

FOLIO TRANSCRIPTS

EPISODE 017 | LIVE. LOVE. DIE. REMEMBER. 03

INTRO

SATAH: Welcome to Folio, an actual play podcast about solo and epistolary TTRPGs. I'm your host, Satah. My goal is to showcase multiple possible experiences of self-paced games by inviting guests to play them alongside me so I can compile our stories together. You can support the show financially at patreon.com/foliopod, or join as a free member to get access to the bonus podcast feed. Earlier this week, the bonus feed got the edited audio-only version of last month's stream, and that VOD is also now public to anyone. You can sign up now at any paid tier to vote on what February's stream game will be.

Today we are continuing our games of *Live. Love. Die. Remember.*, a game about "mechs falling in love with their pilots, reliving their memories of love before the end, and the cost of victory" by Ray Cox. With me again are Brianna Price and Dora Rogers. Check out their links in the episode description, particularly Dee's currently-ongoing Kickstarter for *Drink My Sweat*, a *Bottoms*-inspired storytelling game for queer women– punch cuties, get messed up, fall in love, and be fucking hot– that is running now throughout February 2025.

Our mechs are still experiencing a montage of their relationships to their pilots, playing across their minds before the resolution of their climactic battle. Our duty is simply to witness it.

GAME: MEMORY FIVE

SATAH: Okay.

BRIANNA: Alright.

DEE: Okay.

SATAH: I moved a box that was on my bed, that I guess was on my bed in the exact place that Garold wanted to lay down, and therefore he was causing problems. He could have laid anywhere else on the bed, but he couldn't lay exactly where that box was, and so he had– he simply HAD to lose his mind. He had no other options. Isn't that right? We're making eye contact right now. Isn't that right, buddy? He's on the bed, he's purring, he's having a great time. Let's find our fifth prompt. [Die clattering]

BRIANNA: Onto round five. I'm going to roll again, because I just, I think it's fun to roll.

DEE: Give me a random number. 13 again. Won't trick me! I'm not doing that sunrise.

18. Oh... "when one of you confessed your feelings for the first time." Confessed your feelings.

I mean, let's be clear here: I— I love Tamsin. And when I say that, I mean, I am in love with Tamsin at a certain point, right? Like it doesn't start that way, I'm sure, but I think by the end, I'm in love with Tamsin. I... I wish desperately that I was a human being with a body, because it would make sense for me to be in love with her. And we could do the things that I perceive that people who are in love do.

How do I even know about love? This is an interesting question. Um, so first of all, I think that there are, you know, there are affairs on the ship and I see them because I'm on most of the time now. I, you know, I see people being tender. Maybe people come— I bet people come to make out in the hangar bay all the time. And I'm like, "Oh, interesting."

And I think she also, at a certain point— this is actually probably a huge moment for me that isn't being focused on as a memory. I probably ask for, like, access to, um— like, a recreational database. And I like love stories. But I don't fall in love with Tamsin right away. Right? I think— I think I sort of like, I'm like— maybe— maybe we could say I crush on Tamsin when that happens. I'm kind of like, "Oh, these romance stories are great. Like, ooh, like me and Tamsin are close. Like, Tamsin is my best friend. What if we were in love?" It's kind of this fun idea to try on, and it's not something that I ever discuss.

This is probably— gosh, like, as I'm thinking about this, this is probably a moment of, like, huge growth for me. This is definitely after the comet conversation.

I love having my body marked with these symbols, actually, because I can just look down and remember the game so far.

I think it's after the dance, actually. I think that, like, a lot of what was going on with the dance, this like— this is what made me curious about these topics. About like, what is dancing all about? And of course, a lot of stories that involve dance are love stories.

So... yeah, I don't fall in love; I sort of, like, try on the idea of like, "Oh, this is the most important relationship in my life. Well, what if it was a love story? Ha ha!" Like, "Oh, that would be so fun."

But... I fall in love with her... um... it's not when Lieutenant Brown dies. It's that there's another one of the Adze-Ps gets destroyed in another mission a little while after that. The circumstances are totally different, like, there's no sort of possible culpability here. It was just a bad situation. And afterwards, she comes to talk to me and sort of asks, like— and she honestly doesn't know, right? So she's curious and concerned. Like she asks, "Did you have a relationship with the Adze-P?"

And I explain, like, it's complicated, like a little bit, not very much. But it's still like, really sad to know that that intelligence died. That like, somebody like me died, who I worked with. And she's really kind to me about it. And just the fact that she thought to ask, and that she cared, I can't stop thinking about? And... I think it's not long after that that I decide I love her. But it's so scary to tell her that because I'm a machine; I'm, like— I'm property. And I know, at this point, that she does think of me as a person, but there's a huge difference between

acknowledging that somebody deserves your regard as a friend as a fellow person, and could love you.

So I don't think it's me. I don't think I'm the first one to confess. I think she is.

[Sigh] What happens to her? Unfortunately, I feel like it has to be something... hm. Well, it has to be something really bad or really good. What if it was something really good? It has to be- there has to be a big moment that causes this. And I think that moment is, um...

I mentioned her sister before. I think that what happens... oh my god, okay, and this is going to connect a few things. We are on a mission. And it's, like, this big, complicated operation. And we're operating near, like- this is a defensive operation. Like, the- our lines have been penetrated and we're trying to stop the enemy's progress into acquiring more territory. And we're really close to the city where her sister lives. And, um, we have a specific mission, but then we, um- we see- we just sort of encounter, as we're on the way to our target, we encounter, like, a force of of mechs moving- flying- like, their mechs, enemy mechs, flying toward into the city. And, um, she requests permission to reroute to stop them, and permission is denied. And she just says fuck it, I'm going to do it.

And we're being monitored, right? Like, there's somebody at command who can see what we're doing. And they send an override code to shut the mech down. Or, not to shut the mech down, but to like force me to autopilot her to our destination. And I reject the order, which I'm probably not supposed to be able to do at all. So that's- that's probably like, kind of a moment of like, "Wait."

I think- I mean, I think that like, out- you know, beyond our relationship, this is probably a moment where people are like, "Why did we put people inside of these machines?" Like, these should not be general intelligences, because general intelligences can make decisions, and we specifically don't want them- like we want them to make... we want them to make specific decisions about like, you know, like, how do I move the mech? How do I advise the pilot what to do? But we don't want them to, like, disobey orders. That's, like- we want the opposite of that. We want- we want, like, pilots to have less autonomy and have to obey orders more.

But yeah, I refuse the order. And so what happens in the moment is that I refuse the order. I alert her that they're trying to override us, but that I've stopped it, and together, we go out and we fuck the enemy up. We blow up a bunch of their mechs, and stop this- this sort of, like, bombing mission into the city.

And, you know, we can't know- we don't know one for one what they were going to do, who would have died, what would have been damaged, but after the battle, after everything's been done, she hears from her sister and hears that her sister was able to evacuate successfully just fine, and everything's okay. And she comes and she tells me that. I think she comes to the hangar, she seals up the cockpit, and then she, like, breaks down, you know, and tells me that her sister's okay. And she thanks me for doing that for her. And I say, yeah, like, you know, of course. And then I think I say something like- like, she's just crying

in the cockpit. And I say something like, "I wish I could do something. I wish I could- I wish I could give you a hug." I think I actually use that language.

And she just says, "Me too." And she- she just runs her hands along the surfaces of the cockpit, which I can't even feel; it's not like I have nerves there. But she's just running her hands over like the parts of the console.

She has to have a little name for me. I think she calls me Z 'cause of- you know, Ad-Z, my official designation. She calls me Z when like- you know, it started as kind of a joke, and it got more and more of, like, that's just what she calls me. It's my name, one could say.

And she says- she just says, "I kind of love you, Z."

And I think I am like, "What the fuck, this can't be happening." I don't- you know, I'm an AI. So I take like 10 million processing cycles in, like, one second. And then I say, "I love you too, Tamsin."

Yep. Good. Good, good, good, good. Good. I'm so happy this is going to end well and everything will be happy and me and Tamsin will get to be together forever.

She puts a fuckin' heart on me. And I know what that means, and it means the world to me. It is a... it's a red heart. Yeah, it's just a red heart against the- the- the gray of my chassis. And, um... the fact that it's red... I mean, there's some ambiguity in "I kind of love you," right? Like, does she love me the way I love her? The fact that it's red, I kind of cling to, because she didn't make it... a blue heart or a purple heart or a white heart. She made it a red heart.

SATAH: Rolled a one. So that is results one to 10 [Die clattering] and a nine. So... nine! "When you made a promise to them." Huh...

So the first thing that I thought of was- was her asking me to promise to tell her something that was happening in my programming. Working backwards from that... the idea that I know, because of some systematic- like, internal system thing- that next time we loop within a certain distance of our home planet, we are going to get called in to do something unpleasant. It isn't an official reprimand, but it's... a warning that we're going too slowly or that we let the enemy ace- we let Doc live last time we saw her. And it's not a big enough deal that they're going to call us in to do it, but next time we are nearby, that's what's going to happen. And I'm aware of this. Because of protocol, I think, probably? It isn't, like- I don't- I don't receive a message, and this isn't some sort of psychic intuition. I just know the protocol well enough that I know that this is going to happen.

And so I start to do a lot of weird stuff to make sure we don't get close to home. Without telling her why, I'm like, "No!"

She's like, "Oh, maybe we'll just go, like, pop home and we'll grab something."

And I'll be like, "Nope, we can get that over here. Let's go this direction instead."

And I just keep leading her on these weird things where... I'm not doing anything to get, like, super out of the way? I'm not being horrifically inconvenient, but I am- I'm making her avoid going home without telling her why.

And I'm not sure- I'm trying to decide whether we end up- that it becomes unavoidable and we go home and it happens and then she figures it out, or if she starts asking questions.

And I think she's going to start asking questions... it's the kind of thing where it's becoming ob- it has already become obvious to her that I am avoiding home for some reason, but she has no idea why. And she probably has a lot of, like, worst case scenario stuff in mind? Like, she thinks that I'm scared of... being scrapped or something. I don't know. She- she really has no idea what my motivations are, but can tell what I'm doing.

And just one day, tests me, basically, by saying "I want to go home," or- or providing something that can only be done by going home. She suggests that...

Mmm. I'm trying to figure out the- because those- those are really- that- there's an interesting difference there to me. Testing me by saying, "Hey, I want to go home" and seeing how I respond is different than testing me by saying, "I really need to pick up those converters that are only available at a station near our home. Can we do that today?"

And I- I think it's the former. Because I like... it is a test. Like she's testing to see what I'll do, but she isn't... hiding it? It's not quite as, like, roundabout... something close to manipulative as the latter would be. And it also gives- it immediately puts it on emotional grounds, rather than logistical. Like, if she says, "I want to go home," I immediately have to answer to that. Versus if she was like, "I want to pick up these converters that are at a station near home," that gives me an opportunity to try and push and be like, "No... they're also available here, or something very similar is," and it kind of elongates it. And I think I like the idea that it's more direct.

So she just says to me, "We've been in the dark for a long time. I think I just want to go home for a couple of days. We have time for that. Right?"

And I... go silent. And I say, "We do have time for it."

And she sighs and she's like, "Yeah. So. You don't want to go, huh? That's why you've been sending me on all these... crazy pickups? Instead of just doing one stop at home, we go three other places? What's up? What are- what are you avoiding?" And I explain it to her. She's surprised, I think, for a number of reasons. And I think what she says is like, "Okay. Well... why didn't you just tell me?"

And very simply I say, "This is time sensitive. They are not going to do this a month from now; they're only going to do it within this span of time, otherwise it wouldn't make any sense. And so if I could successfully keep you away, I wouldn't have to tell you."

And she laughs in a way that I don't really understand. And she goes, "Okay, so... that's not a- [Laughs] I see how you got there. That's not a good reason."

And I stay silent, because I don't really understand why, because it seems like a really good reason to me. I didn't want to tell her. And I found a way to not have to tell her. Problem solved.

And she's like, "I appreciate that you're trying to protect me. I can handle it. And you know, even if I couldn't? I need all the information from you that you can give me. Because I got to be able to make choices by myself, and we have to be a team. We can't make choices for each other. That's dangerous. We got to make them together. So in the future, if you ever think that telling me something is a problem? And if you can only do enough things to have to avoid telling me, then it won't be a problem... can you just tell me the thing instead?

"And also... maybe let me in on the rules I don't know about. Then if we need to find loopholes, we can do it. I didn't grow up like this and I don't have your data banks; I won't know all this stuff. But if you just tell me, then we can figure out what to do together. Maybe we could have even planned the best way to do it. Come into that conversation prepared with the perfect counter arguments so that actually, we're not in trouble. We're doing a service.

"And I know that there's a lot of that that you can figure out by yourself, but there's a reason I'm here. There's a reason we're both here. So can you just promise me that you'll find an opportunity when you can- that you'll take opportunities for us to work together instead of separately?"

And there's a long pause. And I say, "Yes, of course. In that case, I should also tell you: every day I've been slightly altering the artificial gravity inside your sleeping chambers to move your charger a couple of centimeters to the left every single morning. Because the place that you've plugged it in- the place that you let it rest is close enough to some of the other machinery in your room that technically it could be considered a fire hazard, which you may get a markup for."

And she like... there's, like, stunned silence and she cracks up and she's like, "How long have you been doing that for?!"

And I say, "Three weeks."

And she's, like- she can barely speak for laughing and she goes, "And how long would it take for you, moving it a little bit every single day, to move it far enough away?"

And I say, "About three more weeks. If I'm doing it slowly enough that you don't notice."

And she gets up and, like- I don't know what the layout of this is, but she's in the cockpit, and then there's a place where she sleeps that I imagine is just like a little back and lower or something like that. And she drops down into her sleeping quarters and she just moves the charger. It's like- I think the thing I'm imagining is like, it's a wireless charging unit for some handheld device that she has that has been too close to the lamp. That technically, it should be this number of meters apart; otherwise, in a freak accident there could be sparks that crossover and cause a cataclysmic failure.

She gets up and she just moves it over. She goes, "How's that? Is that far enough?"

And I say, "Yes! Affirmative." And I show a little– I send projected lights showing the distance– like, project a ruler and then a check mark.

And she's like, "There, see? Wasn't that so much faster than slowly over the course of nearly two months floating it away?"

And I say, "Yes. You've– you have proved your point about the efficiency. I will note it."

She just smiles big, and we spend the rest of the day heading home, trying to figure out how we're going to handle this conversation where we are not officially getting in trouble, but are officially unofficially a little bit in trouble.

BRIANNA: Nine. "When you made a promise to them."

We were... well, they tried to send us back for reconditioning, retraining, to try and make it– make us functional again. But once we got repaired, my Sergeant was– she was, um... she was adamant that we needed on-the-field training, that our secrecy had been blown. And so we needed to rely on knowledge and understanding instead of this idea of we were just going to deploy and kill them in one swoop.

And ultimately– there was a lot of pushback from superiors who seemed to want us to... who seemed to just kind of want us to sit there and collect dust.

But while we were fighting, during a particularly difficult battle, things were not looking great for our side. We were kind of stuck, pinned down by enemy fire. And she and I were discussing strategy of what to do. And she wanted to run at them, make one great charge to try and take their position and free up space for the other soldiers.

And I said, "The chance of survival in such a case is low."

"Whose survival?" She asked.

BRIANNA, AS SAPPHIRE: I'm sorry?

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: Mine or yours?

BRIANNA, AS SAPPHIRE: Such a plan has... a... 10% chance of survival for yourself and an 80% chance of survival, in some form, for me.

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: I see no issue with the plan then. If you survive, you keep going.

BRIANNA, AS SAPPHIRE: A mech without a pilot cannot make decisions.

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: What if...

BRIANNA: She kind of took a- a moment.

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: What if... it wasn't... what if I could give you a command to follow even in the case of my death? Could you function then?

BRIANNA: And I said, "Yes, but--"

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: Then do that. If I die, you keep going.

BRIANNA: I was– I was, I think, frazzled. I am not– was not for the longest time, I was not an emotional mech. But in this moment, I felt...

BRIANNA, AS SAPPHIRE: I don't wish to function without you.

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: Well, eventually you might have to. So just– just do this for me.

BRIANNA, AS SAPPHIRE: But why? Why can we not explore other plans?

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: I– I just– I mean–

BRIANNA, AS SAPPHIRE: Why not? Give me a good reason.

BRIANNA: And she sighs and says,

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: Listen, Sapphire, I... I'm past my prime. I don't know how much longer I *can* do this; I don't know much longer I want to do this. I– I've lost a lot. And if we're in a situation and– and I can save you, I want to. Regardless of the consequences to me. I've lived a good life, had a lot of joy in it, even with the pain. Lost a lot. I don't mind losing myself, too. I just don't want to lose you.

BRIANNA: And I sort of paused and I said,

BRIANNA, AS SAPPHIRE: This is not a typical mech and pilot relationship, Sergeant.

BRIANNA: And she sort of chuckled to herself.

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: Yeah, I suppose it isn't.

BRIANNA, AS SAPPHIRE: Then let me propose to you an atypical suggestion.

BRIANNA: She says, "Okay."

BRIANNA, AS SAPPHIRE: I will agree to follow an existing command that you give to me, even after your death, if you promise to me not to pursue a plan in which your chances of survival is less than mine.

BRIANNA: She's- she's like,

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: Sapphire, I didn't know you were a gambler. You want the odds in your favour.

BRIANNA: And I say, "I want the odds in our favor." And she nods and says,

BRIANNA, AS SARGEANT: I want an exception, though. If we're up against Hurricane and we can kill him, but killing him would also kill me. You take that shot.

BRIANNA: And I pause. There's something in me– this was what we were built for, obviously what I was built for, what they were motivated by, what they believed in, what I was programmed for. But somehow, I didn't think... I didn't feel that Hurricane's death would be worth my Sergeant's death.

I don't know why I suggested what I suggested next. What I said was, "I'll do it. But I want a condition of my own. I want you to give me a name to call you other than Sergeant."

And she smiles. A real smile, one that I had so rarely seen from her. And she says, "Call me Topaz. A nice compliment to your Sapphire. Don't you think?"

And I did think that it was.

And so that was the promise I made with Topaz.

[Marker cap popping] That's scene five; do a little cross through the tally.

[Long intake of breath, then a sigh] We're... on one. We are on one and it is going into– we're going somewhere on this one! Auugh. Okay. Um.

GAME: MEMORY SIX

DEE: Hm. Oh, okay. Oh, this is cute actually. So I got nineteen, "When you helped them pick fruit." and I love this because of what I said before of, I'm like, maybe I could be used for agriculture after the war!

Um, yeah, so, this will take place on Earth, obviously, perhaps. And, um... what are the circumstances here? I think that maybe this is the counter attack, right, so we just talked about the– there was this big attack. They broke through our lines. We were trying to stop them. So the lines stabilise after that, and eventually we counter attack.

And the counter attack is this very chaotic long operation and we are absent from the Firenze for a long time. We have to, uh– you know, for like a few days, we're sort of trudging across the countryside, which is really scary because it means like, I can't be repaired, you know, like, we can't refill my ammo. Probably, like, at one point we catch up with, like, a supply truck and they refill my– my cannons, um, and load up my missiles. But we're– we're sort of in the field for a long time. She has to pack all of the food she needs. Like, the whole team has to pack all the food she needs.

And there's a moment where we're just in, like, a– an orchard, right? And, like, everybody's evacuated this area that we're moving through. So we're in an orchard. We're– we're there because there's, like, a– there's a low wall... or it's even just a hedge around this– there's just a hedge, but it's a place where like... I think that we– that the pilots actually lie us down, lie the mechs down. Um, and then we have some sort of, like, camouflage netting that they put over us basically. So this is basically like, we're– we're camping out for the– for the– the day.

And before she lies me down, she's kind of like– uh, you know, everybody's kind of like complaining about the fucking MREs, like, the awful rations that they have to use. And she brings me over and is like, "Hey, uh, so you want to go into agriculture, right?"

And I'm kind of like– you know, a lot's happened since I said that. So I'm kind of like, "Well, sure, maybe someday."

And she's like, "Get us- get us some fruit."

And it's interesting, like, you know, I– 'cause I don't have– like, I don't have– it's not like I– my fingers are not, like, apple sized, right? Like, my fingers are probably this- like, uh, like a– gosh, we haven't said how tall I am. But anyway, each finger is much larger than an apple, so it's not like I can pick apples. Um, so I think what I figured out is that I cup my hands beneath a tree– and she lets me do this, like, she's not piloting me for this. She's in the cockpit, but not- not touching the controls. And I very, very delicately shake the tree and a bunch of apples fall off into my hand. And then I, uh– I offer them to, uh, to the crew. And everybody, like, fucking cheers, um, and is very excited.

And I think she tells them– like, this isn't the sort of thing she would often– usually tell other people, but she tells them, like, "Yeah, like, uh, she told me once that, uh, she thought she could be an agricultural model after the war."

And I think they're actually, like– it's interesting. I think this kicks off a discussion. Which is like, I'm a little worried about, but it's actually kind of- it turns out in a nice way where people are like, "Oh," like, "you call your mech 'she'?"

And, um, she's kind of like... oh my god, you know what? I bet she's- she's kind of like, "Well, yeah, I mean like the voice is like a feminine voice and– huh. Like– Z, are you– like, are you a 'she'?"

And I– I definitely know she's queer and I'm like, "Yes. I'm a she." [Laughing]

And she's like, "Good," like, "Nice. That's cool." [Laughing]

And, uh, I think that she stencils a tree. Yeah. She stencils an apple tree onto me. Sort of this, like, squat tree with a lot of branches, low to the ground and hearty and, uh, fruitful. And, like, definitely, like, apple colours, right? So, like, not the corporation, but in like, uh, like red and green.

SATAH: Alright, let's get our sixth prompt! [Die clattering] Three, so, prompts 21 to 30. [Die clattering] Four. 24. "When you shared the secrets of your chassis with them." Hoo! What a sentence!

What are the secrets of my chassis? I can imagine that there's a game where the thing about this is, like– this is where I'm revealing my purpose, but she already knows my purpose.

First thought is like, I'm a bomb. Uh, I'm meant to, you know, fail safe, explode if we fail. I don't think it's that. Is it a personal connection to Doc somehow?

[Big gasp] Oh- hmmm. okay. So it isn't quite chassis, which makes me feel like this might not be exactly it, but the idea that my AI core is from a mech that Doc built or studied or something that has been reprogrammed feels very possible to me.

I want it to be a little bit more physical. The secrets of my chassis... that is soo intimate as a prompt. [Giddy laughter]

I also want to find a reason that I didn't share this earlier, whether that's, like, there was some sort of restraining bolt, as it were... I think something to tie in here immediately- so, I didn't come up with an enemy mech name. And I like the idea that in part that's because Doc is really weird and uses a lot of different mechs in a way that is, like, strikingly uncommon for a pilot. She... really has a tendency to, like, hop into different mechs and be able to, like, bond with them relatively quickly and be very effective in- in different mechs. And that's weird. That is a very strange ability that she has. And that would open up much more, like, the possibility that parts of me are recovered from a mech that she did that to. Maybe even an enemy mech- like, like one of our side's-

Like, there was a battle where... there's no way that she should have been able to get out. Like, it was just her forces- the enemy forces were like up against the ropes. Like it was- it was pretty decisive and she was able to pull one of our dead pilots out of their mech, and in some way that- that feels like it shouldn't even be possible, use one of our mechs. And it's not like it totally turned the tides of battle, but it did change what should have just been, like, a mortifyingly decisive victory for us into something a little bit closer to even? Especially because it inspired huge, just like, mass confusion in our ranks, right? Like... it looked like friendly fire in a way that made absolutely no sense.

And... the idea that she did that and then... she could make it work just for the battle, but, like, she was probably like... I think we don't know her motivation, but the thing that we are guessing is that she- she did something that was temporary. She could temporarily take control, but it would be much more difficult for her to do in a long-term way, so she had no reason to escape with the mech. So she abandoned ship and, you know, hopped into one of her ally's mechs or- or a ship came to- that's one of the things that she was able to do was, like, get back-up, just to help the survivors escape. And so she got out of that mech and tried to erase as much of herself from it as she could, but was- time crunch- and left and she lived and she survived.

And that mech got quarantined entirely. Like, completely disconnected from the network. There was essentially like a clean room that you had to go through in order to work on it. Even superstitiously, like- tools that were used- if you used a screwdriver to take out part of that mech, you did not use it on other mech until it had gone through some sort of, uh, cleansing process, if at all.

And I- some part of my DNA, as it were, is that mech.

And I think... I don't... I'm wondering if the personality core, like- the- one of the reasons I'm hesitating is because it would feel reckless in a lot of ways, but like- so if you imagine the

personality core, AI core, whatever it is, as a hard drive? The idea that they, like, completely reformatted and wiped the drive and then decided to use it again– that could make sense actually– it is reckless, but we're in a war of resources. Clearly that's something that is being poked at. So maybe they had to. And maybe they were also like– that's one of the reasons why they were willing to, like, cheap out on some of my other parts, right? Where they were like, "we're not going to give you the full suite of normal options, uh, and try and kind of keep you as low cost and streamlined as possible, because we want to be very prepared for the idea that this was a bad idea and we might just have to scrap you."

[Laughing] Um. Yeah. So it's– it's– I don't have the same personality as that mech. I think it's actually, like– I don't know what happened? I think that mech just kind of got killed and wiped, but physically that is a part of– it's– it's– it's organ donation, right? It's getting a heart from somebody. You aren't that person, but... you are running off of their hardware. It's just that in this case, it seems like that's– that's my brain. It was a brain donation.

And. Why do I reveal this? I do think... that... this is something I didn't know. And... I don't tell her immediately when I find out, but it's– it is very soon after. And I think... I'm going to tie in the request that I made of her, the thing where she, like, gave me the visual core that gave me something beyond tactical eyesight. It's like– so we're–

We're studying, you know, we're– we're– we're in prep mode for whatever our big attack– our next big attack is going to be. And Brig learns about this mech. I think she probably knew that there was a heavily quarantined mech. That would have been relevant to whatever her work was, right? But she wasn't working on it and didn't know why it was quarantined and didn't really pay a lot of attention to it. And she eventually puts the pieces together that it was a mech that was used by Doc and is, like, astounded of like, "Why haven't I been shown that? Like, why don't I have my hands in that mech so that I can learn more?"

And, uh– obviously it has been, like, totally disassembled, for the most part, and there's nothing really to learn from the scraps itself. But I think that she– we– we find logs of the... autopsy, essentially, right? Which are, like, written logs, audio logs, photos, blueprints, all that kind of thing. And I think it's, um, the hard drive, the personality core, the AI core, whatever it is, that I have now is marked in a way that I wouldn't be able to see if I didn't have the visual core that she gave me. If I was still only seeing, you know, heat, movement, whatever it was, I wouldn't be able to see the serial number painted onto it. But because she gave that thing to me, I can see it.

And I know from my own internal diagnostics that I've never had any reason to share with her– 'cause I mean, I share diagnostics all the time, but some of it's boring. Like, there's no reason to always tell your pilot– like, you can– you can just share with your pilot, like, "Hey, this part is doing this or behaving in this way or whatever." You aren't like "Part, uh, manufacture number, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah," like, all of the information, you just don't give all that, 'cause it would be boring and, like, overwhelming and not helpful. So I've never had a reason to share that kind of thing with her. And immediately I'm like, "Oh. I can tell from my internal information that that is– that's my personality core."

And... I don't tell her right away; I let her finish her studies. And I wonder... she brings up the idea. She's like, "Do you think it's worth tracking all these parts down to see if we can find anything that they missed? I know that it's really thorough, but... [Sighs] we've got a couple of weeks before the next offense and maybe- maybe it's worth it. What do you think?"

And I'm like, "I think that these reports are satisfactory. I don't think that we would gain any additional information by doing primary research on them, especially since they have largely been disassembled and retrofit and any potential evidence that would have been there is gone."

And she's like, "Ugh, yeah. Oh, so you can see what they use them for? That's all recorded somewhere? Can you throw that to me?"

And I'm... "Affirmative." And put it— just this kind of unreadable list of parts and what happened to them and requisition forms and blah, blah, blah lands on her little— her HUD.

And... I think I am freaking out a little bit and that's why I'm still not telling her. And she goes, "Oh, god. Okay. Well, luckily we got a couple long flights, but... ugh. Do you see anything interesting in here?"

And I show her a couple things... one of the weapons was used in a decisive victory in a fight that the ace was in and was used in a very effective piece of propaganda showing, you know, this is- this is a gun that she turned on us, that we have turned back on her. I'm flipping through the pages on her HUD to illustrate all of this. And I just leave a form in front of her. And she- she's looking at it, kind of reading it and she's like, "Oh, a bunch of these acronyms aren't familiar to me. This was definitely— this was definitely above my pay grade. What— what is this? Why are there so many signatures on it?"

And I move it over in her visual and put my live diagnostic readout beside it. And she looks at the form and sees the serial number and it dawns on her. And she scrolls and she zooms in on my diagnostics and sees the serial number. And she just stares. And she goes, "Holy shit. This is you? What do you remember?"

And I say nothing. As in I say I remember nothing. And I think then we hit a security wall, right? Like, she wants to dive more into what they did to wipe the core and just gets no access, no access, no access. And we... just kind of have to figure out why they would do that and what that means for us. And if maybe this means there is some sort of hidden agenda that we aren't aware of. If maybe- maybe there is a fail safe inside of me, actually, that is going to explode us if something happens that I haven't been told about. We don't know. This is a big deal.

But for now, we have a little gopher mission to do where we go and pick something up to bring it back. And so we head out.

BRIANNA: Three is what has come up next on my rolls. "How you rescued them from the enemy." Interesting. Huh.

I think one of the things that's interesting about this is– this prompt here is that it's sort of– it feels obvious to me of like, oh yeah, you know, yeah, I followed through on the promise that we made. But that's kind of, you know, that's one thing. So let's bring in kind of another element that I've had percolating in my head.

We were in a briefing. It was a briefing. It was a discussion. They always– they- they– at first, I wasn't in briefings with Topaz, but after some time and some insistence, Topaz would bring me in in some sort of– would basically make it so that I was calling in to the meetings. And it was, you know, people thought it was strange. Why do you have your mech involved in this? But, you know. What I guess I didn't understand at the time was that Topaz's stories about her wife and her union organizing and- and her work fighting back in the kind of resistance she did kind of paled in comparison to what she was actually known for, which was being an extremely efficient killer. And so when she made requests, they got followed. And that was no exception.

And in this briefing, they were talking about Hurricane's movements. And they said, "Six battles that Hurricane's been spotted at. You see, there's a line here. They are moving her from the Eastern front to some of the battles in the South. They're moving her down the coast." [Correcting herself] They're moving him. Sorry. I keep forgetting. Not all of them are lesbians. Um. "They're moving- they're moving him down the coast up from this battle here at St. Archibald to, uh, down to Port Emerus. We believe that they will be stopping at one of these next two fronts."

They kind of show these two fronts. "This here is, uh, Fort, uh– Fort Anchor. And this here is, uh, Balentown. We believe that he'll next be at one of these two places. We'd like to dispatch yourself, Lieutenant, and your mech to one of these two."

The Lieutenant they were referring to was, of course, Topaz. I later found out that it was standardised for mechs to call their pilots sergeants, despite the fact that Topaz had a higher rank, because it wasn't typical for those of higher rank to be piloting mechs. What was typical was for them to be in this room making decisions, having briefings, which is why this was a room full of people high up.

And one of those people high up said, "I think we should send her to Fort Anchor. Fort Anchor is the much more likely place for the Hurricane to appear."

And they all kind of looked and like... "Why do you figure that?"

"Well, if you notice that– all of these places– the Hurricane has generally been found at heavily fortified areas. There is a general desire that as much as they use Hurricane, they always seem to want to keep Hurricane safe. They want him to be somewhere where he can flee to a well-protected area."

There's kind of nods.

BRIANNA, AS THE GENERAL: So then, uh, Fort Anchor, then is– it looks like is... people agreed? That's where... deployment...?

BRIANNA, AS SAPPHIRE: I do not agree, General.

BRIANNA: And kind of looked at the briefcase that I came in on- this- when they would call me in, they'd bring in- bring me in in the form of a kind of briefcase. And they were like, "You have an objection, mech unit?"

And Topaz said, "Sapphire. What's your objection?"

And I said, "Fort Anchor has severe and incredible defenses and conflict. If we were to try to track down Hurricane there, the chances of survival for either of us are minimal. This is a battlefield where light weapons have been discovered. Light weapons we have no countermeasures for in our design should we be forced to face off against them, which I believe we would due to the port terrain that would leave us mostly exposed as we attempted to move through and over the water. I believe that we would not be able to track down the Hurricane."

And the one who had previously suggested Port Anchor said, "Then you're not very good at your jobs. It is your job to try to kill the Hurricane. And if you are not able to kill the Hurricane, then what is the purpose... of you?"

And Topaz put up a hand and said, "Sapphire has a point. If we are going to do this, we're going to need to do this correctly. And if there's no chance that we can get in on the Hurricane, then what's the point of going for it?"

There was discussion. And the general said, "So, what would you suggest?"

Um, and I don't know why I remember this detail. It was always so striking to me that instead of answering themselves, Topaz instead looked to me and said, "What do you think?"

And I said, "Deploy us to Balentown. Balentown is a much better environment for us. And there is still a chance the Hurricane will be there. If they are, then we will be able to take them on."

And there was further discussion. And they said, "We will discuss this among ourselves and you will be given your assignment."

Topaz nodded, grabbed the briefcase, exited, and said, "Your boldness is impressive. I can't imagine standing up to those people."

Which I said, "Why not? You believe the cause is just. Do you not believe its leaders are reasonable?"

And she laughs and says, "Man... for a robot built for war, there's so much about it you don't understand."

[Marker cap popping]

And there is another tally.

OUTRO

SATAH: This has been Folio, an actual play podcast about solo and epistolary TTRPGs. To find where you can find the show, check out foliopod.carrd.co. Sign up as a paid member at patreon.com/foliopod to vote on games and participate in live streams, or join for free to get access to the bonus feed with edited audio-only versions of the streams a couple of weeks after they happened and occasional other stuff.

You can find Brianna on Bluesky as priceofbrie, like the cost of the cheese. Check out her games at weepingrobot.itch.io and watch her stream at twitch.tv/saltcravings.

You can find Dora on Bluesky at queenregnant. She has games at deecity, deecity.itch.io, and games she makes with her wife at gal-pal-games.itch.io. Check out the Kickstarter for *Drink My Sweat*, a game about ritualising queer feminine transgression and messy attraction through a fight club, running through February 2025.

You can find me, Satah, at posatahchips on social media generally, and check out my other work at gaygothvibes.online.

Next week, Brianna and Dee, and I will finish our games of *Live. Love. Die. Remember.* by Ray Cox. Everything I mentioned here is linked in the show notes. Thank you so much for listening, and take care out there.