

Hallie

[Faintly.] God dammit.

Kyle

Which is one Misha took over.

Ari

Mm.

Kyle

Meanwhile, Vespari says,

Kyle (as Vespari)

Ah, yes! My friend Xoc, wizard of the East. Are you enjoying the festivities?

Tom (as Xoc)

[Stammering slightly.] Oh, hello Vespari. Ah, yes. My companion and I have been enjoying this...this human ritual.

Kyle (as Vespari)

I'm glad you are enjoying it. I in fact am here with my companion!

Kyle

And he points to the Blue Fairy.

Kyle (as Vespari)

You have seen my assistant during the performances. Well, she thought it would be enjoyable to take some time at the dance, and I really thought it would as well. In fact, I was so excited, at her behest, I just added on even more tags!

Kyle

And you can see his arms are just filled with the Easy Life brand.

Tom

[Strained.] Nooo!

Ari

Oh my god, Vespari, no!

Tom

Oh my god. Ohh.

Ari

Why! No!

Emily

[Pained.] Well, Vespari's gonna die. **[01:15:00]**

Tom

[With a shuddering breath.] Oh, Jesus Christ. Oh god.

Xoc looks at Vespari with just a widening horror at the brands, but then also says,

Tom (as Xoc)

Yes, we have met your assistant before.

Tom

And then Xoc will turn to the Blue Fairy and says,

Tom (as Xoc)

I was happy to loan you something the other day, but I think I'm going to be needing that back soon. If you have it with you I wouldn't mind getting that back now.

Hallie

I love it.

Kyle

She looks at you. Her eyes drift over very pointedly to Vera. She just looks back at you, smiles, winks and walks away.

Tom

Is Vera holding the staff?

Kyle

Vera is not.

Tom

What was that—what does that mean!

[Glumly.] I don't like that! I don't like that.

[Quieter.] I don't like that.

[The music ends.]

Kyle

And Vespari just says,

Kyle (as Vespari)

And off she goes again!

Tom (as Xoc)

[Whispering.] Vespari!

Kyle (as Vespari)

You know, independence is good in assistants.

[Laughter from the party.]

Tom (as Xoc)

[Hissing, irritated.] Vespari! Your assistant is one of the leaders of the Jagged Dream.

Kyle (as Vespari)

Yes. She's one of the—

Tom (as Xoc)

[With an annoyed, barely restrained shout.]

Tom

He just actually like, lets go of Misha to just stuff his hands over Vespari's mouth.

Tom (as Xoc)

Shhh! We're here to stop them. That's the whole point of this!

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Tom (as Xoc)

Be on your guard!

Kyle (as Vespari)

[Muffled.] Mmph! Mm-hmm. Mmm.

Kyle

He won't want to say anything to avoid, for saying too much. So he'll just nod his head.

Tom (as Xoc)

You, you can talk still. Just...just be careful around her.

Kyle (as Vespari)

Okay, I appreciate your efforts, very good friend.

Kyle

Um, Misha, was there anything else you wanted to do in the cameras?

Ari

Um, I wanted to see if I could spot Meeghan anywhere.

Kyle

Okay. And you took over the cameras in the gymnasium right?

Tom

Gymatorium.

Ari

Yeah, yeah, like where everybody is.

Kyle

Yeah, the gymnasium. Yeah, you see Meeghan standing behind the stage, holding one of her tubas. And she seems to be looking around for somebody.

Ari

Does...um, can I see if she has any marks on those hands that are holding the tuba?

Kyle

You cannot.

Ari

Okay.

Kyle

They are masked by the tuba itself.

Ari

My god.

Kyle

She nervous plays, so she's anxiously playing the tuba. And in fact, you can hear—

Tom

[Crosstalking, making tuba noises.]

Kyle

On your Misha side, on your body side, that that's coming from behind the stage.

Tom

[Ends tuba noises.]

Ari

Okay.

Kyle

And it's at that point that another bell rings, indicating that it's time for the intro song and introducing the Proligarchy. And Vespari says,

Kyle (as Vespari)

Ah yes, it's time for the festivities to truly begin.

Kyle

And he points to Misha's hat.

Kyle (as Vespari)

Including that Proligarchy! I believe, ah. Mita Georgedis, I believe you're supposed to be up there.

Ari (as Misha)

[Startled.] Uh, what?

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Tom (as Xoc)

It may be best not to question this part of it Misha.

Ari (as Misha)

[Stammering, uncertain.] Oh, okay. Um.

Ari

Um, and then I guess—I don't know how it works. I guess, I guess since I saw all of what I wanted to see from the cameras, Misha will disconnect from that and be like,

Ari (as Misha)

I...guess I will go up there?

Tom

And Xoc will do like, an arm touch and say,

Tom (as Xoc)

You don't have to if you don't want to.

Ari (as Misha)

Would that help us find...you know...

Ari

And then through the mental link will say,

Ari (as Misha)

Ezra.

Ari

It's just—they still don't trust Vespari one thousand percent.

Tom (as Xoc)

Did you see anyone who was up on the stage or near it?

Ari (as Misha)

Ah, Meeghan, well, seemed to be behind the stage playing her tuba. However, I was not able to see if she had any markings on her flippers.

Kyle

You also saw Sir Kentrim.

Ari

Mm.

Kyle

And an aneen setting up something atop the banister, but you can see what.

Ari

Ah, Misha will say,

Ari (as Misha)

I also was able to discard seven hundred and ninety eight aneens.

Tom (as Xoc)

But where was the last one?

Ari (as Misha)

Well, that aneen was with Sir Kentrim.

Tom

[Annoyed noise at the sound of Kentrim's name.]

Ari (as Misha)

They were doing something very strange. I was not able to tell exactly what it was, or if he had the mark.

Tom (as Xoc)

Do you know which part of the room they're in? You can try to see Meeghan's hands more closely on the stage, and I can try to find out what the two of them are up to.

Ari (as Misha)

It is true. I suppose it will head to the stage to look at Meeghan's hand.

Ari

And I don't remember where Sir Kentrim was, Kyle. So you...

Kyle

Ah, let's say Sir Kentrim was on the bannister.

Ari

Oh, yeah, you did. Okay. So Misha, will say,

Tom

Yeah, yeah, just with a bucket above a prom.

Ari

Yes. Correct. Oh, yeah. Ooooh. Okay.

Kyle

Mm-hmm!

Ari

Yeah, I'm gonna be there. That's gonna be fun. Yeah.

Kyle

Mm-hmm.

Tom

Yeah.

Ari

Yeah. Okay, that's fine.

Tom

So that's very Xoc's going.

Ari

Okay. Sure. Go there, my sweet boy.

Kyle

So Vespari, Misha heads off to the stage. And Misha, you're going to be sat at the banquet table and be like, all right, this is your seat, and they'll start setting you down to your proper position.

Meanwhile, Vespari has run off to meet with the Blue Fairy, because as he states, this is going to be the big song where everybody dances with who they came with.

Ari

Except for the proligarchy people?

Kyle

The proligarchy people dance with each other.

Ari

[Startled.] Oh, what?

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Tom

[Dryly.] Rude.

Ari

That's weird.

Hallie

It is a Royal Court thing though. If you get elected prom whatever and your date is not elected corresponding prom whatever, you dance with whoever was elected that for that dance.

Ari

Ugh, that's...

Tom

Rude.

Kyle

And as everyone takes their positions, because we've got about five minutes left, Loell just stands there and says, **[01:20:00]**

Kyle (as Loell)

Well!

Kyle

And he extends his hand.

Kyle (as Loell)

Would you like to go to the Prom de Plume dance with me?

Tom

So Xoc is storming up to the banisters. I don't know the exact layout, but presumably there's a physical way to go up there if Kentrim did and Xoc is taking that route.

Kyle

Yeah. All right, you're taking your route. Let's just say it's, it's kind of like behind stage, and you just got to go up like a staircase right next to it.

Tom

Yeah, yeah. While Xoc is heading back stage and heading up the stairs, he, without quite turning, like, will sort of stage whisper back at Loell.

Tom (as Xoc)

[Annoyed.] What—what is your deal? You vanish right as I was starting to trust you, and then really bad things happen because of the Apocrita, and then you come back now as if nothing's wrong. Do you—do you remember anything from this? Do you think you can try to win me over again after all this time?

Kyle (as Loell)

Win you over—what the, what the hell is your problem? I'm just trying to help! That's what I did in, uh—

Tom (as Xoc)

Where were you for almost a week?

Kyle (as Loell)

Someplace else? Why does it matter? Why does it matter where I was, when I'm here to help you now?

Tom (as Xoc)

Why don't you want to tell me about that? People are—

[Dramatic piano music begins to play.]

People might be dead right now, and I don't know if it was you or if it's just some lingering effect in my body.

Kyle (as Loell)

People aren't—

Kyle

And he like kind of starts walking in front of you, pretty upset.

Kyle (as Loell)

I don't know what you're insinuating, but I don't kill people.

Tom (as Xoc)

The Apocrita could follow us. *[Strained.]* Follow me.

And I don't know if that's you, or if there's something else, but when you vanished after that, it kind of felt like a pretty clear implication.

Kyle (as Loell)

I don't know you're suggesting, but—but how do I know I'm supposed to be able to trust you, huh pal? How am I supposed to know that? You know, you're not the only one with trust issues. I trust you because I want to. Are you gonna give me that same benefit of the doubt or what? What—what do you need? What do you need to know that I'm on your side?

Tom (as Xoc)

[The music fades.]

What happened for that week while you were away. Did you not want to see me?

Kyle (as Loell)

No, of course I wanted to see you!

Kyle

And I'm going to I say you're standing outside of the door.

Tom

Mm-hmm.

Kyle

And he'll just say,

Kyle (as Loell)

Listen. Fine. *[Exasperated huff.]* When this whole thing—

Kyle

And he points around to the Prodigious.

Kyle (as Loell)

When this thing with your Jagged Dream is done, because it's a little urgent! I don't want to alarm you. When this whole thing is done, I'll...I'll tell you everything. Okay?

Tom (as Xoc)

Deal.

Tom

And Xoc will open the door and stride through. And I assume well, no—no, describe it first and then I'll say what Xoc shouts as he, as he bursts through.

Kyle

[Gleefully.] You know what you see. You see aneen and Sir Kentrim just standing there with a bucketful of something inside of it, just like precariously placing it. And we can see Misha below beneath them, being led by the hand to their seat, which is conveniently right beneath the bucket.

Ari

[Flatly.] It is conveniently right beneath the bucket.

Tom

[Crosstalking.] Yep. Yep. Hoo boy. We got, we got ourselves a good old Stephen King novel here. Anyway, Xoc is going to burst through and say—

Tom (as Xoc)

[Dramatic action music with a lot of reverb begin to play.]

Kentrim!

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

[With an edge of malice.] Hey pal, what are you doing here?

Tom

And he's going to hold up, he's going to hold up a hand, and start slowly walking towards...walking towards Kentrim, and say,

Tom (as Xoc)

[The music ends.]

Kentrim. Are you going to leave me hanging, bro?

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Kyle

He raises his hand.

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Of course not, bro.

Kyle

And I need you to roll speed defense.

Tom

Oh, what the shit!

[Dice roll.]

This is more extreme than I expected. Eee.

What if I were to use my Loell lift in this moment, is that a possibility?

Kyle

That's a possibility. So, what did you roll?

Tom

I rolled a six.

Kyle

Okay, and how do you want Loell to help you?

Tom

Well, it might be best if I, if I comprehend what is hurtling at me? Like what is this speed defense role against?

Kyle

[The music begins again.]

So Sir Kentrim takes his hand, grabs your arm, puts it behind your back and pins you against the railing.

Tom

Holy shit!

Ari

Oh, god.

Tom

[Startled.] This wasn't the plan.

Kyle

And he turns over to the aneen, who you can now visibly see has the brands of lines, so you can see he has the Easy Life brand on him, and he says,

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Drop the bucket Jerry!

Emily

Jerry!

Tom

[The music intensifies into something just as intense, but more hopeful.]

You motherfucker.

So yes. In that moment, Loell and Xoc are going to share a look, and using the mental communication—I want to at the very least give like a split second impression of Loell pushing Xoc to like, break free of it, potentially out into the open air.

Kyle

And he just says,

Kyle (as Loell)

I can't do that man. He's too strong!

Kyle

And meanwhile Sir Kentrim has you pinned, and says,

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Listen, man. I know you got feelings for that monster, but the world's gotta understand what kind of monster they are. They just need a little push!

Tom

All right, fuck this. I would like to far step just myself to that aneen and bucket, if that is if that is a doable thing.

Kyle

Yeah, you blip out of Sir Kentrim, who bangs against the bar, and you get to the bucket. And what do you want to do?

Tom

I want to grab that bucket and fling it onto Kentrim.

Hallie

Nice!

Kyle

Roll me...whatever you use for throwing. **[01:25:00]**

Tom

Speed?

[The music fades.]

Speed? Yeah, come on heart of the—

[Dice roll.]

Ohhh, fourteen!

Kyle

The bucket spirals out of Jerry's hand, hits Sir Kentrim in the head, and you just see red juices just spill all over him. And he just says,

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

What the hell man! That was the only bucket I had!

Tom

And Xoc is not going to waste any time, and is instead going to like go immediately for a glove.

Kyle

So you go, you pull off one of his gloves. Don't see the brand.

Ari

[Muttering.] Well, there's another glove though.

Kyle

But you do see a fist, and I need you to roll speed defense.

Tom

All right, and to specify this was the dominant hand, right?

Kyle

Uh, yeah. Well the hand you thought was the dominant hand, so his right hand.

Tom

[Grumbling.]

[Dice roll.]

[Resigned sigh.]

That's a six.

Kyle

Take five might damage.

Hallie

[Strained laugh.]

Tom

That's fine.

Hallie

That's over half your damage!

Tom

Like, who even fucking cares about boss fights?

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Tom

Who even fucking cares about actual combat? Who cares?

Kyle

And you just see the fist clenched and knock you right in the face and he says,

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

Come on, stop it. That was the only bucket I had, okay? Not worth getting our faces messed up for it. You win, all right? Is that what you want to hear? Ugh. This is all gross.

Kyle

And he starts taking off his other glove, and starts like, fanning it out a little bit.

Tom

Is there...is there another...is there anything on the other hand? Actually, no. No. He'll say,

Tom (as Xoc)

[The Jagged Dream's eerie music begins to play once more.]

Show me your other hand.

Kyle (as Sir Kentrim, Esq.)

What, you want...you're a strange guy pal. What, you want to punch from this one too?

Kyle

And he pulls up his other hand and you can see a dozen lines of light on it.

Ari

[Whispering intently.] It's Meeghan.

Tom (as Xoc)

No, I think we're done here.

Tom

And Xoc starts walking away.

[The music swells and fades.]

Kyle

And so we're back to where we began.

[An intense, brassy fanfare begins to play again. It sounds foreboding.] You hear an announcement start to play announcement music, and you hear, ah, over the loudspeakers.

Kyle (as VIRGULE)

Hey kids! Time for the performances to start. Get on the floor. Get your partner. And get ready for the dance of a lifetime!

Kyle

Misha. You're just sitting there anxious in your seat. You're looking around trying to like see if you can see Meeghan through the, ah, curtains.

Ari

Mm-hmm, yeah.

Kyle

You haven't been able to move because people have been just fussing over you since you got there.

Ari

Mm-hmm.

Kyle

Meanwhile, Elee, you and Rei—what have you been up to?

Emily

Um, probably investigating, and Rei flirting, and Elee trying to flirt.

Kyle

So you two have been flirting but Rei gets a little anxious upon hearing that and says,

Kyle (as Ramya)

Well...I guess we've run out our time. Only thing left to do is dance.

Kyle

And meanwhile, Hop, you and Sera are just tuning in on everything.

Hallie

Yeah, we're not, we're not on the dance floor. We don't go.

Kyle

And Xoc, you do notice one thing as you make your way down. So you make your way down and you go back onto the floor, and you just see down the end of the hall Vera, who looks at you and then rounds one of the corners.

Tom

Xoc is, over the mental link, going to say to Misha,

Tom (as Xoc)

I confirmed that Sir Kentrim and the last aneen both have brands. Still need to check Meeghan. I...I feel like we've checked most of the other people here at this dance. Vera just snuck out. I'm going to follow her and see what she does.

Ari (as Misha)

Understood. I am trying to get a better line of vision of Meeghan, but it is a little bit hard to move here. There's a lot of people. I will...I will keep you posted.

Tom (as Xoc)

Okay, I'll see you soon.

Tom

And Xoc will start following the direction that Vera went in.

Ari (as Misha)

See you also.

Kyle

So Xoc follows Vera out of the hallway, into the courtyard, and starts making his way up to the observatory. Rei and Elee are dancing, trying to enjoy it as best they can.

Emily

Elee's trying to keep her claws in her hands. She's very on edge.

Kyle

Hop and Sera, you might get a little bit of a nervous glance from Hop. But Sera is as focused as ever as she is on what's going on.

Hallie

Hop's nervous, but he's high alert.

Kyle

And Misha, you are looking back at the curtains as they open up behind you.

[The foreboding music fades into the sound of a tuba.]

And Meeghan steps forward, and Soe steps forward, and they play the first student performed song of the evening.

[A string instrument joins in with a sweet, plaintive melody.]

[01:30:12]

Hazel Stapp (as Meeghan)

I...

Look to the sun.

Having begun.

Searching for that someone...

Violet Kawi (as Soe)

It shines on you.

Eclipse my view.

Blows me askew.

My way to...

Hazel and Violet (as Meeghan and Soe)

A secret dance.

A furtive glance.

Now I advance.

Take my chance...

Hazel Stapp (as Meeghan)

Change is coming this way.

Right now, today.

Face it, don't hide away.

Hazel Stapp (as Meeghan)

[Singing as Soe does.]

I...

Look to the sun.

Having begun.

Searching for that someone...

Violet Kawi (as Soe)

[Singing as Meeghan does.]

It shines on you.
Eclipse my view.
Blows me askew.

Hazel and Violet (as Meeghan and Soe)

My way to you.

[Their voices fade into the final notes of Meeghan's tuba.]

Kyle

Meeghan and Soe's song feels like it goes on forever. Some wish it could. With so much anxiety and so much uncertainty about the changes the future will bring how could someone not savor a quiet moment with friends? But, as all moments do, the song eventually ends to thunderous applause.

[Raucous applause echoes.]

And as Soe and Meeghan take their bows, Soe red with embarrassment but beaming all the same, Meeghan's hand, which had previously been hidden by the tuba, falls to the side.

[The applause fades.]

[Closing theme, "Hitoshio" by Miracle of Sound, begins.]

And that's when you see the brand. Meeghan is not Ezra. In fact so far as you can tell, every human, animal, and visitant on the Prodigious is wearing an Easy Life brand.

Tom

[Shrilly.] Has Ezra been VIRGULE the whole time?!

[Closing theme intensifies.]

Tom

[Frantically.] Ohhh, that's how he—oh, fuck, that's how he could never leave it to chance. That's how he couldn't—

[Shrill frustrated noise.] Because if VIRGULE gives the announcements every day, then we have to interact with VIRGULE no matter who we interact with.

Kyle

So the end of the episode is going to be you yelling VIRGULE is Ezra, but the post-credits, do you want to hear all my clues?

Ari

[Brightly.] Yeah. Sure.

Hallie

[Less enthused.] Yeah sure. Why not?

Kyle

Um, when VIRGULE was first introduced, he insisted his name was VIRGIL, despite that acronym not fitting his name, which Q-BO pointed out. So he got his name wrong the first time you talked to him, which wouldn't make sense unless he was someone undercover as VIRGULE.

VIRGULE has been shown operating cameras three times: once when laughing at Elee, once when yelling at a student about WayPal, and once during the Salt and Pepper Rally, so we know he operates the cameras.

Now the thing about those cameras is they stopped Misha from getting in and they also mysteriously activated right before Hop had his chase with Cecilos that resulted in the guards being called.

Ezra's tattoo is on the Prodigious itself. VIRGULE is the only suspect hooked into the ship.

Hallie

[Annoyed, frustrated noise.]

Kyle

It doesn't make sense for that thing to be there unless the ship itself is using it, which, VIRGULE is a robot connected to it.

Tom

Augh!!

Kyle

Ezra is described as coarse, but affable. You haven't seen the affable side of Ez, ah, VIRGULE but very coarse in how he speaks. And finally, and this was the one I thought was going to give it away. Xoc, when Ezra had taken over Misha, had yelled out using his machine link, and had heard laughter as a response.

Xoc's machine link only works with machines, so there's only one suspect who could have heard Xoc yelling at Ezra, and only one suspect who could have laughed at him.

Tom

[Strained.] I'm so fucking angry because the second we were like, so Ezra is the ship, we were like it couldn't just be VIRGULE. That would be too obvious right?

Hallie

[Laughter.]

Tom

Fuck you.

Hallie

Isn't it great that we started the session with Globey VIRGULE images.

Tom

[Whispers.] Christ

Hallie

Aww, he looks so cute in the little hat though.

Kyle

Why is...why is this last one buff, Tom?

Tom

[Glumly.] I don't know.

Kyle

Why is he buff?

Tom

...I don't know.