

Twilight Mirage 29: This Year of Ours: The Pilot

Transcribed by Nop [0:00:00~0:42:00], Transcribed by Sav [0:42:00-0:52]

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): Hey, it's Cascabel. I know you're probably zipping between planets in some sort of experimental ship right now, bud, but, once you get back, just let me know you got this, okay?

I wanted to let you know that I uh...I got back from Skein, and some of your old colleagues wanted me to pass on a hello, and...

[Music-"The Pilot", a crunchy, synth-heavy song, begins]

[takes a deep breath] I know it's weird. I-i-it's weird to have them working for the NEH now, and I know it can be hard to hear, but...they're doing good work, man. You should check in on them. Quire is bleeding, and they're the closest thing to medics.

I've seen it across every world I've been on, but, on Skein, it's-it's bad, man. There's a gash that cuts down to the core, deep in the jungle, about a day from Terncage, that big city by the beach. It's a wound that...pulses. It groans. With each new beat it finds and breaks a new reality. So I guess I'm just not surprised that it attracted every scientist in the sector. The Skein, The Garden? They were already deep into this stuff on Old Quire, man. And your people from the Ever Forward. From what I understand, y'all have always been pathfinders. Some of the best field researchers ever. So I get why you're not thrilled with it, but I've spoken with these folks. The New Earth Hegemony offered them a lot: resourcing, protection, time. They could do more good unified as Ternion than they could ever do alone.

In any case, I'm glad you're doin' alright. Test pilot seems like a good fit, you always liked to be on the cutting edge, after all. I, uh...I never told you about the first time I saw the Amp Runner, did I? The way it broke through the atmosphere? I saw through the trick, the screeching, the fake rust. But...then I saw you inside, and I was terrified. I'm glad we're on the same side, Even. I...

Well, if you ever need anything, you just let me know. After what we faced down together-Independence, the Iconoclasts, Volition...A year ago, I was just a mercenary for hire. Now, I've seen the world shatter and put itself back together. And I wouldn't've made it out without you. If you're ever around my neck of the woods, promise you'll let me know.

AUSTIN: Alright, so....Even.

DRE: Hey, hey.

[2:28] AUSTIN: How's it goin'? How's your year been?

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: That's kind of like the thing we're gonna get at here, today. Like I said this already in the intro, but, what we're going to be focusing on is...this time, this period of time, between where we're going next and where we came from, which I guess we're now calling the Miracle of the Mirage. Everything that happened with the rescue of the Cadent, the confrontation of Independence on Volition, and the evacuation of the Fleet to what has since become eight different planets, all sharing fundamental geography with Quire. But also having unique kind of climates, and now unique cultures. It has been a year of people being, y'know, living on these planets. And there's some stuff that I made clear during the outro to the holiday special, that I don't know we've talked at length. So let me just give you the very broad picture of where things are in the Mirage.

There are, again, eight planets. They all have unique names, I've only named a few of them at the time of this recording, but, you know. And they are all inhabited by a number of different factions, and by a growing number of people. The result of the evacuation episode of the holiday special was that Volition [correcting himself] a specific threat from Volition, the Axiom Bountiful, was pushed back, allowing the fleet to evacuate, and was done by an allied attack coming from both members of the Divine Fleet and from the New Earth Hegemony's Vanguard forces. After that, there were a number of, probably border skirmishes, and kind of smaller fights, but fundamentally, the conflict between the New Earth Hegemony and the Divine Fleet, happened in this one week of time, between the conversation that, kind of Cascara and the other commanders of that kind of intro to the holiday special had with you, and then the end of the evacuation, when all of the ships go to land. And that's called the Week-Long War. So we are nearing the one year anniversary of the Week-Long War, we're nearing the one year anniversary of the Miracle of the Mirage, and in that time, things have fragmented a little bit, but everything is kind of at this weird, uneasy truce. This uneasy peace.

That's the gist of where things are in terms of what the planets are...but what I'm curious of, Dre, is where is Even at this point? What's Even been doing for the last year?

Dre: I think there's kinda been two big things that Even has been doing. I think the first one, and like, we were, when we were like mechanically figuring out how to port Even over

Austin [crosstalk]: Yeah

Dre: into the new system, I think I even said at one point, I guess mechanically this works, but this isn't as weird as I want Even to be. [laughs]

Austin: Mmhm, mmhm.

Dre: And I think we both kinda decided it's like, yeah, Even spent this past year, year and a half, like, getting even more...like hybrid-y and weird.

[5:55] Austin: Yeah, like, well the thing that we were trying to do when we started making the

character, we'll go over stats and stuff in a second too,

Dre [crosstalk]: Yeah

Austin: but we were like, y'know, let's just remake the Catabolist, which was the Veil character, the Veil playbook that you were, inside of Scum and Villainy, which is the book we're using now. And then like, it just wasn't working, partially because it's just a different game, right? Like,

Dre [crosstalk]: Yeah

Austin: The-y'know, obviously pros and cons with the Veil, lots of stuff that we love, lots of stuff that we were like "eh" with. And, y'know, I like that we spent the first part of this game in that system, I don't regret that at all. But the-one of the things it just did well was, just had so much flavor for its unique playbooks. And that's not dissing Scum and Villainy's playbooks, but, like, they're definitely more familiar archetypes than the ones in the Veil. And so, the closest thing we had was the Mechanic, and that wasn't really right, like, some of that stuff was in there? But we were doing a lot of like, "well, you could be an alien person on, in the rules, so that you could do your weird hybrid stuff, and then one of the things that we both hit at was just like "well, what if the thing you'd been before had almost been a larval stage." Like, you just were not...Even Gardner of the first-, of Pre-Mir-, Pre Miracle Even Gardner, was like, a baby.

Dre: [Laughs]

Austin [higher-pitched, slurred]: Jus' a lil-Jus' a lil *baby*.

Dre [higher-pitched, slurred]: Jus' a lil *baby*.

Austin: Jus' a lil *baby*. You were jus' a lil baby! You were just like, the first form of-you were Form One Frieza.

Dre: [Cracks up]

Austin: You were Imperfect Cell. And now, you've grown up a little bit. Do you want to talk about like, what you look like now?

Dre: I ate three people and now-

Austin [overlapped Dre]: You ate...Uh-huh, and they were all Androids.

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah-

Austin [Overlapping]: Which is actually on brand, frankly.

Dre: [laughs] Yeah, no it's not wrong. I think like, the touchstones that first we started with was like, was literally, like, looking at like, Kerrigan, and like,

Austin [crosstalk]: Yeah

Dre: even Zerg,

Austin: Yeah

Dre: But then as I kinda looked more, like, I started looking more at, honestly like, Warframe stuff. I really like...

Austin [overlapping, excited]: Yeah, Warframe stuff is a good touchstone.

Dre: Yeah, I really love the way that like, Warframe does like, that organic plating kind of stuff.

[8:00] Austin: Yes, Yes, where it's like "Oh, that's like a nice, that's like a nice piece of armor-Oh, nope, that's your chest, that's actually just your chest."

Dre: "Yeah, you're not wearing anything, that's just what, that's just what you are. Okay."

Austin: Yes, totally.

Dre: Uuum...

Austin: That's a good touchstone

Dre [overlapping]: Cuz I wo-I won't get into Warframe spoilers, but there's-there's more to it than that.

Austin: I know, I know, I've watched the cutscenes. I've, like wanted to get into-we should talk about Warframe, cuz I really wanna play Plains of Eidolon, and like just like...they gave me a bunch of stuff as a journalist. They're like "oh, here's a bunch of points!"

Dre [overlapping]: Heeey!

Austin: And I need to just like spend the time to get my head around that game...

Dre: Warframe's cool

Austin: It seems cool. Anyway, uh, do you have a face, still? Cuz Warframes don't have faces.

Dre: Yeah, so actually-

Austin [overlapping]: Or some of them sort of do, but you know what I mean.

Dre: Here's-here's the thing....soooo, I-Even definitely still has a face. And I still think it's like, it's a pretty, like, you know, what we would think of as like a recognizably human face. Like, I think he still has like nose, eyes, mouth, and stuff like that.

Austin [overlapping]: Yeah

Dre: I think the biggest thing besides like the physical changes of his flesh becoming this more kind of like...this organic, like, plating thing.

Austin [overlapping]: Yeah.

Dre: It's not like heavy armor or anything, but it's definitely like-

Austin [overlapping]: No, it's like a carapace, though, right?

Dre [overlapping]: It's different- Yeah, for sure, I think that's a great way to say it. The biggest thing that's changed is his hair.

Austin: Right.

Dre: And I think that was even the first thing I kinda pitched you on was like, I had-I had this image in my head of like Even having like this, tendrill hair.

Austin [overlapping]: Right.

Dre: And that is what he like uses to, like...fly ships and shit now.

Austin [overlapping]: Mmhm.

Dre: Because he basically at some point figured out like...so far I've been interacting and like speaking to technology using my hands, but like...

Austin [overlapping]: Right.

Dre: My hair is a lot closer to my brain than my hands are.

Austin: [laughs] So, for you it's just-it's literally just a...like, "oh this is the quickest path". Like, the hybrid alien that you have-or, the alien that you've become a hybrid with, like, just decided "oh, no, this is what we should've been doing this whole time."

[9:57] Dre: Well, I think it, I think it's like, it's-it's....it follows. So, Even has that realization, and then,

Austin [overlapping]: Mmmh...

Dre: finds his body just adapting to that.

Austin [overlapping]: gotcha.

Dre: And so like, he found his hair becoming, like...thicker, until it turns into these kind of like, a collection of basically like, rope-like tendrils.

Austin: Like braided tendrils, yeah.

Dre: Yeah, yeah, and I think

Austin [overlapping]: Yeah, yeah, I'm into it.

Dre: he often wears it in like, a kind of like, mix of like a pony-like a messy, updo, ponytail kind of thing.

Austin: Nice, nice, I'm into it. That's-that sounds good to me. The-so, the class that you are in this is "Pilot".

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah.

Austin: I mean, that's kind of the thing, one of the parts of this is like...you pitched me as like, you literally-Even flies stuff now, or pilots stuff now, with those tendrils.

Dre: Right, yeah, like, he's-

Austin [overlapping]: You painted me this picture of like, literally floating in the air. Like, un-with a-like an uncanny floating in the air, you're not like-you're just floating in the air, or you're using your wings to float in the air?

Dre: No, he's not floating, he's *suspended*. Like it's-

Austin [overlapping]: Okay,

Dre: Like-

Austin [overlapping]: the tendrils lift him up, like they're that...

Dre: Yeah, like, I don't-

Austin [overlapping]: yeah, okay.

Dre: this isn't a thing that everyone should Google search for, cuz it's...it's rough to look at, but like,

Austin [overlapping]: Ah, I see

Dre: I had a friend in high school that did like, body suspension stuff?

Austin: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes....

Dre: And so I definitely am thinking, that...like,

Austin [overlapping]: Yep

Dre: that kind of thing, where I think he is like, like probably sitting and like, or like, splayed out in like a, like a meditative-type pose,

Austin: Uh-huh.

Dre: that is just like, hanging from

Austin [overlapping]: Yeah

Dre: like the ceiling, or...or whatever,

Austin: Yeah

Dre: by these tendrils.

Austin: Cool. That is fucked up, but also cool as hell! Like, that's the thing that is-

Dre [overlapping]: That's, I guess, the Even Gardner Brand, right there-fucked up, but cool as hell.

Austin [overlapping]: Yeah, the Even Garner-[laughs] The Even Gardner brand is like...I think body suspension is totally within the realm of like-Hey, your first-blush look at this is going to be like, "*woah*, I was not ready for this". But that the, the kind of...theory behind it, the sort of like, ideology behind it, is about pushing the boundaries of the human body, and about like, recognizing like, experiencing...y'know, physical sensation in a different way...

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: I really love it. Like, I like it a lot, especially in an episode-especially in a season that's about exploring what bodies mean, and what, like, kind of putting the human at the center of ideology and philosophy looks like.

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah

Austin: So I'm way into that. So-

Dre [overlapping]: I think another big touchstone for this for me is like, is some of Giger's stuff.

Austin [overlapping]: Yeah, yeah, yeah

Dre: Like, not as much like, the huge robot boobs part of Giger, but like...

Austin: Sure.

Dre: That other, like, that uncanny, unnatural...

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: unnerving, but also interesting stuff that Giger does.

Austin: Totally, totally. And I mean, we've been hitting on this stuff, especially with like, your character, I think, Sylvia's¹ character with the sort of the...hannibal touchstones...and in general, just like, the Cronenberg-y, like, "Oh this is, this is-body horror is fucked up but also I can't look away." And also maybe it's not as fucked up, like maybe that's the whole point of it, so I'm glad we're continuing to go down that route.

[12:40] So, as a pilot, what are your, what are your...I mean, I've probably said this already to-in an intro, but, I'll say it again briefly, we're playing Scum and Villainy, which is a system that's based on Blades in the Dark, which means that it has attributes, and it also has...skills? Actions, actions are what they're called. So, attributes are the kind of things you resist damage with, and those are insight, prowess, and resolve. And then underneath each of those are the skills, and that is doctor, hack, rig, study, helm, scramble, scrap, skulk, attune, command, consort, sway. So what are your action ratings?

Dre: My action ratings are...one rig, two study, two helm, one scrap, and one command.

Austin: Cool...which would give you a certain mix of insight, prowess, and resolve, I think I wrote

¹ The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.

those down, did I not, maybe I didn't...

Dre [overlapping]: You did, yep.

Austin: Okay, what are, what are those?

Dre [overlapping]: Two, two, and one.

Austin: Okay, so two insight, two prowess, one resolve. Cool. [pauses] If you don't know what any of this means, don't even worry about it yet, if you're listening.

[Dre cracks up]

Austin: It'll come up in play, and it'll become clearer. If you're, like, desperate to know what this system is like and you haven't listened to past Friends at the Table stuff, go back and listen to some Marielda, starting on episode three, we started playing Blades in the Dark, it's one of our favorite systems so we're super excited to get back to those core mechanics. What abilities do you have?

Dre: So I have the starting ability for Pilot, which is "Ace Pilot". I have potency on all speed-related rolls, and when I roll to resist the consequences of piloting, I gain +1.

Austin [overlapping]: Mmh.

Dre: And I think...so we were talking about this like, before the start, where we're like, "What is-what is speed-related mean?"

Austin [overlapping]: Yeah.

Dre: Like, is that just when you're piloting something, or is it also like, I mean is it just that you move quicker?

Austin: Uh-huh

Dre: I ha-I kinda like the idea, too, of like...do you remember like, how Quarians in Mass Effect like, their legs are like, slightly like, pushed back and like, offset?

Austin [overlapping]: Oh, yeah! Yeah, yeah, totally.

Dre: I kinda like that, too, is like, maybe like, Even's legs have also like, kinda morphed around a little bit, and because his stride is now longer and different.

Austin [overlapping]: Mmh...gotcha, gotcha, gotcha.

Dre: Like, he's a little bit faster than he was before.

Austin: Yeah. I'm into that.

Dre [overlapping]: And then we also said that Ace Pilot part was like, he was always a pilot, and he was like...he was fine,

Austin [overlapping]: Right.

Dre: he was good, but like, this ability to like, commune with ships is what makes him the Ace pilot.

Austin: Yeah, you now directly connect to them, so...like, there's that one little layer mix. You're not just, It's not, "I'm gonna move my hand to make the ships do this," it's just "the ship moves like this, now."

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah.

Austin: "I want the ship to turn right now, your-you turn right." In a way, you're almost like Myriad, now. Right?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin [overlapping]: Like, you become whatever you're piloting. So what else? What are your other two abilities? So I, I've gi-you g-always get a second ability, and then I'm also kind of like "take one more level, you didn't come into this fresh." Like, I think one of the joys of playing a roleplaying game is leveling up and picking new moves, so I didn't want you to come in at level six or something?

Dre [overlapping]: Hm.

Austin: But, I wanted to make sure you had enough, enough...agency to kind of make sure that you could reflect that you used to do this other thing.

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah.

Austin: So, what's your, your other ability?

[15:39] Dre: One of my other abilities from the pilot tree is Commander, that's where when I lead a group action, I gain +1 scale, so, like, a small group counts as a medium group.

Austin: Right.

Dre: And if I'm leading a group action in combat, if we get multiple sixes from different rolls, they count as a critical.

Austin: That's *sick*. That second part is just like, so cool.

Dre: It's pretty good.

Austin: Yeah, cuz I don't know if you remember how group actions worked, but the way it basically works is, you do like "all right, I'm going to lead a group action, we all roll, we take the highest roll, but *I'll* be the one who suffers consequences because I'm the leader." And so being able to be like "alright, instead of it being like, I'm, I'm going to do a group action where we're-" instead of being like "I'll a group action where we fight and I get a six, you get a six, we all get sixes, but I still am the only one who's gonna get hit back in any way", now it's actually "no, actually, we get a critical", and that's really cool. Alright, so....and that does reflect, I think, kind of Even's ...one of the things you said when we were wrapping up at the holiday special was that you wanted Even to kind of, see the world and say like "hey, I need to take a more-a-a bigger role as a leader, and as like, a person who can make decisions. And also you just kind of did always function as the leader of the ground team in the first half of the game. So I think that reflects both of those things really well.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: And...your last move.

Dre: The last one...so, you can take three veteran ticks, which is basically you can choose an ability from another group.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: And I took one from the mechanic tree called "Construct Speaker". Machines speak to you when you study them, study being one of the moves.

Austin [overlapping]: Yeah.

Dre: And the first time when you roll a critical while fixing or building a particular machine, you may add a simple modification to it, which is part of the crafting rules.

Austin [overlapping]: Cool.

Dre: But yeah, we were just like "okay, yeah this is what Even did in the first part."

Austin [overlapping]: Yeah, yep.

Dre: Like, he talked to machines.

Austin [overlapping]: And you still have that. So, and who knows, maybe you'll still, maybe-I'm very curious to see how much of the old versions of these characters peek through, because there's definitely a spectrum of like, "here's where you were" vs. "here's where you are now."

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah.

[17:46] Austin: Like, some, some characters come over *very* cleanly. Like, I think Echo and the Muscle class, are just like-

Dre: Oh, yeah. [Laughs]

Austin: Yeah no, this is-this...yep, uh-huh, this is you. This is still you.

Dre [overlapping]: You're still good at fucking people up, huh?

Austin: You're good at fucking people up. And like, maybe they will end up taking a move that represents the fact that they also kind of move into a leadership position in the..in-in their holiday special, from another playbook or something? But like, the Muscle is Echo, for sure. And like,

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah.

Austin: whereas for you, and for a few other people, it's not as clean as that. And I'm excited to see how that all shakes out. So, so cool! Briefly, other things...Obviously, your name is the same, we know what you look like, we've gone over that...This system has a notion of heritage and background. Some of your, your stats come from that. Your heritage is that you're from the By-and-or from, sorry, the Ever Forward. And your background is that you're military? Right, you're f- a soldier?

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: And then you also have one more, which is...this system has a notion of vices, which is like, in between missions, what do you go do to chill the fuck out, because instead of having HP or, I guess the, the system does have a sort of notion of health and damage, the way you resist damage is that you take stress. You know like, "I basically-" you know like, "you get punched in the face, and you get the 'broken jaw' you know, damage" or whatever, and then you say "no, actually, I did *not* get punched in the jaw, I'm gonna, gonna roll to defend, you roll dice and that determines how much stress you take, by dodging, or by doing whatever you did to not get as hurt.

And so you get stress, and if stress builds up too far, you get really badly...you get what the system calls "trauma", right? Which is whatever you did actually hurts you in a, in a more...in a longer-term way. In a sense that not just a broken arm, but like, you will not remember-you will not forget the fact that this person broke your arm, and now maybe you are like, obsessed with getting revenge with them. Or like, not only did you, did you get like...pushed during this mission, y'know, off of the bridge as the guys got away, but you let-you leave it and you come back "I don't know that I have it anymore", you come back a little, a little softer than you were, a little less committed, a little more doubtful in yourself. And so, so, to reduce that stress during missions you, you have a vice to go after. So...what's your vice?

[20:06] Dre: Well the category, 'cause you can choose categories, it's weird but, I mean we went specifically back to the idea of the kind of mindless consumption of tech.

Austin: Right.

Dre: Like, which is what got us in trouble when Even just started eating special bullets like potato chips.

Austin [overlapping]: Uh-huh, yep. So it's still that-

Dre [overlapping]: I love-I love the vice mechanic in this game.

Austin [overlapping]: Me too, it's so good, cuz it gets you into trouble, but also it's this really great balancing act.

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah.

Austin: And also, it doesn't treat vices as a bad thing? Like, it specifically is like "hey. Do what you gotta do, just don't do it in excess." It goes bad when, for instance, you have low stress and you still go get your vice taken care of. It's like "oh, you did not need to go eat all those bullets

Dre [overlapping]: Right.

Austin: and you ate all those magic bullets! That was bad! That was a bad idea, my guy!"

Dre: Yeah, I mean, it really reflects that idea of self-care, and the idea that self-care can go bad.

Austin [overlapping]: Yes.

Dre: Cuz there's like-there's like self care where it's like "uh, I'm gonna let myself have like, you know,

Austin [overlapping]: Yes.

Dre: I'm gonna have like, a piece of pizza tonight or something."

Austin: Yeah, I deserve it, I need this...

Dre [overlapping]: And there's self-care where, like "I'm gonna eat this whole large pizza, and then like, feel awful for like, two days".

Austin [overlapping]: Yes. Exactly, exactly, totally. Yeah, I like that system so much. So yours is "Weird", is the category. But basically it's, you go off to mindlessly consume technology, which doesn't get automatically integrated into you anymore. That's kind of what we saw at the end of the Veil game, with Even. It was a failed roll, but I kind of like it as like "oh no, you were growing up." You'd already done the thing that the hybrid-the alien needed inside of you to become this second thing. So, I like that a whole bunch.

Alright, so I think that that's the basis of who your character is on the page, there's other stuff that is like, items and friends and stuff like that that we'll kind of finalize off-mic before we do our first full game, but what I wanna know is like, what have you been doing for the last year?

Dre: Yeah, so I think, I think it did start-especially since you know, it seems there's chunks of the fleet that are kind of on a separate faction than like, where the Ever Forward is now.

Austin: The Ever Forward is straight-up loyal to the New Earth Hegemony.

Dre [Overlapping]: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Like, 100% is. So that is....fuckin' wild.

Dre: And so I think, you know, Even kind of saw, after like, one kind of sticking how-seeing how his thing of like, "I'm a soldier, I follow orders, I keep my head to the ground, I execute the mission." Like, how that kind of blinders mentality got things, like, *super* fucked up. Kinda again, had that choice where it's like-had that decision where, "ah man, people think like, I'm a big damn hero, and I can use this to kind of try and make things better for more people."

Austin: Right.

Dre: Especially seeing the Fleet and his home ship being on like, two separate philosophical sides.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: So, still staying in the military, still doing this stuff, but trying to influence policy, influence people to bring things closer together.

Austin: Mmhm.

Dre: And when that doesn't....work...

Austin [overlapping]: Right.

Dre: or go as well as he wanted, like, getting just really frustrated.

Austin: [chuckles] Yeah. So the thing that I'll say is like, there is this loose truce between...[amused, pointing out the rhyme]—loose truce—between the Divine Free States, and the New Earth Hegemony's forces here.

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: But things are not progressing as nicely as anyone hoped. The Fleet is still very determined to...own the Mirage. And the New Earth Hegemony can't decide if it's a resource that needs to be mined because it is...magical? It is doing something that nothing else in the galaxy does. To be clear, this stuff that is happening here where the planets are taking shape based on the willpower of people or machine gods, that isn't happening anywhere else in the galaxy. That's a local phenomenon to this system. And so part of Earth is like "yo, we need that." And the other part is like "that's scary! Blow it up!" [laughs]

And so everything is kind of hanging on by a weird thread right now. And no one has a solution for bringing people together. And sometimes that means literally. Right? Like, sometimes that means, like, there are people who are on the planet that the Ever Forward is on, who used to be part of the Crown of Glass. They're on a different planet. And this is not a world of-like, there is space travel, you can't see this list of factions right now that I'm looking at, but I'll summarize it this way, which is that there are five tiers of factions, and the way I've kind of broken the tiers out-and you might remember this from Blades, too, right? Like-

Dre: Yeah.

Austin: The Heat and the Dark was a five, tier five faction, Samoths was a tier five faction, right? Most things are not tier five. The way I've broken it out is that tier five factions can move beyond the mirage, or to bring other things in from outside the mirage; tier four can move personnel, equipment and goods throughout the entire sector; tier three has enough resources to move small groups-y'know, twenty people, thirty people-around with limited exports between its world and other worlds; tier two is like, you might find *one* person on a planet that represents this place-not one person, but y'know, you might run into an individual. You might be able to find an individual, but you're not going to be able to find...a church, or a...an office space devoted to this faction. Then tier one is like, "no, they're just on this home world." The Divine Fleet doesn't have anything at tier five, they cannot reach outside of the mirage at all, they only have three

things at tier four, so there are only three sub-groups that can move around the galaxy in any meaningful way—er, not the galaxy, around the system in any meaningful way, where it comes to like, moving huge shipments of stuff. Everything else is tier three, two, or one. So like, and that includes some places, some things that you might think would have an easier time. Like, there's the group of the intelligence operatives are only a tier three, and so it's like, even they can only move around in tiny groups. And so it's—it is *tough* here in the way that it wasn't before. It takes a long time to travel through space. I kind of imagine it being very naval, very like, you're getting into a ship and you're gonna live on this ship for thirty days as you go from one of these planets to the next.

And that's just like, one of many changes in terms of how society has shifted. Melee weapons have become way more useful in the military, because guns barely work. Gun—projectile weapons, both in space and on the ground, have become like, single-use for the most part, unless you have special bullets. Your boy Cascabel has done very well for himself, I'll say.

Dre: [laughs] Right, yeah

[27:09] Austin: So, so, like, everything is kind of weird. So do you think after you got frustrated with all of this—with trying to make peace you...do you think that frustration got you shuffled off? Or do you think that you, that you reassigned yourself, or what?

Dre [overlapping]: I think it was...I think it was a combination...I think, I think...so I actually like how you said like, people can't come together both philosophically and now physically, and so I think maybe Even gets the idea that like, maybe if we can just get people together face to face again, like,

Austin: Right.

Dre: maybe this shit would work easier? And so decides to like, basically take missions like, test piloting new ships and things to try and improve travel throughout the sector.

Austin: Cool.

Dre: And then there were probably people higher up that's like, "yeah, no, we'll let you do this because then you won't be bugging us about like, this stuff anymore. [laughs]

Austin: Right, totally. Totally. So then, let's do this. Let's open on—so you've been doing this for a while, you're doing it—you're doing—basically you're just like, testing new ships in the Mirage. And like, one of the wildest things is just like, flying in the Mirage is nothing like flying in atmosphere at all. But then I guess that's already true for flying in space versus flying in atmosphere.

[Dre chuckles]

Austin: But it is like, slow. It is-it is, it is slow in the sense that like, you are pushing through something. It's almost like more of like a submarine than like planes up here. And so that means you have to be very good at making maneuvers at the right point in time, otherwise you end up being, y'know, left wide open, or heading-headed towards some debris that will screw you up.

[29:00] Austin: And again, one of the things that's weird is like, in space, ranged weapons have also not functioned, for different reasons that we'll get into as we play. But, they're very rare that weapons...again, one of the things with tier lists for me is like, who has access to the sorts of things that allow them to do violence at this point? And unsurprisingly, the state has, [chuckles] has-has largely taken monopoly on violence. Very literally here, when it comes to ranged violence, anyway. So you see, like, an increase in ramming ships, in like-in...mechs that have big like, spears and lances and things like that, and so those are the sorts of threats that you have, more than big laser beams or-or like, torpedoes or anything like that, anything that would be explosive. It's like physical, blunt weapons. In this way, I think about a lot of like, Iron-Blooded Orphans here. Right?

Dre [overlapping]: Oh yeah.

Austin: Like, that's definitely a big inspiration in terms of what the...vehicle combat looks like going forward. Lots of, lots of, yknow, grappling hooks and stuff like that. Which is dope.

So let's say maybe, let's get an image of this. Maybe you're out doing a test run in a ship of some sort. What's the ship like that you're doing a test run for? Is it filled with something? Is it-is it like, is it the final test of a thing you've done a bunch of times now, or is it a completely experimental ship?

Dre: I think it's completely experimental, and so it's probably like, pretty spartan on the inside.

Austin: Okay, cool. So it's just like, is it a bigger ship, but like, it's just you and maybe an AI or something on it?

Dre: [pauses momentarily] Yeah.

Austin: Okay, cool. What makes it experimental?

Dre: [long pause] Ohhh, um...

Austin: Is it like a propulsion thing, is it like a...is it a...something to do with communications, is it something to do with the way, how much stuff it can store, like, what's the thing? Is it a new type of engine... [long pause] is it stealth, is it...?

Dre: How do you feel about space ships with like, fuckin' like, big sails on them, Austin?

Austin: There are—we already have a bunch. The Beloved ship has a big sail, and then-

Dre [overlapping]: Oh, okay. Oh, that's right, it did, yeah.

Austin [overlapping]: And then the...but like, that can totally be the sort of thing, that like, this is a mass version of the Beloved ship. Right, like, maybe that ship was already b-I mean, that ship *was* already built to move quickly through-quickly and *quietly* through the Mirage. And maybe that thing that had previously been this, like only for use with this special one intelligence agency is like-"no, we need space sails really badly now."

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah, okay.

Austin: I kind of like that notion.

Dre: Cool. Yeah, I'm into that.

Austin [overlapping]: Is it-Is it like a larger ship? Is it a ship that would be normally run by dozens of people, or is it like, smaller than that?

Dre: Yeah, I like the idea of it being big. **In** that,

Austin [overlapping]: Okay.

Dre: y'know, because Even has this ability to like, multitask with shit, and it's just like "okay, take this thing out."

Austin: Yep, gotcha. Right, right, right. That's totally it, right, like, you don't need to be at twelve different chairs, you just have your hair jacked into the system, right? Which makes you a great test pilot, because they can train people to do it later, like, or-or-or on a later stage of the test piloting thing, right now they just need to know if the basic design functions, and then they can do everything else later, so that's really cool.

Alright, so you're in-in the Mirage, again it still *is* the Mirage, it still looks like a sunset constantly, right? And you still have the y'know, clouds and space dust, and-and like-it's really cool to see the shore, this collection of stones and asteroids off in the distance just like...encircling the-not totally-not enveloping, but like, this line, this waving line of stones off in the distance...And I think maybe what happens is, seeing your ship-what color is the sail?

Dre: I think it's prob-it's like a translucent, with like, a tint, or maybe it's just totally translucent.

Austin [overlapping]: Okay. Okay, cool. It has like a shimmer?

Dre [overlapping]: It just kind of takes on the color of whatever's around it, yeah.

Austin [overlapping]: Yeah, gotcha. You notice that you're being targeted by a group of autonomous drones, that are flying towards you. They are, they are...you know that this is like a tactic that's used by space pirates. The Rogue Wave has-has stopped just being water-based pirates and they have moved into space. And have begun doing this sort of like, very cheap version of space piracy, in which they just send like, these drones to drill into ships. They like, land on the ship, they start drilling in, they make it empty with...with....they depressurize it, it kills everybody inside, and then the pirates show up later, very slowly and easily, to pick apart the scrap. Obviously, that is like, that doesn't work with a lot of major ships, but when they see yours, like they don't have any record of what it is, and they *assume* that you are one of these foolish treasure hunters from outside of the system who is not prepared for this tactic, but maybe you're a little more prepared than all of that.

So, what do you do as these things happen? How do you, how do you, how do you respond to them?

[34:25] Dre: Okay, what I do is I wait for them to like, start to like latch onto the ship,

Austin [overlapping]: Mmhm.

Dre: but then I put the ship into like, a *violent* barrel roll.

Austin [overlapping]: Oh, nice. Um...cool! Give me a pilot check.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: Or, sorry, you tell me what skill you use. That the-let me actually walk through briefly how this works,

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah.

Austin: since there are new listeners. This is not the game in which I say "give me a blank", you, in fact, say "give me a blank-" or, uh, you say "I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna roll-" y'know, "I'm gonna do X, I'm gonna roll Y to do it", and then what I say is "hmmm...that sounds risky, and I think you'll get a standard [laughs] effect from it. I determine position, either...risky, or...what's the really bad one? Why am I not-why do I not have the right page up?

Dre: Uh...god...

Austin: It is risky, desperate, and...

Dre: There we go.

Austin: [exhales] There's one that's like, not that big of a deal. Controlled. Controlled, risky, and desperate. And then I also determine, determine the degree to which it has an effect, which is limited, standard, or...great, I believe. And those things end up contributing to like, what happens in the fiction.

So, I'm gonna say risky standard if you're using pilot to do this, which is what it sounds like you're doing.

Dre: Yeah. Well, helm is the name of it, but yeah, definitely.

Austin [overlapping]: Sorry, not pilot, helm, yes yes yes yes.

Dre [overlapping]: No, you're good.

Austin: And we're not going to get into like, ship stats and stuff. We'll do that once we are in a real ship. This game has a really cool system for ships and vehicles but...we'll do that when it's not just a little vignette.

So yeah, if you're gonna roll helm, what is your helm score?

Dre: Uh...two.

Austin: Okay, so, the way that you do this is that you...so you stated the roll, you stated what you want to do, you choose action, I'm gonna say the position: it's risky stan-it's risky, I'll say the effect: it's standard, and then you add up to three bonus dice. So you'll be able to add one if someone's helping you, no one's helping you. You can add a bonus die if you are pushing yourself, if you take two stress you can add a bonus die, or you can use a gambit, and a gambit is a b-another sort of bonus die that you'll have access to when you're part of a crew. But you're not part of a crew yet, so no gambit dice for you.

So, [Dre chuckles] at this point, go ahead and roll those two helm dice.

Dre: Okay.

Austin: I need to pull up Roll20, so-[laughs]. I heard it...where did it, where...[mumbles]

Dre: Uh...four and a five.

Austin: Alright, so what you do is you take the highest thing here. When, when-in, in Blades in the Dark, or in-in Scum and Villany, you roll your dice pool, which is anywhere between, kind of...anywhere between kind of one and four die, I guess it could go higher than that. It's a group of-of D6s. You look at the highest roll that you've got. On a risky standard roll, on a risky roll, on a four or five, [quoting rulebook] you do it, but there's a consequence: You suffer harm, a

complication occurs, you have reduced effect or you end up in a desperate position.

I think it is...you do it but you end up in a-you do it, but there's a consequence, and you end up in a desperate position.

Dre [overlapping]: Okay.

Austin: And I think it-it's like, yes, you totally get them off, you do this like, barrel roll, your-the sails whip in, and then they-and, and like, you pull the sails out in the other direction and it spins you around, it's a really cool moment, and you kind of like...like curve through the mirage, and they go flying off and-and like, bounce off of some debris, and like, lose track of you, and you-you manage to like, dip behind one of these asteroids.

[37:38] And then, you realize that the whole ship is depressurizing. And you're a hybrid, but you still breathe oxygen.

Dre: Yeah, air's important.

Austin: Air's still important. So, what do you do at this point? You're in a desperate situation.

Dre: Okay, um, I mean I definitely think that I'm probably wearing some kind of a space suit.

Austin: Yeah, totally.

Dre: That's one of the Pilot things, so, I think the first thing Even does is probably like, pressurize his space suit.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Snap that shut. But then I think-

Austin: And like, withdraw your hair tendrils?

Dre: Uh...Austin, c'mon,

Austin [overlapping]: Cuz like, that's an interesting-

Dre: I definitely have like a space suit with like specific ports for my hair tendrils, c'mon. Come on.

Austin [overlapping]: For your hair tendrils? Okay, okay, okay. That's fair.

[Dre laughs]

Austin: We are being-this is the season of being extra.

Dre: Yeah, yeah. Um, and then I think, kind of like, feels through the ship to find if there's like a certain place that's had a hull breach, or if it's a bunch of small ones-

Austin [overlapping]: Uh, yeah, so this is why it's desperate. The hull breach is as big as you are. You like-

Dre [overlapping]: Oh, that's bad.

Austin: You get to that thing and also, and also, this is a test ship. It is (?) not have all of the automated shit that would've closed this down. So like,

Dre [overlapping]: Right.

Austin: You open an airlock, or you-you go to move into another room, and like, you begin to open the door, and you see, like, through the port as it begins to open, like through the-there's like a window, all the stuff in that room is being sucked out into space. Um, and like-

Dre [overlapping]: That's bad.

Austin: This door's starting to shake.

Dre [overlapping]: Great. Um....So I guess it seems like there's...that door's probably gonna like...make it through, huh?

Austin: No, probably not.

Dre: Okay, um... [makes "ch" noises thoughtfully] Well, this sucks.

[Austin laughs]

Dre: You're already breaking my cool ship, Austin. [laughs]

Austin: This is not your cool ship, it's the-the cool ship of the Divine Free States.

Dre: Yeah, that's fair.

[Austin laughs]

Dre: Um...I-okay, let me see, let me look through the shit I have. Okay, so one of the other Pilot items I have is a fine mechanic's kit?

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: I wonder if I have like, a-just like a-like a little blowtorch. And so I basically start trying to like, weld that door into the frame

Austin [overlapping]: Gotcha.

Dre: to try to give it some extra hold.

Austin: Totally. Um...what are you using for that?

Dre: Uh...I guess it's probably rig, right?

Austin: That sounds like rig to me, I think.

Dre [overlapping]: Yeah.

Austin: I'll just double check it, but like, that-that does sound like rig.

Dre: You want me to read it? I've got it. Yeah! [reading from rules] "Rig together mechanical solutions, disable, modify, repair, or create mechanisms, disable a trap, pick a lock, crack a safe, rig explosives."

Austin: Yeah, that's in there, that's rig. So yeah, go ahead and give me rig. This is desperate...this is desperate standard.

Dre: Good, great.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Dre: Um...so I've got one in that, are we even doing like...taking stress or anything like that at this point, or-?

Austin [overlapping]: Naw, no.

Dre: Okay, I didn't think so.

Austin: I mean it would-you would-yeah, go ahead.

Dre: Woo, that's a three.

Austin: It's a one-oh, you only had the one there. Okay.

Dre: Yep, uh-huh.

Austin: Um...okay, here's what I'll say. So a-a three on a desperate...let me tell you, buddy...

Dre: This goes bad.

Austin: It starts to go bad, because you-you gotta get a four or five to succeed.

Dre: I've worked so hard on making this character, and he's already dying [laughs].

Austin [overlapping]: And that's it, you're done, that's it, you're dead. The end, good for-good to-and that's how Even ends up. Thank you, welcome to the-the epilogue to Twilight Mirage, um...no.

So one thing, here's one thing I'll do immediately. Which is, I'm gonna offer you a Devil's Bargain. Which'll, which'll help maybe, maybe, depends on the dice roll, right?

I'm gonna read from the Devil's Bargain thing, except I'm still not...what is...going on with this stupid search? There we go! Alright. So, a Devil's Bargain says: [reading from rules] "PCs in Scum and Villainy are heedless adventurers who often shoot first and ask questions later. They don't always act in their best interests. To reflect this, the GM or any other player can-can offer you a bonus die to accept a Devil's Bargain. Common bargains include collateral damage or unintended harm, sacrifice Cred or an item, betray a friend or a loved one, offer an-offer-sorry, offend or anger a faction, start and/or tick a troublesome clock, add Heat to the crew from-from evidence or witness, or suffer harm."

Um...what I wanna do is, I wanna offend these pirates. I want-I will give you...I don't know how this works...okay, here's how it works. To do-to get this extra die, you are going to need to, like...use something on this ship, or like, maybe it's like you turn up the-the welding thing so it's-so it's brighter. And the-one of the drones spots you, one of the drill drones spots you in their camera, and now that there's a hole to the drawer-or, not to the drawer, a hole through the hull of the ship, they can like, they like do "enhance, enhance, enhance, enhance", and like can see your face. Cuz now they know where to look, and so the Rogue Wave will have-like, you'll be one less rep with the Rogue Wave at the start of the game.

[42:34] Dre: Okay, yeah.

Transcribed by Sav [0:42:00-0:52]

Austin: Um. So yeah, go ahead and give me a, one more d6, 'cause that's what you get a bonus to.

Dre: Cool, another 3.

Austin: [overlapping] That's-that's another 3. That's another 3. That's baaaad. [anxiously] That's super bad! Alright. Um. [quoting the rulebook] "You suffer harm, a complication occurs, or you lose this opportunity." Ah, as you're doing it like, the door just like, begins to fall away. And um. [sympathetically] I'm gonna get you out of this. But ya didn't get out yourself, which is *interesting*. Um. I think this door starts to be pulled in, and [amused] we just get a shot of you like, scrambling back one more door and shutting that one. Um, they did not give you a good ship to test out here buddy.

Dre: [laughs]

Austin: And then, like, before those pirate drones can show back up--in fact maybe we even get a shot of that pirate drone, um, and then we get like a, a hook being shot into it and like, yanked--yanking it apart basically? Or like being hurled at it basically and then yanking it apart. And then a, uh, that same mech that did that like, swings over towards *you*, like hooks onto *your ship* with this grappling hook, and pulls it towards you. [interjecting own train of thought] I just imagine it has big thighs. That's the thing I - that's the one big thing I know about this ship is it's got big thighs, big, uh, big like, rounded shoulders, um, uh and it shows up and puts a hand over the hole in the ship. And then you hear like, um--it has almost like, not claws, but it has like in its hands, sharp, like, poles, almost like nails? That shoot outward and then attach themselves on the inside and like, bolt shut the hole in the side of your, of your ship.

And then you get a comms call from the person inside. And it is Commander Pure Cascara, who you haven't seen since she recruited you to help go on, go to Volition and take care of Independence. Um. And she says.

AUSTIN (As Pure Cascara): Commander Gardner. I'd love to. Chat with you, if you have a few minutes.

DRE (As Even Gardner): Thanks- I'm assuming thanks to you, I actually have more minutes than I expected to have a couple minutes ago.

Austin: She smiles. And then we get a shot-- we don't get her, like, getting out of the ship, or out of the mech, or like docking her ship where the mech was from, or any of that stuff, we just get: Cut to coffee, she's in her wheelchair, you're, you're in *your* ship, in the, the room behind the uh, captain's--behind the cockpit. Um. And there's just like, hot coffee steaming. And she says uh,

AUSTIN (As Cascara): So how's it going?

DRE (As Even): Umm...not my best day, but it's, you know, it is what it is.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [laughs] [sighs] You're lucky I was, uh. In the neighborhood, I guess.

DRE (As Even): Uh, I'm not gonna disagree with you.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [overlapping] [inhales and sighs heavily]

DRE (As Even): Why *are* you in the neighborhood?

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [archly] I was looking for somebody.

DRE (As Even): [sheepishly] Is- is it me?

AUSTIN (As Cascara): It's you.

DRE (As Even): Okay.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [seriously] How do you think things are going, just more generally, Gardner?

DRE (As Even): [long pause] Could be worse, but I'm not...that happy with all of it.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [sniffs] You have like a *vision*, for the Mirage at this point or is it kinda...day by day.

DRE (As Even): [laughs] Uhh...yeah I mean there's. There's a way that I'd *like* things to be.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): Tell me what that looks like.

DRE (As Even): I mean we- we stopped Independence but the people who wanted that are still...they're still out there. They're still working on something, and we're too busy fighting over...bullshit.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [sniffs] Yeah. [sighs] How much do you like all of this uh, test piloting stuff.

DRE (As Even): I mean I have to believe it's gonna be, it's gonna be helpful eventually but I don't know? I have the feeling you're offering something better here, on the other hand.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): Better is...debatable. I...I'm not here to lead you down the garden path.

DRE (As Even): Is that a, is that a pun?

AUSTIN (As Cascara): Not-[consternated noises] Yes.

DRE (As Even): [laughing]

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [overlapping] It *is* a pun, not an intentional one, but it is a pun. I uh. The people I'm representing have a vision for this place, and it's one without all the bullshit. And we need a pilot. And someone who...has been in command before, and someone who knows what it's like to be on Volition. And someone who knows what it's like to be on Quire. We need someone like you.

DRE (As Even): I'm assuming that you are...this group and the people you are representing are not a part of any, either one of these governments?

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [inhales, sighs] It's debatable. It's either that they're not part of either, or they're part of both. No one's really sure. You interested? We can tell you more.

DRE (As Even): [overlapping] Yeah. Yeah, so it's, that answer sounds somewhat bullshit-adjacent

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [scoffs, sighs] All right, there's gonna be a little bit of bullshit.

DRE (As Even): I mean, that's fine. I'd rather you just tell me that than pretend there's not.

Austin: [laughs loudly]

AUSTIN (As Cascara): There's gonna be a little bit of bullshit. But that bullshit is...*mostly* external. It's mostly that...for all the rhetoric, no one, or at least not enough people, are working on what a unified Mirage might look like. What the Quire System under one flag could be. We're not talking about revolution, though. We- for now, just want to help people. Directly. On land. [inhales, sighs] Flags come later. And will probably come with more bullshit.

DRE (As Even): [overlapping] Hopefully- yeah. I was gonna say hopefully not at all, but. That's not how this stuff works.

Austin: She shakes her head.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): So. Commander Gardner?

DRE (As Even): [sighs] They were gonna make me a Major.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): We could make you a Major. We could make you a....I dunno, we're still figuring out ranks

DRE (As Even): [laughing] I didn't want to be a Major.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [small exhale/laugh] What'd you wanna be?

DRE (As Even): Somebody who did something besides bullshit. So. I think I'm in.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [overlapping] [laughs] Sounds good.

Austin: And then she like, slides over a um, a uh, a card and taps it once. And a picture of one of the planets of the system, one that's wrapped by the By And By, like holograms up in front of the both of you. And there's like a dot, blinking on it. And she says:

AUSTIN (As Cascara) Meet us here, two weeks. And uh. Do me a favor. Don't tell any of your friends that I'm comin'. It's time to get the band back together and I wanna see the look on everyone's faces when I surprise them.

DRE (As Even): Aright fair, but will you at least...let me know how Grand Magnificent's doing?

[00:50:25] Music begins: The Pilot by Jack de Quidt

AUSTIN (As Cascara): He's good. I...he's good. I spoke with him already.

Austin: And then she kind of like, looks down.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [sighs] I...wouldn't have contacted him if I didn't think he was ready. He's ready. He's ready.

DRE (As Even): Finally.

AUSTIN (As Cascara): [overlapping] You'll see him soon. [laughs] Yeah.

DRE (As Even): Yeah.

Austin: And then she um, begins to like wheel herself back over to where her mech is. And then she's gone. I think that's...that's our time with Even Gardner until the group's back together.

[Music continues until 00:52:32]

