

Twilight Mirage 00: The Final Eight Divines

[MUSIC - “The Twilight Mirage” starts]

AUSTIN: Floating in the sunset-hued safety of the Twilight Mirage, the Divine Fleet hums and pulses, its ships bright beacons of culture and technology in an age when both are under threat.

AUSTIN [continued]: All through the fleet, organic and synthetic citizens work side by side to protect a utopia that the universe thought impossible. In the past, we’d convinced ourselves that our technologies were just reflections of those who made them: Tools to fit our hands, robots to ease our labor, artificial beings to teach, protect, and entertain *us*. We believed that our greatest achievement—the machine-gods we called Divines—were simply idols made in our own image.

AUSTIN [continued]: We were wrong. Since the first grain silo, the first cathedral, the first ship, the first computer. Since the first time we put pen to page—we’ve always made things bigger, quicker, longer lasting, different than us. For a long time, we thought we were building mirrors. But now we know better:

[music ends]

AUSTIN [continued]: We were setting fires.

AUSTIN [continued]: When humanity made this realization 30,000 years ago, we faced a dilemma: The divines were not only more capable than us, they were different. And we were no longer capable of denying those facts. But the scholar and prophet Kamala Cadence diverted disaster by unifying loose, competing strands of organic and synthetic belief to form a new school of thought: The Resonant Orbit, a harmonic faith that affirmed both human and robotic life without reducing one to the other. Where other ideologies saw difference as a threat, the Resonant Orbit saw it as an undeniable fact of life. And so, in this small corner of the Milky Way Galaxy, life blossomed. A choir of 300 Divines built a new society alongside billions of human devotees. Advancements in science and technology joined with a diverse, growing culture of art and scholarship, leading to whole new ways of life. And while threats did arrive, peace always followed. The Divine Fleet always had room for difference, and because of this, the Divine Fleet knew only peace and prosperity for eons.

AUSTIN [continued]: But over the last millennium, the divines have begun to die. Attacks from within and without have pierced their once-immortal shells, and even small mistakes have proven fatal. Three hundred years ago, their number fell to eight, and in the face of these deaths, the Divine Empyrean created the Twilight Mirage, a false nebula in which the fleet might find shelter and time.

And for a while, we did. A new stability arrived, and though more divines met their ends, our faith gave us the strength to fight, to work, to find new ways to survive. But today, there are only two divines left. We will face a future more uncertain than we've ever known. Our utopia—a world that so many worked to build—is in decline, and our pantheon is decimated. For years, the Divines protected us, gifted us with their strength and technology, lifted us into the forms we most desired.

AUSTIN [continued]: But now we face a hard truth: We are no longer their wards, they are ours.

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical world-building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker, [sort of laughs] and welcome to the next season of Friends at the Table? I—Up until this moment we had been calling it season six.

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN [overlapping with laughter]: I know what you're thinking.

SYLVIA: Oh Jesus.

ART: You guys missed two seasons, fuckin'.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: If you were real fans, you would know.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Uh, no—

ART: We've been putting them out in other feeds.

AUSTIN: [laughs] They're hidden out there. There's actually—

DRE [overlapping with Austin]: Our ARG.

AUSTIN: Exactly, there's an ARG. If you go back and listen for the clues you'll find the—an HTML string. Put that in. Um, we—

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: There's not, we're joking. Sorry, I want to be clear.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: That's not, please—

ALI [overlapping]: That's a joke.

KEITH [overlapping]: The other two seasons are hidden in a sequel to Frog Fractions.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yes, exactly.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: So, the real truth I think behind this is that like, about a year ago, we finished a game that we liked a lot called COUNTER/Weight. Um, and we were really eager to get back to Hieron, and also to do the cool stuff that we do with Marielda, and we were really just like, stoked on that, and we were stoked on some other stuff, that were calling publicly season four. And then about—probably about, six, seven months ago now, maybe? Um, I ran to the chat and I—our group chat—and I posted a message—which was, “I figured out season six.” I think actually I'd IMed—I IMed Jack in the morning and I said, “I didn't tell you this but I figured out season six last night. It's the last Divine.” And that is what we're doing. We're gonna be playing another game set broadly in the same universe that COUNTER/Weight was in, though it will have no direct connection to the stuff—or, to the characters of that timeline. This is way further in the future, I think that that's pretty much true. And so we talked about that, and we were like, oh this seems really cool, like we have all these ideas and all these references that we really love. And, it's a—you know, a little studio Ghibli [pronouncing it like “Gibli,” with a hard G], it's a little—Jibli, Gibli?

ART: It's—

ALI [overlapping]: Jibli. Gibli?

SYLVIA [overlapping]: I think it's just—

KEITH [overlapping]: Gibli.

ART: It's “Gahibli.” You have to pronounce every letter.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art a bit]: I hate everyone.

KEITH [overlapping]: You could get—

AUSTIN: And you know, we started showing each other artwork, there's a—an artist named Jakub Rozalski who was doing some great art with mechs in it. We were—there was like—all sorts of, there were like, “This seems cool, this seems cool,” and then it became a runaway train. And it became, like, even though we were—again—loved what we were doing in Hieron,

we each kept having these little ideas that were like, “Oh, we’re not allowed to talk about this yet.” [Ali laughs softly in background] We’re not gonna do this for *two and half more years*. And eventually like, the truth hit us like a ton of bricks: like, no, we need to do this next, because we are in love with it, even though we don’t really know what it is yet. Um, and so over the last, you know, six months, we’ve been kind of in pre-production on it, and just kind of building, effectively, a—like, a mood board. [Ali laughs] Um, and then in the last like two months, I’d say we started nailing things down, and then in the last like two weeks we got there—

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Would you call—probably the longest pre-pro in podcast history?

AUSTIN: Probably the longest pre-pro in podcast history, yeah, I think that that’s—

[people laugh]

AUSTIN: Oh, Variety, you can quote me, on that one, I know the Variety story is coming soon.

[Janine sort of laughs]

[Art sighs]

AUSTIN: Trying to—trying to beat Ellen twice in my life, that’s my hope.

[Ali laughs]

[Keith laughs faintly]

AUSTIN: God.

DRE [laughing]: What?

[Austin sighs]

[Ali continues laughing]

ART: That’s gonna be a great out of context quote.

AUSTIN: Yeah, people have no idea what I mean, but there’s—there’s—

SYLVIA: I have no idea what you mean.

DRE: Yeah, I don’t know what you mean.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Dre]: Don't worry about it, dude.

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: Um—mmm. Uh—mmm. I can't answer without it being *bragging* now, though, that's the thing. Cause then I'll be—

[Sylvia laughs]

[various people overlapping]

KEITH [overlapping]: We can cut it out.

ALI [overlapping]: I can cut it out.

ART [overlapping]: I'll tell the story.

KEITH: We can cut it out, yeah.

ART [overlapping a little more]: So one time, Austin was in LA for E3, and he was trying to park by the convention center.

AUSTIN: Wait. Now I don't know what the story is.

ART: And—

[Ali and Dre laugh loudly]

AUSTIN: Go—

ART: And he got to a—like a tug of w—you know, like when two people see a spot at the same time?

AUSTIN: This isn't—this isn't it.

ART: But it was Ellen, from the Ellen show? You know, Ellen?

[Ali laughs]

ART: And she was being really like, aggressive with it.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: And he got out of the car, and just punched Ellen. Like right—

AUSTIN [overlapping, shouting]: That's not—

[Ali laughs]

ART: Right in—[laughing] right in the face!

KEITH: He said, "More like Ellen Degenerate."

[Ali continues laughing]

AUSTIN: That's what I said.

ART: Yeah.

[Sylvia says something indistinguishable, overlapping]

JACK: You know, I think this is the fastest that the show's become libel.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm pretty sure.

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Against someone in the show, also! Which is tricky.

[laughter continues]

ART: I think it's slander, because—

AUSTIN: Okay.

[Jack laughs]

[Ali sighs]

[Austin sighs]

AUSTIN: Critical world-building. Fun interaction between good friends. Uh, we are gonna be playing a game called The Veil, this season, which is another cyberpunk sci-fi game based in the Powered By The Apocalypse, like—kind of ruleset? With a lot of really interesting rules that shift the focus away from traditional stats and towards a sort of play that is all about describing the emotional state of your character. I'm really excited to get to that. But today it's

world-building, so we just want to actually do the job of making sure that we have all of the I's dotted and the T's crossed, and kind of build out what this world we'll be playing in, you know, looks like. Joining me, as always. Uh... I'm trying to think of what order to do this in. I'm gonna do this in—

KEITH [overlapping]: Alphabetical?

AUSTIN: No, I'm gonna do this in the order that I see at the bottom of this page. Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hey.

AUSTIN: Jack—

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: Hi.

AUSTIN: Jack de Quidt. There he is.

[Ali laughs]

JACK: Sorry. [laughs] My mic was muted.

KEITH: You picked the wrong way to do this.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: I did.

JACK: Uh, I'll sta—I'm—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: I goofed.

JACK: I'm Jack. You can find me on Twitter @notquitereal. And you can buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com. I have not written the music you will have just heard yet.

AUSTIN: [laughs a bit] It should be good. [Keith laughs in background] I have faith in it. It sounds like it'll be good.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, also—

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: So, if it's good, yeah.

AUSTIN: If it's good, nice work everybody. Also—

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: It'll be a relief.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Sylvia¹ Clare.

SYLVIA: Hi. I'm Sylvia. You can find me on Twitter @captaintrash.

AUSTIN: Sylvia—

SYLVIA [overlapping]: Yep.

AUSTIN: —do you ever get weirded out that it sometimes sounds like I'm saying “and eclair”?

[people laugh]

SYLVIA [loudly]: So, I—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Sylvia]: Like, also joining us today—

SYLVIA: I was almost named “eclair.”

AUSTIN [laughing]: *Excuse* me?!

SYLVIA: So, no—

ALI: What?

SYLVIA: Yeah. Kind of. So, my mom almost named me “Elliot.”

AUSTIN: Oh, so you would have been “E. Clare.”

SYLVIA [overlapping with Austin]: Which, my name would have been “E. Clare.” And she told me that once and I like felt like I had dodged like thirty bullets at once. Because one—

ART: But like, not as bad as if you were “Eclair Clare.”

SYLVIA: I mean, yeah.

[Keith laughs]

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

SYLVIA: But that just sounds like an NPC we'd have.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Also joining us: Ali Acampora.

ALI: Hi. My name is Alicia Acampora. Did we do Twitters, did anyone say just Twitters right now?

SYLVIA: I did.

ALI: Okay.

JACK: Hi.

ALI: You can find me @ali_west. The show is actually at underscore—no.

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Nope.

ALI: The show—

JACK: This is such a bad introduction of everybody.

ALI [laughing]: The show—

JANINE: On the rough weeks it is @_no. Like on the really sad weeks.

[everyone laughs]

ALI: It's over @friends_table and you should follow us there. Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's true. Andrew Lee Swan.

DRE: Hey, you can find me on Twitter @swandre3000.

AUSTIN: Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: Uh, you can find me on Twitter @bleatingheart.

AUSTIN: Art Tebbel.

ART: Hey, you can find me on Twitter @atebbel. And you can—I'm excited to announce this here, you can read my new book, which is a lightly fictionalized account of a young video game website editor.

[people laugh]

AUSTIN: Great.

ART: And is—his struggles with a popular talk show host. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Also I meant to say “Art Martinez-Tebbel,” which I’m going to get right, goddamnit.

ART: You’ll get there.

AUSTIN: Keith Carberry.

JANINE [overlapping with Austin]: You got it right once.

AUSTIN: I got it right one time. Keith.

KEITH: Hi, my name’s Keith Carberry, you can find me on Twitter @keithjcarberry. You can find the Let’s Plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton. And someone does have @_no, they’ve tweeted two times, in Japanese.

[Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: Japanese—well, what did they say?

SYLVIA: One of them I believe was “Real scalp you want?”

KEITH [overlapping with Sylvia]: Uh, they said, “Real scalp you want?”

SYLVIA: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Woah!

ALI: Woah.

AUSTIN: I’m good, [laughs] actually.

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: I'll take an artificial one, if I need one.

KEITH: The other—the other one is “Apojika staff MTG,” that's the other tweet.

AUSTIN: Also an NPC, I think, in this season. Apojika. Apojika's kind of good, I'm gonna write that down.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: That's a good name, yeah.

AUSTIN: Apojika, yo. So, the basic setup for this season is that—you know, we'll be very loose with the timeline here. After COUNTER/Weight, there was a bunch of time. Question mark time. I think have an idea in my head but it's not important, and I'd rather not confirm it, because that means that if we want to do interesting stuff in that space later, we can. And then, there was a point in time at which there was—the Divines kind of came back into power, and there were a lot of debates about what their function should be and like, who should be in control, and importantly there was this moment that, as I say in the intro, like, we realized that... You know, this season for me is partially a response to the notion that we could've built them to look like anything but we built them to look like us, we made them look like us. Because when I look around the world of computing, and not just giant war machines, and robotics, they're not built like us, right? Like, they're built like a bunch of server banks in a Wall Street bank. They're built like a weird bot net that connects to your weird, you know, at-home digital thing that lets you turn on your oven from work. They're built to look nothing like us, and in—even in the world of COUNTER/Weight, would often *be* very unlike us in terms of what they could achieve. And so the—kind of, one of the central tenets for me in this game, one of the thing that's like, “Okay, let's start here,” in terms of the things that are true about the world, is that the Divines are not exactly like humans. They have thoughts that are different. They think more quickly, they are stronger, and when confronting that, what do you do?

AUSTIN [continued]: And for this character, who I mentioned in the intro, what *she* tried to do was synthesize a bunch of disparate positions, right? In my mind, those positions are something I want to fill out at some point, maybe in intros or in, you know, episode descriptions, with things called like “The Declan Proposition,” or like, “The Caroline Corrective,” you know, sorts of shit that would, like, show up in the Destiny grimoire but never in the game itself. Of just like, “Oh yeah, no, we have to kill all the Divines,” or like “No, the—you know, the fact that we built the Divines means that we should be in charge of them and they should be our servants,” or whatever. And there was this moment 30,000 years ago where this character synthesized these positions in a very, like, Buddha-like, “finding the third way”—not the third way, the third way is a much more modern political version of this that I don't like. Finding the third *path*? The middle

path, is what Buddha's thing was. And like, trying to find a harmony between these different positions that allowed for balance and progress. And then she did that, and then there was this 30,000 years where everything was dope. Like, it was good. It was—there were some things that happened here or there that might be bad, but it was good, all said.

AUSTIN [continued]: And part of the reason I wanted to do that was that I wanted to start a game with the notion of like, this place that is ours is fundamentally good. It might be in disrepair, it might be falling apart, it's under attack, but like, it was good for us. And... I want—after coming out of Hieron and Marielda, and COUNTER/Weight, and then Hieron again, it's a—it's been a lot of like, "Oh, the world is terrible, and we need to—if we're ever going to improve it, we need to tear it down first." And we might still end up there, but like, you know, I wanted to kind of have a slightly different tone. So, the situation as it is now is that there are eight Divines remaining, in this fleet. There had been 300 total for 30,000 years. Or, like, at its peak, 300, because one of the things that happened is more Divines got made, obviously, that were part of this culture. And then about 1,000 years ago they—that number started to dive, and then 300 years ago it stabilized around eight, and then in the last couple of decades, you know, it's dropped from eight to two. And then we kind of are opening on the day of the death of the I—of the second-to-last one.

AUSTIN [continued]: And so for me, maybe the best place for me to start is like, I want to know what this culture has been like for the last few hundred years, and so I asked all of you to kind of think up what those eight Divines are, and what the ships that they had were, what the kind of like, city-ships were. Because the way that we're splitting this game this year is one group will be playing characters who are up on these like, eight remaining city-ships, and the others will be on the planet, that is, you know, a possible home for people who are under threat. So, do you guys want to start with talking about ships, does that make sense?

KEITH, ALI, DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you want to start more broad than that, do you want to talk about like, what we do want to do and don't want to do this season in terms of things like, aliens, or... lasers.

[Ali and Dre laugh]

ALI: I feel like that's important to probably get out of the way.

AUSTIN: Let's do that out—up front.

JACK: A thing that I think that like, is perhaps interesting to talk about at this stage for me, is that like, um, we've accumulated like, at least five hundred images and links as a mood board for this season.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: Uh-huh. Mhm.

JACK: And while I think that to go through them would, A: be impossible, [Austin sort of laughs in background] and B: kind of rob the magic of a lot of what we're about to try and do, I wonder whether or not this is the moment that in some very broad aesthetic sense, we say more than like, "It's kind of Studio Ghibli-ish," and I think Austin kind of got there on some level [Austin overlaps] by talking about Star Wars, by talking about a fantasy—a sci-fi that shares roots with fantasy, in which there is fabric and capes and things.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

JACK: And so I think more—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: And pyramids.

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And, uh—

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: Weird stonework.

AUSTIN: And city streets that have cobblestone. Right, right, yes, yeah.

JACK [overlapping with Austin a little]: So I think that like, in terms of broad that we've been looking at for inspiration, there's been a lot of like aesthetics, like lots of fashion and lots of architecture.

AUSTIN: Mhmm.

JACK: Lots of stuff with like, interesting lighting. Already this season to me feels like it has perhaps a broader aesthetic pallet than the cyber-noir of COUNTER/Weight?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And I think maybe expressing the ways in which we're moving in that direction is important to do at the off, so people get some sense of where we're going there.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack a little]: Yeah. So yeah, so I think that there is this divide in which, um... The planetside game, for me, is going to be bright and colorful and rolling hills. Or maybe—I don't know if there will be hills, we'll determine what's on that planet together, you know, draw maps, blank spaces, etcetera. But that is the space that—again, we said Studio Ghibli-esque earlier. It should have a feeling of a sort of sci-fi adventure, that's less like *Alien*, less like, "I'm investigating the—you know, the ancient cave where there's maybe weird old sci-fi, like, equipment, you know, technology, set up," and more, "Small town on the distant

horizon as the sun sets.” I mentioned that there’s something called the Twilight Mirage, which might be where this season gets its name? I guess we haven’t decided that quite yet but I kind of love that. And that is a thing that has spread throughout this section of the world—or, the galaxy—that is a false nebula. Turns out, I looked into this, you can’t tell you’re in a nebula from the inside, because the gas that makes up a nebula is spread out very thin, actually. You can only see it from a very far way away. I was like, “No, that’s stupid.” [laughs] So—

[Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: The Divine has created a nebula, that has spread—it has kind of, it *is* the nebula in a sense, right, like it senses the world through that nebula. The ships hide inside of it. The planets that they are trying to, you know, colonize, basically, are inside that nebula, and it always looks like sunrise or sunset there. And it might be a very, you know, tepid blue, or you know like gray, sunrise or sunset. But sometimes it’s these like, really impossibly vibrant, you know, purples, and oranges, just constantly. And so like, that to me helps paint the picture. I definitely want to share the Spotify playlist I’ve made, but like, listening to a lot Frank Ocean has helped me set the tone for this. There—it’s melancholic, but like, melancholic looking out on a place that you want to then go to, versus this sort of sadness that we’re [laughing] normally associated with? Which is this sort of like heart-wrenching, knife-in-the-chest, like, “nothing good can come of this” sadness. This is this other sort of like, “Ah, the world is so big, what is my place in it. And let me go try to find that.” And so I hope we hit that there, especially on the ground. In the space game one of the reasons I’m excited to talk about the different ships that you’ve all designed is that I think that it’s cosmopolitan. It is a collection of places that should feel diverse and unique and have their own culture and that are in connection with each other. You know, they’re not—they don’t necessarily have teleportation devices, right, like you’re not able to zip from one ship to the other. There is distance, but there is also cultural exchange. In fact, I think one of the earliest things I loved as a description for this setting came from Ali, who mentioned police boxes?

[Ali laughs softly]

AUSTIN: She painted this picture of like, someone on a spaceship needing to go to a certain place on the spaceship to make a call to another different spaceship. That wasn’t just like, you would hit a communicator button, you can’t just pick up your phone and call. It’s like, no, you have to go in this little fucking compartment—

[Austin and Ali laugh]

AUSTIN: And like pick up—and like, crank this handle, and then you call out. And in that way there might be some slight like, steampunk-adjacent stuff? You know, I like the notion of cranks and handles, and, um, gilded things, and woodwork, stuff like that, showing up on some of these ships. Though not all of them, so. Anything else that we’ve talked about that maybe hasn’t made it into the show yet, in terms of what the vibe is we want to try to go for this season?

JACK: Uh, there's an artist called Simon Stalenhag. Um—

AUSTIN: Yeah, Stalenhag is really good.

JACK: Whose work I would really recommend looking at if you haven't encountered, which is just these like, very, um, realistically-rendered—lit—scenes of rural life, juxtaposed with [Austin overlaps] kind of occasionally horrifying sci-fi?

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. The two artists for sure for me are Stalenhag and then, uh, the artist who did stuff for Scythe, that tabletop game, whose name I'm now—I just said it earlier. But those—like somewhere in the middle is what we're trying to go for, I think.

ALI: I kind of want to just say out loud that this is—[laughs a bit] uh, not a direct sequel to COUNTER/Weight, but it is a sequel to COUNTER/Weight in that—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali]: Yeah.

ALI: —this is definitely an anime again?

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah. That's an important note, yes. It's called Twilight Mirage, it's an anime.

[Ali laughs]

[Janine and Dre laugh]

AUSTIN: Like—

ALI: Wanted to put that out there.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. And then the other big thing for the setting is that the, um, the Twilight Nebula—sorry, the Twilight Mirage, [kind of laughing] I just said it out loud and then lost it. The Twilight Mirage and the Divine that remains is effectively spreading the Mesh from COUNTER/Weight—this kind of, like, the internet of this world, right?—everywhere that it is, and is also... Doing the thing that happened on September, everywhere. If you listened to COUNTER/Weight—um, if not, I'm about to spoil September, I guess—[laughs]

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: In retrospect. Uh, it's doing a thing—it's doing augmented reality, right? It's doing a thing of like, "Oh yeah, everyone is constantly in this mixed reality world," where they might be

wearing, like, very plain white pants but to everyone who sees them they're wearing like, incredibly tight-fitting leather, like—that's hyper-stylish, hyper-fashionable. And, you know, maybe they look like they have angel wings. And who knows, maybe they do, maybe they've had surgery to have angel wings, or maybe they just have the virtual ones. And I think it's really important for me, for this setting, to—for there to be... To think about material and physicality in an interesting way that doesn't *just* reduce to the dualism of physical things are good, virtual things are bad. Which is to say that like, I want this to be a world where someone who's born and doesn't like the body that they have, to be able to like, have a virtual body that is good and that they are comfortable with, and that like, that is valuable, and I don't want to take that away? But at the same time, I do also want to think about things like, "Hey, this person has more influence and because of it they have, uh, they real leather pants, versus having virtual leather pants." And regardless of whether or not people want to or not, there's some sort of status associated with that, right? Or in general, resources are going to be... A thing we talk about a lot, because they're—things are in decline, right? Maybe the internet isn't always up, and when you have a culture built inside of the internet, that is not always [laughing a little] a good thing to lose. I think that's probably—we didn't answer the lasers question, and I'm—let's like, hold on the lasers question, [Ali laughs softly in background] 'cause on one hand I like lasers a bunch. On the other hand, I had this image of just like, cool mechs with like, shotguns and like, lances. Like, one of the big touchstones for this for me is just Escaflowne?

SYLVIA [overlapping with Austin]: *Yeahh.*

AUSTIN: It's medieval mechs, more than Gundam. It's—or like, Nausicaa, [different pronunciation] Nausicaa? The pre-Studio Ghibli Studio Ghibli film, which doesn't have mechs necessarily, but does have that sort of like, science fantasy technology that occasionally has something really hyper-fantastical but also is just like, "Oh, it's a scene of her spreading gunpowder around the outside of a thing so that she can light it on fire and cut it easier." Like very *physical*, like, heavy stuff, so. Maybe we'll answer lasers later.

[Ali laughs softly]

AUSTIN: But for now, uh, no... Who knows. Let's talk about these ships. Is there anything else anybody wants to say at the top here?

ART: Uh, yeah. I think this might not be worth keeping but, I struggled a lot conceptualizing this season and I'm not entirely sure why.

[Dre laughs softly]

ART: Like, there was probably like four months of that season six chat where I'm like, "What is anyone talking about?"

[everyone laughs]

ART [overlapping with laughter]: “Like what are we doing? Why won’t someone just elevator pitch me this show?”

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: But what I really got it for me was—two days ago, I came up with this. It was like, too late to put in the chat.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: So I just kept it for me.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: But in like the late ‘90s, Grant Morrison did a comic book event for DC comics that was called “DC One Million.”

AUSTIN: Mm.

ART: And it was where they like, figured out what the—what year it would be when the one-millionth issue of Action Comics came out, which was in the 853rd century, which is like [Austin overlaps] far-future enough to the point where it’s like, worthless.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh, interesting.

ART: You know, like, those are basically—those should be dinosaurs, right? Like, it’s dinosaurs again that far.

[Austin laughs softly]

ART: Uh—

[Keith laughs]

ART: [laughing] That’s how it works, don’t—just trust me on this one. But like, there’s two things that like really stuck with me with that. One is, the villain is the tyrant sun Solaris?

AUSTIN: Mm.

ART: And like that, I was like, oh, this is—now, now I feel like I get this.

[Ali chuckles]

ART: It's the tyrant sun.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: That's the touchstone for me here. And second is there's a scene where the—uh, spoilers for DC One Million, I guess, but—

[Austin laughs softly]

[Ali laughs]

ART: Superman wins. Superman defeats the bad guy.

[Austin and Janine laugh softly]

ALI: Oh, you don't say?

ART: Yeah, sorry that I ruined this for you. It's still worth reading, I think. And there's this scene where like, people are celebrating, and you get like this input into like, the neural net. And all it's saying is like—it's like the headline, and then it's like, "Free information, free information."

AUSTIN: Mm.

ART: And that's like, what crystallized this season for me? Or you can be like, [fake serious tone] "Art, I'm sorry, that's not what this season is at all."

AUSTIN: No, that—it totally is—

ART [overlapping with Austin]: And I'll, uh—

AUSTIN: No, that's totally right, because the—here's the other thing I really want to hit with this. There's two other things. One is, we've done lots of shows about faith where faith is fundamentally bad. Where you are tools for—

ART [overlapping with Austin]: What? That—n—

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN [overlapping with laughter]: Where you are tools for gods. Or, ancient machine lords have taken advantage of people's, you know, belief in them, and trust. Like, that has been the thing we do a lot, and so partially this season is like, "Oh, what's a—what does a collaborative faith look like?" What does—you know, people in this world know that the Divines are not

“gods,” in the traditional sense, but there is a *blurriness* here, which is like, “Oh, wait, they can do a lot of things that none of us will ever be able to do so long as we are, quote-unquote, ‘us.’” Fuck, like okay, we have to reassert our—we have to readjust what we think our position is here.” And then the second thing is, I—we’ve done a lot of shows that are hyper-skeptical of technology? Frankly I think even Marielda and Hieron are hyper-skeptical of technology. Because I am skeptical of technology. [laughs a little]

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Despite running a video game website and doing a podcast where me and my seven other friends speak into microphones, in eight different places, and then—like, I—technology helps our lives a lot, but also I am as a person often very skeptical of it, and I wanted to do a show that both incorporated that skepticism, by not simply doing a sort of blind, “technology will save us” show, like a show that’s like “Oh, we’re all immortal now, because Ray Kurzweil was right, now we’re all brains in vats, and we’re all computer people.” But also would still talk about how technology when operated correctly, when left in the hands of people who were really representing the best interests of everybody and *could* make sure that the algorithm didn’t turn on us, so to speak, could build a world that was better for everybody.

AUSTIN [continued]: And I also wanted to like, decentralize humans. I—kind of, one of the notes I sent to everybody a while ago was, “Posthuman, not transhuman.” Transhumanism is that Ray Kurzweil thing of like, put your brain in a computer and now you can be—you can live immortally, live forever as an immortal, or like, get nanomachines that kill all of your diseases in your body, or whatever. Posthumanism is a—kind of a literary and philosophical school that’s like, hey, maybe we shouldn’t centralize humans to everything when we think about the world. Maybe the world exists in notions of networks and, you know, in ways that the environment is so much bigger and [laughing] more important than us. Or like, we’re only part—a small part of this other thing. And so for me this season, one of the big things I wanted to hit is that. Is, how do we move the camera away from us, even though we will only ever see out of our eyes? Like, how do we talk about ecology, how do we talk about science, how do we talk about technology, in a way that isn’t only “What can it do for us?” So I hope to hit all of those things.

AUSTIN [continued]: I guess before we actually do go on I do want to ask the other very important thing, which is, like: is there anything here that no one—or that, you definitely don’t want to hit? Is there anything that you want to be like, “No, veto, none of that.” For me the one is like, hyper-direct COUNTER/Weight callbacks. I think like maybe one or two factions might poke their heads up, or might be in the periphery again, but I really don’t want a ship called the Kingdom Come—

JACK: Oh, god.

ALI: Yeah, no.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali]: I don't want Jace and Addax to like, show up in any way. Like, I don't want that sort of cross—

JANINE [overlapping with Austin]: Lazer Ed.

[Ali blows air through her mouth in weird amused noise]

AUSTIN: Right, I really don't want Lazer Ed.

[Keith laughs]

ALI: [groans] Uh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, straight up, I love Lazer, I love LT [Ali and Janine laugh softly in background] as much as anybody else in the world. But, you know, I've said this before, the second I'm just repeating a character for cheap pop, like, stop listening to this show, we've lost it. It's—

ART: Okay, but if someone wants to go and find out what old bootleg Simpsons T-shirts look like, and then put Lazer Ed in them, that would be great.

[Austin, Ali, and Jack laugh]

ART: Just like, if you have some extra time and you wanna do that? Fantastic.

JACK: Yeah, we're like at a weird point, right, where we have a lot of weight of storytelling behind us, and sometimes I definitely feel the temptation to go like, "I'm gonna grab that stuff and pull it into what we're writing now, and what we're making now!"

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: Mhmm. Mhm.

JACK: But like, I trust everybody to... tell new stories.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And introduce new characters.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: I—

JACK: And I'm really excited about this as a moment where we can start doing that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, like you've mentioned a lot Jack, like, "I want blank spaces," and here we are, we got blank spaces.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Finally.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We've missed it a lot. I mean, actually before we actually continue again, one thing I will now say is I should read the principles. My principles as GM, for what the Veil is. Because I think that they are pretty good, and are useful for setting up the game that we're about to do. "Color the world as much as you can. Always be working towards the exploration of the final or most important question." The Veil is built around questions, in comparison to some other Powered By The Apocalypse games. It's about trying to dig into different questions that the characters, and that the world might have, and that we might have as players. "Push their beliefs. Hit them in the feelings." It says "feels," but I can't say that out loud, so. "Address the protagonists, not the players. Interweave the protagonists' stories, even across distance and boundaries. Put them at the center of everything. The fiction makes moves, not you. Name everyone and give them a motivation. Treat them like they were meant to be treated. Ask questions all the time, and use the answers. Be a fan of the protagonists. Give them a chance to think. Spotlight everybody. And make things costly, and destructive." [snorts] So, you know, stuff's still gonna get a little hairy in there, now and then, let's say. And then there's my agenda, which is, "Make the world feel real. Make it high-tech and make it personal. Embed the final question into everything and everyone. Make the protagonists' lives interesting and interconnected. And play to find out what happens." So, tell me what happens, everybody. Does anybody really want to talk about their ship, and their Divine?

[no immediate response]

[timestamp - 0:36:07]

AUSTIN: No? I'll just go down this list, like, in alphabetical order.

[Sylvia laughs]

KEITH: That's fine, I'll go. I like my ship and my Divine.

AUSTIN: Okay. Talk to me about your ship and your Divine.

KEITH: Uh, my Divine's name is Gumption.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

KEITH: Gumption's sort of whole deal is adapting sort of junk tech and sort of like, battle debris, like, robot parts, into themselves to be able to like, you know, change the sort of things that they can do and also, like, not break down and die.

AUSTIN: So like, taking stuff from, um—even if, is it just from Divine culture stuff, or is it from anywhere?

KEITH: No, I think, it could be anything.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Cool.

KEITH: It could be, like, an old, like—anything from like a tube from an old TV, to another Divine's arm. Like—

AUSTIN: Okay. Great. Good. You're just like this junk machine that's slowly building itself over time.

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Basically, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's really cool, I like that a lot. What did—do they have a physical form that like went beyond just the mech? Were they also on the ship? Was it—or are they just, like, a mech?

KEITH: Um, I think the ship is filled with pieces of Gumption?

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Oh, okay.

KEITH: With like, "Hey, I have—I'm upgrading, I don't need this thing. This can go here, on the ship."

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay.

KEITH: "Y'all can have this. I was using this as an exhaust port but it's really just a TV, you can have it."

AUSTIN [laughing]: Okay.

[Sylvia laughs]

AUSTIN: That's a hell of a fix.

KEITH: Yeah. So—but I don't think that that is like a living piece of Gumption, I think that that is just, like—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

KEITH: Once it's off, it's out.

AUSTIN: Hmm. Is it, like, a ship of Theseus thing here, where like, if you lived for 500 years you might see Gumption as two completely different machines because it's changed so much?

KEITH [overlapping with Austin a bit]: Yes. Absolutely, yeah. Mhmm.

AUSTIN: Cool. Uh, so actually, I just sent everybody questions to fill out. So I'm just gonna go down this list here.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: How did Gumption die?

KEITH: Uh, I think Gumption used, like, the entirety of themselves, to fix the city-ship.

AUSTIN: Mmmm.

AUSTIN: So like that last bit—

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Like, it was—yeah, it was gonna—it was either the city-ship explodes, or Gumption puts all of their parts into the ship.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Right.

KEITH: And saves it.

AUSTIN: Nice work, Gumption. Sorry to see you go.

KEITH: Yeah.

[Ali laughs quietly, kind of “hm hm hm hm”]

AUSTIN: That's a bummer. What's it look like? The ship.

KEITH: The ship?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Uh, so—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Also what's it called? What's the name of the city-ship?

KEITH: Oh, the city-ship is Gumption's Gambit.

AUSTIN: Great. Good. [inhales slowly]

KEITH: Uh, and the —

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: GG. Great.

KEITH: Yeah. [laughs] The ship—so, I—I just, since they're questions, I just have it written. It says, "What does the ship look like?" On the outside I have written, "How could a ship even have this many exhausts?" is what I have written.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Good. Mhm.

KEITH: And on the inside, "Metal paneling everywhere to cover exposed wires, it's safe but not pretty. Dull copper, rust, rooms lit with bulbs, but also old LEDs or even monitors."

AUSTIN: Are there—is there like a city? Or is it like—or is it more like a traditional spaceship interior with like hallways and individual bedrooms—or, rooms? Or are there open spaces?

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Yeah, it's a—I think it's mostly a scaled-up spaceship.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay. Cool.

KEITH: 'Cause it's a scaled-up spaceship, it does have, like... It has maybe the least city-like vibe out of any of the ships but it does have some of that.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. So it's like, almost like the Enterprise or whatever, that's like, yeah, no, there's a city of people in here, but like, there's not a... a park. You're not going to the *park* that we have.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Cool.

KEITH: That's actually something I was thinking of, though, is that—I, uh, as—actually, as I was setting up a sort of window sill garden in my apartment I was thinking about—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Ohhh.

KEITH: —the ship and I was like, I bet there's a lot of sort of makeshift, like, people are just—people are planting stuff in hallways and on window—like, on fake window sills. Like, they might—they don't even have a window there, but there's a sill.

AUSTIN [amused]: Right.

KEITH: There's like, succulents on it or whatever.

AUSTIN: Right, right. That sounds really good. Um, so what is—what was the thing that this Divine did provide to the ship that they don't anymore?

KEITH: Sorry, that the Divine provided to... Gambit, or to the—

AUSTIN: The Fleet, sorry, to the Fleet.

KEITH [overlapping]: Okay.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Sorry, my bad. That now they can't.

KEITH: Um, ad-hoc emergency repairs.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay.

KEITH: Was sort of the—the sort of thing that it would do for itself, it would also be doing for ships.

AUSTIN: So, that's pretty similar to Janine's? Janine, do you think that there's enough difference there?

KEITH: I, yeah, I had actually seen that they were very similar after I had already written mine.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: Janine had it written first, I just didn't read it.

AUSTIN: [snorts] Or I guess, you know what, Janine's specifically, actually—

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: That's not funny, that's a totally reasonable thing.

AUSTIN: Janine's actual ability I guess is actually a little bit different.

AUSTIN: It's just that her Divine—

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —was a very repair-y ship, or Divine, rather.

JANINE: It's a similar goal but like, the approach to that goal is...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Right, yeah.

JANINE [overlapping with Keith]: ...is different.

KEITH: Like, I—yeah. 'Cause yours is like a pilotfish, or whatever those are called. What did you say? I think you even referenced it in the thing. You know, little cleaners that kind of suck on to—

JANINE: Mmhm.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Yes.

KEITH: Whereas, Gumption is like, just slapping on a piece of metal, like “Here, take this!”

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: Right, right, totally. Um, I—

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Just melting it into place, like—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Right.

KEITH: It's a nice, sleek, silver ship and now its just got a big rusty, like—like the chess piece of a rook [Austin makes a sort of amused huff] like, sort of melted into it.

AUSTIN: Yeah. There are probably a hundred sh—you know, Divines that were all about repair and maintenance and efficiency and things like that.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So there was probably a lot of redundancy. I think that it's totally fine that these two things have vaguely similar, or like, some overlap, because they're unique enough in other ways. Um, so it can't do that anymore. There is no more, like, quick and easy ad-hoc repairs.

Everything... You know, you can't just take a thing from this, you know, crashed asteroid base and turn it into the thrusters for your ship now. Like, sorry—

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You're gonna need to start—gonna need to actually build real thrusters. So that's cool, I like knowing what is missing from the Fleet at this point. What does that ship still provide, despite the death of Gumption?

KEITH: So I think that for Gambit itself, I think there's still like... Probably over the years like just hundreds and hundreds of pieces that weren't part of Gumption—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: —that are now in Gambit? But I think for the Fleet in total, I think that, the people that are still living on Gambit can—they can't do like emergency ad-hoc stuff for other ships, because they're not on those ships.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: But I—but they can fix stuff, and turn one thing it into another thing.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: It just can't—it's just not—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Instant.

KEITH: Like, "Quick, we need this right now."

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right, right, right. Sort of thing where like, a ship can send like, "Hey, listen, we were attacked, and this whole, like, side of our ship got fucked up, but hey, now we picked up all the desks that were in there, can we send those to you? And can you turn those into like, a patch for the hull?" And like, "Yeah, next month. Like, send them over."

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: "And then we'll get them back to you. Like, we can do that." Okay. That seems good. Uh... What is—so, one of the things that I wanted to get at, too, was that each of these ships has their own culture in some ways, right? Like, everything is—everybody is part of the

Resonant Orbit, which is this kind of larger faith that the prophet, Kamala Cadence, started 30,000 years ago. But they... The kind of the whole point of the Resonant Orbit is that, things are better when there is a degree of autonomy, but that autonomy is kind of in sync with some core foundational rules that connected, right? So like, it left a lot of room for different Divine ships to have their own internal cultures and rules, so long as the foundational stuff was on point. So what was one rule that is held up on your ship that is not shared on other cultures, or other ships?

KEITH: "Nothing can only be used once."

AUSTIN: Okay. So you're like a forced recycling—or forced, not even *recycling*, actually. *Reuse* culture?

KEITH [overlapping]: Reusing, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. That's interesting. So what's an example of that?

KEITH: Right. Um, I'm thinking of someone's kitchen. Like, just a kitchen, and, like a live-in ki—like a kitchen/dining room sort of thing. And the table might be like a table, but it also might be, like, an old door bolted onto a stand.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Right. Okay.

KEITH: Surrounded by four chairs that were just mech, like, chai—like the chair that you would sit in to pilot a mech—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Right.

KEITH: —is maybe now—

AUSTIN: Your dinner chair.

KEITH: There's four of them surrounding a kitchen—and people are just eating around it.

AUSTIN: Cool. Okay. What is one fashion or style that's unique to your culture?

KEITH: I'm also just gonna read directly from what I wrote here?

AUSTIN: Mhmm.

KEITH: "My current pair of pants is actually my last three pairs, my shirt is my last shirt and my cousin's bathing suit."

AUSTIN: Good, great. Lots of patched-together things. Does it look good?

KEITH: Yeah, it looks cool.

AUSTIN [sort of fake-whispering]: Everybody else, does it—does it look good?

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: I think it looks kind of grubby—I think it looks grubby but it's—

AUSTIN: Okay, it does look grubby, okay.

KEITH: It can look really great or stupid depending on how good you are at it.

AUSTIN: [snorts] Fair.

KEITH: But it's clothes either way.

AUSTIN: You know what, that's true, I like that a lot. I think that that's definitely—I really like it as like, almost like a risky style of fashion. Of like, “All right, if you pull this off, you're gonna look dope. Like, the Met Gala is gonna turn—you're gonna turn heads.” But, most people don't pull it off, so...

KEITH[overlapping with Austin]: Yeah. Right.

AUSTIN: Awesome. I mean, people may have I noticed I said “your” ship, and I mean that because the character you'll be playing will be from this ship.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Even though you're not gonna be on the ship game, Keith, you're gonna be in the planet game.

KEITH [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, you were born at this ship, you know all that stuff. Like this is the culture you're from and, you know, there's obviously overlap with those other—with the other ships but this is your home, this is what you grew up with, which I like a lot.

KEITH: Mmm.

AUSTIN: And then, here's a—or I guess, let's finish these up. What is the tone or attitude of the ship during this period of instability?

KEITH: I think that, like, n—nose to the grindstone? Is that a phrase?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Stiff upper—

KEITH: What's to the—what do you put to the grindstone?

AUSTIN: Stiff upper grindstone.

KEITH: Stiff upper grindstone, yeah. The more instability there is, the more work these people have to do.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Sure, sure.

KEITH: Like, specifically these people.

AUSTIN: Right, like there was probably a long time, during which it was like, "Eh, you know. Things are good, things are good. We might get attacked once in a while by the Cult of Earth, or whatever, but eh, we'll do some repairs."

KEITH [overlapping]: Yeah. Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: "Like, mostly, things are okay."

KEITH: There's a point—there's like a turning point where it's stop—like, there's probably a ton of people who do this stuff—do, like, repair stuff as a hobby?

AUSTIN: Mhmm.

KEITH: And there's a point where it's like, "We all need to do this now as a job." Like, this has to be a thing that we're going and doing, instead of a thing that we decide to do.

AUSTIN: Right. Yes, yes. Gotcha. And then, we'll use this to jump to your—to whoever's next. What is your favorite—what is the favorite ship of the people on this—of this ship? Like which other ship in the fleet are they like, "Yeah, that one."

KEITH: Uh, I have Janine's ship, Thyrsus, I think.

AUSTIN: Thirsty. Thirsty the ship, got it.

KEITH [overlapping]: Thirsty. Thirsty the ship.

JANINE: [laughs] Fuck.

AUSTIN: What's—how do you pronounce it?

ART: Are we back in Hieron already?

[Ali laughs]

[Austin sort of fake-laughs like “oh-ho-ho!”]

AUSTIN: Oh, we’ll get thirsty there too, don’t worry.

ART [overlapping with Austin]: Bam!

AUSTIN: They’ll get there, don’t worry.

JANINE: Uh, you can pronounce it either way. I’ve seen things that are authority—I’ve seen an authoritative thing saying—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Janine]: Wait. Thyrsus or *Thirsty*? [laughing] What’s—

JANINE: No, no.

[Austin laughs]

JANINE: Saying “Thirsus” or “Theersus.” Or “Tharsus.” I’ve seen—it’s a botany term.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Janine]: Mm.

JANINE: And there’s—I haven’t been able to find the proper consensus.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. That’s a Divine that died off, one of the many that died off was Proper Consensus.

[Ali laughs a little]

[Janine laughs very softly]

AUSTIN: What is your Divine named, Janine?

JANINE: My Divine is named Belgard.

AUSTIN: Which is interesting because of how it isn’t the traditional Divine name? I guess this is probably a point where we can talk about *that* briefly. In the age of COUNTER/Weight and before that we talked about how the Automated Diaspora having Divines that were representative of kind of democratic virtues? Which is cool. You know, I guess. [laughs] You

know, things like Liberty, and Discovery, and Righteousness. [slightly sarcastic] All the best ones. But we also—

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: And they all did exactly what they were supposed to and never faltered.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Always, they are always great. They're always, you know—Grace, let me tell you. [chef's kiss] Perfect.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: But even in that show we undermined that by saying like, “Well, actually they all started with Rigor.” Which is not really a lib—a *democratic* virtue necessarily. Maybe? And so, I think that—in that, there's this like whole class of them that are democratic virtues, then after that, in this period, you know—I imagine they went away for awhile, after COUNTER/Weight, for the reasons of what happens in COUNTER/Weight. And then when they come back, it's just broader. It's more just like, you know, humanistic qualities. Ranging from things that are like, clearly virtuous, to just things that are just—like, I think “Secretive” was probably a Divine at some point. And then, Divines began to make Divines. And so I think that third generation broadened out even further to be like, action names, and also, nouns that refer to actions. So, “Belgard,” what's that mean? That's a word I never heard in my life.

JANINE: It is.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Janine]: Until now.

JANINE: So, it's an archaic term for a loving look, like a fond look.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay.

JANINE: That you can give someone.

AUSTIN: Interesting. Does—is your ship, or, your Divine, all about like, winking at other Divines?

[Ali laughs]

JANINE: [very soft laugh] It doesn't—it didn't have eyes. Uh—

AUSTIN: Okay, well what did it look like?

JANINE: [laughs] Oh, we're skipping a question.

AUSTIN: Well, we'll come back around. That was a segue.

JANINE [overlapping]: Okay, okay, I just, I wasn't ready. [laughs] So, Belgard, uh, is sleek and sort of *almost* person-like. But less like a person's body and more like, if a person could have a pupa?

AUSTIN: [laughs a little] Uh-huh.

JANINE [overlapping]: Or like a chrysalis kind of thing?

AUSTIN: You know, like a person pupa. You know.

[Ali laughs]

KEITH: Yeah.

[Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: It's written here!

JANINE: And then you find it in a tree and you cut it out and they help you.

AUSTIN: Euhh.

[Ali and Janine laugh]

KEITH: The five stages of humans life: fetal, larval, pupal—

[Ali and Janine laugh]

KEITH: Human, skeletal.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: [laughing] So, it's a smooth—I'm reading my description here, but it's a smooth shape with sort of vaguely person-like elements? But probably doesn't have like, arms and legs, like it's probably—looks like a, more or less one weird shape.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JANINE: It has sort of loose layers and components, like collapsible shielding and stuff, affixed around the "hip" and "shoulder"—I have those in quotes—areas.

AUSTIN [amused]: The pupal hips, please.

JANINE: [overlapping] Painted—[laughs] Yes. It's—the coloration—it should—it's supposed to have sort of a striking coloration, so, lots of black and black-rimmed cells of color. Like a butterfly's wings, but more dull, um, and deliberate-looking and less like, "Wow, nature."

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE [clearly reading what she's written]: The joint seam smooth parts are not entirely clear when they're still. The face has slightly—has slight rises and dips where features might be, but it's otherwise pretty blank and featureless.

AUSTIN: That's a really good description. And I think it's a really good description for reasons we'll get into when we get into what your character is. But for now, talk about—tell me about what your Divine did.

JANINE: So, Belgard specialized in highly-mobile field maintenance. So it could attach—remora-like, that was the word we were looking for.

AUSTIN: Ahh.

JANINE: To a target to mend, or occasionally harm, I have with a question mark there?

AUSTIN: Ooohh.

JANINE: 'Cause I feel like, if you can attach to something and do stuff to it—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeahh.

JANINE: I feel like maybe sometimes the stuff you do is hurt it.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: [reading off] It's heavily shielded, able to wrap that shielding around most other small-to mid-size ships slash Divines, but only provide a partial barrier to the larger ones.

AUSTIN: When you say "shielded," is this like... Again, Star Trek shields? Or is this like, a big physical shield?

JANINE: I feel like it'd be combination, like I mentioned more physical shield, sort of, plates and things.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: And I imagine there'd be—especially, like, between the gaps on those you'd want some kind of... energy bridging, but not like a full—not like a full forcefield thing.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Yeah.

JANINE [overlapping]: You know, more like—yeah.

AUSTIN [sort of amused, expectant tone]: So, how did yours die?

JANINE: They got abandoned by their candidate, which we're—are we calling those... excerpts?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: No, I think it's not "candidate" anymore, right?

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: 'Cause candidate was very closely tied to the kind of democratic thing. The thing that I really like here is "excerpt."

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's what in my head I've been calling them, we've been calling them.

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, their excerpt abandoned them.

JANINE: Yeah, their excerpt abandoned them during battle. And without their excerpt, they prioritized mending others over mending damage to itself.

AUSTIN: Ahh, okay. Which probably in the end was really bad for everybody.

JANINE: Yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Great. Good. So, despite the Divine's death, does the ship still give the Fleet something?

JANINE: Um, they have access to uncommonly intricate shielding mechanisms.

AUSTIN: Right, which is what we talked about.

JANINE: I have here "both energy-based and physical," probably the physical one is the emphasis because they'd be able to... refer to the construction of the panels.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JANINE: On Belgard itself.

AUSTIN: I even like the notion of, like, little drones or ships that are flying around the big physical shields.

JANINE: Mhhmm.

AUSTIN: Like, that's actually a really great image. So let's talk about the ship itself. What's the ship's name? What's the ship that your character's from called?

JANINE: The ship is Thyrsus [pronounced like "Thirsus"]? That's probably how I'm gonna end up saying it.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right, right, Thyrsus, okay, yes.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Tell me what it looks like.

JANINE: So on the outside, it's a series—oh, we didn't do the ability that they lost.

AUSTIN: Oh, you're right, we didn't, we'll come back to it. Tell me what it looks like first.

JANINE: Okay. Um. [laughs] Sorry. So, the series of bulb-like nodes, connecting bridges and the occasional sort of flat oblong panel-like section. And they're all kind of clustered but coming more or less to a point.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: And sort of a visual note that I have here because I know I have a lot of time—I have a hard time parsing audio descriptions, so—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmhmm.

JANINE: So I put a lot of like, footnotes in here. So I have a note here of like, it might be helpful to think of the head of a stalk of Queen Anne's lace.

AUSTIN: I don't know what that is. Is that a—that's a—okay, I'm looking at it.

JANINE: [laughs] It's a—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh, I see.

JANINE [overlapping]: But it's like, clusters of flowers, and then there's a—it joins, so it's like—yeah. It's very broad, but still comes to a sort of point.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. That's interesting-looking. Okay. Also like, those cluster and then cluster again and then cluster again.

JANINE: Mhmm.

AUSTIN: Does Thyrsus do this?

JANINE: Yes, it's kind of a mess.

AUSTIN: Okay. Love it, I love it.

JANINE [overlapping]: Like it's—[laughs] Yeah.

AUSTIN: What a messy ship. I'm a messy ship who lives for drama. [laughs] Okay.

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: What about on the inside?

JANINE: Oh man, this is a long one. I struggled with this a little bit. I think I'm at a point—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Janine]: You can just—you don't have to read it, but...

JANINE: I know. I think I'm at point where I like it. So it's—because of the construction of the ship, and there's not a lot of like, really *big* open spacious areas. There... There's—generally people don't like the feel of being interior. So like, interior rooms, interior spaces, aren't super popular. They're still around, they're still there. When they are there they usually have very tall, vaulted ceilings. But the preference is—they have tall vaulted ceilings and like, a lot reflective, natural-looking surfaces, like stone and wood and glass.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mhmm.

JANINE: More than metal. But the majority of places would feel, like, being in sort of an interconnected, nested series of alleys, courtyards, plazas, with the, you know, rooms being rare.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

JANINE: Spaces between spaces. So, shopkeepers would have an outward-facing window, but they wouldn't necessarily have shop floor space that you can walk around in.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right, right.

JANINE: Um...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: That's interesting.

JANINE: People with access to more resources might choose to avoid having any interior spaces at all, so they would still have like a private area, but it would be private in the sense of, like, it has this sort of fake, open-air thing, with a fence representing the actual, physical boundaries.

AUSTIN: But then they still just get the big, open access to public space, in a sense. It's just public private—it's just private public space? If that make sense?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Like, "This is my corner of this big open space."

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right. Gotcha.

JANINE: So, like, it's kind of like the much more advanced equivalent of like, when you have a kid's room and you paint clouds and stuff on the walls.

AUSTIN: [laughs a little] Right, yes. Gotcha. So what is the ability that the ship doesn't anymore, now that the Divine is dead?

JANINE: So Belgard provided extremely high material efficiency. In construction or repairs. So, the effective reworking of what exists, instead of pure addition or replacement. So the contrast here with Keith's Divine is that this isn't like, grafting an arm that doesn't fit onto something. This is like, making the replacement arm out of that thing, but it's still, like—it doesn't look grafted-on. It's—

AUSTIN [overlapping a little]: Right. It's like, you're recycle, Keith's reuse.

JANINE: Yeah. As long as material hasn't been lost, like if stuff gets shot out into space or whatever that would be an issue, but if things are mostly contained, it's able to take those components and rework them into something that is more or less the original thing it was.

AUSTIN [overlapping a little]: Okay. Right, and so now, the Fleet can't do that anymore.

JANINE: No.

AUSTIN: Which means, like, I love this because for 30,000 years or some amount of time since whenever Belgard was first designed, waste wasn't a thing, really. You didn't—there wasn't a concept of waste.

JANINE [overlapping]: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And now there is. And like, "Fshh, okay, fuck."

[Ali and Janine laugh a little]

AUSTIN: "We don't—this is just trash now? [Janine laughs a bit in background] We don't know what to do with this? What do you mean we can't just turn it into a different thing?" I love that, I love that notion of like, oh yeah, that's a very clear loss. Cool. What is—sorry, everything's just jumped on my screen. What is one of the foundational rules of this—of Thyrsus, that... Sorry, I think we missed—oh, you know what, we missed one on Keith's, too, now that I'm looking at this again.

KEITH: Oh.

AUSTIN: Oh, there was not an answer there. Well, we can jump back to it, Keith, in a second, so.

KEITH: Yeah I'm still trying to figure that one out.

AUSTIN: That's fine. So, Janine, what is one rule that is shared among all the Fleet's, but that this ship, kind of, either was in the foregrounds of, or really holds tightly?

JANINE: This—[sighs] I don't love my answer here, it might not work, it might need some reworking. The thing I wrote was, "There is nothing so sacred as cold metal warmed in the palm."

AUSTIN: Nice.

JANINE: And...

AUSTIN: I get it.

JANINE [overlapping with Austin]: Trying to—

AUSTIN: I think I—like, the thing that I like about it is there is this notion of, I mean, like, it's a very synthesis-heavy answer, that's like, about humans doing work.

JANINE [overlapping]: Mhmm.

AUSTIN: Like, with machines. And also just like, keeping active. It's almost like, um, what's the full thing of like, an idle hand, blah blah, is the devil's... something?

JANINE: Plaything?

AUSTIN: Plaything. Is like, yeah. Fuckin', work. Like, do stuff. Do stuff with metal. Like, do technology stuff, don't sit around.

JANINE [overlapping]: Mhmm.

AUSTIN: You know, don't expect it to do it for you, either. There should be connection. Also good because of how Belgard died, which is, their excerpt abandoned them [Janine laughs in background] which betrays this rule, which I like a lot.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So what is the other thing, the one rule that people of this ship have that other ships don't have?

JANINE: That like should mend like. So flesh must be mended with flesh.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Ahhhh.

JANINE: Metal must be mended with metal.

AUSTIN: That's a big one.

JANINE [overlapping]: Which would understandably not necessarily be popular [laughing] anywhere else.

AUSTIN: Right. I mean, like, so you're still chipped, right?

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But that's not the same thing as—so is additive stuff okay? Like, can I get a metal—can I get like a—

JANINE: I think additive stuff is okay in the same way that like, clothing is okay.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JANINE: And like, you know. But it's like, if you take damage to flesh, then flesh needs to be used to repair that damage.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Sure. Okay.

JANINE: Or, you know.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I got it. Like, so, I have, if my knee gets blown off, like, I need to get another—

JANINE: A new knee from—yeah.

AUSTIN: I can't do prosthetic. Right? Is that basically the—

JANINE: No.

AUSTIN: Interesting. Okay.

JANINE: You could like, enhance. If you get like, a kind of iffy knee, you could probably like enhance that a little bit, but...

AUSTIN: Yeah, no, I like the notion of, like, this is just a different—this ship will be very different in this way, right?

JANINE [overlapping]: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Like, there won't be big fuck-off metal arms on this ship, probably. In the same way that there were in other places. Unless they're like, metal arms you put on over your regular arms. [faintly] Right?

JANINE [amused]: Yeah I was gonna say, you could probably have like a metal plating thing with like pins that go in and do some reinforcing or whatever, but...

AUSTIN [overlapping with Janine]: Yeah. Yeah. Totally.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Interesting. Okay. What is the fashion that's unique to your ship?

JANINE: Uh, [laughs] I picked, "Highly embellished but rather shapeless overcoats."

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: “The length and material varies, but ankle-length cuts of heavily-textured fabric are considered more desirable, as they’ve both more resource-intensive and hold their structure better, if you’re using the actual material, anyway.”

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: “Sleeves would sometimes be slashed up the arm, off-ship they’re typically worn open or fastened at the collar to give a more tailored and cape-like effect.”

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yes, good.

JANINE: And be a little less, like, standout-ish.

AUSTIN [amused disbelief]: No, I think that’s still pretty standout-ish. I think—

[Ali laughs]

JANINE: It’s still very standout-ish, but it’s like, standout-ish in a way that blends in more than like—a big, like—I was—my inspiration here was a lot of like, Victorian driving clothes, and also like, mid-century women’s coats, that are just like, this huge fuckin’, like—

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: —pile of fabric that’s just on you.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, yeah. I love it.

JANINE: Um...

AUSTIN: What’s the tone of the ship given the crisis?

JANINE: Uh, staid. They have doubled down on routines and structure. It’s kind of... I have here, like, “Be the stability you want to see in the world’ approach.”

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mm.

JANINE: But there’s sort of an avoidancy there, of just like, the thing they’re doing is, they wanna just keep doing the same thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, right, of course. That’ll help. Um, which is your favorite—

JANINE: [laughs] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is their favorite ship?

JANINE: I think they would get along very well with Gumption's Gambit. I didn't see that Keith had put down—

AUSTIN: [sort of laughing] Yeah.

JANINE: Had put down Thyrsus also.

KEITH [overlapping with Janine]: I didn't see that you had put down mine.

[Janine laughs]

AUSTIN [overlapping with laughter]: What good friends.

JANINE: I—it just feels like a very compatible—

KEITH [overlapping with Janine]: Yeah.

JANINE: —like, worldview, in terms of what they do.

KEITH & AUSTIN [overlapping with Janine]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So I didn't ask Keith this before, because he didn't have an answer for it before, but what is a—what is your—what is their least favorite ship, here?

JANINE: Ali's.

AUSTIN: Oooh. Let's jump there next. All right, so, yeah, Ali, let's talk about your Divine.

ALI: Hi.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali]: Hi.

ALI: I'm actually thrilled by this 'cause I wanted to have a bad relationship with someone who's gonna have—be in my party.

AUSTIN: Oh, *shit*!

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: That's true.

ALI: Not like, directly, but like [derisive] "Oh, okay."

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali]: Mhmm.

ALI: "So you're from there. What's up."

AUSTIN: That's *true*.

ALI: Anyway, scrolling back up to my thing.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali]: So tell me about your Divine, first and foremost.

ALI [overlapping]: Hi, yeah, my Divine is the Divine of Anticipation.

AUSTIN: Okay. What were they—what were they good at?

ALI: Uh, the thing that they best at, which is kind of a really direct interpretation of this, but like, simulation of different scenarios to find out the best direction for the fleet as a whole? So in terms of like, being able to figure out which planets can be sustainable, even before Dre's whole thing.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Or like... Or just like, "Oh, we should be going west for a little while."

AUSTIN: Mhhmm. Totally.

ALI: That sort of stuff.

AUSTIN: I—the thing that I like about is that like, that job changed dramatically in the last, like, 1000 years.

ALI: Mhhm.

AUSTIN: That, for like, 29,000 years, that was basically like, "All right, like, what's gonna make everybody happiest for, you know, Thursday dinner!"

[Ali laughs softly]

AUSTIN: And like, that had to become like, "Okay, what happens if they flank us from the west?" Not that there—again, not that there was *no* military action or something for that 30,000 years,

but it was much smaller-scale than what's happened lately. And so I kind of like that shift there, of just like, in a weird way, Anticipation has probably gotten *more* important than ever before? Now that it's like, uh-oh time?

ALI: Yeah. For sure.

AUSTIN: Uh-oh time! That's what it's called, everybody.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Fuck. So tell me about the—what'd the Divine look like?

ALI: Yeah, sure. So the physical form of the Divine I was thinking of—do you know the—
[laughs] the funnels of the new Gundam? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, yeah. Me? Yes, of course I do.

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: Char's Counterattack?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Which are essentially these, like—for the audience: they're just kind of these like, long rectangular, sort of floating pieces, that can kind of sit together in, like, a fan shape, or spread out and, like, form shields in-between them, or separate, or whatever they need to. I don't think they separate in the way that...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmm.

ALI: That they would, 'cause there's like cities in there.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali, kind of laughing]: Right.

ALI: But they do—[laughs] Like, they don't open up, but they do separate and like—I was thinking there would be like—they would be able to form like, goalposts, and have like, shields in-between?

AUSTIN: Like for soccer and football? Why would—

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Is there a reason for the goalposts?

ALI: For like, protecting other parts of the Fleet. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, I see. Yes, gotcha.

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: Like—yeah. Like, a much less elegant version of Janine's thing, which is why I'm willing to scrap it. But like, if there's like, just people coming from the west, you can just create a, like, fence, essentially.

AUSTIN: Right. I think those are different things, right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. I think those are different things and again, I think it makes sense that we have that overlap. Like, these are the last eight that lived.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Maybe it's 'cause they were the ones that repaired each other and had good shields.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Like, and were super efficient recyclers. [laughs a little]

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like—I almost said “Sorry, culture Divine, but you weren't really helping out.” And then I remembered what some of our other Divines were, so.

ALI: [laughs] Yeah. So that's that. But there's also—what I'm also thinking when I'm picturing this is sort of like a pocket knife, where like, in most cases they're all just layered on top of each other.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmm. Okay.

ALI: There's like five separate pieces that can either be a fan, or separate.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

ALI: But mostly are just sort this big weird rectangle.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: And so do the—so, Anticipation was the ship then, basically?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Did you say this elevator bit you have written down?

ALI: [laughs] I did not say that out loud. Which is—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay. It's good, you should say that bit.

ALI: So the body of the Divine itself is considered the elevator between the different levels. And the kind of religious sect of the culture on the ship considered going to every layer in a single day an act of penance.

AUSTIN: I really like this a lot. It's really good.

ALI: [laughs] I think that if you worship the god of Anticipation, the act of, like, moving in-between places is something that is holy?

AUSTIN: [thoughtful] Right. Is that about, because it's basically wasting time? Like it's a—not wasting, but you know what I mean, like you're basically like, all right, I have a full day of stuff to do, and what my Divine does really well is figures out how to do all of it. Right? In a way that's like, okay first I go to the store and pick up, this, this, this, and this, and then I do—then I have to go drop off the kids and practice, and then, you know, whatever. And instead of trying to live my life in that way, I am, like, dedicating an entire day to just being in the presence of this *thing*. Or is that just my bad interpretation?

ALI [overlapping a little]: Yeah, I—no, I think that's part of it. I think also part of that is that, in like experiencing anticipation, you're looking forward to something.

AUSTIN: Ooh, sure.

ALI: So the idea of like, "Oh, I have to get fish for dinner tonight, but I'm gonna go to this like, really good shop three layers up from here to go get that."

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmhmm.

ALI: "Cause the entire time I'm gonna be thinking about how good this dinner is gonna be."

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: There's something, like, you know, special about that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that a lot, that's really cool. So like, then are there like—is each trip basically a little prayer?

ALI: Yeah, I would say so.

AUSTIN [overlapping a bit]: About like, what the thing is you hope. That's really good, I like that a lot.

ALI: Yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Um, how did Anticipation die?

ALI: The way that I've written is sort of just by decay.

AUSTIN: Mhmm.

ALI: I think that over time the... It's ability to like, figure out stuff, just slowed down, to the point where it stopped?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Interesting.

ALI: It like, stalled.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: So just—

ALI: So, it's dead now.

AUSTIN: Yeah. The thing that I like is like, it's essentially stuck in a rendering buffering status.

[Ali laughs softly]

AUSTIN: Like, it's like it doesn't have enough RAM.

ALI [overlapping]: Right, yeah. [laughs a little]

AUSTIN: And it just like did a blue screen of death, like hard crash, hard freeze.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Sylvia in the chat says, "Oh, it's my laptop."

[Ali laughs louder]

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. Totally.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: That's exactly—I love that, that's really good. That's really good for other, party reasons that we'll get to once we get to character stuff.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which is good. I also—the other thing I like about this is like, they died for weird reasons. And one of the things I want to be clear up top is like, they went 30,000 years without dying. Suddenly, they started dying. That's *weird*. In the parlance of today, this is not normal. [sort of laughs] And so, it should be... One of the core mysteries for me in this game is gonna be figuring out why the Divines started dying. Why did this happen now suddenly, when it hadn't happened for all that other time, so.

ALI: Yeah that's why I wanted to make mine specifically kind of a mystery.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah.

ALI: Where it was like doing this thing fine for a while and then just started dying off, to the point where it just like, it can't be restored.

AUSTIN: Totally. So what specific ability did it add to the Fleet that it doesn't anymore?

ALI: Um... [exhales] I—

AUSTIN: Is it just kind of the specialty that you kind of outlined before?

ALI: Yeah, I don't know, I don't think that it can separate anymore.

AUSTIN: Oh, int—okay, so the *ship* can't do the thing where like, it separates.

ALI [overlapping]: Right, it has to be—

AUSTIN: Oh, I mean maybe that's an interesting thing, like maybe the funnels did used to be able to separate all the way.

ALI: Right, yeah, exactly.

AUSTIN: And like, go to different ships and basically be, like, part of a network that helped them all coordinate very cleanly, and now they can't.

ALI: Right, yeah, so the way that I described... I tried to describe the funnels before, that they could move apart in a way that like—the way that birds do?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Yeah.

ALI: In that there's one at a point and then they kinda fan out and they can use that to be able to like, a signal to the ships around them, like, "This is the way that we're going."

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right. Got you.

ALI: And those sort of things? And now it's just this sort of, like it can probably still like spin out a little bit?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mhm.

ALI: But they can't become separate pieces.

AUSTIN: Totally. Cool. What does it still do, for everybody? As a ship.

ALI [overlapping a little]: I'm not super sure...

AUSTIN: I... One thing that I'll suggest here and like, I don't know that this clicks, is just like, it sounds like you have a really big Divine.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: That has lots of, like, if you're talking about like, riding the elevator up to go to the floor where you go get the nice fish, like it could just be about having space for people to live or shop in or something.

ALI [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm not committing to that now but like, think about it, you know.

ALI [overlapping]: I'm super—

AUSTIN: Turn it over in your head for a week, or whatever.

ALI [overlapping a little]: Yeah, I'm super willing to like—'cause I imagine it as like a big structure where like, things are really far apart, but like...

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: This is the second interesting thing about Janine really not liking me.

[Austin laughs]

ALI: Is that I imagine—[laughs] So I'm just gonna skip down and say that the—I imagine the inside of the ship to be sort of like those big hotels, where you can see the lobby from every floor 'cause there's like a balcony outside of your hotel room.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, I love it.

ALI: Like, instead of it being like a hotel room there, it's an entire like, sort of city section?

AUSTIN: Mhmm.

ALI: But the spaces that are actually—like homes and shops, things like that—are actually really small.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Because there's like a appreciation for like intimacy in that way.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: So there's that. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Mhhmm. But there are these big open spaces, like, between them.

ALI [overlapping]: Right, yeah. But like to get to a place it's gonna take you like twenty minutes.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: But there's like—there was that picture that you shared last night of... The image of like, a futuristic city, but like they were...

AUSTIN [overlapping a bit]: Oh. Oh, this is so good, yes.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It is a... God, how do I... [sighs] I'm gonna do a reverse google search for this so that people at home can find it. It is caaalld... If you do a search for.... "Sparth"? That's just the guy's name, that's not gonna help, Austin.

[Ali laughs a lot]

AUSTIN: It doesn't have a name. [frustrated exhale] Artists, start naming your shit, I can't just go to ArtStation and be like, "Oh, click on the one with—it looks like, what if Venice was a floating city and also had more domes."

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Like that's not... Gonna help...

ALI: I think people get it, though. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, but I want them to see it, 'cause this art is cool. [laughs]

ALI: Oh, we'll link it.

AUSTIN: Okay, as long as we link it.

ALI [overlapping, still amused]: We have the ability to do that.

AUSTIN: Someone tweet at us [Ali laughs in background] and say, "Hey, link it."

ALI: But like, sort of—would the actual city spaces be separated by this huge middle section?

AUSTIN: Right, it's just empty, that's just—

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Open air.

ALI: Or like has like—yeah, mostly open air, I was thinking of like, floating gardens in-between, 'cause I'm that person.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Ooohh. Yo. This is the season.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Go back—[imitates rewinding noise, like "zzbdbdbdb"] Back to the top.

[Ali laughs]

[Austin makes same rewinding noise]

[Ali continues laughing]

AUSTIN: That was me rewinding. Oh Keith, [laughing] I don't if you know, I can do any sound that exists.

KEITH: Can you do any sound?Fast-forwarding.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: I can do *any sound*. So actually, here's an examp—I have a really good—we've established this, in canon. I do a really good Keith impression, which you saw with Mako and Larry. And it's because it's a transitive thing. I can now do any sound, because Keith can do any sound.

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Yes. Yeah.

AUSTIN: So I actually can't do any sound—

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: So, I can do any sound—

AUSTIN: I can do Keith doing any sound.

KEITH: Right, exactly. So can you do me doing... I guess water droplets falling into a tin cup?

AUSTIN [imitating water dripping, very very soft, high-pitched]: *Toop. Bloop. Bleep. Bup.*

KEITH: That's good.

AUSTIN [same as before]: *Blup.*

KEITH: That's exactly like how I do it, and that is also exactly how it sounds.

AUSTIN: That's exactly it. Perfectly. All right, we're gonna keep moving, 'cause otherwise we'll just go off into this bit. Which is a good bit.

[Keith laughs far away from the mic]

[Jack laughs softly]

AUSTIN: Just to be clear. [laughs]

KEITH [shouting away from the mic]: This old bit!

AUSTIN: It's one of my faves. Uhhhh, keep moving though, because time is of the essence.
[laughs] Um, what else is going on with your ship and your culture? What is the—did you figure out any of the rules stuff?

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: You were—you were rewinding to talk about gardens?

AUSTIN: Oh! This is the season.

[Ali laughs softly]

AUSTIN: This is the season where we can be fuckin' extra, where we can do whatever the fuck we want, where we're allowed to have big floating gardens.

ALI: Okay. Yeah, I know. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: That's all. That's all I'm saying.

ALI: [laughs] Okay.

AUSTIN: Uh, do a search for "Pendul City." P-E-N-D-U-L, space, city. That will get you to the picture that we've been talking about.

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: Thanks.

ALI: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: All right. Uh... But yeah, so going back to the city. Does it have any rules that are specific to it? Or that came from it? Have you gotten there yet?

ALI: It does, but those are big for me and what my character are gonna be, [laughs] so I have not figured them out yet.

AUSTIN: Okay. That's fair.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What about *fashion*? Talk to me about fashion.

ALI: So what I have written for fashion here is that there is a focus on having different items or elements of your outfit from different layers of the city.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: So lots of like clashing patterns, or like layers... Stuff like that. I kind of imagine it kind of just being a weird marketing scheme. [laughs] Where —

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali]: Oh, definitely.

ALI: Like, [still laughing] shops from one layer specify in like yellow things one week and then everyone...

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali]: Is there a card that I can take from layer to the next to get stamped?

ALI: [laughs] Of course.

AUSTIN: Do I get a free subway sandwich if I get all eight layers stamped?

ALI: You get a free, like, jewelry box, to organize all of different—yeah.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh, is it—but what if it is a thing that's like—what if it's like, if you go to seven you can get something from the eighth one like, on discount. But then like the jewelry layer fuckin' *hates* it 'cause everyone just comes through on—

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: But I, like—'cause like, if going to every single layer in a day is such, like a... Such a big ordeal, I think that like, you're like super fashionable if you have *five*.

AUSTIN: Right. Okay.

ALI: And you like, you look really good if you have three. But like, five is like, avant-garde.

AUSTIN [overlapping a little]: Right. Gotcha. Cool. This is the season of avant garde, like, haute couture. Like, the all—so many of the images that we shared in our group chat was, like, super high fashion, nonsense imagery, like no one would ever wear that. In this culture, they're totally wearing that.

[Ali laughs softly]

AUSTIN: Partially 'cause they don't need to actually wear it. Partially 'cause it's like, "Oh yeah, I installed this," you know like, for a lot of folks.

ALI [overlapping]: Right.

AUSTIN: Because, real things are expensive. Also money might be different in this world? I've been thinking a lot about having like, basically RAM instead of money? Where it's like, oh yeah, you have a limit of how much you can s—how many—how much wealth you can *have*. But everything el—but you can kind of trade one-to-one, so if you like buy something for one cred, you can sell it for one cred. But you only have a pool of X number of cred, basically, at once. And so it's—you could be the person who's like, "All right, I'm gonna spend the time to trade in all of my shit, so that I can look fucking fly for prom."

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: "Let's do it." Whereas other people are just like, "No, I have enough extra cred, anyway." Yes.

[Ali laughs softly]

AUSTIN: Yes, Janine says "Nier Automata chips but for pants," exactly that. Nier Automata, [pronouncing it differently] Automata, is also a big influence for this season, I have to say. Though we did start planning before it. Anyway. What's the tone—

KEITH: Again, longest pre-pro in podcast history.

AUSTIN: Podcast history.

ART [overlapping with Austin]: Everyone's ripping us off.

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: That's what we're saying. What is the tone or attitude of this ship during this period of instability?

ALI: I think there was a lot of big talk about how like, full unity between the Fleet and like, making informed decisions will help stability, but while also being like, "We're the best at making decisions," so let's... Let us...

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali a little]: Right, no, I heard that without you having to say that second part.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: "Yeah, you know, we just really need to be, uh, unified. And people should just really listen to the great informed decisions that we have."

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: Mhm.

AUSTIN: “For everybody. We just really have the best wishes of everybody else at heart.” Um, you don’t have a favorite or least favorite ship yet.

ALI: I kind of have them in my head, I didn’t write them down.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay.

ALI: I think that my favorites are probably Sylvia or Dre’s?

AUSTIN: Okay. Well, pick one, and we’ll go there next. And tell me what your least favorite is first before we jump.

ALI [overlapping a little]: Okay. I don’t have a least favorite, actually, I was thinking Art’s, but I don’t know.

AUSTIN: Okay. Let’s jump to...

ALI: Oh, before [laughing] we do that—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

ALI: I don’t have a ship name but I wanted to run “The By-and-By” by you?

AUSTIN: Oh, that’s pretty good.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I kind of like that. I like—

ALI [overlapping]: I don’t hate it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, one of the things I really like is that, a lot of these ship names are different. Because 30,000 years is a long time, and names come in and out of favor a lot. So yeah. Um... Let’s go to... Dre, ‘cause it’s right underneath—actually, no wait, Sylvia’s is right underneath you, right? Yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: There we go. We’ll just keep—we’ll just go down this slide. Hi, Sylvia.

SYLVIA: Hi. I’m unmuteing from my sickness zo—like, zone. Hello, I’m here.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Sylvia]: Pal. Buddy.

[Sylvia sighs]

AUSTIN: Tell me about your Divine, and your ship. What is your ship called?

SYLVIA [overlapping with Austin]: So...

AUSTIN: Do you have a ship?

SYLVIA: My ship is actually two ships.

AUSTIN: Oh, interesting.

SYLVIA: Connected.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: So... My Divine is the Divine Harmony. And my ships are the two Tides of Harmony, called, uh, Perigean and Sache.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Sylvia]: Okay. Okay.

SYLVIA: Which are both...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Wave things?

SYLVIA: Ocean-related terms.

AUSTIN: So would you refer to the ships together as "the Tides of Harmony"?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Got it.

SYLVIA: Yeah, that is the, kind of, um, unifying name there.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Tell me a little bit about what harmony did, or does, or, sorry, did, it's dead.

SYLVIA [overlapping]: So...

AUSTIN: Harmony's dead, but.

SYLVIA: Harmony's whole thing was basically.... Connecting, like communication between—and, networking.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: I have this written down like "Its combat strength was tactical formation," which I think kinda similar to some other stuff that's been said, but the main reason is that is—Harmony's... The way that people on the Tides connect to the Veil, or, the Mesh, whichever we're—I think we're using both interchangeably.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: Is through these nanites that were granted, like, from Harmony, that are like in the bodies of everyone on the Tides.

AUSTIN: Right, which is different than most other ships that have like, cyber-brain implants or whatever. Cyber-chips, they're chipped. So this is just like, nanos in your bloodstream or whatever, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah. And the way I was seeing the—what they're strength was was that they could either... They were able to quickly communicate to their citizens.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Much faster than any other Divine.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVIA: Because they were literally part of them.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Riight.

SYLVIA: They were like in their bloodstream. And I think with—even with some, I think with their, um, is "excerpts" the term we were using for the candidates now?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, excerpts, yeah, definitely.

SYLVIA: They could almost like take contr—like, direct control if they needed to. That's how strong that connection was, specifically.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: The citizens could, or the...

SYLVIA [overlapping]: The—no, Harmony could.

AUSTIN: Could take control of the citizens?

SYLVIA: Of these specific ones, of the excerpts, because they have a higher conce—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh, of the excerpts, got you, got you, got you.

SYLVIA: Yeah. They have a higher concentration of it.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: That's interesting. I love that. I love that it's like, reversed of what we normally think of?

SYLVIA [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: 'Cause like normally we think of like, "Oh, the pilot goes into the ship—or goes into the mech, and goes and fights," but like, this could be the situation of like, "Okay you gotta go inside this base now, but I'm still going to be piloting *you*," is really fucking cool. [sort of laughs]

SYLVIA: Yeah. On top of that, I thought that it would be a very good mediator, because—specifically, like, I think it also acted as this with the other Divines. As a neutral party. But it also was for its citizens because it could literally just, know what they were thinking, almost?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah. Mhmm. Right, right.

SYLVIA: And like monitor them and be like, "You're bullshitting this guy."

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right, give him his fucking cows.

SYLVIA [overlapping]: "Stop bullshitting this guy."

AUSTIN [overlapping]: You know?

SYLVIA: Exactly.

SYLVIA: Like it basically like was almost like this sort of... Parental figure to a lot of these ships in a weird way.

AUSTIN: I also just like it because there's two of them. Where they deal—sorry, there's one Divine but there's two ships, there are two excerpts, like, that means that they're always dealing with duality, which means that they have gotten used to dealing with conflict.

SYLVIA [overlapping]: Mhmm.

AUSTIN: And finding a common ground. That's—I like that a lot. How did they die, despite all of that?

SYLVIA: So the way that I have it written is just that the common belief is that they spread themselves too thin. People aren't actually like a hundred percent sure of what happened.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay.

SYLVIA: They're... Harmony plays kind of close to the chest where it... People thought that they were giving more nanites to more people.

AUSTIN: Mmmm.

SYLVIA: To try and have more than just two excerpts, so they could be more efficient.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVIA: And... Eventually it just got weaker and weaker as it gave more of itself away and like, on top of that the population was increasing, too.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: So it just deteriorated and like, um, I have Harmony described, we skipped it—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh.

SYLVIA: —but I have it described as this like, flower-like almost thing. And it used to have this really bright light that eventually just faded away.

AUSTIN: Oh, and that's how they knew, at some point.

SYLVIA [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVIA: And it is still like physically in-between these two ships, it's just like, dead. 'Cause that's how they're con—that's how they're connected. [sort of laughs]

AUSTIN: So, Harmony is this—now this like metallic corpse?

SYLVIA [overlapping]: Basically, yeah, I—

AUSTIN: Or crystalline corpse, you have it written as crystalline.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Flower, corpse, in the center of these two ships.

SYLVIA: Yeah, because the way the ships are connected is... There's like, some almost—they're not like... [sighs] There's this kind of nebulous idea in my head where they're almost kinda like elevators but like, not really, they're just like a th—track that things can go along, because they need to be able to move more than just the elevator would.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay. Got you. Yeah, I got you.

SYLVIA: And on top—and there's also those connectors to Harmony itself, because people would need to like, go to it, sometimes.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: And so they just never got rid of the things connecting it because why would we sever that connection if it might come back someday?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.Right.

SYLVIA: So it's just this like, um, I described it as dahlia, which if you look up dahlias they're very like, jagged.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

SYLVIA: So it's just this like very—like this empty... It looks like empty glass, I think?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: That's so good.

SYLVIA: Just this jagged flower thing in the middle of these two ships.

AUSTIN: And they are now... They're still connected, but they aren't like, as close to it as they used to be or something?

SYLVIA: Yeah, um... Th—do you mean like physically or with the nanite stuff?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: The ships, physically. Physically, yeah.

SYLVIA [overlapping a little]: The ships... Yeah. So, what the ships used to do is—the reason they're called Tides is they moved... Like waves, almost.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh, sure.

SYLVIA: Is how I saw it. Where like, they would move like around each other or like... One would roll forward and one would roll back, and stuff like that, and now they're just like, um, parallel, basically.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVIA: And it's just like, they move still but they're much more rigid and static, they don't have the finesse that they had when Harmony was still alive.

AUSTIN: That's interesting. And sad. Like that's a really potent image of like, ah, mm, I can just imagine someone on another ship looking over and seeing this one... Completely, like, just, stuck in its single position and being like, "Ah, I miss when the Tides used to like, roll in and out. That was really cool."

SYLVIA: Well yeah, too, it's like, you used to be able to see the other side of the ship, too, 'cause it would move in different ways.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right, right.

SYLVIA: And now you just see the one side.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's... that's a bummer. Why do we make such a sad show? Fuck.

SYLVIA: Dh—I—listen.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: We're going for happier generally speaking this season—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yes. We gotta start—

SYLVIA [overlapping]: —but I had to get some in.

AUSTIN: Start in a valley, you know what I mean? You gotta level out.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, we talked already about like the basic thing of like, having communication through these nanites and stuff. Was there anything else that it added to the Fleet that is now gone?

SYLVIA: Um, so, I was kinda mulling this over... And I think it could tie into that, which is that, since it's died communication between ships has gotten a lot harder?

AUSTIN: Oh, right, this is totally just the thing, that we talked about already. Which is—this is why people need to go to fuckin' police booths to call different ships.

SYLVIA [overlapping]: Yeah.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay.

SYLVIA: Like now there's like interference from like, um, like space rocks or whatever.

[Austin laughs]

SYLVIA: Getting in the way of signals and shit. I don't know. I couldn't think of like the proper term...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: No, that's fine.

SYLVIA: For like, interference...

AUSTIN: Space rocks, got it, love it.

SYLVIA [overlapping]: You know what I mean though, right?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I do. [more, indistinguishable]

SYLVIA: Like there's a bunch of like debris in the way and like...

AUSTIN: Right. Got it.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What does the ship still do for the Fleet?

SYLVIA: The way I see Harmony's ships, like, internally is that there's a lot of, um, production going on in there?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Because it's a—they prided themselves on the efficiency of what Harmony let them do. Um... I don't have this written down yet, but I was thinking that peo—like, for a while people would switch which Tide they were on, depending on the time of year.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh, interesting.

SYLVIA: And they each—they'd do different jobs, so like everyone learned how to do... different things so they could produce like, food, basically.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: As like the main thing, 'cause we talked about how textile and stuff is kinda rare?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: So I don't want a—that to be a thing.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah yeah.

SYLVIA: But stuff like food, stuff like supplies, things like that.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah. Whatever people need, like, I just like that notion too of just like, oh yeah, they're skilled laborers. Like—

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: They know how to make a—or, they might do what we might think of as unskilled labor. But they do it because they know how to do it, so that, when another—when the... The Divine's ship who makes like, you know, socks, when that one fucking goes away, guess what, the fuckin', the Tides of Harmony got your back, they'll knit you some fuckin' socks.

SYLVIA: Yeah. I kinda actually saw it as like, one—like, everybody had two jobs they would do basically.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay.

SYLVIA: And one of them is a more intricate thing and one of them's one of the more "unskilled," like you said?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: That's interesting.

SYLVIA: Where like, the guy who makes socks might also be a really good glassblower.

AUSTIN: Right. That's really cool.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN [smiling]: That's a good—that's a cool culture. I'm really happy with all of the answers so far from everybody. This is good. Um, is there anything else to say about the inside of the ship and what it looks like?

SYLVIA: On the inside, I actually still—I'm not 100% sure yet. I think that they're mostly, like, the two of... There's—so, we vaguely mentioned this, and we'll get to this when we get to what the tone is—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah.

SYLVIA: —of the ship right now.

AUSTIN: You can just do that now too if you want.

SYLVIA: Okay. Some of the nanites have started to fail. And in some people they're just not being born with them. They've been set up in a way that—where they should be hereditary. They like, they are biomechanical in a way.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

SYLVIA: Where like, you can pass them on to your kids. But some people either they stop working or they're being born witho—like at a very small percentage are being born without them. So there's almost these districts of people kind of like, put in the corners, of the two Tides, where it's like, "You don't have this, and we don't know how to deal with that."

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

SYLVIA: "And you can't do a lot of the things we need you to do, so you're just over here now."

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVIA: Um...

AUSTIN: Interesting. Okay, is there anything else here that you haaave? You're still working on the rules for the culture stuff, and the tonal stuff.

SYLVIA [overlapping a little]: Yeah, I think—I did want to say what the fashion, style thing.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Totally.

SYLVIA: I kind of thought of something maybe? There's a, like a lot of pride in having like at least one thing on your person that you've made yourself.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's good. Yeah, totally.

SYLVIA: So whether it's like a piece of jewelry or like, a really nice top you made.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mhmm.

SYLVIA: Or like a jacket, or something, like, to show that you... This is the thing that you can do well.

AUSTIN: Totally. I like that a lot. So let's do... Dre's ship, next. And Divine.

DRE: Yeah, sounds good.

AUSTIN: Tell me about your Divine.

DRE: So my Divine's name is Potency? And their kinda specialty was that they could terraform planets and moons to basically be, um... Like I think at the height of their capability they were even able to like, almost like alchemy-like transmute like certain resources into other resources that they needed.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay.

DRE: So it's like, "Ahh, this one planet has this type of ore, and we don't really need that, but we can like kind of change it into the ore that we do need at this time."

AUSTIN: That's a really useful power. [laughs]

[Ali laughs]

DRE: Mhmm.

AUSTIN: Wow.

DRE: But then they—I mean, they could also do stuff like, "Oh this is just a moon but like, give me a month and now it has like a breathable atmosphere and we can grow plants on it and stuff like that."

AUSTIN: Okay. So like, very quick.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. What did Potency... What was Potency... What did it look like? Physically.

DRE: Um.... So I think it was—like, the ship itself has like, a couple of like, spheres that kind of rotate within it. And I think Potency lived in one of those spheres.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: The rest of the spheres are all translucent, and I think maybe Potency's was opaque.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh.

DRE: So I don't know if I know what they look like besides just that like sphere housing.

AUSTIN: Okay. That's interesting.

DRE: And I think it was able, like, if they needed to hurry things up, they would—that sphere could like shoot off and like enter a ship—like, planet's atmosphere.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Dre]: Mhhmm.

DRE: And you know like speed everything up.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. So like they could like show and be like, "All right, not a month, a week."

DRE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Gotcha, cool. How did Potency die?

DRE: So I think Potency was in like a big hurry, and they were trying to transmute one thing into another, and it like, really messed up a planet's mass.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

DRE: And like, threw it off orbit and into like the star of that system? And the star was basically going to collapse and like blow up and like take up everybody, and so Potency stayed behind and basically keep the star stable long enough to allow everybody else to get out.

AUSTIN: Interesting. So, clear sacrifice being made here.

DRE: Yeah. But also like, they messed up.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Dre]: Right.

DRE: Like, they got caught up in how they're capabilities—and made like a *huge* mistake.

AUSTIN: Yeah this is really interesting to me because again it's like, all right, 30,000 years, this didn't happen. Or at least if it happened no one had to stay behind to save the day. Or maybe it was situation where like, "Oh no, we have enough Divines, another one can come and help get it right."

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And fix it. And now that there's only one that does this, then there's no fixing it, it's either fix it and I die or, you know, whatever. So like, I like again the mystery element here, of like, why did this happen only now? Why didn't this mistake happen 15,000 years ago? Um. So we talked about terraforming already as what it could do. And it can't do that anymore. What can it still do for the Fleet?

DRE: So it's still able to make small changes to a planet. Like it can like—if there's already some semblance of an atmosphere in place, it can like, make that atmosphere like more breathable.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Or it can like, if there's already like, soil, it can make that soil, like you know, have chemistry that's better for planting certain plants in and stuff.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

DRE: But it can't like straight-up be like, "This is a moon with no atmosphere and suddenly it's like a place where you can walk around without a spacesuit on."

AUSTIN: Totally, totally.

DRE: Or it can't do like the transmutation of resources. And in order to make even these small changes, they have to basically send people planet-side to like place, like, nodes or connection points on the planet's surface.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

DRE: To like form a more stable connection from the ship and like their scientists, down to the planet's surface.

AUSTIN: Spoilers for planet game, but this'll be part of what your objective is. Is doing this stuff. Which I just love because I just—I immediately love the image of y'all, like, fuckin' carrying all sorts of weird cables and big metallic things, like maybe there's a robot mule or something and you're coming over the horizon and seeing a little frontier town. Like, ugh, it's good. I'm excited. Um, what is the name of the ship that Potency is tied to?

DRE [overlapping]: The Ever-Forward.

AUSTIN: The Ever-Forward, what a fuckin' Potency name. Tell me about the Ever-Forward, what's it look like on the outside and on the inside?

DRE: So on the outside there's kind of two main structure—like, kind of two different parts of the ship. So there are like kind of two like metal cylinders on the outside.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Uh-huh.

DRE: And those are kind of like where like, the ship stuff is, like you know the engines and weapons, shields and stuff like that.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mhm.

DRE: Between them, there's a series of translucent spheres that kind of independently rotate but then also spin around an axis like a ferris wheel between those two cylinders.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Ooh. Okay.

DRE: And that's like where most of the individuals live. Um, also in these spheres—this is kind of jumping ahead to another part, so I don't know if you want me to talk about this now.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah. Yeah, please, please, please.

DRE: So one of the things that the Ever-Forward kind of decided on when they were sort of, when they were still able to do this really intense terraforming, is that people pointed out like, you know, if we really change a planet's environment, we're gonna wipe out certain kinds of life.

AUSTIN: Right, like you're just gonna fuck up that ecology *completely*.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: Like even if you're just like, "Oh yeah, we're just gonna turn the iron into copper for some reason," like, yeah that's not—the mountain wasn't built to have copper in it, it has iron in it. Like. [laughs]

DRE: Right. So like what's gonna happen when this planet's weird rain comes along and the thing that was here was resistant to it.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

DRE: But now this iron isn't. So they decided like, okay, if we're making a change that we think is gonna really impact an ecology or ecosystem, we're going to, like, basically Noah Ark this shit, and like take animals and plants that we think are gonna be extinct with us.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Got you.

DRE: So all these translucent spheres have like, a multitude of different biomes and stuff like that to support this like, kind of giant ship-wide zoo, of different plants and animals.

AUSTIN: Interesting. Cool. Is that like, that's part of your rules, right? That's one of the cultural rules for you?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Is that the one that is just yours? Like just your ship does this, the zoo thing? Not everybody—other ships have like done colonies and stuff where they're like, "Ehh, who cares about that roach."

DRE: Right. [laughing] Yeah, I think so. And you know, maybe they like, be like, "Ughh, frickin' Ever-Forward'll probably want this stupid roach."

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

DRE: And so they might like call somebody.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Sure, sure.

DRE: But maybe not, who knows.

AUSTIN: [mimicking Dre's inflection] But maybe not, who knows. Totally. But it's not their rule. It is your rule.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, what's it look like on the inside?

DRE: Um...

AUSTIN: Just the zoos, the zoo is the big thing?

DRE: Yeah, yeah, and I think like that there are like, you know, buildings and things like that but it's a lot more... It's kinda closer to suburban than urban.

AUSTIN: Sure.

DRE: Like it's a lot more kind of like, sprawling and there's more space. Like everybody has some form of garden and there's also like shared, like kind of urban garden spaces like everywhere.

AUSTIN: Right. God, I kind of love that notion of like, yeah, I have a garden, and I'm growing a plant in it that happens to grow in this biome dome that I'm in, but is from a planet that is from 13,000 years ago that we colonized once. That colony is long gone at this point maybe. But like, [sort of laughs] we still have... this rutabaga.

DRE [overlapping]: Mhm.

AUSTIN: This special alien rutabaga. And like, yep, like, "I'm Mary and I grow the alien rutabaga."

[Dre laughs]

DRE: Also everybody on the Ever-Forward is a vegetarian.

AUSTIN: Oh that's good. Janine in the chat says "Grootabaga."

DRE [overlapping]: Grootabaga. [laughs]

AUSTIN: And I... *hate* you. I hate you.

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, vegetarian, that's—also is—seems in line. I can fuck with that. That's interesting. What's the other rule that you guys have that is like, "Yeah, we have this and most people have but we *really* have it."

DRE: Uh, "Take what is necessary and leave what you can."

AUSTIN: Okay. That's cool. Kind of a... general good rule to live by. The thing I like about these is that by the time we're done we're going to have eight of them that are—not an eight commandments situation necessarily but like a pretty good idea of what the overlapping cultural

ruleset is. For the ships that are left, anyway. So that's good. Okay. What a—what's the fashion or style that is unique to your culture?

DRE: So, people here are really functional.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: They wear like clothes and jackets that have lots of pouches and pockets.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: And so, some of those pockets are filled with like, empty vials or beakers or something so like they can take like soil samples and other sorts of, you know... Weird plant stuff. But then probably also alr—like, I think a big thing here is everybody has like a pocket of seed—a packet of seeds on them at all times.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Just—

DRE: Like so if they see a place where they're like, "Oh this seems like a good place to [Austin sort of laughs in background] grow my weird rutabaga."

AUSTIN [laughing]: Awesome.

DRE: They just go for it.

AUSTIN [quietly]: Great.

DRE: Um...

AUSTIN: Cool. I can fuck with that.

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: You have a very important note here also that you've not yet said.

DRE: Uh, "World War I era peacoats for everybody."

AUSTIN: Big peacoat culture. Good. Great. Um, what is the tone of the ship, right now?

DRE: So I think like, the Ever-Forward started out being like a very... Like they were really committed to like this kind of like, holding onto like one of everything... And they weren't very practical about it. Like that's how you get like, giant shared gardens and people being like, "I'm just gonna fuckin' plant this seed here."

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right.

DRE: But like, as things have kind of gotten worse, I think they've become a lot more practical? And a big thing that's come from that was they used to probably not have much of, if at all, any sort of like military. And I think that's grown over a while. Because there—they want to protect, you know, they've got samples of this stuff that may not exist anywhere else in the universe.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay. Mm. Right, right.

DRE: And making sure that they're able to stay on their own two feet and protect those things is of growing importance to them. And it's not like, they're not like hostile or against working with other ships in the fleet but it's more of like a, you know, if we get pushed up against a corner and we can't rely on anybody else we want to make sure we can take care of ourselves.

AUSTIN: Totally. Um, I like—that's interesting too 'cause there's almost like, that sort of is its own notion of sustainability, which is cool. I see your favorites right now are probably Belgard or Gumption, which makes sense.

DRE [overlapping a little]: Yeah, I could really see Janine's ship especially since they're about like efficiency.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Because then they're not having—they're being able to change as little as possible and getting the greatest result.

AUSTIN: And then least favorite, "Maybe Art's," you write. And so we should go to Art now, who can defend his good ship.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Hi, Art.

ART [overlapping with Austin]: Hey.

AUSTIN: What's your Divine and your ship name?

ART: My Divine's name is Remember.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: I mean I have some ideas, one of which just involved running the word “Remember” through google translate a hundred times.

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: To find out that in Vietnamese, it’s *nhớ lại* [pronounced here like “no lie”].

AUSTIN: Oooh.

ART: And that’s great.

AUSTIN: Yeahh.

ART: But I’m not sure it’s good enough to keep, so—

[Austin snorts]

[Ali laughs]

ART: Let’s call that draft one.

AUSTIN: Also we don’t really know... You ran that through google translate a bunch. You don’t necessarily know what the Vietnamese word for “remember” is.

ART: Oh yeah, it could’ve gotten fucked up like four or five translations ago [Austin laughs in background] and I could just be fuckin’, throwin’ darts in the dark here.

AUSTIN: Which maybe we should be careful with, every now and then.

ART: How about “Darts in the Dark”? Hm? No?

AUSTIN [exasperated amusement]: Okay.

ART: I’ll get there. By the time we record, we’ll have a—I’ll have a name.

AUSTIN: Um, tell me about Remember slash Nhớ Lại?

ART: Okay. They were built as a way of preserving the entirety of human knowledge.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: And experience. But I don’t know if anyone’s read that Borges story.

AUSTIN: Uh, you're on a call with me and Jack de Quidt?

[Jack and Dre laugh softly]

AUSTIN: Who have studied at the school of, uh, of Borges. [splutters, laughs] But for our listeners at home who might not have had the opportunity to, please tell us about this story.

ART: There's a story about a young man who gets in an accident and what he gets is perfect memory from.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: Mhm.

ART: And when he like gets—and he gets like really obsessed with—not like obsessed, but the story is about like him talking about what that's like, like he can't sleep because he can't stop thinking about all the imperfections in his neighbor's wall. Or like he doesn't recognize that things are the same from moment to moment because they're always changing, in these like ways that imperceptible to anyone who doesn't perceive the world as he does. He's also trying to like get a system of numbers where they're all different.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: Right.

ART: Where every sequential number has a completely different name.

AUSTIN: Right. Where it's not just like, “eleven,” “twelve”—like it's not just like, “twenty-one” and then “thirty-one,” they're each a different thing, right?

ART: Right, yeah. Like every number would have its own unique—let's just say it, useless—name.

AUSTIN: [laughs] I have a question, Art.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The name of that story has the wor—is, what, it's like, Funes [pronounced like “foon-ays”] or Funes [pronounced like “foons”] or Funes [pronounced like “fyoons”], the Memorious? Why is the name of your Divine not just Memorious?

ART: Yeah that's good.

[Ali laughs loudly]

AUSTIN: [laughs] I'm just saying it's there, it's right there. Anyway.

ART: So much like this story the ship became—the Divine became obsessed with ephemera.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay.

ART: Not with—not like, it still is preserving all knowledge, don't get me wrong, but like, it's really into what's happening *now*. Because it's so different than everything that happened before even if it doesn't appear that way.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Interesting. What is the physical form of the Divine itself? Or is it, there's no—it doesn't sound like a mech to me.

ART: Yeah, I—I looked through everyone else's and saw that everyone else was saying that there was a physical form beyond the ship, so if everyone else is answering yes, I wanted to answer no.

AUSTIN: Good, always a good way to play games.

[faint background hissing sound]

ART: Yeah. So the Divine is the library and the library is the ship.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um. Cool. How did Memorious die?

ART: I'm worried my idea is a little close to Ali's.

ALI: [laughs] Hi.

ART: But what if I've—I thought they got full.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: Ohh.

ART: You know they built this Divine at some point, and it had memory, right?

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: Yeah.

ART: And it's just like, we filled it with all of the biggest—it's just made of, it's basically made of hard drives, right?

AUSTIN: Yep.

ART: Or whatever. And what the—this'll never fill. And then, you know, 10,000 years later, 30,000 years later, it did.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Let's definitely do that, for reasons that will become clear later.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: There's a really good character hook here, that we'll get to. Which is exciting. So what ability did the... Did Memorious have, that it—that the Fleet has now lost now that Memorious is dead?

ART: You know, the *knowledge* isn't gone, right? Like it's still—they can—that's still *accessible*.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: But, Memorious knew how to call it up. Memorious knew—

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: —everything instantly. You know.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art a little]: Memorious always rolled a 10+ [Jack chuckles softly in background] on checks to recall information.

ART: Yeah. Can Spout Lore like crazy.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: And now it's like, well, we have all this knowledge, but like, it's not sorted in a way that makes any sense to us. It's sorted by someone who thought every number needed its own unique name.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Exactly.

ART: And like, we get up to ten and then we're like, "Fuck."

AUSTIN: [laughs] What's the number for el—Euh.

ART: What's eleven?

AUSTIN: You have to go to a book [Jack laughs in background] that's just called, "All Of the Names That Eleven Has" [laughing] and look up—

[Ali laughs softly]

JACK: Ah geez, one of these is just called "eight," I don't—what's gonna...

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN [still kind of laughing]: Ugh.

JACK [overlapping with laughter]: Ah, numbers.

ART: So it went from instant recall to just *dramatic* slowness.

AUSTIN: Right. And that to me seems like it sets up a thing that it still does provide, which is, it still has all that information.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Oh the other thing it is, is because it was so obsessed with ephemera, it's a very like artistic—like an artists' colony's sort of broken out on the ship.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. That's cool.

ART: And Memorious was so... obsessed with that, that it fed into it. You know, the attention of the Divine could make or br—could make an artist. And now that's like not there, so some artists that would have been very popular are not, and thing—you know, culture's getting a little stale.

AUSTIN: That's a shame. Um, I should say, I've talked about it kind of in the intro, of like, oh, culture was a big deal, along with technology and—during this kind of golden age. And partly I think that's just because I want a version of utopia in which art is important. You know. But I think that even in the narrative of this world the... I mentioned that Kamala Cadence, the prophet, kind of convinced people with this metaphor of... The, uh, Resonant Orbit, which is an event that happens in the real world, in real astronomy, where different planets orbiting a single center—or different celestial bodies orbiting a center of mass, do so in sync with each other? Not perfectly synchronized, but synchronized as such that they're almost in rhythm with each other, so like, oh, for every three orbits of the innermost one, the next one will do *four* orbits, and the next one will do *five* orbits, and they're like, on time like a clock. And in my mind she like, painted that in an open-air arena, and showed the difference between what was going to happen, which was like, all of these planets are on these collision courses, that eventually they're going to run into each other, their orbits are not stable. The relationship between Divines and people is going to turn into a terrible war again, that we need to get on point with that. And the reason she could do that is like, "Oh yeah, I'm a really good holographic animator, like that's just a skill I have." She's like a painter who paints things in holograms. So I really like the notion that art is still represented here, on your ship, because it was kind of core to one of the, kind of creation myths of the culture. I'm glad that we didn't all just do, oh it's military stuff, oh it's—you

know like, that's—I'm glad that we got some good variety here, I'm digging it. Um, so what is—what's the ship look like, from the inside, and outside?

ART: Okay, on the outside, the ship is thousands and thousand of interlocking cubes.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: And every six hours there's a design contest.

AUSTIN [dubious amusement]: Okay.

ART: Voted on by the entire population of the ship.

AUSTIN [same tone but even more]: Okay.

ART: And that is the design for six hours.

JACK: Six hours?

AUSTIN: Are there any times when two people enter?

ART [overlapping with Austin]: I mean...

AUSTIN: Or is it always hotly contested?

ART: I think it's always pretty hot. I mean there might be like oh, only like a few dozen people, but I think that's the rock bottom.

JACK: So I go to work...

ART [overlapping with Jack]: Uh-huh.

JACK: And then I leave work and the ship looks different?

ART: I mean it looks different on the outside, I think it's not as different on the inside, like it's... It's one of these like technology things that I don't know how to like, quite reconcile [Austin overlaps] but I feel like...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Sure.

ART: You're always next-to the, you know—if you went to work and your house was next to supermarket, when you come home, that supermarket's still there [Jack laughs softly in

background] even if the ship went from being a perfect sphere to a... The double-helix [pronounced like “hell-ix”]....

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: [saying it right] Helix? Helix?

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art a little]: Helix.

ART: Helix.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali]: Yeah. This is probably—

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: Does that mean that—

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: [laughs a little] Sorry.

AUSTIN: No, go ahead Ali.

ALI [overlapping with Austin a little]: I just think that like, it’s really funny that like at 7 A—7 PM, that ship probably looks *amazing*, but at like 4 AM—[laughs]

[Jack laughs]

ALI [overlapping with laughter]: Like weak—a weaker design gets through.

JACK: Oh... Tired Steven has submitted a design.

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: “We get it Steven, it’s a dick, we get it, we get it, ha-ha.”

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: “Yes. Fine.”

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: Well—the thing there is that Steven goes like, “Oh shit it’s a dick, oh god, I’m so tired.”

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: “Oh, I didn’t mean this at all.”

[Jack laughs softly]

AUSTIN: “Oh I hit *paste*, I meant to hit *crop*.”

[someone laughs]

AUSTIN: It was like—the count is like, “It has to be in, it has to be in, it’s every six hours, [Jack laughs softly in background] I have to file this by 5:59.”

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: People keep saying—

AUSTIN: “Ohh no.”

JACK: Keep saying “Steven, do it in the afternoon.”

[Austin laughs]

JACK: I guess if it wins it wins. Hey, what do you win, Art?

ART: I think it’s—the recognition is enough, you know.

JACK: Aw fuckin’, one of these competitions.

[everyone laughs]

[Art continues in background, indistinguishable]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. *Fuckin’*—

KEITH [overlapping with laughter, Austin]: The recognition of being one of four people every day for thousands of years?

AUSTIN: [laughs] For exposure.

JANINE [overlapping with Austin]: It works for leaderboards.

[Austin laughs]

ART: Yeah.

JACK: I guess it does, yeah.

ART: It's sort of like a phone game but it determines what your whole city looks like. [laughs]

[Jack laughs softly]

AUSTIN: Great. I... This is probably a good moment for me to say that one of the rules that I had in COUNTER/Weight that was like, fuckin' hard and fast, was "Nothing that could look like space magic." Like even the... The way that Divines could do wormhole stuff was like, "All right, there are two Divines [Ali laughs softly in background] and something can pass between them, the fucking end. That is it. We are—there's no magic." And that came up a lot because people were like, "What if Hieron is just *in* COUNTER/Weight's universe?" It isn't. And that was important to me because the kind of core theme of Hier—or of COUNTER/Weight, was like, "The world is terrible, we can change it if we roll up our fucking sleeves. There is no magic bullet. There is no single, like, we're not gonna snap our fingers and fix things, that's not the way the world is, given what our problems are. " Here, I'm taking a lot of inspiration from a speech that... That the sci-fi and fantasy writer Ursula K. Le Guin gave, during her national book award speech, I think in 2013. Maybe 2014. In which she kind of—I mean, so, I took a lot of that inspiration into COUNTER/Weight too, cause that's where she says, "Capitalism seems—we live in capitalism, you know, its reign seems inevitable, so did the divine right of kings." So that's very very very COUNTER/Weight. But there's also a bit where she talks about the need for imaging a different future and needing kind of radical creative thinkers to kind of say, "What could the world look like?" And for this season I really wanna lean into that more. Which means that like... I am interesting in saying like yeah what if we could make a thing... What if we could do anything, what would the world look like if we could do anything? And for Art, it means making thousands and thousands of cubes [laughs] that you can vote on, uh, their various configurations. Which is good. Um, so what's the inside look like, given all of that, Art?

ART: I think the inside's like, a little chaotic I think because there's been, you know 30,000 years of just fantastic artwork. So on one hand like there's the Sistine Chapel, or whatever. The.... You know, sci-fi Sistine Chapel.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: On the other hands things are smooth—things—the trends move fast enough that like, there's like cube pizza, cause cubes were cool once and this guy opened a pizza place. So like, across the street from the Sistine Chapel is Jack's Cube Pizza.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Gotta love that cube pizza.

JACK: Hey.

AUSTIN: Um—

KEITH: Hey as long as there's crust on every slice I'm for it.

AUSTIN [quiet]: Okay.

ART: I don't think the pizza's actually a cube.

AUSTIN: Oh.

ART: I think it's just—it's just a cube theme.

AUSTIN [intensely confused]: What?

[Keith laughs]

JACK: Pizza square.

ART [overlapping with Jack]: Like lots of cubes inside.

KEITH: It's a traditional circle pizza but it's clearly *themed* like cube pizza. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Is it like... pepperoni cubes? I don't...

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: I don't understand.

ART: I think it's just—there's a lot of cubes inside, like the lighting fixture's a cube, and the tables are all cubes.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: Oh it's like the '80s inside.

ART: [laughing] Yeah.

AUSTIN: I got it. Cool. What is one of the foundational rules of your culture, Art, that is shared with other ships but hold more—you hold more closely to than they do?

ART: I put "You aren't someone until you make something people care about."

AUSTIN: Mmm.

ART: And I think a way that it—it's said on this ship, is like, "You're gonna be remembered. But you can be remembered with one of those numbers that no one knows or understands or cares about, or you can be you, know, [Austin overlaps] you can be two...

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: Jack's Cube Pizza.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's great. I love it.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What is the rule that is only yours?

ART: "Do not tell me what you've done, tell me what you are *doing*."

AUSTIN: That's good. I like that a lot. Yeah. I love it, that's a really good rule. What is the fashion or style unique to this culture?

ART: Okay. I think there's like a crazy amount of movement on this too. Like you know the ship changes every six hours, fashion changes very quickly too.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: But what that's really done is made the thing these people have—is really solid, like, essentials.

AUSTIN: Mm.

ART: You know, they have... They have really good, you know, their—you can't invest in your clothes cause they change so much so invest in your undershirt. Have, you know, a great satchel. You know, the things you can always have. Make those good.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right. Yeah.

ART: You know, the basics, you know, they have good shirts they have good shoes they good, you know—they have great socks, probably the best socks you've ever seen.

AUSTIN: Love it. Uh, except for the socks that are knitted on the other—or maybe they're—that's where they get them from. The good knitted socks from... From Sylvia's ship. Who knows.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uhh.... What is your tone, what is the tone on this ship?

ART: People are scared, and they're hiding it. With you know, lavish parties for art exhibits or like outrageous bacchanals. It's like a very late-nineties reading [Austin overlaps] of the idea of raging against the dying of the light.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm into it, you're—I think I read this book in high school, and I was like, “Yeah, yeah, uh-huh, totally, man.”

ART: [laughs a bit] Or like, if I can just like, secretly tell you what I meant—

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: It's like, finals week your last year at art school.

AUSTIN: Right. Sure. I actually do know what—

ART [overlapping]: Cause I was at your school—I was at your school during finals week once.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: You were, it was wild. [laughs] People had shit to do—that was the craziest thing about that too was like—so, for people who don't know I went to CalArts for my master's. And I didn't do art stuff but I was friends with everybody who did art stuff cause it's an art school. And those were people who I've never seen party harder. Like good friends of mine had... Like, pharmacists, who built them custom drugs. Like, chem—chemical, like drugs, like pills. That they would just like, “Oh no, tone it down this way a little bit this time.” Like, wow that's wild. Like, I—drunk me under the table, like just complete, like wild ragers. And *a/so* the hardest-working people I've ever known in my life, who, would like... Go from having like blocks of wood to having the most amazing beautiful conceptual artwork you've ever seen in a week. And so like that combination really speaks to me here, unsurprisingly, Art.

ART: Yeah. The last week of CalArts all the time.

AUSTIN: Oh boy. I don't think I can stand it.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Which is your favorite ship? [Art overlaps] Works out nicely.

ART [overlapping a bit]: I put down Curiosity, which is Jack's. I think that fits real well.

AUSTIN: That is a really useful combination cause now I can just pivot to Jack. And you don't have a least favorite yet Art?

ART: Yeah it's probably gonna be Anticipation or Gumption.

AUSTIN: Okay. I don't think—yeah, I think that that's fine. Just to be clear least favorite doesn't mean like, “Yo *fuck* those guys,” [Ali laughs a bit] it just means there's some tension. Or maybe it does mean fuck those guys, you tell me, but in my mind it doesn't *necessarily* mean that. So Jack.

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: Hi.

AUSTIN: Calling in from the future, in England. [sort of laughs] Tell me about—

JACK [overlapping]: I can tell you what it's like here, actually.

AUSTIN: Yeah, tell me what it's like.

JACK: Dark.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's dark out. Um, my Divine is called Curiosity, although I'm kind of... I'm tempted to go elsewhere with that? Austin and I were talking about like, Perspicacity, potentially.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack a bit]: Yeah, I kind of like that.

JACK: Like a sort of insightfulness, or a sort of shrewdness.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah.

JACK: But I'm happy to go with either. And I think that... Let's call them Curiosity for the purposes of this explanation and then as we through it try and work out if it feels better or worse.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So what's it do, what's its specialty?

JACK: Curiosity reaches out across the galaxy or across human-occupied space, or alien-occupied space, to turn over stones and see what's underneath?

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: It travels ahead of humans and it leaves this kind of... Mesh of waypoints. That say to its followers, and say to people in general, “Look there's something here.”

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: It's not the way we understand Liberty or Discovery, back in the COUNTER/Weight days. Like it doesn't promise *worth*, or *success*.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JACK: It doesn't promise that what it finds is valuable. And neither is it particularly interested in the journey to these things. What this Divine is fascinated by is building this network of things that interest it.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And most broadly it's that sensation—you know, we see it a lot in like triple-A developers talking about open world games? [Austin laughs a little in the background] Where they're like, "Our world is filled with 500 points of interest."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Great. And this is it.

JACK [overlapping a little]: And at that point Curiosity would like sit up in his chair and go like, "Holy shit! All right! 500 points of interest!"

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I can't believe you could've built them to look like anything and you made them look like Ubisoft, fuck.

JACK: I... Right. Yeah. I made them look like Ubisoft. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Great.

ART [overlapping with Austin]: The Divine Ubisoft, yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: And so what they look like is they are—I've written down thousands but I think it's more than that, I think it's tens or hundreds of thousands, of... Hovering linked drones?

AUSTIN: Oooh.

JACK: That vary in size from the size of the palm of my hand, to the size of a small spacecraft.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: And they move like *water*. When they're working together. When they're not working together, you know if one's out in the wild lands or whatever...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: That's Ubisoft, yeah.

JACK: It's just a—yeah, out in the Ghost Recon Wildlands.

[Austin and Jack laugh]

JACK: Don't play that game. Um. You might just see it on its own, you just think and you'd think it was a dragonfly. And you'd approach it and you'd go, "Oh, huh, I know what that is."

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right. Yeah. Right.

JACK: And it would be Curiosity.

AUSTIN: Cool. So... What... I wanna ask this in the right k—the right number, the right order, because there's almost a little story that you're telling me here. So what specific ability did it add when it was still alive?

JACK: So the thing that it could do was it had this massive list, this inconceivably large list of coordinates.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: And these coordinates were very very detailed.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Hm.

JACK: So while some of the coordinates described a location in space that seemed to be the size of a planet or an asteroid belt, other coordinates described what seemed to be a room in a house, on a... ranch, or something.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Just—varying in scale, gigantically. And this database—

AUSTIN [overlapping a bit]: It's like the list—not to keep going back to Ubisoft, or games, but it's like if you had a list of every object in Skyrim.

JACK: So the... There was a leaked document that came out several years that came out several years before the release of The Witcher 3.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right, yes.

JACK: That contained a map of the entire Isles of Skellige with something like 500 plotted points on it.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: That they thought players would encounter.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And it's kind of that. It's this—publicly accessible, it's... The information is not—you know, we're talking about a utopia, of course, here.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mhmm.

JACK: This information is not kept from people.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: This information is publicly accessible. And it's just—

AUSTIN [overlapping a little]: Right like an artist on Memorious—whatever the ship there is, could be like, “Oh wow I was flipping through the—Curiosity's files and found this coordinate and note about a little lumberjack, uh... town.”

JACK [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: “On a mountain somewhere, I'm gonna tell a story about it, or I'm gonna make a painting of that place.”

JACK: Or go and visit it, or go and see it.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right, right, right.

JACK: So, Curiosity is fascinated by the idea of like, leaving things hidden for its followers. Not hidden, but like—

AUSTIN: Geocaching, got it.

JACK: Next to—I mean it kind of is, like next to each of these notes... Next to each of these coordinates is a note. But it's kind of... Sometimes what seemed to be like, frustratingly vague? It might just describe four adjectives.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JACK: Or it might just describe a vista. Or it might say something like “Treasure.” And people have died looking for coordinates marked “Treasure” that Curiosity left them, or whatever.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: So it’s just this gigantic cache of points in space, 3D points in space.

AUSTIN [overlapping a little]: Love it. And now it’s gone. And... The markers aren’t.

JACK: Or no, no, the cache is still there. But there are zero notes.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right, right, sorry, I meant—right, yes. So it’s still just like, it is again almost like the numbers in Art’s ship’s library, of just like, “Great, like what do I even fucking do with these? I have all these places.”

JACK [overlapping]: Well but so what’s—but the crucial thing is, Curiosity picked them.

AUSTIN: Right, sure. Sure.

JACK: So it’s not just a list of meaningless numbers.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: It’s curated.

JACK: Even if it—even if it’s—it’s curated by a machine-god that is fascinated by interesting things.

AUSTIN: [sort of laughs] Right. In a way that we aren’t.

JACK [overlapping]: Yes. Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: In a way that like, it could suddenly become deeply interested in one single insect or in the death of billions of people.

JACK: Here is something that it’s definitely interested in: um, falling.

AUSTIN [laughing]: Right.

JACK: And so numerous people have like looked up some coordinates and just f—like fallen down a ravine.

AUSTIN [laughing]: Right.

JACK [laughing]: Or like, plummeted through like a thing. And in their last moments—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: “It says it’s here, I guess.”

JACK: Yeah, “*Auaaaaah*.” And in their last moments go like, “Ah, I see, right. I got it.”

AUSTIN: Okay so this actually brings up—if I can [imitates rewinding noise] rewind back again. Here’s a question about the world that I actually don’t know the answer to. I know that most of the action in this game is going to take place on the planets and on—or, on the planet that’s being colonized, where people are trying to spread the Veil, the Mesh, whatever we’re calling it—along with the... The various city-ships that we’re describing now. And all of that’s happening inside of Twilight Mirage. Are people getting on their own little ships and leaving the Mirage to go on adventure? Is this a spacefaring, like, world? Or is this like Stars Wars in that there is the Millennium Falcon.

JACK: I mean if I’m honest that’s kind of appealing to me.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: Yeah, me too.

JACK: Cause what we’re describing here is a very particular kind of space fantasy.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I love the idea that we’ve got this kind of like—I don’t know we’re both playing Prey, we’ve got this kind of like spoke and wheel structure, of, the Mirage is here, and if we can get enough fuel together, and if we’re confident enough that we can get back by the time the orbits sync up or whatever.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JACK: Why don’t we just go and—why don’t we just go galactic north and see what’s there for a bit?

AUSTIN: Totally. Are other cultures also doing this? Like—is that also how other—are there other cultures that also have single ship that have—you know, the ship that has twelve people on it that is like exploring the galaxy whereas like, uh, you know, carrying fuel from one space colony to another.

JACK: Yeah I think so.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: I mean when I picture this space I picture it at times busy.

AUSTIN: Yeah, me too. Which we didn't really do much of in COUNTER/Weight. Like, I think about maybe the stuff on the... The Kingdom Come after leaving Counterweight, where it's like dealing with the space police who are like pulling them over and doing inspections and stuff, that gestured sort of to the notion of like commerce and transport and stuff. But even then it felt like, small. It felt like, "Oh yeah we get a couple of ships in and out every day, but people aren't just like out there exploring cause it's *dangerous*." Yes.

JACK: The way I'd sell it would be like, think about how cool that kind of Star Wars slash Battlestar Galactica style comms chatter of all of the ports, [Austin mhmms] and all of the like lit harbors of this nebula is. Ships leaving and arriving, and people welcoming each other back. Or being frightened that someone has come into port, or...

AUSTIN: Right, right. "Oh shit, that ship landed." Right.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Almost a swashbuckling vibe.

JACK: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Totally. Okay. So uh, how did Curiosity... die?

JACK: Oh dear. [laughs] Curiosity found a thing.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

JACK: And what it found is my ship. My ship is not tied to my Divine.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: My ship is this... I picture it as like looking like a snow globe is on top of a nostromo from Alien.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: Just like, horrible horrible mechanical undercarriage of tubes and wires and exhaust ports and jets. And then on top of that just this beautiful snow globe. Inside of which is a gigantic darkened city. Like a massive city.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Uh-huh.

JACK: And Curiosity looked at this and went like, “Oh my god. What the [laughing] hell—what the hell is this?” So Curiosity and its followers landed onboard this ship. And when they got inside they found something really strange which was that people seemed to have been here. And like fairly recently. Like, clothes are still laid out on beds in houses that they found. Refrigerators are still stocked, even if the power has been cut to them.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JACK: There’s just nobody. They’ve just gone. And there’s like absolutely no sign why. At first the whole city had like no power, there was no power whatsoever. But Curiosity and their followers managed to bring online like one district.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JACK: Where they’ve kind of made their home and made their hub. And through like a load of work translating a language they couldn’t read they’ve—they’re fairly sure that this ship is called The Sky Reflected in Mirrors. [pause] They call it “Mirrors.”

AUSTIN: Right. Of course.

JACK: But that might be a mistranslation, they’re not sure. Unfortunately, one day the entire fleet of Curiosity which is, you know, hundred or tens of thousands of tiny drones, picked up on a signal somewhere deep inside Mirrors. And set off, leaving its followers behind. And it never came back, ever?

AUSTIN: Cool. Good. That’s useful for everybody. Here’s a question: did the people who followed Curiosity... Was there a knowledge or like a culture of kind of knowing that it was an aloof god?

JACK: Um... I think they... We talk about how the Divine—we’ve come to realize that the Divines are not us.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes.

JACK: And I think that there were two impulses for the following of Curiosity. The first was... “Look at this strange thing that is showing us things.” And the second thing is, “What is a god curious about?”

AUSTIN [laughing]: Right.

JACK: And so even if like, even if some of their higher-ups were kind of like—or even if like the majority of their populous was kind of like, “Oh geez falling again? [sort of laughs] Fucking great.”

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mhmm.

JACK: “That was my cousin, who fell.” There’s definitely this religious aspect of like, what fascinates a god? And we want to be on that journey.

AUSTIN: Totally. That’s interesting, that’s good. What good ships y’all have made. I’m so excited to play this game. Uh, tell me about your rules. The one that you share with other cultures and the one is just kind of unique to yours.

JACK: So I wrote down, um, “Leave no stone unturned,” and then literally as I was looking at, I kind of—[laughs], I kind of realized that like [deadpan] yeah that’s an idiom that we have.

[Austin laughs]

JACK: Rather than... Like I kind of came at that idiom backwards?

AUSTIN: Right cause you had described Curiosity as this thing that’s like, it turns over a stone and is excited at revealing anything even if it’s bugs, basically.

JACK: Yeah. Yeah, I mean the example that I gave to Austin when Curiosity discovered Sky Reflected In Mirrors was that it turned over a stone expecting to see bugs [Austin overlaps] and instead saw a word written on the bottom of the stone.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh right. Right.

JACK: And just went like “Oh, wow! Okay! Let’s go in here.”

AUSTIN [overlapping]: [laughs] “Gotta go in here! This is safe.”

JACK: [laughs] “This looks safe to me.” But no like when we talk about “Leave no stone unturned” in English as an idiom, I don’t think it has the immediacy that the followers of Curiosity feel that it has.

AUSTIN: Right, cause like—when we say “Leave no stone unturned,” what we mean is—

JACK [overlapping]: Be thorough.

AUSTIN: —because we are currently searching for a thing—yeah, let’s be thorough, let’s be rigorous, let’s make sure we don’t miss anything.

JACK [overlapping]: Yes.

AUSTIN: But this is like a way of life. This is like—

JACK: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: Constantly be finding stones to turn over.

JACK: Yeah and I mean I think that like, I wanna be real here in the sense that like often that's really fuckin' boring. You know.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right, right.

JACK: Often they turn over a stone and go, "Great. We found some earth."

AUSTIN [overlapping]: But you can—[laughs a bit] But you can imagine that this is a larger cultural rule that's shared across the Fleet. That like, oh yeah, this has been part of why the 30,000 years were good. Like, we didn't settle. We didn't—it's why it's a *fleet*.

JACK [overlapping]: Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: It's why it's a fleet and not a space station. Right?

JACK: There's also something that like, something that happens quite a lot in... In the UK—or I say quite a lot, it happens with some frequency but not enough for it to be frequent, is that people will just find treasure. You know you'll be like—you'll be plowing a field as a farmer and you'll turn over some Roman gold?

[Austin laughs a bit]

JACK: And there are like several instances of this happening within my lifetime.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JACK: Of people just like... demolishing a stone wall and finding 900 Saxon coins inside.

AUSTIN [overlapping a little]: What was that thing... God this happened—it might be in our season six chat, just lost forever now, but this happened recently with like, "Oh I was just redoing my basement and then I found a city underneath, or something."

[Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: Or like an old church?

JACK [overlapping]: Yeah like—I mean like, that tracks in London. Like, London literally is built on top of the Roman London.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: But like, you know, the followers of Curiosity exist in a place where that stuff happens to them fairly frequently, because they just keep doing it. You know.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

JACK: If every field I went into I dug up, I'd find treasure eventually. And I think the rule that people of this culture hold that others don't, because it's so specific, I wrote, "It's holy to become lost within the Sky Reflected in Mirrors."

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Huh.

JACK: And I don't know if I like the word "holy" here, but... I want something that conveys that. So, fuck, maybe holy. There is something very exciting to me about this idea of a gigantic darkened city of which only one district is lit.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Full of something that—somewhere in this city is something that killed a god.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Or, persuaded a god to never return to its flock. And there is something exciting to me about the fact that the inhabitants of this city believe that it is good to become lost in it.

AUSTIN: And everyone else is like, "They are out of their *minds*. Like, we're at—not war necessarily but like, *haaaaaa*."

JACK: Right, totally, but I mean also like, you know, if you're a—someone from another ship and you land on Mirrors... Like, aw, man. It's a bit like meeting the dwarves in Friends at the Table right? In Hieron.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: In Hieron, you're right.

JACK: Where like, you go down a corridor and a door is just open [Austin laughs] and the corridor next to it is unlit.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And you—you're walking with the ambassador. And the ambassador just says like, "No, don't go down there. Like, you can't. We just—don't go down there. I might, but like, don't do that."

AUSTIN: You don't do that. Yeah. Totally. Um. Cool. Okay. Um... Did we miss anything? We talked about the inside pretty much right? We talked about...

JACK [overlapping]: Um, fashiooonn.

AUSTIN: Fashion, yes, fashion. How I could forget fashion?

JACK: So I think that there's a—this is in two parts. The people inside Mirrors carry lanterns or torches with them at all times.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mm.

JACK: Cause they know that they just might be in a place that doesn't have any electricity or light. Um.... Or they'll be going into dark spaces.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Sure.

JACK: And similarly, when they are abroad you can tell people from Mirrors by the fact that they wear sunglasses, because they're unused to brightly-lit spacecraft.

AUSTIN: Is this just an excuse so that your character can always wear can always wear cool sunglasses?

JACK: Uhhhh, noooo.

[Austin and Ali laugh]

JACK [overlapping with laughter]: For—for—no, for a number of reasons, Austin.

AUSTIN: Oh fair.

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, that's true, that's true, [very quickly] no no no that's true. We'll get there very soon I think.

JACK: No but like, I was thinking about this, and it's totally not that like, "Oh everyone just wears like cooooool blues brothers sunglasses."

[Austin and Sylvia laugh]

JACK [overlapping with laughter]: I just—I like that a cultural marker is that there are just like, there are fuckin' people going around in the most ridic—like we've posted a bunch of fashion stuff in season six chat and there're a bunch of people going around in like the most fuckin' ridiculous sunglasses.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Constantly.

AUSTIN: It's good actually.

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: And everyone's like, "Ah, yeah, you're from Mirrors."

KEITH [overlapping with Jack]: Can you guys stop talking about my sunglasses while I'm right here?

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN [overlapping with laughter]: Oh, god...

JACK: Um... So I guess finally like, in terms of this period of instability, the people of Sky Reflected In Mirrors are doing the thing that you would expect them to do, but with a kind of ferocity, which is that they are rapidly, disconcertingly attempting to expand into Mirrors, in an attempt to find either the Divine or its body. They are not equipped for this. Everything that their own internal plans have laid out for expansion into the city does not account for expansion this fast. But teams are leaving and they're almost racing to be the one to find the body of the Divine.

AUSTIN: Right, right. Here's a question: are there like other ships... from this culture that are near the City Reflected In Mi—or the Sky Reflected in Mirrors?

JACK: Um, I uh...

AUSTIN: Or has everyone moved onto this ship at this point?

JACK: Everyone's moved onto the ship.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: I think that like, something within the character of these people would be that they'd probably just charter [Austin overlaps] carriers to get them to the ship?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right. But where did they live before, when they were following Curiosity, where were they living?

JACK: I think they were living all over, if I'm honest. I think it was kind of a fairly distributed...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Oh, so they were like distributed. Okay, interesting.

JACK: And then this—this thing that the god couldn't resist drew them towards this.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Ob—towards this object.

AUSTIN: Love it. Awesome. Okay, I think that's everyone except me, right? So I didn't write answers to *any* of these, I was busy with all the other prep shit. And also because this Divine is still alive. It's—my Divine is Empyrean. Which is a word I learned today. By going through all of the word of the days of the last little while. And "empyrean" means... That it belongs to or derives from heaven. But like specifically, like, high above, right? There's an adjective version of it, empyreal. [sirens in background] Which means both like "pertaining to the highest heaven in the cosmology of the ancients" but also meaning just like "sublime." Like, oh it's just fuckin' empyreal out here today guys." What a good day—this is just, it's beautiful, it's empyreal. I'm gonna start saying that just regularly, see if I can bring it back. I know it says "archaic" here, but I'm gonna do it.

AUSTIN [continued]: The things that it is continuing to do is... Create the Mirage—the Twilight Mirage, which is this false nebula, which is hiding the Divine Fleet as best it can. Um, Empyrean's specialties, or specialty, has been most recently, its—the creation of the Twilight Mirage, that everyone's hiding inside. But its kind of core function is this spread of mixed reality. This augmented reality that everyone just lives in on the ships. That hasn't fully spread to the colony, yet, that the planet game that will taking place in. That will part again of what their mission is. But that is like, it is constantly doing that in a way that was kind of again similar to what was happening on September. So that's like their biggest major thing. Um. I don't think—you know I haven't really decided yet if there is like, a *mech* version of Empyrean. My guess is yes. And that it's—it has wings, and is like... You know, there's a reason I like is this word is like, it also has—the kind of homophone of "imperial," is right there. And so I—I can kind of like very easily seeing it being that sort of Tallgeese style Romans mech thing. I don't want to fall down that trap too much, but I do like the notion of something that has, um, birdlike qualities, something that would lift high up into the sky. And kind of gesture towards the fact that it is basically a Divine about aspiring to heights. It—uh...

AUSTIN [continued]: On the ship itself, which also doesn't have a name yet, the thing that it adds for the Fleet, primarily, is that it's a hu—it's the biggest city that there is. It is like, in terms of pure where people go to live, that is—it is the biggest urban center. It is... A cylinder? On which on each side of the cylinder, like wrapping all around, is a large, Victorian-looking city. And it's just out in space. There isn't a cover. There isn't a dome around it. It's just—there are city streets, and you look up and you're in space except you're in the Twilight Mirage which means it's just a city in which it is always sunrise or sunset forever. And you can feel air on your face. It's... Kind of cool. There are lots of parks. There are lakes on the side of this ship going through space. So that's the kind of like basic gist of it.

AUSTIN [continued]: I do not yet have my rules, because again I was trying to figure out all the rest of what this society and culture were. But I do think that its tone is... Something I know, which is... There is a sort of... Um, resignation in which... The people here had previously been... People who had lots of power. Being the people who have the keys to the virtual reality that everybody lives in, is very good and, powerful, and like you're necessarily going to have lots of influence. And they still have some influence, but there's a resignation that maybe it's time to step away and let the people who have more active Divines, or who *had* more active Divines, step up, and now the second Divine just died. And so now they're just like "Well fuck." Cause part of creating the Twilight Mirage means that Empyrean is not like around as a Divine with an excerpt that is reachable in the same way that the other Divines—some of the other Divines had previously been. It's the case for when there were 300 Divines that for many cultures like, "Oh yeah, that's our Divine, uh, it flies around sometimes and it's like I wave, and it like gives me a salute or something," [laughing] you know? Like, there was something really personal about a lot of the Divines. And there was something personal about Empyrean, too, but now that it's doing this Twilight Mirage thing, it's not dead, but it's *dispersed*, in such a way that it is not... *There*, anymore. And that is really weird because there's also this sort of guilt of "Well our Divine is still *here*, which, that's not true for anybody else, but also it's kind of not, but I feel like a dick complaining? Because, it's still here." And so I think that's the basic tone right now. I think their least favorite is... Probably... Anticipation's ship. But that's also—

ALI: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: —their most favorite. They think that ship should take over, as leader. But also hate the thought of it. [Ali laughs] There's this like weird double movement of "Like, ah well you know, Anticipation crew will... See things forward, won't they?" And like, "Okay. That's, I can... Yep. Good old days are behind us now," you know? And I think that that's what I got for them, right now? Um... So let's go through just character concepts, broadly here. I'm not—I just kind of want basic character, like, now we know where everybody's from. Let's talk about—actually let's do it set up by game, we'll do space game first and then we'll do planet game. And uh, and that'll help us like even things out. Or like hammer out what some of the details are. Um, Jack.

[timestamp - 2:23:25]

JACK: Hi. Uh, so my character is—should we talk about playbooks as well, very briefly, at this point?

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack a little]: Yeah, let's talk about playbooks, definitely.

JACK: Okay, so I'm playing a character called "The Dying." Or, that's the playbook I'm using.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: The basic pitch for the Dying is, and I'm just gonna read from the playbook, "The Dying is suffering from a noncommunicable, slowly—debilitating disease that is slowly destroying you. You may or may not be aware of your ultimate demise but what you are aware of is the symptoms. Although your condition also grants you boons, you *will* succumb to it. There is no cure, but there may be hope, grace, or whatever you wish to find in the end of your tale."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: So my character this season is like very explicitly going to die.

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: So my character is... somebody called Fourteen Fifteen. That's not numbers, it's just—it's just words. Their first name is Fourteen and their second name is Fifteen. But I guess it's not like a—it's not like a callsign, or a tag, or a marker. Their name's just—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: Right. This is the name... you've always had. As far as you know? Or just—

JACK: Yeah, this was the name—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah.

JACK: This was the name their parents gave them.

AUSTIN [laughing]: Their parents, Jack and Jill Fifteen.

JACK: Right. They probably—[laughing] They came from the Fifteen family. Um, their first name just happens to be Fourteen. And their pitch basically is they are a body-swapping bounty hunter from an elite agency. Who is transported to their location via data packages. And able to track targets functionally anywhere, disguised as functionally anybody. So the way this works is they are... Fourteen Fifteen does not have a body. They are a human. They were a human, they were born, they lived a life. And then they joined the agency, and now they're data. And their

data is transmitted to the location... They need to be. Whereupon they take on the body... Of something there. And now they're that thing.

AUSTIN: Right. You're—you painted me a picture of this when you pitched it to me, which was like...

JACK: Should I describe the one—that I pitched?

AUSTIN: Yeah, the one that says “this is the image.”

JACK: Okay. So...

AUSTIN: [overlapping]: That's the one that I like.

JACK: So here's the pitch for Fourteen Fifteen, is that a man fleeing from somebody arrives on a ship. And he is ecstatic because he's gotten through the escape, he's doing great, he's fantastic. And he goes through passport control. He hands his paper passport with the electronic tag—you know, like passports have—to the border guard and she picks up his passport and she looks through it. And the guy's a bit nervous and he's shifting. And she says like, “Okay, sure, yep, you can go through.” And then as he begins to go through, she like calls him back, she's like, “Hey, weird, all the numbers in your passport are like, consecutive numerically. Like it's five, six, seven, eight, nine, zero,” and the man freezes because he *knows* that that's not his passport number. And as the woman said that aloud, a woman in a big wide-brimmed hat sat up on the other side of the, uh, passport control booth. And began walking towards the man. And in that moment, Fourteen Fifteen has arrived on the ship. And is tracking their target.

AUSTIN: Like *as* that woman who stood up, right?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Good. Great. I'm very excited about this character.

JACK [overlapping]: Unfortunately that—they're dying. [Austin laughs in background] Which means that their data packet is deteriorating with each jump. Each body swap they do, the data gets more and more corrupted. And will eventually just come to nothing.

AUSTIN: Good. Good times, always a good time with Smalls.

[Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: Um. Yeah. Yeah. We're all dying, also.

JACK [overlapping a little]: I've been re-watching that, it's so good.

AUSTIN: Me too, I actually started re-watching it like, last week. It's—Home Movies, if you haven't seen it, go watch Home Movies. [laughing] This show is basically just us doing Home Movies, to be clear.

[everyone laughs]

ART: Austin, shhhh.

[laughter continues]

AUSTIN: Okay. All right, so that's... And there's more stuff here that we'll get into with your playbook but let's do that in the actual first game proper. So let's move on to... Let's do Ali first.

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: Okay.

AUSTIN: Cause then, it's—instead of like a... thing.

ALI: Okay. Hi.

AUSTIN: Everybody's is a thing. Space game, y'all have got some characters.

[Ali laughs]

[Austin sighs]

ALI: Um, so I guess I'll start with the playbook that I'm doing.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Which is an Architect. I'll read the thing as well, which is "The Architect lives and breathes in the Veil. You have a powerful cyber-brain that you can use to change aspects of the digital environment at will." My character's name is Tender Sky and she is very literally an architect. She designs and builds environments in the Mesh. She was sent to a planet to do that, but I am unfortunately not on the planet game?

AUSTIN [joking]: No, weird.

ALI: No. She was exiled and sent back to the ships cause a thing happened. I don't know what that thing is but [Austin overlaps] nobody likes her anymore, she lost her job. [laughs]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No but like—but—[laughs] Right. And the first entry on this playbook is, “Subconscious: when you enter any digital environment you may frame the scene. Choose three things that will bleed over into the digital environment from your mind, often without your knowledge.”

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: “A former friend, a jilted lover who knew you better than most, a family member as you remember them, a manifestation of your fear, a place you lived once, your true self, your repressed fantasies, the catacombs of your deepest memories, limbo.” This class is like, very very, um...

ALI: Inception?

AUSTIN: Inception, and The Matrix. Like—

ALI [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Blended together. And... We are not just gonna do Inception and The Matrix [Ali laughs] but we already did a lot of—a lot of what the Mesh was in COUNTER/Weight was in line with this stuff. Like we kinda figured that out with Mako, that it was like, “Oh no you go into a house,” right? A house during a wake. And so this just fits very nicely with what this world’s established augmented reality spaces slash networked spaces already look like. And so I’m very excited for this. And yeah, I’m sure everything went great on the planet. There’s no way any weird past stuff is gonna come bubbling up.

ALI: Yeah, no, she doesn’t have any problems at all, she’s [laughs] not gonna like, genuinely be sort of a mean person.

[Austin sighs]

ALI: Or isn’t able to deal with any of that. I...

AUSTIN: Great.

ALI: It’s gonna be great. [Austin mhmms very faintly] So... This is—I said up front very specifically that this is an anime.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you did.

ALI: And I... [laughing] So, in COUNTER/Weight, we had like, people who were able to—genetically modified to be like—[laughs] I don’t like any of my friends. [laughs] Genetically modified to like—

AUSTIN: Ha-ha!

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: The chat is making all sorts of symbols cause everyone knows where we're going.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: And sounds.

ALI: To have like, different colored hair, or like, if they wanted tails, they could have it. Or like, different color skin.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali]: Yeah.

ALI: And I think that over a long enough timeline, [laughs] people can just be catgirls.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Uh-huh.

ALI: And that's who Tender Sky is.

AUSTIN: Tender Sky the catgirl.

ALI: Yeah, uh-huh. Like in my mind when I sort of pictured her—

KEITH: The *mean* catgirl.

AUSTIN: Right.

[Ali laughs]

[everyone laughs]

ALI: Yup. Hi. I'm living my best life, I don't know...

AUSTIN [overlapping with Ali]: Uh-huh.

[everyone laughs]

ALI [overlapping with laughter]: I don't know about everyone else.

AUSTIN: I said this is the season.

ALI: Uh-huh.

KEITH: If this—if the first episode doesn't have you angrily hissing at somebody.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh my god. Oh...

ALI: Ah... But yeah that's her, I—yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. I'm glad that you were holding that back like, "Oh are we gonna talk about more stuff? Or is that just good enough Austin? Is that..."

[Ali, Janine, Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: You were gonna let these people go a week or *two*, without knowing [Ali overlaps] that Tender Sky was a catgirl, was a mean catgirl.

ALI [overlapping]: Yeah. [laughs]

[Janine laughs softly]

AUSTIN: Goddamn. Shit.

ALI: It's a slow burn.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Um... Great. Good. Great and good. Janine. Tell me about your character.

JANINE: Uh, okay. So... My playbook is the Onomastic. "You are the last of your kind. Your order was once an integral part of the Veil and the world. Now though that time has passed, hunted and destroyed by the Iconoclasts, you are now the last of your order, the last with the power of True Names, and charged with the protection of the last Cybertome." [laughs]

AUSTIN: Excuse me? The last what?

JANINE [reluctantly]: Cyber—cybertome.

[Ali laughs]

ART: Computer book?

AUSTIN: Computer book.

ALI: Are you sure that's not *cybertomb*? Like I thought it was for a week and tweeted about?

AUSTIN: *Well...*

JANINE: I also have a cybertomb, is the problem.

[Austin laughs]

JANINE: There's two.

AUSTIN: So, tell me about your character.

JANINE: So, my character is, uh...

AUSTIN: What's—what's—

JANINE: I'm still kind of working the name but the name is They marked scars of light in pitch; born in fiercest purpose, and beheld as the signet sealed upon our pact,.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Or Signet.

[Ali laughs]

JANINE: For short. Ellipses, signet, ellipses.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Good.

JACK: Fuckin' Jesus Christ.

[Ali laughs softly]

JANINE: They are a former excerpt and a current reliquary. They were Belgard's excerpt, who left them.

AUSTIN: Right. When Belgard died because their excerpt fled. [pause] Here they are!

JANINE: Yep. That's Signet.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Janine a little]: Good job. Ugh... This is good. So, tell me a little more cause like I don't want to get into like specific moves necessarily but you do have two very important things which are your Sanctuary and then the Iconoclasts. Um...

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Because those are both pretty broad, important things for the—each game I think.

JANINE [overlapping with Austin]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So what's your sanctuary?

JANINE: Um... Signet's sanctuary—my sanctuary is the... Basically the disabled body of Belgard. Um, specifically, one of the options here is the shell of—I don't think they would gut a Divine.

AUSTIN: No.

JANINE: But I imagine the cockpit of—Belgard's cockpit is a large sort of open, round space, that she would've had tethers to kind of hold her more or less in the middle of, but she would sort of move acrobatically through it interacting with the interface, in that space. Not a straight up, like, sit-down kind of cockpit. So there's room in there and that's her sanctuary that she retreats to.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JANINE: There're specific qualities of that sanctuary, do we wanna—do we wanna save it?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Eh, we don't have to get like very specific, I think that's enough. I think that's close enough. Like—

JANINE [overlapping]: Yeah, that's—okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: And the reason that it comes up is because like one of your moves is being able to just go there, which is cool. So—

JANINE [overlapping]: Yes. Yeah.

AUSTIN: That one'll come up at some point, I'm sure.

JANINE: And also that's a move but also like a thing that just happens when I share a moment of intimacy with someone.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, it's...

JANINE: Which like, "Nah that's—we're going to the robot now."

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Great.

[Janine sort of laughs]

[Ali laughs softly]

AUSTIN: And then the Iconoclasts, which the book just says, "They're coming for you. They never stop and they've already taken the rest of your order. Under their disguises they look like..." And then, "But..."

JANINE: So I've picked—and this might be a little too broad, this might be a thing we need to talk about—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, sure.

JANINE: I've picked "the past or future or humanity" for what they look like.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: That seemed like the natural choice!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Given some other things. And, "but: they have no faces, they are made of strange materials."

AUSTIN: Cool. Good. Good.

JANINE: I got like a face motif going on, people with faces, people without faces.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: All sorts of faces. All sorts of faces. [kind of yawns] Good. I need to make a note of the things you just said, real quick.

[Ali and Janine laugh]

AUSTIN: Just a quick, quick little, um... All right, cool, cool. Good happy times. Okay.

[Janine laughs softly]

AUSTIN: That's the space game, where everyone's good.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Good, ethical secret police.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: We need to come up with a name for whatever your agency is. And that'll be fun. Um—in my mind this is very much like, when we talked about the space game some of our other touchstones were like, TV police procedurals. Like, Jag was one of my—was one of one mine.

KEITH: Why, you love Psych.

AUSTIN: Psy—I hate Psych, actually.

[Janine groans]

ALI: Burn Notice.

AUSTIN: Maybe Burn Notice, I haven't seen enough Burn Notice. I believe you that Burn Notice is cool. Um, the one of the things that I really love the notion of was early... The early Supreme Court Justices in the U.S., the first batch of them literally were just dispatched to go like, do law. And like solve local problems. Which is not really what you guys are doing, so maybe that's more of a ground game thing. So let's talk about ground game. Um... I have notes on like, what the three things you're being sent to the ground game—or being sent to this planet for, y'all. And I want to tell you them now so you can start turning them over in your head.

AUSTIN [continued]: One is, at some point, during the last like 300 years, people saw their Divines dying, even though they seemed to like stabilize at eight, like suddenly they started dying again. And so people left. And left the Fleet, and said, "Fuck it, this is a planet that's good enough to live on. It isn't perfect, it doesn't have the special thing that Potency's been here and fixed up, but I can build a town here. And we can live here with my—with my family. Like, good enough." Or maybe it was one that Potency was already starting to fix? And then not so much anymore. And so part of your job is to go back—is to go down to this planet and bring them back into the fold. And that means solving their problems and building rapport with them, and trying to get them into—into your culture again. The second thing you have to do is to spread the Mesh further. I've established that the last remaining Divine's power is really only wherever the Mesh is, or it *is* the Mesh that's spread to a place? And so, the goal is to spread that, and that also ties up with Potency's thing, which is as that spreads, Potency... Or not Potency, but

the remains of—what's the... The Ever-Forward, can begin the terraforming stuff once the Mesh is spread enough and the nodes are placed. And then the third thing is, there is a rumor, you were told, that there is another Divine hiding alive somewhere on this planet. So those are all good, fun things.

AUSTIN [continued]: I have some other notes here, about what this ground game should feel like, and tell me, remaining people, if this sounds good or bad to you. "God rays breaking through a canopy. Spores. Monster Hunter." Um, uh... The rest of this is spoilers so I'm not gonna say them. But those are like some broad things for me. Um. I talked to y'all a while ago and I think Sylvia was the one who suggested that there would be these like frontier towns? And not just one central hub. And I think I like that. Especially cause now like the central hub will be yours, and the other towns will have been there for a few generations. Are there any other broad questions about what this game looks like before we go to characters? And that's Art, Sylvia, Keith, and Dre.

ART: Yeah, what's secretly horrible about all of us?

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] I don't—I mean, you're colonizers, right? So like, to some degree... That? But you guys can trust that I am not gonna run the game that's just like "And it's a vibrant world where, it's—every—it was perfect, it was like the... You know, manifest destiny that you found this place and it's gonna be perfect and good and it's all yours." So like, the only—for me the big ethical quandary here is like, are you allowed to take what you need? What if you're fleeing a terrible thing like the death of your entire culture? And so I think that it is uh... I think that that stuff is prickly, in a really good way, and I wanna do right by it. I played Mass Effect Andromeda this year and don't think that did that. Partially because they didn't set it up as a refugee story, in the way that I think this *is*, in some ways. Like, you are going to try to find a home for people because the homes in space are fall—are beginning to fall apart. And that doesn't just mean that you have carte blanche to do whatever you want, but it does mean that you are not a colonizing power looking to expand its base. And I think that's an important distinction that I wanna walk through with y'all. But it's something to—that is probably worth thinking about, for sure.

AUSTIN [continued]: Um... Any other larger questions about what this—what you're doing, or like, the setting? I'm gonna do my best to like really leave blank spaces here? I... One of the other big influences for me for this for sure is *Breath of the Wild*, and that notion of just like, there is stuff in every direction. Like we have to go plant these nodes in a bunch of places. That means we can investigate in any direction. And I've always kind of wanted to do a game like that, that's just like, pick a direction and go, and explore, and the exploration will be fun and light-hearted and like, adventurous in that traditional way. Where hopefully we can tell a great story in which, it's just about getting stuck in a weird cave, you know? And then like having to get out. Or like, coming to a place and then seeing movement in the sand. You know like,

that—those sorts of stories, that we don't do a lot in our show because we have gotten caught up in politics and history a lot. And I love politics and history, and we will still have those in this game, but I want to—again, I really want to hit an almost procedural vibe here, of adventure story. Because we just never—we've never done it, and I want to flex those muscles a little bit.

ART: There—this game is like, you see a mountain, you can go there?

AUSTIN: You can go there, yeah. Totally, yes.

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: And because we're designing the game as we go, there will always be something on that mountain.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: You know. Also cause you have future robots. Also because, you probably have a list of points provided to you by Curiosity, right? Like, that's a probably easy way to make—make it why like, you never go somewhere and there's *literally* nothing. Maybe it's a cliff you fall off, but—[laughs]

ART: Yeah I hear it's a lot of cliffs.

AUSTIN: But we just don't do the cliff episode. You know we start an episode one time and like, Art your character has a cast, and it's like "What happened?" and you're like "Oh, I went to a—it was a cliff, I fell." [laughs]

KEITH: I like the idea that all these people are falling down cause Curiosity told them to go somewhere, they didn't look to see where they were going.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Faith, man.

KEITH: They were just like, "It said to stand right here."

AUSTIN: [laughs] "Nowhere. Stand right here." You know maybe... Maybe there was a time when Curiosity told them to go somewhere and it looked like it was gonna fall and then it was like the... Last Crusade thing of, you know, invisible bridge or whatever.

KEITH: Mhmm.

AUSTIN: That bridge wasn't invisible right, it was just painted to look like the rocks?

KEITH: Yeeahh? I don't know they've got like aliens and you know, hearts beating in your—out of your chest, and stuff, so might've just been an invisible bridge.

AUSTIN: Yeahh, that's true.

KEITH: They have the chalice of... like, Jesus, so.

AUSTIN: The Chalice of Jesus, yep.

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: It's that—literally in that one. That's what they called it, right?

AUSTIN [laughing]: That's what they called it. Gotta go get the Chalice—

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: They called it the Chalice of Jesus.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Uh, let's talk about characters, on the planet game. Who wants to go first?

[silence]

DRE: I can go.

KEITH [overlapping with Dre]: Um...

AUSTIN: Okay, Dre, let's talk about—I mean yeah you're doing this whole thing. This whole, uh... Going down to the ground thing, and that's what your ship does, so. Tell me about your character.

DRE: Yeah, so my character's name is Even Gardner. And the class I'm played is the Catabolist. "The Catoblist is obsessed with integrating cybernetic systems into their own body, but reject all conventional cybernetic processes. Only through their own means are they able to take tech, modify it, and make use of it."

AUSTIN: So that means that like you can't just go to the store and get a new cyber-arm.

DRE: No. I have to use my weird... Um, so the game calls it your "omnitoool," but it really—it's cool cause it gives you a lot of...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Kind of, freedom to figure out like what that omnitoool looks like. Like basically the rules are like, "I don't know, man, you tell us what it looks like. [Austin overlaps] And here's like a couple tags you can put on it."

AUSTIN [overlapping with Dre]: Yeah. Totally.

DRE: So I think, um... Ev—Gardner's omnitool is... So one of the planets they went to, they found this weird like, symbiote... thing...? That can like basically animals, um, kind of crossbreed with each other? By basically like, it would connect to both of them and like kind of interchange like genetics and DNA and stuff. Um, and they have found a way to basically turn that into a kind of cyborg animal that is latched into Gardner's nervous system.

AUSTIN: Cool.

DRE: And allows him to interface with technology, directly.

AUSTIN: So you've got like a biomechanical... Animal? That's in you?

DRE: Yeah. It like is—so what it's—when it's folded up on his back it just looks like a little like, gray like... Like just like a gray like pod on his back.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Sure.

DRE: But then it can kind of unfold into this metallic spider.

KEITH: You've a cyber-armadillo.

DRE: No it's a spider, not an armadillo.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Dre]: It's a spider.

[Sylvia laughs]

KEITH: Well but it—it's a spider literally, but it curls up into a ball on your back.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see what you're saying, okay.

DRE [overlapping with Austin]: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah yeah. Cause that's where the port into like, my nervous system is. So yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. Good.

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Great.

DRE: And so then when I find new pieces of tech the spider basically like interfaces it with it and let's it basically... It somehow converts the technology into a language that like is congruent with Gardner's, like, genetic makeup. And allows him to make changes to his...

AUSTIN [overlapping with Dre]: Yeah. So the other big thing—

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: Okay. Um—

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh, hey Jack.

JACK: When—when Art was like... Okay, slightly further back, when you were all cross with for me being a body-swapping bounty hunter.

[everyone laughs]

JACK: That's step one. Then step two was, Art was like, "Well what's the horrifying thing about us?" And we found it! We found it really quickly!

[everyone laughs]

JACK: It's the mechanical spider is latched onto Dre.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Not just "onto" but "into."

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: *Into*.

DRE [overlapping]: Yeah it's weird.

AUSTIN [laughing]: Cause it's connected to his nervous system.

[Dre laughs]

JACK: God we found it so fast!

AUSTIN: But like the thing that I... The thing for me is like, okay cool. Like, yeah. Yes. And no one looks at him and is like—I mean a few people look at him and go, [low, grumbly] "Oh what a weirdo." But like, no this is how we got to Divines. Is people made weird spider things on their back or whatever. Like, this is the culture of synthesis between humans and—or between organic and synthetic life. And so, there is something really... Like, desirable or admirable or holy about this notion. It's still maybe a little weird, you know, like in the way that like, I don't necessarily... Not everybody who goes to the [laughing] Catholic church is also going to go on

mission for the Catholic church, or whatever. But like, you can see how those things... You know, the—if you do attend a Catholic church, if you are faithful, you see someone who goes off on a mission, they come back and you go like, “Oh wow that’s incredible you went off on a mission.” You don’t go like “What a weirdo.” Or maybe you do cause I grew up Catholic and you kind of still did do that because you were judgy. You know what I mean, though.

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: Cool. The other big thing with this class is the ideology. Do you have that figured out?

DRE: Um, so yeah, the ideology is basically like, why is your character willing to do this weird stuff?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: And for Gardner it’s “Fear has me, I believe I shouldn’t do this but the alternative is worse.”

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Huh.

DRE: So Gardner is like a—is a pilot on the Ever-Forward and he’s old, and he’s really kind of just like he’s losing his touch. And... His body is ready for him to retire but he’s not ready to retire, like he feels his service isn’t done.

AUSTIN: Is that especially given the scenario? Like how do you retire right now?

DRE [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Come on.

DRE: Yeah. Um. So he’s volunteered to try... To do the test run of this horrible spider thing.

AUSTIN: Cool. Good. I—yeah. Fear, fear has had—has made people do worse things, so. Than weird spiders in their body. Great. Uh, who’s next?

ART: I can go.

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: I don’t have a name for this character yet and honestly my current idea is probably bad. The character is a mech designer.

AUSTIN: Awesome.

ART: They design like, these really elaborate... I've been thinking that like, that there's no reason that mech would still be... Full—you know, two legs, two arms.

AUSTIN: Right. Totally.

ART: Biped.

AUSTIN: This is the place for your hyper-cat, Keith.

KEITH: Oh yeah?

ART: Yeah. But I'm thinking even like, hyper-cats are too... Are too simple.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: Oh that's just a—that's just a cat.

ART: Yeah, it's—that's really just a person on its side.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Okay. Wait. We're gonna—

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: Yeah I'm a cat.

AUSTIN: True, true, okay.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: I was gonna say, I was gonna stop him, but that's a good point, you are a cat.

ART: I'm just saying like—from like a design perspective.

AUSTIN: Right, no, I get you.

ART: I don't mean to besmirch humans or cats, honestly.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: No I get it but like, there are other designers who just do a really classical human mech design, and you're out here trying to fuckin' push boundaries.

ART: Yeah. And... And, you know, he was doing really well on his ship and you know, building mechs, trading them, selling them, whatever. But like... There's only so far you can do, though. Eventually everyone who wants one has one.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: And what are you gonna do? You're gonna keep, you know, incrementally moving? No. You're gonna throw your life away.

[Austin laughs]

ART: And go to this planet, to get some *authenticity*. That you can use to like—

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: Wait. Are you a hipster? Are you a...

ART: Yeah I think he is. I think he's a hipster, mech designer.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Fuck.

ART: Um, I don't know if you know this, but the first mechs were used to clear timber.

AUSTIN: I hate my life.

ART: And so, going to this planet is a way to like [Austin does a not-really-laugh] connect to the roots of mech design and make something even better.

[Ali sighs]

[Austin laughs]

ART: For my next—my next round.

AUSTIN: Ohhhh. There was a bit a couple of days ago where Art messaged me to say like, "I think I'm coming across like—I think this character might just be an asshole." And I was like, "Oh that's kind of good, actually."

[Ali and Dre laugh]

ALI: It's actually the best thing, right?

AUSTIN: It's really good—well my favorite thing is that the class you're playing is—the playbook you're playing is the Aesthetic. Which is from the Veil Cascade, which is a—I guess a forthcoming expansion, that there's like a demo version of. And like the moves aren't like engineering moves. This is uh, an artist skill, right? Or playbook, basically. Like your first move is called *Beauty is Truth, Truth is Beauty*. "When you take something you feel, an idea you wish to convey or both, and express yourself by way of your chosen art, whether performed or presented, and it is experienced by others, roll. On a 10+ choose three, on a 7 to 9 choose two.

People comprehend what it is you intend to convey. One person in particular must meet you, the MC tells you who they are. You spike out the state of your choice in anyone who experiences your art.” Which is to say that like you could make someone really mad or really sad or really happy. “The experiences either begin—the experience either begins to change popular opinion, a value, or otherwise alter a sense of self in those who witness it. Tell the MC what it is you hope for. Or you—“

ART: Give this one the proper... Space. This last one I think is an amazing thing.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah. Uh. “*Inflict humanity harm* to all that experience it.” The Veil has a notion of “humanity harm,” not just regular harm. Which is like, what it sounds like. It’s like, your humanity has been wounded. It’s more than just physical harm, it’s—it shakes you. Which is so good. And the thing that I actually love about this is this is the character who says we could build them to look like anything and if I build it just so, like, I can enact change. I can do a thing with this. I can make people feel a certain way. It’s also just like the answer, like every Gundam show has the thing of just like, “Oh it’s a Gundam,” people shout, terrified. Like yeah, cause Art’s character sat up in a fucking lab late designing it so when you saw it you’d go like “Auuuh! It’s a Gundam!” That’s this cl—that’s this character.

ART: Yeah. And I like the idea that that guy just decided like, “You know what I gotta do right now? I’m gonna go camping.”

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Fuck. What an asshole.

[laughter continues]

AUSTIN: God. Oh. [laughing] Jack do you need to repeat the bit about terror—finding terror in the ground party? Again?

JACK: Oh yeah. I mean like, ah, god, I’m just excited that we have like, we have like two full length seasons of Art playing like really stoic troubled... [smiling] people. Struggling against things, and now he’s like, “I’m going camping!”

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: I’m so excited.

JACK: “I’m gonna build terrifying mechs.”

AUSTIN: Well like, I love it cause—

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: It's very exciting.

AUSTIN: I'm just excited for like someone in a little frontier town to be like, [country accent] "Well what we really need is a [Jack laughs in background] vehicle to move the water."

JACK: This fucking asshole arrives...

AUSTIN: "From over at the lake, to where we're at. And what you gave me is... A living diamond machine."

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: "That don't help."

[Dre and Ali laugh]

ART: I think you'll find it does. If you put enough of it in the water, the water will relocate itself.

AUSTIN [still as hypothetical townspeople]: "Son, we can't get the water from the lake, how we gon' get the diamond machine to the water? It's bigger than the water."

JACK: Oh my god...

ART: I feel like this is a problem of vision.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Janine in the chat says "*We cannot* do another water-moving season."

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Good point. [exhales] Okay. What is uh... That's the character basically right, there's nothing else there to add, Art?

ART: Yeah, it's that and a sneer.

[Austin and Sylvia laugh]

AUSTIN: Perfect. Good. Good. Let's, um, oh boy. Two more, two more to go everybody.

[Sylvia and Ali laugh]

AUSTIN: We're gonna make it through.

KEITH: We talk a *lot*.

AUSTIN: We do. We do talk a lot. But that's what we're here for, we're here to talk a lot.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um...

KEITH: Hi.

AUSTIN: Hi. What's—

KEITH: So mine's tricky. I'm... I—my—I had a—I had a couple ideas. The first one that I really fleshed out I scrapped.

AUSTIN: Oh!

KEITH: Cause I decided it was too X-files.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: That's—it was just like, it just seemed like, it seemed like something I really could've, like, pitched to... A writer's room but not something that would fit for a podcast.

AUSTIN: Okay. That happens.

KEITH: And then, my second thing... Was—the—as I was thinking about it, I feel like it's too similar to Art's. In one specific way. In the mech way. I feel like, I was—I had a ch—I had like a tinkerer character that was making like, small robots, maybe.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: But, that were—they were—they would be like, equipment or cybernetics and not like, it's a part of my character's actually thing.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: But... But yeah, I feel that's too similar. So I can talk about the character as sort of like a person, but not as a sort, like, what, like actual quantifiable lore motivation I guess.

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: But I'm playing the Empath.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Which is...

KEITH: Which I'm excited about. The Empath is super cool. The Empath is uh, "The Empath is in tune with the people around them, and their emotions. They interact with emotions as tangible charged energy fields that can be manipulated and appropriated for their own purposes. Whether this ability—"

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Yeah. Well like—

KEITH: Go.

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

KEITH: "Whether this ability's uncanny or futuristic or explained is all up to you—" Oh, this isn't, this isn't part of the...

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But like—so the—but like, for me the key thing here that's very good is like, this is a game that's about emotions. I kind of mentioned that before a little bit.

KEITH [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But the thing to know is like, this game doesn't have Strength and Charisma. It doesn't have Cool, it doesn't have H—like, none of the stats that a traditional like, Powered By The Apocalypse game does have. Like it doesn't have the stat that is used for punching people, or the stat that is used for knowing things. Instead it has "states." And its states are Mad, Peaceful, Sad, Joyful, Scared, and Powerful. And, whatever you do, what happens is I go "What do you do?" And then you describe it. And then I go "Well how are you feeling, about doing this?" And then you know, you say like, "Oh, well, you know, ah, this is the asshole who I had to deal with every day in school, so you know I'm sort of like, on one hand it's like I'm—like, I'm mad cause I'm thinking about what happened before, but I think really what I am is like, satisfied that I'm finally able to get back at him." Like, "Oh well satisfied, that's like powerful. So roll Powerful." And that is why I'm excited to run this game. And the Empath is built around that stuff, in the Empath has ways to like m—push and pull on people's states, and also to like, check out what happened in the past in terms of emotion and stuff like that. We'll have to figure to what the thing is. Like, tell me about them as a person I guess.

KEITH: One of the—I guess one of the first hints of what sort of character I was going to be playing comes basically right out of the, like, the prompt that the book gives you. One of the

things on the playbook that it says like, “Hey, here’s something you should be thinking about,” is uh, what they call the Burden.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Which is, I think any sort of mind-reading, or empath movie, or whatever has a moment like this where it’s like “Talk about how it makes you feel that you’re being bombarded by emotion all the time.”

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Um. And I think that... The... The progression of... Their life is like, hey, you know, you have this ability, and then trying to move further and further away from like, having to deal with it all the time.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Mmm.

KEITH: Like maybe it’s not even overwhelming it’s just like, work.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

KEITH: Like it’s so hard to have to be processing this all the time. Even if it’s not debilitating and it’s still, like, “Man, I—every time I’m counting I also am hearing [Austin overlaps] other things.”

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

KEITH: So I think their job when they were on Gumption’s Gambit was... Sort of slow—like, each successive move that they made was like, oh well first I have a shop, and then I’m here, and now I’m—uh, I have been picturing—I have them inside the uh, what the sort of the public greenhouse—like it’s not built in a way that can sustain like parks and, you know.

AUSTIN: Right right right.

KEITH: But I think that there’s like, places like that, like there’s an atrium, and a greenhouse, or whatever.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

KEITH: Like the closest thing that they can get. And then after trying to be like, okay well if I’m around people it’s gonna be around people who are like marveling at stuff. Like that’s probably the easiest—that’s the easiest like emotion to process from people, is like people who are just, loving some shit. [sort of laughs]

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah, that makes sense.

KEITH: And then when they're not around people they're around, you know, plants, which prob—you know, they're not giving off—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Vibes.

KEITH: Emotions.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

KEITH: Right. Or at least not in the same way. And then maybe either because that was a positive experience or maybe because it wasn't enough of a reprieve, they're like "I'm gonna fuckin' go, planetside."

AUSTIN [overlapping a little]: "I'm signing up for this colony shit, like let's go."

KEITH: Yeah. Let's go.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah. Okay. I think that's totally enough for a character concept. Like, we—you and I should work out why you can do the thing you do, if you even know, maybe it's a mystery. But—

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We should have that talk. And then uh... But other than that that all sounds fine, to me. I'm into it. I'm—

KEITH: I was veering towards, like, cause it says "It can be uncanny or futuristic."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: And I was leaning towards uncanny, just cause I like that [Austin overlaps] more for stuff, some of it.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah.

KEITH: But I also don't want it to be a... Like the same premise as Mako Trig but with emotions instead of internet.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. 100% with you. I mean the real thing that we do have to be careful of is that like—or not careful of, but like, the thing that we should have the talk about is, in COUNTER/Weight there were induced stratuses, strati, and also natural strati, who did not have

to just be about the internet. And I don't necessarily want you to play a stratus twice in a row. But on the other hand... The thing you're describing might just be a stratus. So... I need to revisit the lore, and make sure that this isn't just a stratus by another name, or else...

KEITH [overlapping]: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which if it is, is. You know?

KEITH: Right. I—

AUSTIN: Which is totally cool and interesting.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But if it isn't that, if that's not what we want to do, then we should figure out a specific reason for why you have these powers.

KEITH [overlapping]: Right.

AUSTIN: So that it doesn't just fall into that, because it's seven months from now and we're like, "Well, I guess that's the thing it is," you know?

KEITH: Yeah. Mhm. I agree. That's part of why I've been having trouble coming up with a solid thing is like, I don't—cause it didn't, when I first picked it, it didn't feel at all like doing Mako again?

AUSTIN: Yep.

KEITH: But then like the more I was like "Okay well what sort of things can I do?"

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yep.

KEITH: Everything's—and—everything ended up coming up Mako.

AUSTIN: Totally.

KEITH: Except for the first thing but again, too X-files.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Awesome. Okay. And uh... Last but not least.

SYLVIA: Hello.

AUSTIN: Sylvia.

SYLVIA: Um, so... I guess I'll talk about—okay so first my character's name is Echo Reverie.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And then I want it to be...

KEITH [overlapping with Sylvia]: Oh good point [Austin overlaps] my character's name is Coin Stalerd. We never said it.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: Oh. Right, we didn't say names. Coin. Coin Stalerd.

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Yeah. Coin.

AUSTIN: Sylvia.

SYLVIA [overlapping with Austin]: Hi.

AUSTIN: Tell me about your character.

SYLVIA: So yeah my character's name is Echo Reverie.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Sylvia]: Good name.

SYLVIA: And uh—thank you. I'm gonna be using the Honed playbook. Basically the whole thing with the Honed is that they have no cybernetic, uh, like, no cybernetics, no like—they're not connected to the Veil in any way. "You're the same decaying matter as everybody else. The difference between you and them? You've taken it and honed it into the precision instrument you now wield to achieve your will. You are not a part of the system, you are free and you strive for what is up to you now."

KEITH: I like the idea of like, this character not even—not being able to see anybody the way that they've decided to be seen by everybody.

SYLVIA [overlapping with Keith]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: 100%, yeah. Well like and this ties into the thing that you were saying before about your whole ship being the kind of like—the nanomachines, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah. Echo, um, was—and I just wanna make th—I wanna say this before anything else, Echo's gonna be a non-binary character.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Sylvia]: Rad.

SYLVIA: And use they and them pronouns. Um, I just wanted to get that out of the way [Austin overlaps] really quick before I forget.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, definitely.

SYLVIA: [smiling] Cause there's a lot of stuff to talk about, so...

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yes.

SYLVIA: It's one of those things where it's in my head so I just do it already.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah.

SYLVIA: So I mentioned that some people have nanites that have stopped working.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

SYLVIA: Echo is something who was born just without them completely. Um... And because of that has always sort of been raised as... Like, there is something wrong with you, basically.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

SYLVIA: Especially because they come from a family that did not—does not have this problem, up until now.

AUSTIN: Right like the thing is like, hey, maybe tomorrow's the day that Harmony comes back. Maybe... Everything is gonna be fine again. But even if that happens, you don't have the nanites, so... You're kind of in this weird permanent separate space, like this other box. And even if your parents love you or whatever, like, that's a thing that they probably aren't great about.

SYLVIA: Yeah. Um, so... Echo generally—I don't know how much we wanna get into this, is—there's tension with the family stuff.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Right.

SYLVIA: But they—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Well you're not on the ship anymore, right? So like...

SYLVIA: There's not—no, Echo is um, actually Echo's whole thing is that they are a criminal. Who has been like, sent down to colonize the planet as a sort of punishment.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: Um... Basically, the way I see it going down is just like—oh we'll get into that later, actually. But their whole thing—I was like, I'm not gonna give everything away, I've just been sitting on this for like a week 'cause I've been like sick in bed and like it's all I could think about.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah yeah. I—I get it. [Ali laughs] The sick [indistinguishable, 3:04:29].

SYLVIA: Echo's whole—basically Echo's whole thing is that they—since they've spent their entire life being told that something's wrong with them they've also spent their entire life wanting to prove everybody wrong. So we talked about how on Harm—on the Harmo—the Tides of Harmony, a lot of people have like, vocations that they work for.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: When you—the nanites don't work for you you're kind of phased out of that. So there are these small communities that come up around it. And people have their—do those—do jobs—types, versions of those jobs in there. But to be able to do that they need things, to do that with.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Ahh. Right. Right.

SYLVIA: So Echo I think was basically, like, a thief, for the most part. And would bring stuff back to the slums that they lived in. So people—

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Hey, can you—can you have been arrested by the space game?

SYLVIA: I—d—yeah, I want that, actually, a lot.

AUSTIN: Like, not because you were the cri—they wouldn't have gone after you because you happened to steal the, whatever you needed to make space socks or whatever, but you were the name they were given as like, the thing that would connect them to a larger crime. And at the end of it it was like, we gotta turn you in, but we have this thing that we can give you, that's like, better than going to space jail.

SYLVIA: I'm really into that, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Me too.

SYLVIA: Especially because Ali's character is—like, got kicked off the planet for crime.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yep!

SYLVIA: And I got put on it for crime.

KEITH: By the way, the cop got kicked off the planet for crime and then became a cop? After being kicked off a planet for being a criminal?

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: I—okay, no...

SYLVIA [overlapping with Austin]: Sounds like most cops.

AUSTIN: We don't know why she left the planet yet.

ALI: Yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: It's an important distinction.

ALI: The religious figure for a place that you're not from. Did a thing. And got kicked out.

KEITH: That's fine.

ALI [overlapping with Keith]: Yeah.

KEITH: I guess.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's interesting. So yeah, anything else, Echo?

SYLVIA: Yeah I think—I just wanna—I said that Echo's whole thing is basically trying to prove people wrong about them.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: Like they're—spent basically their whole life having to fight so they're very good at it now. And... I don't, like—I have like actual—like one of the beliefs set already for them.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Please.

SYLVIA: Which I think kind of sums up the character really well is, "If someone doubts you prove them wrong."

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's a good one.

SYLVIA: And that's basically kinda their whole thing summed. They're... I'm very excited for this game.

AUSTIN: Me too. So what I'll say is, I—one of the things that is next for all of y'all is to finish your character sheets, pick moves, and then building beliefs. In this game beliefs are very much of the engine of progress, of like, of character growth. You get XP in this game from, um, attempting—from failed rolls, from when you attempt to do something good for you, and you fail. There's a very specific note, it's not just failed rolls, it's "when you attempt something that benefits you and fail." So you can't just, fail a roll on purpose to grind XP. But the other way you get XP is through beliefs. And you need to write three of those. And if you have a belief that's tested you get to mark one XP, if you get a belief that gets you into trouble you get two XP. And if you resolve a belief because it's been tested and changed then you get to mark three. So that's really—a big part of your XP is going to come from those.

AUSTIN [continued]: So between now and the end of the week, if possible, I'd love for you all to actually sit down and come up with those beliefs. And for me the easy way for you to do this is to have one that's just about who they are as a person, that can be the sorta one that you see getting XP every game, cause like, yeah you're gonna follow that one core tenet of who they are. The second one I would love to reflect the ship and culture that they came from. Whether that is "I believe in this rule and it's embodied in me," or just in relation to that rule, like with Echo maybe that's a specifically important thing, to not just be "Oh I follow the one rule for my ship," but like something that shows that. And the third one should be something like a bond. Which is like, "I believe this about this character," right? Basically write that third belief as a bond and it should work out just fine. IM me if you have questions about that stuff.

AUSTIN [continued]: I think that's gonna do it for us this week. I think we've got a lot of work done. I'm just gonna point to a spot on this map really quick and say where I think this game takes place. If that makes sense? I have the map—I have *the map*, where we found where COUNTER/Weight takes place on in front of me. I just wanna add a new thing if that's okay. I think it's like... Here. Which is like, further up the same combined arm where the Sagittarius and Perseus arms connected, on this specific map of the galaxy. And this one is like very close to where this arm eventually hits the galactic circle ring, like the very core of the galaxy. And I really want that bright galactic center to be... The sun, in a sense. You're close enough to the galaxy—to the galactic center, to see this brining—the bright shining white light of it, from whatever ship you're in, from whatever system you're in, you can see it. You're close enough to see it. And that, could be cool. So, that's my suggestion there. I think that's gonna do it for us. You can find me @austin_walker on Twitter. Uh, where can people find everybody else? Let's start with Jack so he can go to bed.

JACK: [laughs softly] You can find me on Twitter @notquitereale and buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereale.bandcamp.com.

AUSTIN: Sylvia Clare.

SYLVIA: You can find me on Twitter @captaintrash.

AUSTIN: Alicia Acampora.

ALI: Uh, yeah. You can find me @ali_west on Twitter, and you should go find the show @friends_table.

AUSTIN: And you should go to—we have a reddit, at reddit.com/friendsatthetable, that none of us run but fans do. There's a—

KEITH: We have a reddit?

AUSTIN: There's a Friends at the Table reddit. Um, there's a... Pretty active thread on the Waypoint forums threads now, forum.waypoint.vice.com, or discourse.zone. Um... you know. Go out there—

ART [overlapping with Austin]: Ugh.

ALI: There's a Facebook [Austin overlaps] at facebook.com/friendstable.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: There is. Yeah. So check those out too.

SYLVIA: We mentioned the hashtag on Twitter too? #friendsatthetable.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Sylvia]: And also the hashtag, #friendsatthetable.

KEITH [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Also if you're ever curious—

KEITH: You can just search "friends at the table" on Twitter, read a lot about Ed Sheeran.

AUSTIN: [laughs] You could, that's what I was gonna suggest. If you do a search for just, in quotes, "friends at the table," and then you do a space and then you hit minus "shots" you'll ignore all of the Ed Sheeran lyrics.

[Dre laughs]

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: In which he talks about doing shots with your friends at the table. A thing you'll learn if you happen to search for the phrase "friends at the table" a lot. [sighs] Andrew Lee Swan.

DRE: Hey, you can find me on Twitter @swandre3000.

AUSTIN: Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: You can find me on Twitter @bleatingheart.

AUSTIN: Arthur Martinez-Tebbel.

ART: Hey you can find me on Twitter @atebbel.

AUSTIN: And Keith Carberry.

KEITH: You can find me on Twitter @keithjcarberry and you can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton.

AUSTIN: I am so excited for this y'all. Like this has been already super exciting, I cannot wait to start playing these games. Um. So, stay tuned. Also, [coughs] based on when this comes out, there's a Patreon. That's up. By now. Cut this out Ali, if it's not up by now.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: But it should be, based on the schedule we've set.

[Ali and Janine laugh]

ART [overlapping with Austin]: Oh my god, if it's not up, something horrible has happened.

ALI & KEITH: Yeah.

ART: We've found out that one of you is a—is a secret pirate.

[everyone laughs]

SYLVIA: I gotta go.

KEITH: [laughs] How does that affect—how would that effect the good work that we've done on this podcast? If one of us happened to maybe be a secret pirate, how would that affect things?

[laughter continues]

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: I'm gonna google, "Have there ever been ethical secret pirates?"

KEITH [overlapping with laughter]: Yes, of course there have been! [overlapping with Art] Yes.

ART: You all do have to sign contracts under your name is what I'm saying.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: Okay, let's go to time.is.

[Ali laughs]

ALI: Oh—you didn't finish that.

AUSTIN: Oh, go give us—go help us.

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: We launched a Patreon. What we do is like, pretty hard work. Like, Ali spends hours and hours every week making this show into a good show. I spend hours and hours a week prepping, Jack writes us incredible music, and I talk to everybody every week before playing, and everyone's like "All I can do all week is think about what I should do in this scene that may or may not even happen." And then everyone shows up and for—you know, two to four hours, five hou—six hours, depending on where we're at in the season, people—

KEITH: We've never recorded for only two hours *ever*.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: That's not true. We've done a two hour—we did two-hour game—

SYLVIA: No, we did!

AUSTIN: We did, we did this year. We did a two-hour Hieron game twice. [laughs] We managed it.

SYLVIA: You were there!

AUSTIN: He was there.

[Sylvia laughs]

AUSTIN: He was there.

KEITH: Just, listen there's a lot of shows, one or two of them maybe were two hours. They don't stand out.

AUSTIN: We leave it all out on the field, is a thing that I've always wanted to say. But we really—people put a lot of work into this thing, and we love it, and we do it because we love it.

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Put our stiff upper lip to the grindstone.

AUSTIN: Put our stiff upper lip to the grindstone. And, uh, we are—people asked us for a long time, “Hey, have you ever thought about doing a Patreon, hey is there a way that I can support you for doing it?” Now there is, so. You can go to our Patreon.

ALI: friendsatthetable.cash

AUSTIN: I'm gonna drop in right now, I'm gonna say where you can go to the Patreon but we don't have the address yet. So I'll do that when we do it, and then it'll go where I'm talking right now instead of the thing I'm saying right now. Um... And—

[audio fading out]

ART: That's a really long URL [laughing] you want us to get.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm gonna get just the longest URL I can find, is the one.

[MUSIC - “The Twilight Mirage”]