

Twilight Mirage 66: Futura Free Pt. 3

Transcriber: vesta

[MUSIC - "Twilight" starts]

AUSTIN (as Demani): Dispatch 717.

AUSTIN (as Demani): [continued] Satellite... I mean, Grey. Sorry, just feels more natural to say 'Satellite' when I'm out here in this tin can. Nostalgia for a different life. Not quite the good old days - I'm so much happier now, with you, with the Brink. But things were more certain then. Now, I look at the data that's coming in, and I don't know what to think.

AUSTIN (as Demani): [continued] No. That's wrong. Things are just as certain as ever, it's just that now instead of just knowing what's coming next, I'm scared, Grey. Every day, I'm scared of tomorrow. The truth is that, while I might disagree with what Crystal Palace is doing, it's right about this system: The Twilight Mirage is boiling over.

AUSTIN (as Demani): [continued] Volition is literally bubbling right now. Even with Signet's successful sortie against it, It's continuing to create new Axioms at the sort of pace that only comes with absolute safety or total desperation--and with the destruction of its shield, we know it doesn't have the former. Which leaves the question: What makes something like Volition desperate?

AUSTIN (as Demani): [continued] I wonder if it feels a rivalry to the Splice, Our Profit's perfect little virtual utopia. Volition wants a world where ideas are more important than physical reality, and Our Profit's given it to everyone in a form they actually want. And now Tenderness is trying to put Anticipation into the mix...

AUSTIN (as Demani): [continued] Meanwhile, everyone on the ground is vibrating with angst and anxiety. A quarter of the damn Qui Err have already boarded Rapid Evening ships out of the system, and the rest are hoping beyond hope that Seneschal's Brace is actually going to keep their word about giving up some territory. Which is hard to do when they're busy stealing a Divine and handing it over to a former war criminal like Declan's Corrective. Hell, maybe our time with the

Rapid Evening makes us war criminals, too. How many people did we sit and watch die with the knowledge they were in danger?

AUSTIN (as Demani): [continued] Ugh! Crystal Palace makes me so mad. I hate it, Grey. It just sits and watches and spits out a wall of predictions and people like us, people like your dad, we sit there and go “oh okay, I guess this has to happen.” And here’s the real thing I’m scared of: that doesn’t make us special. That makes us just like everybody else.

AUSTIN (as Demani): [continued] Places like the Divine Fleet - places where people learned over thousands of generations to actually care about one another? Those are blinks in the long stare of an amoral universe. They’re exceptions to a world of principled disinterest in the well being of others. A world where any alibi not to intercede is transformed from an easy excuse into a natural law.

AUSTIN (as Demani): [continued] So when you look at someone like... Grand Magnificent, all holed up in some safehouse in the snow, praying that someone will come help him? That’s not rare. He didn’t get himself trapped. He was always trapped. We’re all trapped, Grey. You and me have the good fortune of being trapped in here together. But none of us can get out.

AUSTIN (as Demani): [continued] When we were deciding whether to stay Off Cycle or go back onto the loop, we were so focused on this limited idea of freedom. We wanted to be at the border of Crystal Palace’s range so bad, where things get just a little fuzzier, where there’s a chance that the data misses something, misses us. We knew the terrible things it successfully predicted about the worlds Off Cycle - suffering, slavery, death - and we hoped that maybe those things just didn’t happen beyond the periphery. Without data, anything could happen, right?

AUSTIN (as Demani): [continued] Wrong. There wasn’t any data, but wherever society is, there are always people. Backstabbers. Oppressors. The selfish and the scared and those who have no sympathy for either. That’s what scares me. Not Volition or the Splice or politics or Crystal Palace or your dad and his bomb. People. It’s just people.

[music ends]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical world building, smart characterisation, and fun interaction between good friends. I'm your host Austin Walker. Joining me today, Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hello there! You can find me on Twitter @notquitereal, and download any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com

AUSTIN: And boy is there a lot now [chuckles]

JACK: Yeah, no! There was a point where I was like, it should be two albums, but it's still one album.

AUSTIN: Yep, it sure is. Also joining us, Sylvia¹ Clare.

SYLVIA: Hey, I'm Sylvia, you can find me on Twitter @captaintrash, and you can find my other show at emojiidrome.

AUSTIN: Also joining us, Keith Carberry- Sorry I'm looking at a lot of prep it's throwing me off.

KEITH: That's okay. 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 contentburger.biz

AUSTIN: Good urls. Also joining us, Andrew Lee Swan.

ANDREW: Hey! You can find me on Twitter @SwanDre3000.

AUSTIN: Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: You can find me on Twitter @bleatingheart.

AUSTIN: Art Martinez-Tebbel.

ART: Hey you can find me on Twitter @atebbel and listen to my other show @OneSongPod. It's only me.

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

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: Wow. [Ali chuckles]

ART: No one else is on it.

AUSTIN: Okay, I guess that's- also joining us-

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: One Guy Pod.

AUSTIN: Ali Acampora.

ART: I've usurped the podcast.

AUSTIN: He certainly tried.

ALI: Hi, I'm Alicia Acampora, you can find me @ali_west on Twitter, and I recently did a guest appearance on OneSongOnly [everyone laughs].

AUSTIN: That seems good.

JANINE: I like that they have two rotating guest chairs. [chuckles, people exclaiming while laughing]

AUSTIN: You follow everything Friends at the Table does @Friends_Table on Twitter, we also have a- there's a Facebook group that updates stuff, I think? I don't really- I'm not a big Facebook person, I'm sorry. And as always, you can support the show and as we come to a close this season maybe you feel like supporting us, friendsatthetable.cash. We need support, y'know? Like that's what I mean. [people chuckle] I think what the show reveals is, woof. That this group of people, am I right? [Andrew laughs, followed by more chuckling]

AUSTIN: [continued] We are continuing to play Futura Free today, a hack that I made of The Quiet Year by Avery Alder, and Mobile Frame Zero: Firebrands by D. Vincent Baker. Our goals are to make the Mirage cool, weird, and touchable; to make it political and make it personal; to think it- to think geographically and communally; to play easy, play fair, get into messy entanglements, and let others make their own decisions; and to play to find out what happens. When we last left off, where were we? [chuckles]
Grand?

KEITH: Oh God, where we were?

AUSTIN: Grand Magnificent had been locked in a cage.

JANINE: Uhhuh, it's not a cage.

AUSTIN: Sorry, it was a hut- well, it was more than a hut, otherwise the Rapid Evening could get in, right?

ART: Yeah, it's a safehouse. I drew a cage because a safehouse is hard to draw?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: So you entered this safehouse willingly. And then realised that it had become a kind of a prison.

AUSTIN: Right. Grand-

ART: Yeah. Sort of like-

AUSTIN [overlapping with Art]: -failed a chase, right?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

ART: I was gonna say it's sort of like Napoleon, when Napoleon was- wherever the hell they said Napoleon-

JANINE [overlapping with Art]: On an island?

ART: Yeah.

JACK [overlapping with Art]: Elba?

ART: I'm sure it was nice, but he was stuck there, right?

JANINE [overlapping with Art]: Right, Elba.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah I think you have like TV, you know? It's a safehouse.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It has food, it has-

JACK: Much like Napoleon.

AUSTIN: Much like Napoleon, Grand Magnificent has TV.

ART: Well, either I have- either my project has to freeze, cause I can't work on it, right?
[Jack chuckles] Or my project becomes a time bomb.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

ART: Because there's no way I can send it out without the Rapid Evening getting it.

AUSTIN: Totally! So-

JACK [overlapping with others]: I kind of like the latter.

AUSTIN: Me too. Your project is Independence Mk II. for Even, Echo and Tender. You're building a new, updated version of Independence. I think you just- it's just running, right? Like it's compiling or something? Or they find it? What- what is it?

ART: I mean they haven't found it yet.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: So I guess I'm actively working on it?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: But like, then we have to really like, I'm not sure we're playing at the top of everyone's collective intelligence and be like, and then I send it out, surrounded by the Rapid Evening-

AUSTIN: No.

ART: So maybe the compiling thing is the better choice.

AUSTIN: Well so here's a thing that's new. There's a new project by the Rapid Evening called Grand Magnificent.

ART: Hmm.

AUSTIN: And here's- it's new- it's a new one, this didn't exist before. And, the thing to know about that is, that, let me read here, you'll note that its name is already visible to you. That's because I'm gonna tell you what it is. Oh boy. So, on steps one, three and five of that clock, Grand Magnificent, you will strike through one of your character traits. As you are worn out inside of that safe room.

ALI: Ohhh.

AUSTIN: After the Rapid Evening continue- continuously tries to get in. I'm starting to imagine it less of a safe room, and more like a safe complex? Like, it's an underground warehouse that has a bunch of different side rooms that you're needing to like, play cat and mouse with them? And traps, and like. It's a very Home Alone situation in my mind? [Jack chuckles] Except they're the Rapid Evening and not two bumbling thieves. So that's one. On steps 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8, an Advent force is gonna be- is gonna try to breach the net that has been thrown by the Rapid Evening, and the kind of more natural defences set up by the Divine Free States since this is Thrysus. And one of their abundant resources will be reduced. So. Really gotta know if someone is gonna save Grand Magnificent. [chuckles] Because, every step that we take, is- is not necessarily a great one for Grand Mag, but every other step we take, and then a bunch of them in a row, is a bad one for Advent.

JACK: Oh, you bastard!

AUSTIN: What's up?

JACK: I just realised that that-! I just- I was just like, well, I was just like 'well, you know, if Advent's abundant resources get lost that's less resources Grand Mag can use', but yeah, that's also an opportunity to get one over on Advent.

AUSTIN: It is. It sure is. Let's go down what your characters are, your character traits are, and what the resources at play are. Let's start with characters. Echo. What are your three character traits?

SYLVIA: So my character traits for Echo are courageous, fiery and mighty, and I haven't used any of them yet?

AUSTIN: Cool. Gig?

KEITH: I am handsome, kind, and resourceful? And I have used resourceful.

AUSTIN: Alright. Signet?

JANINE: I am good-hearted, resolute, and strong. And I have used strong.

AUSTIN: Even?

ANDREW: I am desperate, weird, and a dare-devil.

AUSTIN: Fourteen.

JACK: I am passionate, sturdy, and determined. And I have used determined.

AUSTIN: Tender.

ALI: I am charming, devoted, and bold. And I have used bold.

AUSTIN: Grand.

ART: Brilliant, rich, and conflicted.

AUSTIN: Great. Resources currently: system wide, there's the Mirage itself, and then Anti-strike Volition force that the NEH put together. Advent currently has an abundance of material- material, guns, innovation, the Splice, DIY knowledge, the Stitch, and food. Advent has no- no scarcities, but they- they have some other stuff that is not as scarce, kind of a neutral resource? Which is access, information, control, and intimidation. And that's- everybody can have that stuff, it's just a neutral resource? So you can just invent a neutral resource by taking it down to a scarcity, you know? So. Anyway. NEH has Splice, population, DIY knowledge, Splice twice, I don't- oh, oh I think they added- when they added Splice to everyone I added a second Splice, they don't get that, I'm gonna get rid of that.

JACK [overlapping with Austin]: Splice Twice, the sequel to Splice.

AUSTIN: They don't get a second Splice here.

JANINE: One of them is the actual Splice, and one of them is that soda I keep thinking is called Splice [Jack and Austin chuckle].

AUSTIN: It's called Slice. And Stitch and food.

KEITH: Splice is when you mix Slice with Sprite.

AUSTIN: Exactly.

JANINE [softly, overlapping]: Ooooh.

AUSTIN: And they don't have unity. The Divine Free States have territory, a deep state, DIY knowledge, Splice, Stitch, and food, and they're lacking Divines. Volition currently has Iconoclasts, fear, DIY knowledge, Splice, Stitch, it doesn't have mobility or Axioms, it- it has a serious lacking of Axioms at this point. The Rapid Evening has weapons, stealth, prophecy, DIY knowledge, Splice, Stitch, food, and it's lacking allies and population. And you might notice that there's also- [people chuckle] that it's also- it's neutral on Grand Magnificent. So yeah, if they fill that clock, that becomes plus Grand Magnificent. [Keith laughs] I hope you're ready to work for the Rapid Evening.

AUSTIN: [continued] And then, y'all. Qui Err Coalition has communication, DIY knowledge, the Stitch, and food. But it's neutral on Splice and morale, but it brought that morale up you may recall.

KEITH [overlapping with Austin]: Yeah that was-

AUSTIN: It was brought back morale up from negative.

KEITH: What is that called again?

AUSTIN: Scarcity? What.

KEITH: Scarcity.

AUSTIN: Yeah it was scarcity, yeah. Waking Cadent has Divines, has Splice, has DIY knowledge, has Stitch, has food, but is low on population, which could be bad.

Especially since the goal is to get people out of here. And Seneschal's Brace has population, has DIY knowledge, has Divines now, has- has the Splice, has the Stitch, has food, but is low on diversity, which they care a lot about, is low on trust, which they care a lot about. And is neutral now on experience, as- as Declan's Corrective is back on his feet, and into the cockpit of Gumption. [Jack chuckles]

JANINE: Back on Gumption's feet.

AUSTIN: Back on Gumption's feet, exactly.

JACK: Could we also, like, really quickly just run through the various clocks,

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Faction by faction?

AUSTIN: The ones that are already in prog- in process right now?

JACK: I mean, I was gonna say all of them so we're better informed?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: But there are a lot of clocks.

AUSTIN: There are a lot of clocks. I'll go over it quickly then. Advent in the Fall- so let's go through Fall, or not Fall, Spring rather. Dawn, I guess. The- they were going to raid the Qui Err? Advent was going to raid the Qui Err and steal some resources, but Tender froze it and then I think the Qui Err destroyed it? The NEH deployed an anti-Volition fleet. The Divine Free States had a project that was cancelled, but I don't think I labelled it. But it was- oh, right, it was they were going to fix Gumption [Jack chuckles]. But y'all-

JACK: Hmm.

AUSTIN: -stopped that from happening. Volition was building that weird Iconoclast shield of- of weird video Iconoclast? That was stopped by- who blew that up? I wanna-

JACK: Was that Tender?

JANINE: Wait what?

JACK: Or was it Signet?

AUSTIN: Yeah it's the Iconoclast shield, was that Signet or was that Tender-

JANINE: Oh, the like- there was like a big tower of-

AUSTIN: Yeah, of Iconoclast- Janine just drew 'em, but I don't think she did it.

JANINE: No I drew it, I didn't do- I think it was Independent models.

AUSTIN: I think it was, yeah- Grand ended up doing that. Grand blew up the shield, I think. The Rapid Evening successfully interrupted everyone's comms, the Qui Err Coalition successfully moved the Arcenciel Amovement Park from Gift-3 onto Quire-sorry, onto Skein. I think it was to Skein, right? Some- it was in the same area-

KEITH: Yeah, Skein. It's floating- It's sort of between Skein and Moonlock.

AUSTIN: Yeah, which are the two Qui Err places. And Seneschal's Brace successfully stole Gumption. In Spring- sorry, in Summer, aka Midday? Or was-

JACK: Meridian.

AUSTIN: Meridian? Okay. Or was it just Morning? I think it's Dawn, Morning, Meridian, Twilight, Midnight. Right?

JACK: Yes.

JANINE: Brunch, Lupper,

AUSTIN: Right, exactly.

JACK: I'm sorry.

AUSTIN: No it's fine.

JACK: Please don't say lupper again. [Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: They- Advent successfully- or deployed this like, this virus in searching for Divines? Which they're looking for in order to upgrade those Independence models. They wanted to study some Divines. The NEH deployed Splice- the Splice to everybody, gave everybody a plus Splice bonus. The Divine Free States blockaded the Waking Cadent. Volition deployed the- the Axiom Aperture, which opened up those Stitches across the entire system, and is currently looking for a way out of the system? The Rapid Evening stole the food project that Grand had started- it was Grand who started the food project?

KEITH: Grand started the food project. That was-

AUSTIN: And the Rapid Evening stole it.

KEITH: Yeah, that was Morning's Observation's idea.

ANDREW: Honestly-

ART: Rapid Evening is on my stuff right now.

AUSTIN: Yeah, they really are. It's a lot. The Qui Err Coalition-

ART: I mean, who I was.

AUSTIN: Built morale between- for themselves? By kind of negotiating and- and successfully demanding more territory from Seneschal's Brace. The- Seneschal's Brace folks studied Gumption- I should note. They stole Gumption because Kent was like "what if we stole Gumption" and then did it. And then- and then they studied Gumption and decided who should be Gumption's Excerpt, and the group decided it was Declan's Corrective.

JANINE: Does- does he have an Excerpt name yet?

AUSTIN: Don't- we didn't come up with one, because everyone was- we should get it- Jack said Jack would do it between turns, so I'm gonna toss that ball back to Jack [Andrew chuckles].

JACK: Hello.

AUSTIN: Hi, Jack, you have a name for Declan's Corrective, you have an Excerpt name for Declan's Corrective?

JACK: I'm very jet lagged.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: That's not true, I flew out a week ago. I'll get one- yeah, I'll get one soon.

AUSTIN: Okay. The other thing that y'all had started doing was, the- the Anticipation Splice manoeuvre? In which-

JACK: Oh, God.

AUSTIN: Tender, you- you're trying to find a kind of backdoor into the Splice, to nest Anticipation and kind of let it do more work there?

JACK: I'm such a- such a bad verb.

AUSTIN: The Splice Manoeuvre? Or nest?

JACK: Nest.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Nest.[Austin chuckles] It's not great.

AUSTIN: [Austin chuckles] And finally y'all also decided to built- or to- to kind of, get the quarantine task force, the kind of collaborative group that's deeply under resource that's been tracking Volition for the last year, more resources and people, so that they can help you do an attack on Volition. Okay. And currently, there are new clocks on the table that y'all can see. Those are again, the Independence or- Independence Mk. II for Even, Echo and Tender, we already talked about that, that's a Grand Mag clock. But there is a four step clock for Advent, an eight step clock for the NEH, an eight step clock for the DFS, a six step clock for Volition, the eight step Grand Mag Rapid Evening clock, and another eight step Rapid Evening clock. So it's the beginning of a season. That's how you know there's a lot of clocks. That's- that's it. That's what happened. I also can see a bunch of other future clocks? That are very hard to understand,

because I have them hidden on GM view only? I just need to be very careful about what I say out loud.

AUSTIN: [continued] So. Where we were, though, was the beginning of Morning. No. It's our third season, Meridian. So it's like high noon, and Echo, it is your turn. You drew the Nine of Autumn, which says: the community works constantly and as a result, a project finishes early, or a group goes out to explore the map more thoroughly and finds something that had been previously overlooked.

SYLVIA: Ohh. So I have to pick the second one then, cause the Qui Err don't have any ongoing projects.

AUSTIN: Oh true, I didn't realise that, yeah. Oh no what we decided it's actually one that you helped on, so- if you're helped on one of these other projects, which I don't think you done?

SYLVIA: I don't-

AUSTIN: So. So yeah, I guess it's the other one. It's a group goes out to explore the map more thoroughly and find something that had been previously overlooked.

SYLVIA: Okay. I'm trying to think of what a useful resource that also makes sense to find would be.

AUSTIN: Good question.

SYLVIA: I mean, the main thing I kind of been focusing on a little bit, at least just in my head, has been like, Echo making sure they're ready to defend themselves?

AUSTIN: Mmm. Ok.

SYLVIA: So, if it's either- if it's even just like, hey, we found this place on Moonlock, that we could make more secure for us.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: Cause like, we had the threat of that Advent raid-

AUSTIN: Yep!

SYLVIA: -so I imagine it- it makes sense for them to sort of want to fortify a little bit so they can worry of taking care of the Rapid Evening blowing up the system.

AUSTIN: Right, sure. So it's defences of some sort?

SYLVIA: Yeah. But like- I like the idea of it being sort of a naturally occurring thing on Moonlock?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, could be, Moonlock is a wild planet. Moonlock is a planet that has been rebuilding itself constantly? Like, non-stop for the last year? And like, like an Etch-a-Sketch, you know? And then it shakes itself up. But- it'd be kind of cool for maybe Echo to find something that firmed up a lot more permanently, you know? Out on a scouting trip, like, is it just a dope castle? Is it a- is it, is it Iota Pretense's like, historical palace? Is it something more communal than that?

SYLVIA: I would prefer to be something more communal, because-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: A big part of what this faction is, is a bunch of teenagers on an amusement park?

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: And I don't want them to think that there's suddenly like, a king and queen-

AUSTIN: And now there's-

SYLVIA: -and a palace.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly.

KEITH: Although, now I'm- I don't know if you guys are just like- this was like a viral thing from a few months ago? But there was pictures of this like, traveling couple complaining that these mansions in Cuba had- are like, just being rented out to whoever? So I do like the idea that Iota Pretense's historical palace is just like, full of people just living in it.

SYLVIA: That's pretty good.

AUSTIN: Then it's like the equivalent of the like, what's the- the hidden? What's the Japanese imperial city thing?

SYLVIA: Oh.

KEITH: I don't know this.

AUSTIN: I feel like Art does.

JACK: The Chrysanthemum- The Chrysanthemum Throne?

AUSTIN: Well, the thing that I'm thinking of is like more than just a- a palace. It's like, an entire location-

ART: Are you thinking of the Chinese Forbidden City?

AUSTIN: I am thinking of the Chinese Forbidden City, you're right.

JANINE: Woof.

AUSTIN: Listen. [Janine chuckles] That's bad. It's bad on me. But yes. Yes. We're like- it is not just- it's not just like "hey here's a cool mansion". It's a massive complex that was once- you know, the Qui Err at their height were a fairly- you know, there was a- there was, a lot of great stuff for people, but there was a royal family still. You know? There was a royal family that started with like, the royal family that was already ruling Quire, and then a space pirate who worked his way into the family line. And, and so like yes, there is- there totally could have found like, the echo of the old royal like, city, basically.

SYLVIA: I do think we- since we don't want to make it a wholesale like, resource, there needs to be like, something to do, like a project for it, even if it's just like,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Move some stuff here.

AUSTIN: Yeah totally.

KEITH: -making- just like, making it liveable.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's like the X-Com style clear the debris out and [someone chuckles] turn it into-

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Like how do you turn this thing that was meant to be a symbol- it's also maybe more symbolic than that, right? Or more like, about appearances to some degree- how do you turn something that was about the power of one family, into being about the power of everybody? Right? I mean I guess one thing is, I think it already says- I have to look at my old notes. My- my notes from the prev- pre-Miracle. If I recall, it doesn't- it says, no Apokhine, no Demarch, only Us. Is what it says. [chuckles] I- I also found what Sciron, the space pirate in question, who used to pilot the- the Holiday Gambit, what- what his personal motto is? Which is, no Apokhine, no Demarch, only Gold. Which. Good job. [people chuckle] Weird space pirate.

SYLVIA: God.

AUSTIN: But you know. It's good. No gods, no masters. So yeah, do some- do some work on this place. I like that. I'm into it. So that is the first step- second step is I have to mark some clocks, hell yeah. Independence Mk. II goes to three out of four. Splice- mm, said the word Splice, shouldn't have said it, happened immediately. The next - believe it or not, the NEH is working on more Splice shit. That one advances by one. The DFS' advances by one, one of eight. Volition's advances one of six. Grand Mag advances by one. Hey Grand Mag?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna need you to cross off one of those traits.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: What is it and what happens?

ART: Hold on, I'm drawing a picnicolour for my line.

[25:00]

JACK: Okay.

[Keith laughs loudly]

AUSTIN: Thanks Grand Mag. Thank you- thank you Grand Magnificent.

KEITH: Brilliant and conflicted.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ART: I'm going to strike through brilliant.

ALI: Ohh...

ANDREW: Oh, buddy.

AUSTIN: What- how do you, how do you- remember, striking through it doesn't mean you're not brilliant anymore. It just means you've activated it in a way that's draining. The end of the game will wrap back around like hey, are you still brilliant?

ART: You ever been like, really stressed?

AUSTIN: Me? [people chuckle]

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Wow, what's that like. [Andrew laughing]

ART: And when really stressed, you ever just felt like, you're not as capable or smart as you used to be?

AUSTIN: Like, literally the last two years of my life have been this exact thing, yes.

ART: Oh, weird.

AUSTIN: Yeah it sucks. [people laugh, including Ali]

ART: Well that's what I think this is.

AUSTIN: Don't launch a website, is my advice. [Keith laughs] To anyone listening.

ART: I think-

AUSTIN: You will feel less than a human being.

ART: I think that might be the biggest problem, is that while in here, Grand was like.

KEITH: [overlapping entirely with Art] Launching a website?

ART: I'm gonna. Yeah I'm gonna launch a website?

KEITH: [overlapping entirely with Art] freegrandmag.biz

ART: And it's like a culture website about-

ALI: Oooh, okay.

ART: Being trapped in a safehouse? [Austin, Keith, Andrew laugh] And people are like, get your politics out of being stuck in a safehouse?

AUSTIN: God. Ugh. Perfect, good.

JACK: What are the politics of being stuck in a safehouse?

AUSTIN: Well, for one you have to be rich enough to have a safehouse.

JACK: Right. [Ali laughing] Okay, yes, that one.

KEITH: Oh, you also have to be in the safehouse because you built weapons for bad guys.

ART: I'm in the safehouse because I was trying to destroy their stealth technology.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

ART: So these are great jokes in the chat everyone, [Ali giggling loudly] I love them all.

AUSTIN: Oh-ho! The escapist house.

ART: The escapist house is so good. [Keith howling with laughter] We might need to cut that from this show.

AUSTIN: No, fuck that, it's so good. Oh boy. Janine saying Goop is also very good. Goop 2. Good. Great. Ok. So that makes sense. Alright, back to- clocks are filled. Echo, what do you do with your turn?

SYLVIA: I didn't know you were gonna put in like a whole system with Grand being trapped.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

SYLVIA: And my whole thing like this past week since we recorded last was, I should really rescue Grand.

AUSTIN: Yeah?

SYLVIA: But, if the other- if everyone else wants me to hold off on that I can-

AUSTIN: No fuck that, what's Echo do?

SYLVIA: Oh Echo wants to go, like-

AUSTIN: Hell! Yeah! [clapping]

SYLVIA: Grand sent out a fucking emergency signal, right?

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

SYLVIA: And, what does Echo do since like early in the show, is they rescue Grand.

AUSTIN: They do rescue Grand, that's what they do.

SYLVIA: Yeah!

ART: I wish I could put an emoji in this chat. [Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: Alright.

SYLVIA: What kind of emoji, either way, just-

AUSTIN: Mhm. What's the website again,

SYLVIA: [overlapping with Austin] Thanks for the shout-out.

AUSTIN: What's the podcast again? How can people listen to you talking about emoji?

SYLVIA: Couldn't think of a fun- it's called Friends at the Table,

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Clapcast usually [Andrew laughing].

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

SYLVIA: Don't do that that often, but now and then I- I just, I've been thinking, I've been throwing around some ideas but I'm not sure if anything's gonna come of it.

AUSTIN: Okay, great. Follow emoji-drome on Twitter please, [Sylvia laughs] everyone. Alright.

SYLVIA: Alright. Yeah. So, I think the way we wanna do this mechanically, would be, attack?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think-

SYLVIA: Or would I need to start a project?

AUSTIN: No, this is an attack, this is attack cause you-

SYLVIA: Yeah that's what I thought.

AUSTIN: Yeah I think so. Because you're trying to stop this clock, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think that's probably- I think it's probably a heavy attack.

SYLVIA: Oh, no, yeah.

AUSTIN: Right?

SYLVIA: I, I figured this out.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: So I'm gonna spend my contempt token.

AUSTIN: Okay, oh you should know that Echo, Gig, Signet and Even all have contempt tokens. Fourteen, Tender and Grand did not. So.

ART: Well, I spent mine to get captured. [people chuckle]

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: It was a great use of resources.

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Spent!

ANDREW: I forget, can other people outside of Echo's faction like-

AUSTIN: Echo can ask for help.

ANDREW: -join forces to help.

AUSTIN: Whenever they want. Echo can say, I would love some help on this.

SYLVIA: I would love some help on this. [Ali chuckles]

KEITH: I can help you, I'm here.

SYLVIA: Yes.

ANDREW: Do- would Echo want Even's help right now?

KEITH: Oh wait, this is help to rescue Grand Mag, I take it back, sorry.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: I'd have to- I don't know how happy Echo would be about it.

AUSTIN (overlapping with Sylvia): So we need three resources totally? Now Echo's gotten rid of the contempt token?

SYLVIA: And I've also crossed out my trait Mighty?

AUSTIN (overlapping with Sylvia): So we only need one more, but we can also change this around if like Echo doesn't wanna cross out Mighty, or if, whatever.

ART: Can I help?

AUSTIN: Yes. Right now.

ART: I don't have access to my shit.

AUSTIN: I mean you could access to your- your character.

JANINE: Yeah, rich.

ART: I'm- I'm trying to conserve that. I'm trying to spend Advent resources.

AUSTIN: Right. Right. If you can convince me as to how you're spending an Advent resource- like, the Advent resources, the next Advent resource would be getting crossed off next turn for them trying to help you anyway. Like, Ballard is literally going to be leading an attack to try to rescue you right now? So maybe you-

ART: [overlapping with Austin] You should get out of there before that happens.

SYLVIA: Yeah, that'd be awkward.

AUSTIN: You know. You're both doing the same thing. For a start.

ALI: Ah.

ART: Could I use the DIY Knowledge to construct some really efficient Home Alone style prep?

AUSTIN: Hell yes! [people laughs] Absolutely. Are you fucking kidding me?

ART: You know who is the best at Home Alone? Grand Magnificent.

AUSTIN: Grand Magnificent? Yeah.

JANINE: Is it now just less like Home Alone and more like those Deception games?

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes. Where they are just literally-

ART: Still a lot of like, kid stuff, I think. It's still lotta like Legos and, paint buckets.

JANINE: That's in line with Deception I think.

AUSTIN: That's what you had in your-

ART: -paint buckets-

AUSTIN: -in your safe house? Just a bunch of Legos? You like, gotta kill some time. Love it.

ART: Again, I think a thing you would put in a safe house you thought Grand Magnificent might spend a lot of time.

AUSTIN: Fair, fair. Alright so, Echo is spending Mighty, and the- the contempt token, and then, Grand is spending DIY. Anyone else who wants to be in this scene, can ask to be in this scene regardless of them having spent something, to be clear. I would- so my suggestions on game are, either it's a group thing, and it's 'Tactical Skirmish'? Or it's basically a you and Ba- you and Ballard, we narrate you and Ballard having gotten through the Rapid Evening stuff? And it's kind of come down to the two of you to-

SYLVIA: Oh-

AUSTIN: -who is going to get Grand Magnificent. In which case it's a Ballad/Echo-

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: [overlapping entirely] A hundred percent.

AUSTIN: -Meeting Swords-

SYLVIA: We have to do that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, 'Meeting Sword to Sword', right?

JACK: It has to be that.

ALI: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh. So Meeting Sword to Sword says. Set up. Only you and your chosen partner play. Decide how the two of you came to be standing alone, sword to sword. Yeah, Echo, what does it look like for you to get into this weird, underground ice warehouse on Thyrsus? That was being surrounded by the Rapid Evening and being attacked by Advent- also by Ballad, who is in an Independence model, right? And, also- also like, the DFS is there. So, like, they don't necessarily tracking down Grand Magnificent, but they have- they have resources on this planet, you know?

SYLVIA: Mhm.

AUSTIN: So how did you get past all of those to- to get to here? And also, is this going to end up being- are you Meeting Sword to Sword with Ballad via ____, or be- via mech? Or on foot, inside of this trapped area?

SYLVIA: I've been thinking a lot about this being on foot?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I like that.

SYLVIA: Particularly for the rescue just because like, Grand Mag had the chase on foot-

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: -I think on like a super icy planet having a bulky suit, is just gonna-

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: -cause more problems?

AUSTIN: So do you land and see that- that Ballard's already landed? Like, you can see his- his Independence model in like a kneeling position. You can tell that it's his, cause it has like, some- some symbol that's been painted onto the crystalline like, body of it, or some- or etched into it, not painted- that's too gouche. But just like etched into the forehead is Ballard Reverie's personal symbol? Or whatever?

SYLVIA: Like the same thing he had on his-

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: -previous.

AUSTIN: Exactly. Yes.

SYLVIA: I like that, yeah. I definitely like the like, sort of dread of "oh. He's already here."

AUSTIN: Uhhuh, yeah. Totally. And like the camera follows you down and like you see the door's already opened and swinging, it's like. One of those like rooftop doors, do you know what I mean? Like on a rooftop, of like a building?

SYLVIA: What?

[Andrew laughs]

AUSTIN: Like a rooftop do- like a door on a roof of an apartment building or whatever?

JANINE: Roof access?

AUSTIN: Like a roof access building.

SYLVIA: [overlapping] Oh, yeah! Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: And it's like swinging in the wind- I'm tryna' paint a picture here. Alright, so you're not in your Mobile Frames, you're not fighting with plasma cutters. Alright, to open the duel, ask a leading question. The- I guess actually let's slow down. When do you finally meet with- with Ballard here? I almost picture it being dark in this facility? That feels- Grand, would you turn the lights off?

ART: Yeah, of course.

AUSTIN: Are you watching it?

ART: I mean except the part that has the fake person dancing in the window to Jingle Bell Rock?

AUSTIN: Okay, good. Great. Thank you Home Alone Again. It's a holograph person or something, right?

ART: Sure. Yeah.

KEITH: [overlapping entirely] It's more rare than a regular person.

AUSTIN: Sorry, it's the Twilight Mirage, it can't be holographic, it has to be some other bullshit. It's a person made out of like, falling liquid metal- I don't fucking know. It's been a long year, okay? It's a- it's a hologram. It's a hologram-

ART: It's very futuristic and cool.

AUSTIN: [laughs]. Thank you.

JANINE: [overlapping] A water hologram.

ART: Everyone listening, pause this for like ten seconds, think of something really futuristic and cool, and that's it.

KEITH: It's a wooden marionette.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's allowed. It could just be a wooden marionette. It's like retro.

KEITH: Yeah, but the- the tech is that there's a robot controlling the strings to make it very realistic.

AUSTIN: Gotchu. Yeah, love it. Thank you very much. I'm here for it. And you're watching on like a- like a close- close circuit TV security system, Grand?

ART: Yeah, of course.

AUSTIN: Or is it like, that can be the holographic stuff here? Where you're like literally seeing them projected, full scale into your safe room?

ART: Oh that's cool.

AUSTIN: You know?

ART: Yeah, and it's like. And like- you get some- like the shot of Grand like nervously pacing like,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: -holding his forehead like.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Lit by those holographs? Yeah.

ART: Yeah, I don't know if that works like, I don't know if in real life that would provide- cause like, a TV has that like big amount of blue glow that I- we're all thinking about? I don't know if a hologram would do that. But for this is does.

AUSTIN: It does, yeah. Uhhuh. Alright, so, Echo, what do you notice about Ballard, what have you heard?

SYLVIA: I think he's really, like [sighs]. I don't know- tired's not the right word? But like worn out-

AUSTIN: Yeah. Mhm.

SYLVIA: -from this. Like, it's less of like, he's exhausted, and more just like battle hardened a little bit? He's definitely stepped into the role of being sort of a commander.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think you. Totally. You notice that he's wearing like a higher rank on his uniform now? But it's still the like- you know how you have dress rank and you have

like, duty rank on- in military uniforms? If you're going to be on a stage or wearing something that's a little fancier maybe, this is not that. He like- he is still in the trenches as a soldier, and committed to it? And so he's still wearing his like, his more soldiery uniform than his command uniform.

AUSTIN: [continued] Alright. Conducting the duel. To open the duel, ask a leading question. The better with the sword begins. If you don't know which one of you that is, throw a coin. Take turns asking leading questions back and forth. At any time after the third leading question either of you can choose to ask one of the closing questions instead, ending the duel. Keep asking questions back and forth until an answer ends the duel. Note that some of the leading questions might end the duel, and some of the closing questions might allow the duel to continue depending on the answer. So, which one of us is better at sword fighting?

SYLVIA: I think we gotta flip a coin for that one.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so too.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah do you wanna be one or two?

SYLVIA: I'll be one.

AUSTIN: You're better. So.

SYLVIA: God damn straight I am.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Alright, next page is all of these questions. So it's three leading questions and then, a- a closing one.

SYLVIA: I think I wanna start with a 'we circle swords touching, what do you say to me?'

AUSTIN (as Ballad): Echo this doesn't have to be a thing. He's gonna come back with us, and we're gonna launch him in a catapult out of the system. That's what Grand Mag's future is. Just let me take him.

SYLVIA (as Echo): [sighs] I've had Advent take enough things from me, and I'm not gonna let them take another one.

AUSTIN: Alright. 'I pretend to falter and dip my blade, do I draw you out, or do you recognise the ploy and hold steady?' And this looks like him being like, he is dro- he is pretending to drop his blade as if you've made a good point. That is a lie. That is a ploy. That is where Ballad Reverie is at.

SYLVIA: Echo falls for it.

AUSTIN: Ohh. Oh-ho, okay! I think like, comes back up with the- with the blade- what do these swords look like, by the way? Cause they're not just like rapiers, right? Like this is-

SYLVIA: I described it as like the first episode so I'm tryna remember. I think I said that they were like, sort of like the size of a machete-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: But much- like not that type of blade, like a thinner blade. And I-

AUSTIN: Yeah I've always pictured them as kind of like a flat blade, you know?

SYLVIA: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. Cool cool cool. Do they bend when you swing them? Or do they stay firm.

SYLVIA: I think they stay firm.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: I like the idea of there being this like- we talked a lot about how I wanted a like- I dig the sparks with the swords?

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes.

SYLVIA: Basically, and I like the idea of them being like a metal that sparks when they hit.

AUSTIN: Great.

SYLVIA: A lot.

AUSTIN: So I think one note on- on Ballad's sword, is it is like that same sword of flat bladed machete? But like, it comes back- there's like a spike pointing backwards- backwards at him actually, on the backend of the sword? And as you come closer, he like flicks the blade up and catches you with that part, with the backend of it, do you know what I mean? So it's not just blunt on the end, the very tip on the back, there is like a sharp point.

AUSTIN: [continued] I guess- I guess the thing I'm describing is just the Uruk- an Uruk-Hai sword, from the Lord of the Rings movies, now that I'm looking at pictures. So yeah, if you search 'Uruk-Hai sword' U-R-U-K H-A-I, two words, sword, you'll see this like little come back to a sharp point- do you see what I mean? So as you get closer, he's like. He doesn't say anything. And just catches you in the side, and just- right in the- like high side under your arm pit. And like, it doesn't- luckily does not pierce anything that will kill you instantly. But it could've. That was a killing blow- you know that blow. You know what that was. I think he even says that- and I think he even says like.

AUSTIN (as Ballad): Come on, Echo. You know that one.

AUSTIN: And then takes a fighting stance. Your leading question.

SYLVIA: 'I launch a sustained attack with my weight behind it, do you give ground readily or grudgingly.'

AUSTIN: Grudgingly.

SYLVIA: I'm sort of seeing that as like a- Echo's kinda pissed that they got shown up just now?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: And it's an- it's an angry attack.

AUSTIN: Yeah. 'We lock swords-' so we're like pushing, you're like 'hit hit hit', and I 'block block block', sparks, the whole room is dark, so it's being lit up by these sparks, right? And, and you drive Ballad to a wall, 'we lock swords, your mouth is near my ear, what do you say?' And that again, at this point, any of us can ask a closing question instead of a leading question, I'm choosing to still ask a leading question.

SYLVIA (as Echo): You're the who always says to me, that it doesn't have to be like this. And this is me telling you that if you wanna stop now, you can. You always can. But I'm getting through that door.

AUSTIN: I think he just grimaces, and kind of like pushes himself away from you to make some more space.

SYLVIA: 'I catch your wrist in my hand and draw you close, do you let your sword drop, or do you shove me away and fight on?'

AUSTIN: I shove you away and fight on.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: He says,

AUSTIN (as Ballad): I'm giving you opportunities to stop because the future Advent sees is the one that's going to be. The one you're imagining, it isn't real, Echo. Me dropping my sword doesn't change anything. You dropping yours maybe means you get to walk out of this place alive.

SYLVIA (as Echo): You know I don't- I don't know if I was ever going to say this to you, but you're really starting to remind me of Dad now. It's always- you were always the one telling me not to give up on things. And I guess that's why we're in this mess, huh? I'm turning it around on you this time. I'm not- I'm not giving up.

AUSTIN: My question-

SYLVIA: [overlapping] It's my question? I think it's yours.

AUSTIN: I think it is. Cause you- you asked me if I pushed away, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. 'You get your-' Mmm, I think it's too early. I think it's too early for that. I think it's too early for that. [Ali chuckles] 'You touch me, cutting me a- along the rib or across the arm. Do you press your attack or give me a moment?'

SYLVIA: I like the idea of this one being- this happens in a way that like- I like if Ballard is trying to pull something, and that Echo catches it-

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: -and outshines him,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And that's what leads to the attack, and Echo giving him a moment here is sort of like, I'm- I know that I'm better than you at this now?

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: And you have- this is the last shot you're getting.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh. And he retakes his stance.

ART: Ufffff.

AUSTIN: Grand. How's it going in there? [Ali chuckles]

ART: I mean. I- I- I want Gr- I want Grand to be smart enough to see what's about to happen? But I don't know that's like consistent with character.

AUSTIN: You did cross out 'brilliant'.

ART: I did cross out 'brilliant'.

AUSTIN: Again- yeah, mmm.

ART: Yeah, it's- it sucks. This- this feels bad.

AUSTIN: Mmkay.

ART: I mean- it feels- you don't need to be that smart to have it feel bad.

AUSTIN: [Austin laughs] It's people fighting?

ART Right.

AUSTIN: That doesn't feel good.

ART: Not it doesn't. Echo it's your turn.

SYLVIA: Yeah. I'm- I'm ooh. Getting to the wire on this one, huh?

AUSTIN: It is.

SYLVIA: I think I might go with the closing question here.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: 'I pierce your side but in doing so leave myself open to a return stroke, do you deliver it?'

AUSTIN: It doesn't say killing blow right? It doesn't end this fight.

SYLVIA: No I just- stab you.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I deliver it. I think it's bad. Like I think we- I think, neither of these characters walks away from here feeling good, if they walk away at all. And it's- it's another- so what's that blow look like? What does that strike- what does the- the, piercing my side look like?

SYLVIA: I like- so you- I'm bringing in the Uruk-Hai spike you brought up earlier now that-

AUSTIN: Okay sure.

SYLVIA: I like the idea that- so like Echo sort of ducks under the sword, maybe?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: In someway, and that's when they're able to sort of get him maybe like around the kidney area?

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

SYLVIA: And then he brings- Ballard brings the sw- the spike back down.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

SYLVIA: And gets Echo in the back or something with it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Cause they- they didn't count for the mo- the other movement where-

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Where they move backwards and get them with the backside of it, they were just dodging the main cleaver.

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So I think from there- here's the thing that happens. I think bleeding through you know, white coat now- not drenched in, but like spattered in red blood, in the dark, lit by the sparks of the- of the swords. I'll tell you the sparks stay, for longer than they should? Like these two- when these two swords hit, there's a spark, but the sparks hover in the air for a second, almost like a sparkler, or like- you know what it kind of looks like to me? You know when you do like stop motion light art? Where you film at night- a light with- you take a bunch of pictures and kind of superimpose them so that you're like writing in the sky with a light, do you know what I mean?

SYLVIA: Mhm.

AUSTIN: It's like that, but with the sparks of the sword. So around the room, there are like lanterns of the spark light, that are slowly fading as we get away from when those blades hit. Ballard kind of twists away from you, then comes back in to you? And gets

low into your side with the blade. And begins to push it in, and the thing that you note is that the Uruk-Hai style spike is just pointed right at his heart. On his side. And you're blocking it and holding it back, but it's effectively, 'You get your swords point well between us inside my guard, if you drive it home, you kill me. Do you drive it home, or do you allow me to step back and recover myself?'

SYLVIA: Ahhhh! Oh man, I really gotta think about this.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: Keith shut up. [Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: Keith in the chat says "oh boy, I could've ended this a season ago." [Keith chuckling]

SYLVIA: I- mmmm. [groans in frustration] I think Echo- I'm tryna- I'm gonna just stick with the character here, even though I think dramatically it'd be really cool, I think Echo lets them back off. Echo's still like 'that's my big brother, I can't do that'.

KEITH: I think that's still dramatically interesting.

SYLVIA: It is.

AUSTIN: I totally is.

KEITH: Your brother's trying to kill us, not just you. Us.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes.

SYLVIA: Yeah I am-

AUSTIN: Your turn.

SYLVIA: I'm gonna let Ballad recover.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Ballad recovers. And sees that that happened. Also is- sees that that happened, and is tearing up, right? But like, [exhales] *takes his stance*.

SYLVIA: Ooh. 'I thrust and you barely turn it, a fraction slower and you'd been cut through. Does it exhilarate you or chill you?'

AUSTIN: Chill. There was a turn here, I think. And. Ballad knows he's losing. And. He knows you're better than him at this? And knows that you have a better cause, at least in the small sense. And you can see it like, he grips- he grips his blade harder, but.

[MUSIC - "The Reveries" starts]

AUSTIN: He's shook in a way that you don't know what that's gonna make him do. 'We circle swords, tips touching, what do you say to me?'

SYLVIA (as Echo): No one's gonna blame you if you stop now. Trust me. You've put up a really good fight, we can just let this end here. You can tell them I- I've slipped away from Advent hundreds of times. I mean I've slipped away from you- you can just say.

AUSTIN (as Ballad): Echo, it's not about that. It's not about that. It's not about *that*. I can't, Echo. [struggles to speak] I can't go back empty handed. I can't go back to a time before. Echo there's no way back. There's only forward.

SYLVIA (as Echo): You can come with us! Come to Moonlock, we have the space, you'd be helpful there!

AUSTIN: It's your turn. [Sylvia exhales] He like grips his sword again, and is crying. And like, wipes his tears away with his like, fucking, the bloody lapel of his jacket. And then like, I think he like- it's all cut up, and just kind of like tears it off. And he's like you know, in the- the white dress shirt- not dress shirt, white, like undershirt he has on underneath. It's also been cut. And he sighs, and then like takes stance one more time.

SYLVIA: 'I seize momentum and initiative and drive you backwards, if you stand throw. On heads, you hold me back, on tails I cut you through, killing you. Do you stand or do you allow yourself to be driven back.'

AUSTIN: I allow myself to be- I allow myself to- I don't stand. He drops his sword. And steps away. And like, he sees it in your eyes. And you like, catch him. But I don't think it kills him. And he just like, flops- not flops, he like, slams his back

against the wall, with the sparks kind of lighting his face, and he just kind of slinks to the- to the ground. And he like reaches out and grabs your hand, and just like, pulls you closer, and just like, leans into your chest and starts fucking sobbing.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Hey. Hey, It's gonna- it's gonna be okay. We're gonna get you out of here, okay?

AUSTIN (as Ballad): This is gonna make you a bigger target. This is just gonna make you a bigger target.

SYLVIA (as Echo): [softly, overlapping] I don't care.

They stayed away from you because I was working for them. They stayed from Mum and Dad because I was working for them. If I go, the Volunteers are going to splinter, and then who knows what happens to us?

SYLVIA (as Echo): I can at least get you out of here. I can make- there's not- there's gotta be something I can do.

AUSTIN (as Ballad): That's what I said. Go save your friend, I'll be right here.

[music ends]

SYLVIA: Oh it takes a while for Echo to get off.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: I think Echo actually wraps Ballad in their jacket first.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: Like so, they're freezing when they go get Grand.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, totally. Always- it's the old jacket, right?

SYLVIA: Oh of course.

AUSTIN: You've given back the jacket again.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. Good.

SYLVIA: And then it's just like, Echo sprinting-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: -tears in their eyes, trying to get Grand, so they can have someone help them carry their wounded brother while they're bleeding out as well.

AUSTIN: Grand, do you manage to turn off the traps, as Echo's sprinting through them? [Keith howling with laughter, Ali chuckling]

ART: I mean I think that that's like the- if we wanna like, have a moment of levity here, and we should, the like- that is it. It's like, Grand watches the end, it's like 'oh shit'. [Austin laughing] And you get like, you get Grand like, running out, and trying to like dismantle all the traps and like, you get like, you know, Echo and Ballard come in and it's like, Grand's kinda- cause it's like, feathers on his arm, [Austin and Keith laugh].

SYLVIA (as Echo): How did you get tar in the safe room? How did you tar and feather yourself? [Keith still laughing]

ART (as Grand): You know, a lot of things in this house if you- if you melt them at a high enough heat, become a liquid that's a lot like tar?

AUSTIN: Gross! Weird, I don't know I like this!

SYLVIA (as Echo): I have nothing to say to that.

KEITH: I bet you can melt Legos down, you can get a sort of like a tar like thing.

AUSTIN: Great. And y'all leave. I think Ballard comes with you. You come back to Ballard, Ballard has put the jacket on. The Advent jacket is on the ground, covered in blood in the safe house. I think we get a shot of Keen Forrester Gloaming in like, a different safe house watching y'all? Through like a scope. We also get- I think we also get a shot of Blueberry Jin watching y'all? Who used to be a member of the- or is a member of the First Exponent, used to be in Contrition's Figure. And is- is also

watching and lives on Thyrsus, and was my trump card for how to get you out of here if no one came? Blueberri Jin was gonna-

JANINE: Blueberri disappeared, remember?

AUSTIN: Uhhuh. They did. You could not get in contact with them. They are now operating as an independent. They are doing what the First Exponent was built to do. Which is like, parachute into a place, help a community, kill a person if that has to happen, solve problems. But like-

JACK: It's kind of like a- kind of like a more decisive Notion.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. Uhhuh.

JANINE: I don't think they k- I don't remember bringing the killing into it, but okay.

AUSTIN: Then you remember- they were also part of the Loving Gaze, which was the- the DFS spy agency? So. You know. That's- you pick some things up along the way. So. Yeah, so they are also watching through a window.

JACK: Off to a good start.

AUSTIN: But yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The three of you return. You return to- where do you go? Where does everybody go?

SYLVIA: I mean I said back to Moonlock.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Cause I know it's safe for me there, and I can probably make it safe for Ballad. Grand can go- I'm not gonna like, shackle Grand for anything?

AUSTIN: But also we need Echo and Grand to talk really quick.

SYLVIA: For sure.

AUSTIN: What are- please. Can we just get a little bit of that before we move on?

SYLVIA (as Echo): You know. If you wanted to get out of there- the catapult sooner, you could've just called me.

ART (as Grand): I'm s- [sighs, pauses] I'm sorry.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yeah, I mean. Me too?

ART (as Grand): It's not for right now.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yeah-

ART (as Grand): We have to go back.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Oh.

ART (as Grand): I can do. I can do better there.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yeah, okay. Just. Don't, you know. I've got bad experiences with people I care about falling in with groups that I don't necessarily trust for ostensibly noble reasons, and ending up, you- I mean you saw all that. I'd really like to avoid a-a do over. So.

SYLVIA: Echo's still crying while saying this by the way.

SYLVIA (as Echo): So, you know.

ART (as Grand): Look, I have something really cool to show you-

SYLVIA (as Echo) [overlapping with Art]: Make sure you don't get indoctrinated, that's all.

ART (as Grand): Look I have something really cool to show you, and then- and then we can work on it.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Alright. That- yeah. That'll do.

AUSTIN: Great, good. Great and good. Alright.

KEITH: That's turn one.

AUSTIN: Turn one. Got it. [Andrew chuckles] Only thirty more of those to go. Easy.

SYLVIA: If you need me, I'll be in my trailer. [Ali cackles]

AUSTIN: Alright.

ART: Grand isn't brilliant anymore, so the thing is melted Legos. It's if you put fire under- [people laugh]

KETIH: It gets really sticky. I can turn Legos into sticky.

JANINE: I can literally-

ANDREW: I don't like the way you said that.

JANINE: There's- that dude on YouTube, or that person who makes knives out of stuff, also did a video about how to make wood glue out of raw hide dog bones, so it can be done.

AUSTIN: We're all subscribed to Gig Kephart. We all follow-

KEITH: Yeah. I thought you were gonna say the world's sharpest Lego knife.

AUSTIN: Oh my god, that fucking world's sharpest underwear knife is unbelievable.

KEITH: Oh I haven't seen that one. I haven't seen-

AUSTIN: Yo.

KEITH [overlapping with others]: -the underwear knife one.

JANINE: That's a good one. That's a good one.

KEITH: Was it sharp?

AUSTIN: Yo- yeah! It was sharp!

KEITH: I was you know, I was underwhelmed by the world's sharpest pasta knife.

AUSTIN: Yeah me too.

JANINE: The jello one- the jello knife one is my favourite because they take a bunch of jello and make a knife, and then at the end, reconstitute the little jello couplets [shocked noises] that they started-

AUSTIN: Wow. That's cool. [other impressed sounds]

KEITH: Wow.

AUSTIN: Alright.

ART [overlapping]: Do they eat it?

JANINE: It is sustainable.

KEITH: Well they eat-

JANINE: They eat-

KEITH: They eat the pasta one too, but I just wasn't impressed with the sharpness.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do they not wear the underwear knife- okay. Next turn. Gig!

KEITH: Do they eat the underwear knife?

AUSTIN: They do. The Seven of Meridian. Seven of Autumn here. A project just isn't working as expected [everyone laughs], radically change the nature of this project, don't modify the project die. When it resolves, you'll be responsible for telling the community how the project went. Or, something goes foul, supplies are ruined,

JACK: Woof.

AUSTIN: -add a new scarcity.

KEITH: Well I can't do the first one.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah you haven't helped in any of these huh.

KEITH: No.

AUSTIN: That's a shame.

KEITH: So we have to add a new scarcity.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Oh here's one! Trust.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah! Sure.

KEITH: Yeah. Cause we now have, half of Advent.

AUSTIN: Right no- so I think the thing that happens is, I think- I wanna like zoom out the Ballad thing. I think Ballad makes the calls, and the Volunteers of Seiche bounce from Advent. Advent loses the Volunteers. And they join up with the Qui Err Coalition. And they've been-

ART: Oh, boy.

AUSTIN: Not all of them- I wanna be super clear, not all of them. Because some of them are still fascists. Like, this wasn't just 'hey!' But- but Ballad makes the call to those people who were like him, making a bad choice about staying ability, and about trying to avoid the worst possible outcome, and who had tried to- who would start to see things differently.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so- but hey, a day ago- oh three weeks ago, they would have raided this community. Right? So.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah I think, trust is good there.

KEITH: I also- I do like the idea of a bunch of people that we don't trust joining the community as something going foul.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally.

JACK: Mmm. Mhm.

AUSTIN: Supplies are ruined, you know? Trust is a toughie. Alright, so we've added negative trust.

JACK: And it's you that brought them there as well, right?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: It's like, these two people who Iota was like. Welcome, you can help.

SYLVIA: [unintelligible]

JACK: Yeah, it's like. Thank you for your trust, Iota. Now, I've brought some Advent soldiers.

AUSTIN: I've brought my brother from Advent, trust me. He's fine.

JACK: Oh.

KEITH: Okay. Alright.

AUSTIN: Clocks advance. So. Hey, what's up with Independence Mk. II?

ART: It's done?

AUSTIN: Sick.

ART: It's cool, and, unless- I guess unless Echo wants to stop it, it goes to Echo, Tender and Even.

AUSTIN: Dre, do you wanna say that bit out loud?

ANDREW: Yeah how- How evil is it? How- how evil is Independence Mk. II?

ART: I mean, can a hammer be evil?

KEITH: Yes.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ANDREW: Yes?

ALI: Of course a- [starts laughing and wheezing out the rest]

JACK: Of course a hammer can be evil.

ANDREW: Especially if I can- especially if Even can touch that hammer and have it talk to it about all sorts of sinister evil plans. [starts chuckling]

AUSTIN: True.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: True.

ANDREW: It can be.

AUSTIN: So actually let's- let's spin this then. Like, what is the version of this- what is Independence Mk. II- so what- so let's start with one. What was Independence Mk. I?

ART: The point of the first one was to outwardly project this like, historical significance and relevance and power? And inwardly reflect your own doubt?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: Imma tell you. Grand has learned in the time since then, that those are both bad ideas. [Austin and Ali and Jack chuckle] Neither of those was good or fun.

AUSTIN: Mmm. I see.

ART: Cause as I've been reminded by- by listeners and not me, Grand kept the- the internal mirror.

AUSTIN: Yeah. You did.

ART: The- the seeing, the bad parts of yourself mirror. And honestly, I wished I'd remember that more, because that would've really helped some- [Keith laughs] some stuff over. So I think that this is a much more traditional design?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: And I think what it is is it's way less faceted? It's not trying to project images either outward or inward, it just sort of like, it is what it is. It's sleeker, it's smooth. And because of that it probably moves better? I bet making joints work on a faceted-

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: -limb is very difficult? I think that's one of the big improvements. I also think one of the improvements is that- just Advent hasn't fucked it up.

ART: Right. Cause Advent had previously kind of fucked up the first model. Like, you don't need to see the worst version of yourself, get that shit out of here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I mean that was probably a good call, but also like-

KEITH: Well the thing it did was they- instead showed the best version.

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: So.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: They swung hard in a worse direction.

AUSTIN: Exactly.

ART: Yeah, it definitely doesn't do that. It prob- you probably don't see yourself at all. You know, most things you drive in your life [Austin chuckles] don't like, show you *you*. But yeah I think- I think in a lot of ways it's more utilitarian, it's less- it's less artsy I think? I think that's kind of like-

AUSTIN: Hey wait a second, you built a fucking mech! You designed a mech again!

ART: I did.

AUSTIN: Do you- are you showing your tattoos off? Are you like-? Or is it something else? Is it just you have those tattoos- yeah, I make mechs.

ART: Yeah, I think- I think Grand still wears them on his sleeves. I think.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: I think- on some level Grand finds the tattoos a little embarrassing-

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

ART: -at this point.

AUSTIN: Do you put the fingers back on?

ART: Oh definitely.

AUSTIN: Okay. So we get the shot of Grand with the fingertip light drawers on.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Nice. Nice.

ART: But yeah, this is little less artsy, little more utilitarian, and it's like a response, right? This is, this is like- this is in a lot of ways like a middle finger to the Advent versions.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: And I think one of the other reasons it's less artsy is to kind of like, file the serial numbers off of this? Like, Grand doesn't want this to be seen and for people to be like, 'oh fuck, Grand Magnificent made this and sent it to our enemies.' You know,

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: Grand is looking for plausible deniability here, like.

AUSTIN: There's no special touch? There's no Grand Magnificent signature somewhere?

ART: I think there is no- I think there is no signature, but you could talk me into like. There's like a time release signature that like, in eight months or whatever, like- [people start chuckling] it turns into fucking. I don't have a thing, but like.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Like Grand has like, 'well by this time, I'll be gone, so'.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh. Perfect.

ART: At this point, it'll like, grow giant middle fingers, and walk by fucking flipping people off, I don't know. [Andrew chuckles] That's not real, that's not it.

AUSTIN: That's not it. That's not it. It just like- boots up, and it's just a picture of Grand Magnificent giving you a thumbs up?

ART: Yeah, uhhuh, it is like- it's like an operating system where like, it has like a really weird login screen, but it slowly adjusts, and like when that- that counter ends, you see the like, a Grand Magnificent product- A Grand Magnificent Production.

AUSTIN: Perfect. What if it's also like the- you know,

ART: And then the missile launchers turn on.

AUSTIN: So Satoru Iwata had the- rest in peace, the former CEO of Nintendo, they- the developers of the Switch added in a motion you could do on his birthday, that would launch his- like, one of the first games he programmed? Which was like golf for the

NES. What if it's something like that, where it's like on a certain day, you could do a certain thing that reveals that Grand Magnificent- that's like a shoutout to yourself.

ART: Yeah there's a certain thing to do on Grand Magnificent's birthday, and then it turns into the Amprunner.

[Austin and Janine chuckle]

ANDREW: Oh shit.

AUSTIN: Happy Grand Magnificent Day everybody.

KEITH: Golf for the NES? Pretty good.

AUSTIN: Pretty good. Pretty good. Watch the RunButton video of it.

KEITH: Watch- RunButton video- RunButton- youtube.com/RunButton golf.

AUSTIN: Do a search for golf. Alright. Another thing completes- the Anticipation Splice Manoeuvre. Hey, Tender?

ALI: Hi.

AUSTIN: What's this look like?

ALI: I think-

KEITH: Roller rink.

ALI: She's just like-

AUSTIN: Yup. Roller rink.

ALI: No I think that it's like subtle because like, if somebody goes and is like, okay I want this to be a Burger King or whatever like, I want this to be a field of grass, like, something in the environment is just like, blue yarn, probably?

AUSTIN: Yes. yes. I love it.

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: Crust in the corner or like, you know, I nice chair that's like really plushy that's like, made out of this like, really nice blue fabric.

AUSTIN: Oh right.

ALI: So go sit down, like, hell yeah.

AUSTIN: That's awesome. I love that a lot. [Ali chuckles] Cool. Cool. So do you gain-you gain, the resource Splice Backdoor, right? Or like, Splice Vulnerability or whatever. Who gets- is the Independence thing a resource, or is it just a, is it just a fiction?

ART: Yeah, I think so. That, I mean- but I mean it's up to us I guess.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: That was my idea, but whatever.

AUSTIN: You don't take one.

ART: No.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Grand's not a pilot.

ALI: Grand can I ask very briefly how you felt while making this? [Austin chuckles]

ART: Scared?

ALI: Ohh...

AUSTIN: Yeah, good. Good. I guess the other way to do it is just to have, have it as a resource, that's probably easier. So I think, plus Independence Mk. II for the Qui-Err and for the- Seneschal's Brace, is the way I'm just gonna do it. That's easier. Alright, Tender. Does this release- does this release Anticipation from your brain in any way, or- yes, so you still feel it. It's still in there.

ALI [overlapping with Austin]: Uhhuh.

AUSTIN: So you still do feel Anticipation running the clock in your head constantly. Like running numbers. Okay. Are you talking with Anticipation much? Or is it just in the back of your mind, she just- I think we said she/her for Anticipation, right?

ALI: Yeah. [soft chuckle] I think it's the way that like, anxiety can work sometimes? Where you're just like, 'oh, you know, I have to go do this thing'.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: And then like sometimes you're like, no. I have to stop thinking about things right now. Or, [chuckles]

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: It's just happening?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: So, it's- you know. Day by day.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. Gig.

KEITH: Hi, yeah.

AUSTIN: What do you wanna do?

KEITH: So I couldn't find an exact answer, I want to- I want to start a project.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: But can I- can we have like a scene,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Two, not like a whole of a discussion but just a scene.

AUSTIN: Alright, as long as you haven't already framed the scene this turn, totally.

KEITH: I have not.

AUSTIN: Alright, then let's do it.

KEITH: So... I wanna have a scene with me, Echo, Grand, no- not Grand, well maybe. Okay so, me, Echo and Iota definitely in it, and also maybe Grand and Ballard.

AUSTIN: Okay. What's the project you're starting, cause the scene should be about the project you're starting.

KEITH: The scene- the project that I'm starting is removing the scarcity of Trust.

AUSTIN: Okay, so let's start that.

KEITH: Is that what, four?

AUSTIN: It's a four, yeah I got it. Cool. Alright. So what is that scene?

KEITH: Boy I just don't know. I just can't even wrap my head around it. That's why I want it.

AUSTIN: Is it just having a conversation? Is it-

KEITH: Yeah, I'm just like, I don't know how I feel about all of this! And then I guess I gesture at-

AUSTIN: Where is this happening? Let's start there, then. Let's start with- cause when you do a like, dinner table stuff- so who is- is Grand there, is Ballard there?

KEITH: Let's say yeah. Well, let's say Grand's there, Ballard's not. Echo's there, Iota's there.

AUSTIN: Ballard's like recovering, being attended to by doctors and stuff, probably.

KEITH: Yeah. I'm just at a- I'm at a complete loss. Like literally at a loss. I don't know,

AUSTIN: Okay, so let me-

KEITH: Hi, it's me Gig.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: I'm at a loss.

AUSTIN: So real quick, take turns. The person with the lowest social standing takes the first turn, if it isn't clear, have another player choose who takes the first turn on a whim, Gig you can take the first turn, I'm not saying anything about your social standing.

KEITH: Oh you don't think Grand has the lowest social standing?

AUSTIN: Grand does have the lowest social standing of this group.

KEITH: Okay- oh! We're just saying-

AUSTIN [overlapping with Keith]: But Grand's rich, so, what's social standing real- it's hard to say.

KEITH: But what does rich mean to-

AUSTIN: To Iota Pre- right. What's a king to a god, exactly? [someone chuckles] So. Let's go- the- we could just have actu- you know- engage in an actual improvised conversation is fine. But then, on your turn, you can also- we're doing the conversation over food game?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: And so, we can have an open conversation, but like, once it feels like there's a beat, we're gonna move from Gig to Grand, to Echo, to Iota. And then back around to Gig.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: So, Gig.

KEITH: I've got- yeah. I get- I need- I'm saying this to Echo and Iota, and I just need to know-

KEITH (as Gig): What is up with this I don't know why this is what we're doing!

AUSTIN (as Iota): Echo I'm giving you a lot of rope.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yeah, I- you know, personally, I was just thinking that-

AUSTIN (as Iota): You were thinking personally, that's accurate.

SYLVIA (as Echo): It would be better if Advent didn't get their hands on the guy who knew how to make the death machines really well.

KEITH (as Gig): But he already made them the death machines. That's why we- I thought we didn't want him here.

SYLVIA (as Echo): He can help! Right?

KEITH (as Gig): But he could also leave.

SYLVIA (as Echo): He can- listen. I'm not saying Grand has to join us. That's Grand's choice. I'm just saying he clearly wants to fix, you know, what's happened. Right?

AUSTIN: Everyone looks at Grand, presumably?

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, is that right?

ART (as Grand): Mmm. I don't know that Grand is going to answer direct questions from Gig. So it's really better if that ends with Echo's?

AUSTIN: Oh my god. Gig asked you-

SYLVIA (as Echo): Right, Grand?

ART (as Grad): Thank you. Yeah. I have a lot of regrets about how things went. I- I really didn't mean for it to get where it got, and I have been doing my best to use what Advent has for the benefit of everyone, with the hope of eventually making them collapse from the inside.

KEITH (as Gig): What?! What are your regrets specifically?

AUSTIN: That is a topical question, we'll after- Grand, you can choose a response to that, and then we're going to move to someone else as the leader of the conversation.

ART (as Grand): I don't know. Meeting you for one.

SYLVIA: Jesus Christ

KEITH [overlapping]: Oh boy.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Okay. So from—what did I say?—Echo, from Echo, so I said Gig, Grand, Echo, Iota? Right? So Grand it's your turn, you can- you can [snorts] ask a topical question, engage in actual improvised conversation, pass - saying something instead about the food, or leave the conversation.

ART: What are we actually eating?

AUSTIN: I don't know, what are we actually eating? What does the- what's the Qui Err food here. There's definitely jelly juice on the table.

KEITH: I think it's a potluck.

AUSTIN: Has everybody brought something?

KEITH: Everybody brought something. I brought like a sort of cheesy rice dish.

AUSTIN: Okay. Iota brought like a stew. Like a, like a hearty vegetable stew.

KEITH: Oh boy ladle that on the rice, it's great.

AUSTIN: It's fantastic, yeah.

ART (as Grand): I'm sorry, I followed the ingredients on the package but I think this pudding is really too thin.

AUSTIN: Okay. Grand says pass, saying something with the food. Echo.

SYLVIA: [exhales]. Okay, so I don't have to pick a question, I can just, talk?

AUSTIN: Yes, you can also just talk, engage in actual improvised conversation is a valid option.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Look, I know that going off on my own and coming back with my brother, a bunch of former Advent soldiers and Gig, isn't the best look-

KEITH (as Gig): Grand.

SYLVIA (as Echo): -Grand, my bad. Grand—

SYLVIA: [Austin chuckles] 'G' names, my Kryptonite. I always stumble on them. Anyway—

SYLVIA (as Echo): I just- I know how bad this looks, and I'm willing to take responsibility for any discomfort or any trouble that comes to the people that were already here from this merger, I guess? [strained and high pitched] Possible friendship? Someone else please say something. I- You're gonna- you- Iota you're right. You gave me- you've given me a lot of rope, and now I'm taking it a bit too much here.

AUSTIN (as Iota): It needs to be clear to these people from the Volunteers of Seiche what the situation is. This is not a partnership.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Mhm.

AUSTIN (as Iota): If they're pledging fealty or throwing in with us, if they want to fight alongside us, fine. But [pauses] I'm not in a place where I'm gonna give people who three weeks ago were working for Advent authority.

SYLVIA (as Echo): I'm- I'm not asking.

AUSTIN (as Iota): I know you're not asking. But how long until they start asking? Demanding?

SYLVIA (as Echo): I'll take care of them. Trust- like this is my, this- I will handle this. I'm gonna take ch- I'm gonna probably try and- Ballard's not in any condition to lead, and I thankfully from the Miracle have a bit of a reputation for that. So I'm hoping they'll listen to me. And if not, I will figure it out, cause that's what I do. I guess. I hope.

AUSTIN: Grand, Iota Pretense hopes to get you to commit to redirecting Advent's resource of Innovation to the Qui-Err. And I think that is specifically is like, you, in a sense, right? Like,

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: I think that Iota's like,

AUSTIN (as Iota): Grand, I've seen the design that you sent to Echo. It's wonderful. And I understand that- and I've reviewed the notes of your rescue, and I saw the various defences you built- was very little- little children's toy blocks. We need something like that. We're trying to make this place defensible. Defensible. And-

ART (as Grand): Okay.

AUSTIN (as Iota): We're trying to do a lot of things very quickly. Advent is very good at developing new ideas very quickly. You are very good at developing new ideas very quickly. Show me that you're willing to share that with us, and deny it to Advent and you'll gain some points in my book at least.

ART: Just quickly, what is- what is that gonna look like mechanically?

AUSTIN: I think it's-

ART: How do I- how do I do that?

AUSTIN: She is asking you to spend a clock basically. Giving- raising- I guess switching Innovation over? Is that a- is that- I guess that's an attack of some sort probably right? I mean it's up to you how you'd do it right? She's asking you to commit to it. So either it's starting a clock that would give the Qui-Err Indepen- Innovation. And then like helping that clock along or something by spending Advent's Innovation, or it's straight up doing a heavy attack that lets you steal a resource from Advent and bring it to the Qui-Err Coalition.

ART: Alright. I don't think I'm ready to do that one,

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: That feels like a little- I'm trying to avoid directly attacking Advent till I'm ready to-

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: -grab that bottle of champagne and jump out the airplane emergency slide.

AUSTIN: Mhm. That like you do.

ART (as Grand): Yes, absolutely. I would love to help. I think I could do some really good work here, and, not only it's the least I could do for saving my life, but it's also absolutely the least I could do. I- I owe a debt to Quire.

AUSTIN: She nods. Back to you, Gig.

KEITH (as Gig): Hmmm. This pudding is way too thin.

AUSTIN: Then it goes to- to Grand. That was pass, saying something instead about the food.

KEITH: Mhm.

ART: There's so many things I'd like to be reassured about, but that's just really not-
[Austin chuckles]

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Not really what we're here for. I'll give one more. This is I think for- how much is- for anyone but Gig. I'm feeling generous, what favour do you ask?

AUSTIN: I think Iota Pretense finds a moment, to like, talk to just you, Grand?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Like, Gig and Echo are getting some more stew in the kitchen or something, right? She leans over and she says,

AUSTIN (as Iota): Can you stop giving Gig a hard time? I get it. I get it. He's helped a lot of people. Give him a-

ART (as Grand): I appreciate that but he's,

AUSTIN (as Iota): -another chance.

ART (as Grand): He's so fucking rude.

AUSTIN (as Iota): We're in the business of taking territory away from people. We, [chuckles] rudeness is something we have to lean into sometimes. To make the world a better place. He's also just- he doesn't- it's not a- [sighs] He's not trying to be rude, he just is rude. You know? [people chuckle] Just try to give him some slack.

ART (as Grand): I'll do what I can. But it's- it's probably for everyone's benefit that you get me out of here sooner than later.

AUSTIN: Fair. Echo?

SYLVIA: My move was going to be can you be more polite to Gig, [Austin laughs] and we can work together, so I actually don't have another.

AUSTIN: No that's funny though! What if it's just the same thing, it's just- and then- 10 minutes later, Echo pulls Grand-!

SYLVIA: It's like hey, about dinner, listen. I'm- I'm gonna talk to Gig about this too.

ART (as Grand): Are you actually, or is that the thing-

SYLVIA: Yeah, I am actually. I'm actually very-

ART (as Grand): Okay, okay.

SYLVIA: Not to. Been in the situation between two friends not liking each other weirdly a lot this year.

ART (as Grand): Uh huh!

SYLVIA: So. Able to method act that one. So, I think Echo's just like. Hey, and it's like super uncomfortable.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Hey, so I'm going to talk to Gig about this too, I'm not just singling you out. But you guys gotta stop being dicks to each other, especially in front of

Iota. Cause- she's kind of in charge of everything, and, also? It's really uncomfortable. I just got stabbed by my brother yesterday, like, I've kind of got enough on my plate. If you guys could just- you don't have to like each other. You just have to not hate each other. Openly.

ART (as Grand) [overlapping with Sylvia]: Did you-

SYLVIA (as Echo): Openly is the emphasis. Hmm?

ART (as Grand): Did you two coordinate this?

SYLVIA (as Echo): What?

ART (as Grand): Literally like, [Austin laughs] two minutes ago-

SYLVIA (as Echo): Oh.

ART (as Grand): Iota came and asked me the same thing. Is this-?

SYLVIA (as Echo): I mean, great minds think alike, right?

ART (as Grand): I wasn't lying- I wasn't like. When I said I would, I mean I meant it.

SYLVIA (as Echo): I haven't talked to her since dinner. Gig and I have been talking about how thin that jello was, for like the past hour.

ART (as Grand): Look, the recipe said [Austin and Keith laugh] add two cups of water to the mix. That's what I did!

SYLVIA (as Echo): It didn't taste bad, it was just weirdly thin, I don't know how that happens.

ART (as Grand): I think- I don't think the directions are necessarily universal for different atmospheres?

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yeah. We'll figure it out.

ART (as Grand): And I could've added it more slowly. Look, I'm gonna try with Gig. I would really appreciate it if you- if you also talked to him, but yeah. I'll do my best.

And again, this is temporary. I'll be out of all of your hair soon. And then I can try to continue living a life without Gig in it.

SYLVIA (as Echo): I mean, okay. Well you- you don't have to the whole you know disappearing thing again, just FYI.

ART (as Grand): I think- I think I can do more damage on the inside. I don't know how I'm gonna get back in, but.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Oh, I thought, you meant the catapult again, once this was all over with.

ART (as Grand): Oh.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Cause I-

ART (as Grand): I don't know-

SYLVIA (as Echo): -that, yeah.

ART (as Grand): Let's see how this ends. Maybe we'll all be dead by then.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Always great talking to you, Grand.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Always a good time with the-!

SYLVIA (as Echo) [overlapping with Austin]: Always fun.

ART: Always a good time with the Magnificent.

AUSTIN: Oh boy. Great. Okay. I think that's probably scene.

ART [overlapping with Austin]: Can we put the name for like Grand Magnificent's sibling the other day, like a character we just never-

AUSTIN: Did you have a sibling this whole time?

ART: No! But I just really thought of a really good like other name?

JANINE: Peter?

ART: I don't even remember what it was.

AUSTIN: Peter- you don't-

JANINE: It'd just be Peter Magnificent.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Janine]: You don't even remember what it was?!

JACK: [people laughing] I cannot believe- You're just teasing! I was so excited!

AUSTIN: Me too!

JANINE: That's fucked up.

ART: I think it was Singular Triumph?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I hate this.

JACK: It's extremely good.

AUSTIN: It's very good.

JANINE: Singular Triumph Magnificent?

JACK: [indignantly] It's not a surname!!!

ART: Magnificent isn't the surname!!!

JANINE: Oh my- okay! [laughing]

ART: Everyone just names themselves.

KEITH: Speaking of names, did Jack ever get a name for-

AUSTIN: Yeah. Good question.

JACK: Yeah, I have one for you. Declan's Corrective's Excerpt name is '**Engage the crowned gears, drive forward with the pinion and the rack, for though the maintenance may be concluded, there are repairs to perform**'. And the Excerpt name is 'Pinion'.

AUSTIN: Love it. Can you type it so that we have it in writing?

JACK: Yeah for sure!

AUSTIN: Thank you. Let's-

KEITH: I'm ready for this scene to be over. I did have more giving Grand a hard time, but we can-

AUSTIN: But we can-

KEITH: -have enough of that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that continues to happen. Alright. New turn. Signet, are you ready?

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Oh! That's.

JANINE: Mmmmmmm.

AUSTIN: Okay, so that's gonna go back in. That's the King of Autumn. That does not happen, but we've now triggered the King. Oh shit! Well-

JANINE: Woof.

AUSTIN: Okay!

JACK: Janine, just read this carefully.

AUSTIN: Ten says, Harvest is here and plentiful, add an abundance. Or, cold autumn winds drive out your enemies, remove a threatening force from the map in the area.

[Ali gasps]

ANDREW: Jesus.

KEITH: Wow.

AUSTIN: And we talked about this in play testing?

JACK: It means what you think it means.

AUSTIN: Exactly what you think it means.

JANINE: Really.

AUSTIN: Really.

JACK: Yup!

KEITH: Wow.

AUSTIN: But like the world sees whatever you're doing, right? So.

JACK: Yeah, the- the game will continue.

JANINE: So. My- there's a big question here of like what is most interesting for what remains of this story.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

JANINE: But there's also a question of, there aren't any limits in this- in this proposition? But I think within the universe there are? This is just me sort of reasoning things. I feel like because of where we're at, like Crystal Palace isn't here, so a move to destroy the Rapid Evening, I think is only confined to the Rapid Evening within the Mirage, right?

AUSTIN: I think that's fair, yeah.

JANINE: Yeah. In which case,

AUSTIN: You-

JANINE: That kind of- all that will do is make them madder.

AUSTIN: It would destroy- so what it would do is to destroy the blockade and allow people to leave the system? Like, Advent and- and the Waking Cadent, who wants to leave, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But yes. Crystal Palace is still on its way.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And, and it's not- that is not- that's not gonna change.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I guess what I would is like, I would have to figure how to make Crystal Palace less effective of a military force when it arrives?

JANINE: Sure.

AUSTIN: Obviously it's arriving with the military stuff.

JANINE: That's still- the premise of this game is that Crystal Palace is arriving and that's the end.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: So, what I'm basically what I'm presented with here is, do I get rid of the immense bad thing? [Austin chuckles] Or do get rid of the small thing and allow- do I get rid of an immense bad thing and allow another immense bad thing to still exist at full power, or do I get rid of neither immense bad thing and just like a branch of, you know.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: So I feel like in light of that I need to go for Volition because that is,

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: The biggest, punch relative to what is possible right now. What is this system, what is-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

You know.

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: And also you know, the Rapid Evening saying they're here because of Volition- I think Signet would be like, okay cool, well.

AUSTIN: Well we fought- we did it. We got rid of Volition, well now what? Yeah.

JANINE: Your move.

AUSTIN: So, what's this look like? I don't-

JANINE: I think.

AUSTIN: The card does not say, and I know the card couldn't possibly say do a heavy attack to do this. I don't think there's a fail state here.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The card says remove a threatening force from the map in the area. So tell me what cold autumn winds look like. And it should be embodied so I'm guessing it's y'all, right?

JANINE: Yeah. It's tough cause Volition is huge?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And we have so little information about what affects Volition? At least I feel like I have very little information on that?

AUSTIN: Mhm. We can invent it. We haven't seen it, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We are the authors here, and it's your turn, which gives you extra authorship.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I guess I'll restate some things about Volition that we already set up. Now they couldn't have changed, it's been a year. Volition is a black moon that's at the center of the system. It was a moon, it was a moon of Qui-Err, it was a false moon of Qui-Err, of Quire the planet. Its- its surface changes in shape and texture. It has sometimes a sort of liquid metal type quality that's either perfectly smooth or bubbling and boiling. Sometimes the ground itself is like obsidian, like black glass? Sometimes it's sooty, or like black sands? It is- it has- it breeds Axioms, it creates Axioms by cutting a hole from our world into some different, idea driven world into another dimension? You're not going to find an Axiom factory here? Whatever you find will always feel metaphorical. In terms of where it builds them? I think we've already seen that in your dance in a sense, right? You've killed a bunch of the Axioms it stored up.

AUSTIN: [continued] It has a mind. It has a will, obviously its name is Volition so of course it has a will. It does not have a pilot. We know that it can- it has a subjective self because we saw it in conversation with Chthonic during the Dragon game of the Holiday Special; the Follow game that Even, Signet, Grand were on, right? What else do we know about it- it doesn't think of itself as needing a Candidate or an Excerpt. It thinks of itself as being a new next- the kind of final step between Divine and Axiom, a fourth generation of Divine that requires no pilot-

JANINE [overlapping with Austin]: I think I just figured this out.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: It might be too fucked up.

AUSTIN: That's- let's do it.

JANINE: Do you?

AUSTIN: Maybe. What do you propose?

JANINE :Can a Divine pilot a Divine?

AUSTIN: Sure. We know that- we know that that's true.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's absolutely true from COUNTER/Weight.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We know that that's true.

JANINE: I feel- this isn't- this isn't a move I would make if it didn't say that I was removing a threatening force.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

JANINE: Because that feels like I am- I don't want to say guaranteed but this feels like it should be safe in a way a move normally wouldn't be. Like I wouldn't want to do this as an attack.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE :Or something. But given the context of this move I think the thing is that Signet- because Polyphony doesn't have an Excerpt or anything. I think the thing that Signet sort of proposes is maybe like- like a sort of midnight revelation, and something that- that she- I bet she brings this to the Waking Cadent in a very pointed way.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh. Like in a- like walks in the throne room, so to speak?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Heels on the- on the hardwood floor?

JANINE: And- I think she- she just mentions that like what Volition is, is in the- in the way the Waking Cadent feels, or can feel that Divinity can be incompatible with freedom. And needs to be tethered to something. And the way that Signet feels that people are not superior in a way that makes them entitled to be the tether.

AUSTIN: Mmm. We should just have this conversation.

JANINE: Probably yeah. I don't think I want a scene for my other thing, so.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's fine. So, it's the- it's the Temple of Privign, it's this kind of jewelled area- I think- I think it's probably the- do you remember the area in the Temple of Privign that was like, all of the concentric circles of like, little shops and offices from like where Fourteen Fifteen got shot?

JANINE: Mmm [nervous laugh] I do.

AUSTIN: That whole play where Tender's legs broke, and-

JANINE [overlapping with Austin]: And I fucked up a bunch? And I lost my scarf?

AUSTIN: Everybody fucked up a bunch, it went bad. That whole place has been reworked into like a garden where it's like concentric circles, and then the center is the Waking Cadent's kind of like, throne effectively? But it's like a working throne? It- it is surrounded by kind of displays that- that are built into these icicles hanging from the ceiling, that fall down around her? And like- she's able to like kind of pivot around inside of this chair three hundred sixty degrees and like look at a bunch of information that's being- that's showing up etched into these icicles? Or kinda being like broadcast through the icicles' screens? And so it's like a winter garden, basically. And the icicles definitely have gems in them too. It's dope.

AUSTIN: [continued] And as you approach I think that she like uses a hand to move the icicles to a side and kind of like, makes a walking path- like a line of sight for you? And she says like,

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): Signet. You've been here for a while. We haven't spoken yet. I'm pleased that we finally will have the opportunity to.

JANINE (as Signet): I was waiting for the right moment.

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): You sound like you speak with intention. Should we get to it then?

JANINE (as Signet): We should.

AUSTIN: And she like lowers her throne to the ground and like raises one for you, so that you can sit and speak.

JANINE (as Signet): We have a fundamental disagreement. That I imagine made it a little surprising for you when I showed up.

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): I suspect your disagreement is not as fundamental as our disagreements with others. We both know what Divines are, we both know recognise their brilliance and power. I think we simply differ with what to do about that.

JANINE (as Signet): I don't think we both agree on what Divines are because if we did, it wouldn't be a question of what to do with them.

AUSTIN: A- a wry smile crosses her face.

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): I hope you understand that I also am in a position of needing to wonder what to do with other people too. What to do with is not a thing you choose to want to think about the world. But at a certain point, that is what was thrust upon me. In any case, what is the matter you bring?

JANINE (as Signet): I want to give Volition an Excerpt.

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): I've considered this. But-

JANINE (as Signet): But who could tame Volition?

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): Who would not be tamed?

JANINE (as Signet) [overlapping with Austin]: Who would Volition-

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): Yes.

JANINE (as Signet): Who would not be tamed by Volition?

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): I'll be honest. I considered it myself.

JANINE (as Signet): Heh.

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): But, I- I know my own flaws. And my time with Polyphony has made me more comfortable with them. I cannot conceive of throwing anyone to that thing.

JANINE (as Signet): You're still thinking of this relationship as a very strong dog on a leash, and making sure that the arm holding that leash is strong enough to keep hold of that leash. Even if the dog is leading in certain directions, even if the dog has its wants—the arm holding the leash would still be able to keep it in line, right? You yourself told me that I should leash Belgard.

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): Not only did I tell you that, I think whether you call it something else or not, you have leashed Belgard.

JANINE (as Signet): Have I leashed you? Have I leashed Blooming?

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): Yes, of course-

JANINE (as Signet) [overlapping with Austin]: Have I leashed Massalia?

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): Of course. This is the world.

JANINE (as Signet) [overlapping with Austin]: And you would say that's the same? You'd say that's the same as what you're proposing before.

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): I think the world is a series of leashes that we pull on. And I don't think that because I am young and naive, I th- I think that because I've seen it happen. Because my own has been pulled. And I spent a long time thinking there was no need of such things. Now, it's not that I think there's a need, I think it is what the world is. Even now, even- under the graceful aura of Polyphony, I recognise that I am being pulled in directions. That is not a problem. What is important is understanding the directions one is being pulled in, and recognising the times when it's important to pull back.

JANINE (as Signet): Then what we're saying isn't that different. You're not saying that they need masters. You're saying that they need relations.

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): No relations exist that do not have some degree of dominance in them. But, neither do they exist with rare exception in a form of total

subordination. There is always room for resistance. So, again I think we may be more alike here.

AUSTIN: And the smile fades a little bit. Because like, there is something- there is something she's losing- it's a bit of personal pleasure she loses in not having diff- not having the disagreement available, you know?

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: That's who she is. She loves having a sparring partner? But, also hey you're in a little closer here, and I think you propose your idea. I think she brings up like a model of Volition here. She actually brings up a couple of them? Made of black ice, and like shows her variations on this theory of like, we could give it this person, we could give it this person. But you're right, she's not yet thought about the thing you're proposing. And so I think she says like-

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): I considered it with myself. I considered it with Blooming. With Massalia. With Cascara. Even a touch of Quire itself at the helm. But, none of these work. What do you propose?

JANINE (as Signet): I propose- [short pause] one of the strongest relationships- one of the strongest relations that can be forged, and one we haven't seen before. I think we should give Volition its child as a Candidate. As an Excerpt.

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): Its child.

JANINE (as Signet): The best relation that you've been mentioning. Again and again as we talked. [Austin inhales] The person who has helped you understand things a little different, who has helped you-

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): You would throw Polyphony to it.

JANINE (as Signet): [chuckles] I'm not throwing Polyphony anywhere. Being an Excerpt you know, is not being thrown to something unless you don't want it and if you don't want it. usually they don't make you

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): [overlapping with Janine]: Have you spoken to Volition?

JANINE (as Signet): Yes.

AUSTIN: And like you can tell she's a little scared at this.

AUSTIN (as the Waking Cadent): I will trust you here. But I care for Polyphony, and I worry. It will be very easy to convince them to do this. It will make you happy and so they will do it. And I should not- I should not care that it is so easy to pull that leash. But it will be. I pray that this works.

AUSTIN: And I think she like immediately begins like, to construct a model of it, to see what happens? In like this weird ice simulation? And she sees like a couple of possible outcomes. What's the one that happens? Show me in like montage how this goes down.

JANINE: I kind of have an idea but I'm not sure how- do you remember the Holiday Special Volition pulled Signet and Belgard into like that weird-

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: In-between islandy space?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it was an island built on top of a skyscraper and construction that was-

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Completely underwater? Except the very top.

JANINE: I should also be clear that I- we don't really have time for like, for this but I- I want to imagine there is a conversation between Signet and Polyphony that is very much like: the thing that would make me happy is you being happy?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: Like, and she- and that's not just saying that, that's true because she cares for Polyphony too.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes.

JANINE: Like she doesn't want to put Polyphony in a bad situation if Polyphony, you know, is just doing it for- you know. But Polyphony being what Polyphony is, that's kind of a weird- Polyphony's thing is a difficult thing to explore.

AUSTIN: Yeah it's like you're digging- digging- you're digging for consent from-

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Gravity, right?

JANINE: I considered having Belgard- Belgard has will too and that's important.

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: To mention.

AUSTIN: Totally. I think it's probably worth saying that Belgard is also a little concerned about this.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because Belgard can very easily run the numbers and- and can- can imagine this going so bad that- that wounds are delivered that are too big to be repaired. Right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And- but that she also- I think there's a degree of Belgard here, that like, she respects your ingenuity? And your willingness to recognise Axioms as potential beings in this way? Even if she, Belgard, is not quite convinced by that yet, you know?

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: But that Polyphony specifically could be a good, a good fit here.

JANINE: Yeah. So I think what happens is that you know, that those discussions happen, but ultimately I think the way that it sort of comes to pass is that Signet takes Polyphony in Belgard and they go to the surface of the- Volition. And try to kind of tempt to conversation again? I don't really remember what triggered it.

AUSTIN: Oh, it's easy-

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Volition's desperate to talk.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Volition is not an Axiom, Volition is a Divine. And Volition has spent the last year alone. I think you see something very strange as soon as you land, which is in various forms the same way that it builds the Iconoclasts in various forms? It's been building clouds. And they're just lining the ground, so it looks like fog? Except for like when you look down at it from a valley you can see that there are various types of clouds? And it's trying to rebuild Chthonic for the last year. Because Chthonic was like the last person to talk to it?

JANINE: That's sad.

AUSTIN: And so it's like, it's- it's- part of the reason it builds Axiom- it builds Axioms because its job is to build Axioms, right? And it genuinely believes in the- that world. It genuinely believes the world would be better without subjectivity in it? And with what it sees as the true form of everything that could possibly be being brought unto existence. The Platonic Ideals are again, Aristotelian ideals of like, of clouds. Of- of cars. Of schisms. Of polyphony. And so it's opening this gate into this other dimensional world, that it thinks is more honest somehow than this one. But it is- it is not from that world, right?

AUSTIN: [continued] It is- it's a Moses like figure, or- or a figure like- like the Socialism that's supposed to exist between our world and Communism, right? It's- it's always going to be a bridge that can't itself see the future it wants to bring into being? It's always going to be lacking in some way. And that fucking hurts. And I think Signet specifically can pick up on that, and can see the signs of that as you explore its surface. I think it takes something big to get noticed. Like what do you do to gain its attention?

JANINE: Uhhh this is hard! I think the thing Signet does to get noticed is probably like you know- I always could go back to my Veil powers, because they're very cool. I think she does the thing though, that like, true name kind of,

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Kind of reach out like- because, specifically Volition has pulled her in before.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: There is a kind of access there where she can reach out directly to Volition in turn,

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: And make herself known, and like make herself seen?

AUSTIN: Yeah. So I think you're back on the island, you, Belgard and Polyphony. And you can see that the island- the floodwaters have subsided? And the building below you that was- the giant under construction skyscraper is completely built. And the rest is, the- all around it, you can still see, it's still an island at the end of this massive- surrounded by water, but now like, there's a whole city surrounding this singular skyscraper. And I think for the like- for the folks at home, for the viewer of the show, it should- it should echo the Second Street Drifting city? From the Contrition's Figure Arc? Where it's just like these long, long wide avenues?

AUSTIN: [continued] Except instead of being in the kind of orange, and yellow, and golds? It's in like silvers and purples and blacks, right? Because, colours. Because Volition's already a big black space orb, right? And so it's st- it's very pretty, I want to be clear. It doesn't look evil. This isn't- this isn't Mordor. It's just- it looks cool where the other place looked warm, you know? So little- some blues here. A temple on a hill, still, you know? And it probably plucked this image from your mind the last time you were here. And again, instead of the twenty seven temples to the- to the Divines, it's temples to the Axioms its built? It's going all the way in on this shit? And it feels you there. And you're on- there's still just a little tiny tropical island on the top of this giant skyscraper that you're looking down on. And it probably- you know what, it's the giant- the skyscrapers are built to be the skyscraper you took the elevator on, back in Contrition's Figure, right? That's what it was building. Where you first met Chthonic. And it has taken the shape of Chthonic, and is this singular cloud, this dark cloud at the top looking down at you from there. And I don't think it even- I don't think it wants to speak to Signet. I think it only speaks to Polyphony and to Belgard. Do you- which want, do you want to voice Belgard for this? If you're comfortable with that?

JANINE: I think Belgard, yeah.

AUSTIN: Otherwise I would be talking to myself three times. [Janine and Ali chuckle]
That would be hard.

AUSTIN (as Volition): You return.

JANINE: You could be talking to either of us.

AUSTIN: Belgard.

JANINE: Okay.

JANINE (as Belgard): I do.

AUSTIN (as Volition): Then you come with another. With one of mine.

JANINE (as Belgard): I do.

AUSTIN (as Volition): Why do you return them to me?

JANINE (as Belgard): We- we believe that-

JANINE: Sorry is Polyphony they? Or she?

AUSTIN: They. Polyphony is they/them.

JANINE: Okay.

JANINE (as Belgard): We believe that they- their presence would be beneficial to you. That it would fulfil something.

AUSTIN (as Volition): Divine, you do not know me. You do not know my lack.

JANINE (as Belgard): It's our role to- to see lacks. And a lack is not always something that you acknowledge. A lack is- a lack is complicated, it is sometimes a wound that hurts to heal. Or whose treatment is difficult and unpleasant.

AUSTIN: As Belgard talks, the waves begin to rumble. And the city slowly starts to flood again. You should also no- I should also note- here's a fun thing. Here's a fucking fun, wild thing. Part of the reason it's been able to build the city is because the- the old NEH gave it something beneficial, which is the Splice? So there is another colour here, which is- there is- there is a run of blue thread all through.

JANINE: [nervous chuckle]

AUSTIN: There has to be. It's still the Splice, right? So like, all throughout this city there's little, you know, blue crochet- there's no place like home things on the walls. Or, the inhabitants which are again these kind of mannequin people, are wearing blue dresses.

JANINE: Comfy sweaters.

AUSTIN: Comfy sweaters, exactly. I mean ironically Polyphony is also always wearing blue, so there's a good little double up here. And I wonder, Tender is Anticipation watching on? Is Anticipation relating this back to Tenderness? Or is this just Anticipation solitary. Not in communication.

ALL: I don't think it's in communication? Like I don't know that it's like,

AUSTIN: Okay. Volition, the cloud, thunders, and like it shakes, and you can see lightning sparking inside of it.

AUSTIN (as Volition): I do not have wounds. I cause wounds. I do not have lacks — I reveal them. I am Volition itself. I need naught. I simply am. Like you, child.

AUSTIN: And the light- like a bolt of lightning strikes in front of Volition, in front of Polyphony's feet. Polyphony steps backwards? But like very- very measuredly. Not a jump back. Just a slight step backwards. And then looks up, and is like- so I don't know- I don't know what Polyphony says here. Polyphony knows that Volition is lying, right? And knows that Volition needs to lie. Knows that Volition is fulfilling its own need by lying. What does Volition really want? Table, what does Volition really want?

KEITH: [thought sounds]

JACK: It- it. It wants to- I mean when I think of Volition I think of it just kind of like- like, churning out Axioms.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And it wants to- impose isn't the right word. It sort of just wants to like make-

JANINE: Propagate?

JACK [overlapping with Janine]: Wants to like make- yeah, propagate!

AUSTIN [overlapping with Jack]: It does! It does. So I think the thing I'm drilling to is, it's doing that for a reason though, right? Volition does that because Volition, 1. is an echo- is built by the Iconoclasts, who were devotees of Independence and were, you know. Lived through the- the terrible annihilation of the planet Quire, and wanted to bring about a better world, right? And for them, that better world was not material, it was idealistic. It was a world of ideas and not a world where form or function really mattered. What mattered was this ideal- this idea that should replace us instead of the physical echoes of that thing, right? Like, oh, we need a world in which- in which the- we don't just have, you know, chairs. We have the perfect chair. We only have the perfect chair, that's the better world. Because we can't be trusted to build our own shit.

AUSTIN: [continued] So Volition wants a sort of world of- a world where whatever a thing is, it is its best version, right? And I think maybe the thing that Polyphony understands and finds the root in, is they- they recognise that the thing to fix there is to convince Volition that every independent thing could improve, certainly. But is its in own independent thing. It's like re-injecting Independence in the place of a sort of like general, collective thing. It's saying, nonononono. We don't need one- one really good chair. Every chair is its own thing, there is no good, special, perfect, ideal Platonic form of the chair out there. There is just this- like this desk chair you have. And that like, love-seat in your living room, I almost said kitchen. If you have a love-seat in your kitchen at home, I'm not judging you! That's a cool place to have a love-seat! I've played House- I've seen House Flippers, sometimes you put a love-seat in a kitchen! And I think what it- what it tries to do, I think it just- I think that they say-

AUSTIN (as Polyphony): You're right. You don't lack anything. The world does, though. And you could help fill those lacks. Each individual one. We can do it together.

AUSTIN: And so instead of seeing the world as reflections, right- I mean this is the like, the Plato's Allegory of the Cave is the super easy way of doing this right? Is the- for

people who have no idea what this philosophical shit I'm talking about is, a lot of classic philosophers thought about the world as there being a real place. Or a- not a place, but a realm of ideas that, wha- all we saw were the shadow puppets on the wall, right? We- we didn't see again, we didn't see a cat, or we didn't see the true thing cat, what we saw were, someone with a fucking sock puppet making a cat, and going- yeah, that's a cat! But our foolish assess couldn't understand: no really, there's a true perfect cat out there! And Polyphony is affectively-

JANINE: His name is Bone Bone.

AUSTIN: His name is- [Keith laughs] that's actually true. [Janine giggles] That's actually true. So what Polyphony's doing is like: no you idiot! Bone Bone is a good cat, Bone Bone is already a good cat. What we need is a world where Bone Bone gets to be the most Bone Bone it can be, and also the- what's a second good cat? Who's- what's the second best cat on the Internet? Who has another kit- Annie! Annie is a good cat. And Annie gets to be the best Annie that Annie can be. We don't need to replace Annie and Bone Bone and Gracie with the perfect Good Cat. What we need is someone to bring the best out of Bone Bone and Annie and Gracie. Something that is like specific and historical and not like, ideal. It has to be material. The way you fucking help people, you idiot, is by helping people! Except it's Polyphony so- Polyphony would never go: you idiot! They say we can do it together! I'm your friend!

JACK: Do they still describe the cats though?

AUSTIN: Yes. They say,

AUSTIN (as Polyphony): Imagine three cats. [Jack chuckles] There's a very fluffy one named Bone Bone. Actually don't think about Bone Bone, Bone Bone is already perfect. [someone scoffs] Let's think about these other cats who are pretty good!

AUSTIN: I think Volition rumbles again. And the seas stop shaking. And they recede. And nothing changes about the city, the blue doesn't disappear, and the blacks don't turn bright. And the- the rumbling cloud doesn't- doesn't turn into a, you know, bright, white sunstroked, you know, cottonous thing out in the sky. Like it doesn't become perfect here. Volition is Volition. But Polyphony is here now too. And I think that they just turn to you, Signet and Belgard. And they say,

AUSTIN (as Polyphony): I'll miss you both very much. Please stay in touch.

JANINE (as ???): Luckily I'm very good at that.

JANINE: That was probably- I don't know who that was actually.

AUSTIN: Who was that? Yeah. Are you in- is Signet in Belgard? Or is Signet on the ground.

JANINE: I imagine there was like a moment of like, disembarking,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And Signet is probably like, on Belgard's hand or something, that's always cute.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: Yeah. I forgot-

AUSTIN: I think that Polyphony walks over to you, and like offers you a hand down.

JANINE: I'll take that.

AUSTIN: And they'll like turns and looks at the city, and like the oceans in the distance. And they say like,

AUSTIN (as Polyphony): It's so beautiful. There's so many things to do and so many people to help, and. Thank you, for giving me this.

JANINE: I wanna kiss Polyphony's hand.

AUSTIN: Hell yeah! Okay.

JANINE: There we go. That's good.

AUSTIN: You kiss Polyphony's hand. I think that they like, bring you in for a hug.

JANINE: Aww!

AUSTIN: Like a much more like- you give them the very very sweet hand kiss, and they're like no I want a hug! That's not, no! Give you a big hug. And then they walk back over and just like, sit down on the side of the. It's like,

AUSTIN (as Polyphony): Travel back safe.

AUSTIN: And then they sit down on the side of the- the [pause] skyscraper, and let their legs dangle off? And start like pointing at things, and like playing with the environment, and creating stuff inside of this city. And just kind of like, playing with play-doh at a distance. And Volition just kind of rumbles, and eases? And it stops making Axioms. It still could, I think. And maybe it still does here or there. But it isn't doing the thing or just like- gotta make these fucking Axioms! Just churn 'em out! What's up next! What's the next one? It's just like, very slow, and very thoughtful. But still wilful, right? It's still Volition.

AUSTIN: [continued] I think the weird thing happens here, which is. It. It lights up. And so at the center of the system now, instead of being this big black orb of sharp glass-sharp hot glass, there is a sun.

JANINE: I hope that's not bad news for Moonlock. It's very close.

AUSTIN [overlapping with Janine]: Moonlock, catches fire. [Janine chuckles]

SYLVIA: Aw.

AUSTIN: And that's it, it's gone now.

ALI: Well. Whoops.

AUSTIN: Boom. No it's fine.

KEITH: Oh, that looks nice!

AUSTIN: Moonlock is fine. Yeah, I didn't draw, I searched for 'sun' inside of the 'tokens' list?

KEITH: Yep, it just fits right there!

AUSTIN: It does! It fits like right there, very perfectly.

KEITH: It covered up all the words though

Eh, you know, I can- sorry it doesn't sound, Hi-Rar-My-My-Whoa-OhBoy anymore.
[Keith chuckles]

JANINE: And also the corpses.

AUSTIN: And all the corpses are gone.

JANINE: What corpses?

AUSTIN: Alright. I'm gonna have to cross Volition's off here huh.

JANINE: Yaaay.

ALI: Whoo! [chuckles]

AUSTIN: Phooey!

ALI: Good job!

AUSTIN: Good hustle. Good hustle out there.

KEITH: And so we beat Volition, so, Rapid Evening, doesn't-

AUSTIN: -everybody else. What does this look like for everybody else? Like the sun turned on?

JANINE: We don't even get to have our first reaction to characters seeing a sun turn on in this show. [Ali chuckles]

AUSTIN: It's true. Yeah, well. We saw it turn off first, right?

JANINE: Someone put on a ring, and then they were like "did I do that?" [Andrew chuckles]

KEITH: I think I'm- I think I'm on Skein. Maybe Moonlock too. Everybody runs and hides, something bad is happening, it's glowing, it's gonna attack us.

AUSTIN: Right. That's fair, right? Volition lit up. What the fuck.

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: I think The World Without End just- its navigation stuff? Just like, something utterly bizarre- I don't know whether or not if Even's piloting it at this point but like I think like that the idea that a body- the computer that runs The World Without End seeing a new orbital body that is a sun?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And just going like:

AUSTIN: Uhhuh!

JACK: "Oh god, right, I'm going to make immediate evasive manoeuvres", so I think everybody's thrown about. I think all the shadows- everywhere the shadows change, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah! A hundred percent. There are shadows now that are not just from the natural light of the Mirage.

KEITH: Do-

JACK: Just these very hard shadows-

AUSTIN: [completing Keith's sentence] -you have the time to listen to me whine. [Keith laughs, Ali sighs] I don't know what's wrong with my brain, I don't know. I'm sorry.

KEITH: Wow.

AUSTIN: That's where my head was.

KEITH: Wow! I said do, and you filled in the strangest blank! [people chuckling]

ART: That's the worst human match cam I've ever been a part of [people burst out laughing].

KEITH: Ohh boy, alright! Well. Oh! So my question before we started doing Green Day was,

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

KEITH: Do the planets rotate around that orbit ax- Volition?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN [crosstalking]: Yeah.

KEITH: So they do-

AUSTIN: They already had.

KEITH: Okay. So. We- don't- I don't know if you noticed a map is a static image. So in my head I'm just like- "Twilight Mirage is weird"

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: So they could just sit there the whole time?

AUSTIN: Yeah? No they do- they orbit around it.

KEITH: Okay so it's not just like- well half of everywhere just has a day always.

AUSTIN: Right, no. No.

ART: Well this has been a great podcast with noted Green Day super fan Austin Walker.
[Ali giggles, Keith laughs]

KEITH: That-

AUSTIN: That's- that's me. I need more reactions so we have- I have- I have The World Without End happened- I have Fourteen, I have Gig. Everybody else- there's a sun in the sky now, what the fuck!

ALI: I think I'm gonna change my answer before, which is like. Tender did know this stuff was happening, maybe not like a full play by play, but it's like, her at a meeting not even with the Cadent, like a bunch of people who work under-

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

ALI: Her, just completely out of focus? And then like, she like is just staring dead center until the window, it's like- the sun came up, and she finally like, looks over?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Cool. Are you able to be like- "oh hey hey, it's fine. This isn't a bad thing. [Ali chuckles] Calm down everybody."

ALI: I'm sure she says that out loud, I mean like you know,

AUSTIN: Right, okay. [Ali laughs] But also, fair.

ART: I mean I think I will, I will just repeat a thing I said while we were on break? Which is that this is the best- I think this is the best thing for- for Grand's idea to have the Rapid Evening and Advent destroy each other?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: So I think there's an extent to which this is like, this feels good. It like sets the wheel turning-

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: -in Grand's head again.

AUSTIN: Right.

ANDREW: I- I think Even is like, in a command centre somewhere? And is like- has like a desk and like a bunch of like, touch screens around him? And is like, going over like, various like, scouting reports and tactics, like drawing up a bunch of plans for Volition. And then the sun comes on, and he basic just like- wipes everything off of his desk and then pulls out another stack of stuff, that's labeled like 'Advent' and 'Rapid Evening.'

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: For Echo, I think it's pretty simple. Just helping take care of Ballad because they don't know what's going on so. Oh, I should probably get my wounded brother out of the hospital and to somewhere safe.

AUSTIN: Totally. Okay,

ANDREW: Does Janine-

AUSTIN: You still have a turn.

ANDREW: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: We have to move clocks and stuff-

JANINE: -that's why I was like, yeah.

AUSTIN: We should hustle, alright. Let me update clocks. I'm not gonna play Volition as a thing. I'm gonna- what am I gonna do? What am I gonna do with Volition?

JANINE: Volition probably needs some time, right? Like finish it out?

AUSTIN [overlapping]: Yeah, I'm not gonna- I'm gonna- this clock, will be when Volition is around as a- as a thing again? Like, Volition as Divine clock. I'll show that nameplate. There we go. Cool. And then that's it. Oh! That one also. Okay. So what is your actual turn?

JANINE: I don't know if this makes sense in fiction? But the thing I wanted to do was spend a resource to reduce Rapid Evening's Prophecy to average instead of an abundance? But I don't know if that makes sense in the context of what just happened.

AUSTIN: That would still be an attack, is what that would be.

JANINE: Is it? I thought it was-

AUSTIN: No, you're-

JANINE: -you're just reducing it one tick. It wans't-

AUSTIN: I mean it's still an attack right?

ART: It's a light attack, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah light attacks don't have to be scenes. Okay, yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Totally, so what are you spending and what's it look like?

JANINE: I'm spending my contempt token. I- I kinda just imagined it as like them being kind of like- I don't know if you can surprise them but kind of- I don't know that they were expecting that to happen specifically.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So which one are you getting rid of? Or you are reducing?

JANINE: Prophecy, sorry. Prophecy.

AUSTIN: Prophecy. Sure, sure, sure. Yes. Yep.

JANINE: Maybe it was just like-it was one of those things that they saw, but it was 1%, or it was 0.5% and they were like oh shit wait, we gotta do some math.

AUSTIN: Everything in the Mirage is wild because of- yeah. The Mirage has thrown them off a number of times now? It doesn't work the way the rest of the world does, and that makes it hard. So now that they're at a deficit they don't have a scarcity of prophecy, but they no longer have it as an abundance. So, good. Okay that's your turn. Even, you ready?

ANDREW: Yep.

AUSTIN: Draw this card.

ART: Ho!

KEITH: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: Four-

ANDREW: Geeeeeeeez.

AUSTIN: The strongest among you dies, what caused their death? Or the weakest among you dies, who's to blame for their death?

KEITH: Shit.

AUSTIN: So.

ANDREW [overlapping with Austin]: Cool cool cool cool cool.

AUSTIN: What's good. What's good over there?

ANDREW: Nothing, Austin! [chuckling, and sighs]

AUSTIN: How's that going for the ol- the old Seneschal's Brace?

KEITH: Well. I have a question: who's the strongest and who's the weakest?

ANDREW: Yeah, that's actually what I'm trying to look at.

AUSTIN: Good question.

KEITH: Let's get out of the way

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

ANDREW: Let's see. Let's look at the-

AUSTIN: I can throw one out. Quire could die.

JANINE: Mm.

KEITH: As the strongest or the weakest?

AUSTIN: Sure.

[Ali and Jack chuckle]

AUSTIN: It's both, right? It's dying.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We know Quire's dying. We know Quire is in- Quire is a planet, and Quire has been alive for a loooooong time. In fact Quire is probably the oldest among us, in retrospect? But it's certainly both the strongest among us in that it has done the most incredible things, and has the most incredibly power. It's probably also the weakest among us in that it has failed to create the world it dreamt of? And also is about- is in its final fifty to sixty years of life? Whatever I said a few episodes ago—hundreds of years of life, but that's still a blink in the eye of this thing that's lived for millions of years, you know?

AUSTIN: [continued] And that's kinda of fascinating, right? Like what happens if Quire dies. If you wanted to blame something on Advent, fuck it. [chuckling]

ANDREW: I think at this point I am- I am going with- with Quire.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ANDREW: And I'm just not sure whether I like the framing of strongest or weakest.

KEITH: Like I guess is- do you wanna blame someone?

ANDREW: Right yeah, yeah yeah. Because-

KEITH: Did Quire just die? Or did someone do it.

AUSTIN: It could be- it might not need to be a terrible thing.

KEITH: Yeah.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Could this be that Quire sees what's happening with Volition? And is like- oh fucking thank god. Like I don't- I've been trying so hard to hold on. Maybe I don't need to anymore.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know?

ANDREW: Yeah. And I think that- that falls much more under the frame of strongest among us.

AUSTIN: Right.

ANDREW: Yeah, I- I think I- I like that. I feel comfortable with that.

AUSTIN: What's this mean for Cascara? Who is like, blended with Quire. Does she continue living as like, just an embodied being? Separate from Quire? And what's it feel like to have Quire die? I would kinda like- I kind of want Cascara to leave screen but maybe not die.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Does that make sense? Right. Similar to what- or who knows if she dies, right? But like, during the Holiday Special, her ship disappeared, right? And we didn't know what happened to her. It was revealed that she was going to die and Quire saw in her someone who it admired, right? And was like, oh man, she's great. Like, she fucking has that hustle. I could work with her. And then tried to build this world. And so I kind of like the idea of her- I don't want her to lose that special touch of Quire, but I don't know- I feel- I don't feel good about her dying, but I also don't feel good about having her like, and the agent of Quire stuck around to watch everything and was just hanging out in the background of scenes.

JACK: I have- I have a proposal.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: Especially because I really don't want- taking Cascara off screen? Cascara is too interesting and important a character I think to lose, even in a finale.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: And I think that- I think that to say "well we don't see her anymore" is in a lot of ways, mechanically similar as saying "oh she died." So I wonder if she- I wonder if

something changes about her. I wonder if- I wonder if you know, Quire's passing is not something that goes unnoticed by people around her? But I wonder whether or not she tries to- she tries to surround herself with life that she now feels the lack of.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JACK: So-

AUSTIN: That's sadder, Jack.

JACK: It's sadder but it's- it's- it's not. Oh no! It's not necessarily sadder because in the same way that nothing can replace or remove grief.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JACK: There are ways and- and there are methods—usually involving time and thinking—that mean that you can think about- you can think about the ways in which things can grow again?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And obviously with something as massive and something as powerful as a planet dying, that is not necessarily an easy thing. But Cascara is very clever.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And Cascara cares very deeply about people around her. And so I wonder if, if we see the process of Cascara grieving, and grieving the loss of something that is- that is deeply interlinked with her.

AUSTIN: That she knew in a way that no one else alive did.

JACK: And- as is the way of these things happen, perhaps that is a lens through which she can grieve.

AUSTIN: Right, right. This is processing, this is- this is working. Working to live. Is this- hmm. I like this. I like this a lot. Is this also reflected maybe in a change in what she does for Senschal's Brace?

JACK: Ohhh.

AUSTIN: Right? Like she's been this kind of military commander for a long time? And what if in this moment she switches to, or she starts doing more.

JACK: She like takes a break, and then-

AUSTIN: Work, do you know what I mean?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I don't know.

ALL: Community management, or?

AUSTIN: Yeah... yeah.

JACK: Which we know she is capable of.

AUSTIN: More than-

JACK: Because a degree of that- there's a degree of that like, Cascara's always been great, because she's been like dispatch forces over there, and also I'm going to send like a bunch of stuff to help the Arc-en-ciel kids.

AUSTIN: Right. And you know what? Corrective isn't Corrective anymore.

JACK: Right! Pinion is like-

AUSTIN: Pinion is off being Pinion with- with like. Seneschal's Brace is a brace. It's two things connected. It is like, the city and the country, right? It is the- the waking. The Cadent Under Mirage off in the mountains, with the waterfalls, and it had been Declan's Corrective in the city. At the heart of it all, surrounded by as many people as he could be surrounded by. And the two of them coming together to like—hey, what's, what's going on over there? How can we serve our communities?

AUSTIN: [continued] And I don't- not saying Corrective has left that community behind, I can never imagine Declan's Corrective not taking the opportunity to walk down

Broadway, you know? But I could imagine there being a gap there. And it could be interesting to see Cascara move in to that role.

JACK: Mmm.

AUSTIN: You know? She has been the one surrounded by people. She's always been surrounded by people, right? She works with people. She's been a tactician, and tacticians aren't- I mean she's been a pilot and stuff too, obviously but like. She has always been someone who has been about seeing people around her change and trying to like, help them change to be the best versions of themselves, and find ways to put them to use for the greater good. I can imagine her in this moment stepping into that role. Also she'd look great in like a cool suit. [Andrew chuckles]

JACK: And in part this is- that is like a really interesting way of putting it as well because in part that is a process that she recognises she can enact with herself, right?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Of like, looking at a situation, looking at- looking at a situation that has changed and recognising how can I make this the best situation I can?

AUSTIN: It's also the same realisation Volition gets pushed to. Which is like: you can't-

JACK: Yeah!

AUSTIN: You can't just make new cities! You have- you have to help people. By-

JACK: You idiots!

AUSTIN: You can't just go meet with Acre 7 on the edge of the system and go come help me make a new city!

JACK: Mm!

AUSTIN: You have to like go to town halls and get yelled at by angry people. And be like-

JACK: Yeah!

AUSTIN: We're fixing the water, I'm sorry, you're right, we should have anticipated the leakage, we're going to be back up and running by this time next week. We're- you know. Or whatever.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Even just this sound- this sound like something in the direction you're into, Dre?

ANDREW: Yes, sorry. I was still not sure if you were still talking-

AUSTIN: No, sorry, it's your turn. So I'm trying to.

ANDREW: I know. No yes, I'm into that.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ANDREW: I like that a lot.

AUSTIN: Cool. So I think we just- we see the stuff we just talked about. Maybe we see a little into the future of like continuing to grieve, right? By doing works. Advancing clocks now. Which are my works.

[Jack chuckles].

AUSTIN: Alright. What do you- oh, this one finished huh. Advent's finished.

ALI: Oh.

ART: So we're not good at hitting Advent clocks.

AUSTIN: Weird.

JANINE: I took care of Volition okay cut me some slack. [Austin and Jack chuckle]

AUSTIN: So.

ART: This feels bad.

AUSTIN: A thing that's been happening in the background- so, I think you just see on the news, the king of the planet Crown, Absolute Territory, announces that finally the terrible Scourge of the Sands, the Living Library Memorius has been captured and brought to leash, has been brought to kneel- what's the word I'm looking for?

KEITH: Heel.

ART: Heel.

AUSTIN: Heel. Brought to heel, thank you. By the licensed monster hunters of Advent, who have captured Memorius. Memorius got fucked up, we never went to Crown- Memorius got *fucked up* during the Miracle? Volition- Volition built a thing that turned it into an Axiom version of itself? Which was like a giant sand worm version of a library? What if a library could be a worm that lived in the sands? Anyway Advent captured-

KEITH: Yeah I got it.

AUSTIN: Advent captured it? And they have a- that's what's been going on in the background, if you investigated it you would've seen that they were on that hunt. Now they've captured it, and they have delved into the chorus of the library? And have come out with knowledge of what a Divine mind might look like. And so, they have developed a thing called the Sublunary System—shout outs to fan Pam R who helped come up with the word sublunary during a Drawing Maps episode—which is basically a mass produced Divine mind. It is all of the speed, all of the, the kind of efficacy of what the various Divines have, with none of the subjective self. So it's limited-

KEITH: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: You know? What the Sublunary System does is, as long as it's functional, which means that I'm going to add it as a resource, interrupting Advent operations, whether that it is attacking resources or attacking clocks, costs an additional resource.

KEITH: Attacking Advent's clocks?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Is the implication here because they have these horrifying pseudo-Divine-

AUSTIN: Yup.

JACK: Countering us?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Cool.

AUSTIN: That is exactly the implication.

KEITH: Mass produce a Divines

JACK: [overlapping with Keith] Do they call them Divines?

AUSTIN: They do not call them Divines.

JACK: What do they call them?

AUSTIN: They're mechs, they're mechs with the Sublunary System. That's all. Other stuff that advanced, nothing else completed, no. Okay. What are you doing with your turn, Even?

ANDREW: Well, so if we want to remove that thing Advent just got, it's attacking their Sublunary System resource. Okay.

AUSTIN: Yes. Okay totally, and it costs an additional resource to do. Any level of attack.

KEITH: I- I have a good idea for that which is the Anti-Volition Strike Force could help.

JACK: Oh! Cause they're just sort of- the Anti-Volition Strike Force is like "well we have some news". [chuckles and laughs]

ANDREW: Guess there's different stuff to do now. I'm gonna do a- I guess a heavy attack on this Sublunary System.

AUSTIN: Hell yeah! What do you bring, and what does it look like?

ANDREW: So I'm going to use my contempt token.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. One.

JACK: Oh wait, I've taken a contempt token when the Sublunary System got into effect.

AUSTIN: Okay, good call.

ART [heavy overlapping]: Oh, yeah super duper mad.

JANINE: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

KEITH: I already had- I still have-

JANINE: Hey Echo you just stole-

SYLVIA: Sorry, sorry! I just have one.

ANDREW: All these ghosts just flying across the screen.

SYLVIA: It's the Sublunary System being-

AUSTIN: Very good.

SYLVIA: -deployed, they look like ghosts.

ANDREW: Alright, so that's- so I need four, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah you need four.

ANDREW: Okay.

AUSTIN: To do a heavy attack.

JACK: [exhales]

ANDREW: How-

ALI: Alright.

KEITH: Can I help?

ALI: I may a contempt token that I can give you, so maybe-

JANINE: Yeah, I would also help.

ANDREW: Well, geez.

KEITH: Yeah well I'll- I can help. Oh so we just have four contempt tokens, that's what it costs.

AUSTIN: That's what it costs.

KEITH: It costs four- and we didn't need to use the Strike Force that's good-

AUSTIN: Alright. Uh huh.

KEITH: We didn't need to use any resources that's cool.

JACK: Powered-

AUSTIN: Wait who's the fourth- wait who's the fourth?

KEITH: It was me, Signet, Even and Tender.

AUSTIN: That's a good-

JACK: What a team.

AUSTIN: That's a good fucking team right there.

ANDREW: Yeah. [Ali chuckles]

JACK: Powered by the sheer force of contempt.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. [all laughs]

ART: Welcome to Friends at the Table.

AUSTIN: Wait, are you sure you don't want to be here Fourteen?

JACK: Why- oh. *Oh*.

AUSTIN: All I'm saying is, I know who's-

JACK: Yeah there's-

AUSTIN: -still in Advent, and it's Kitcha Kanna, Kentucky's Corona, Soft Stone, Mrs Castlerose, McCartney and MacManus,

JACK: Oh lord.

AUSTIN: Who are Mrs Castlerose's agents.

JANINE: Oh, Fourteen should be there.

AUSTIN: Question though, really quick. Fourteen doesn't remember much- Fourteen remembers a couple of hits that they did for Castlerose?

JACK: Yeah I-

AUSTIN: So I see no animosity here.

JACK: Oh no, there is absolutely animosity and I'll tell you why. I know that I did like two hits for Castlerose, and also I keep seeing her fucking name keep cropping up with Advent stuff,

AUSTIN: Yes,

JACK: And she keeps trying to kill me and my friends!

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay, fair. [chuckles]

JACK: Y'know. Yeah I'll go along, and as interesting as it'll- yeah let's stop equivocating here, I'll come on.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: All these little ghosts? They're all clustered together.

AUSTIN: They're all clustered together.

AUSTIN: Dre?

JACK: [sings notes of the Ride of the Valkyries]

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think that this might be A Tactical Skirmish.

JACK: Oh shit.

ANDREW: I was thinking either that or Free For All.

AUSTIN: So it could be either. But Free For All feels a little more, it doesn't feel like I'm going to go- I don't know, it's up to you. We could go either.

ANDREW: I guess I'm getting just hung up on the wording of Tactical Skirmish's you and your chosen partner. But obviously that's just-

AUSTIN: That's just me and you.

ANDREW: Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ANDREW: No, I think Tactical Skirmish fits better, because Free For All is more like, more chaotic, more-

AUSTIN: Yeah. That fight that we did before that was like "hey I'm trying to push you guys out of here, we're just kinda having a space fight real brief" was a Free For All.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We could still do a Free For All, I also just wanna see a Tactical- cards on the table, Tactical Skirmish is fun. But-

ANDREW [overlapping]: It is fun. No let's do Tactical Skirmish.

AUSTIN: Alright. Only you and your chosen partner can play, although below you can see that if you and your partner agree you can invite other players to join your side, no one can join uninvited. So that's happened. What do you notice about each other? What have you heard? So what is happening? You're like attacking their facility?

ANDREW: Yeah. Above-

AUSTIN: They have like a facility above Crown?

ANDREW: Okay.

AUSTIN:I'm just gonna draw a cool little space thing real quick. So, I think what we've noticed about y'all is I think Advent's reaction is like "wait a second you're not- the Notion doesn't exist anymore, you're not allowed to be here as a group. Like," [all chuckles] Fourteen, Even, and Tender are, but not- and also, who else- wait who else is here with this?

KEITH: It's me.

AUSTIN:And Gig, right. Gig, you're supposed to be gone, you're not supposed to be hanging with this crew anymore. What do you notice about them, Even?

ANDREW: I mean, probably a lot of Independence mechs.

AUSTIN:Yeah, uh huh. So this is- it's a well defended facility but it's not such a well defended facility that there are infinite Independence mechs. Both of you say how many soldiers you lead, it should be a number from 3-8, be prepared to identify each one by name, rank, codename, relationship to you, and position in your force. This is easy for me, because it is Kentucky's Corona, Soft Stone, Mrs Castlerose, McCartney and MacManus.

ANDREW: Oh, question.

AUSTIN:Oh wait, you captured Soft Stone! Soft Stone's not there-

ANDREW: Oh yeah! [noises of realisation]

AUSTIN: So it's just Kentucky's Corona, Castlerose, McCartney and McManus.

ANDREW: Hey Echo, do the rest of us know that your brother is not with Advent anymore.

SYLVIA: Oh!

KEITH: I do.

SYLVIA: I mean Gig knows.

ANDREW: Okay.

AUSTIN: Even- I think you would- I think you would know that there had been defections from the Volunteers of Seische.

ANDREW: Okay. Then I think like one of the first things Even would notice then is that like,

AUSTIN: Right.

ANDREW: Specifically that Ballad's doesn't appear to be there.

AUSTIN: Ballad's mech is not there. A hundred percent. Yeah, totally. Okay, both of you did that part, both of you name your objectives in the Skirmish, your objective here is to destroy the system, right?

ANDREW: Mhm.

AUSTIN: So, conducting the Skirmish, take turns making demands of each other. The attacker makes the first demand. When you make a demand, you choose whether to demand submission or withdrawal. In your demand you must name yourself, one of your own soldiers, and the enemy's declared objectives. Just to be clear, as far as I know right now, the soldiers that you have are Even, Gig, Fourteen, and Tender. Are you bringing any NPCs with you?

KEITH: We should.

ANDREW: We should.

AUSTIN: Yeah, here's what I would say. Each of you write down an NPC that you want to bring in, 1 or 2 NPCs you want to bring. The number is of no consequence to me.

[Jack and Ali chuckle]

AUSTIN: You're the ones who are going to put them up to be killed, so.

[Ali makes a strained noise of anguish]

JANINE: I actually changed my mind I want to bring Blooming.

[Austin laughs!]

JANINE: It's a bonding experience! I bonded with Massalia over a fight, I'll bond with Blooming over a fight, it'll be fine.

AUSTIN: Mhm!

JACK: Oof. This is very much like this is the great anime scene of like all the ships assembling just outside, in the orbit of Crown, it's like the shot of Destiny ships next to each other.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent. So what we have is Dre arriving with Kent Brighton, Signet and Blooming- Signet piloting Belgarde? I'm guessing?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right? And then Blooming inside of- Blooming and Compulsion, right? Blooming got Compulsion and Massalia got Barricade, so Compulsion. Fourteen and Waltz Tango Cache.

JACK: We're showing up- what did you show up in, Even?

ANDREW: So I'm actually debating that internally. Whether it is The World Without End, whether it's my Angler, or if it's one of these-

AUSTIN: You got one.

ANDREW: Independence Mk. II

JACK: Oh damn!

AUSTIN: Y'all got the Mk. II.

ANDREW: It's probably the Mk. II.

AUSTIN: God I love saying the words Mark II, god. [Jack chuckles] I can pretend- I can like- I genuinely just looking at a mech doesn't do much for me. But the second you said the word Mk. II, I mean. [more group chuckles]

JACK: Yup, does it get better the more numbers?

JANINE: Sometimes Mk. IIs-

AUSTIN: Which is great, but it does mean- it's supposed to mean better.

KEITH: Right. Well like you have, Mk. III is like kinda of a backstab, then Mk IV-

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly that.

KEITH: As soon as you add the 'V' in there it's super-

AUSTIN: Oh God, Mark 5, the Mark V? Forget about it!

[Keith and Jack chuckles]

JACK: So if Dre is showing up in the Mk. II, I'm going to bring The World Without End.

AUSTIN: Okay, sounds good.

JACK: With Waltz Tango Cache piloting-

AUSTIN: The ship.

JACK: Fourteen just going-

AUSTIN: Wait so you're not going to take Waltz's ship instead?

JACK: Oh damn!

AUSTIN: The Bolero Smooth? With-

KEITH: The award winning ship.

AUSTIN: The award winning ship with Adri-

JACK: No I reckon it's absolutely The Bolero Smooth because I reckon it's definitely-

AUSTIN: God.

JACK: Fourteen goes to see Waltz Tango Cache to say:

AUSTIN: I want to- so when you go to see Waltz Tango Cache, here's what you find. Waltz Tango Cache has started a new crew, that is Waltz Tango Cache, Tannoy Kaji, and Lily Lysander.

JACK: Oh my god!

AUSTIN: And they are the fucking best. [Ali chuckles]

JACK: Do they have a name?

KEITH: [soft] That's a good crew.

AUSTIN: They are debating it. They haven't decided on one yet. But Waltz Tango Cache- I'm just going to read from the chart here what I realised they needed to team up, Award Winning Bounty Hunter pilots The Bolero Smooth, Tannoy Kaji, record breaking pilot and smuggler, pilots The Other Hand, and Lily Lysander, trendsetting designer engineer scientist and fashionista, they are the best crew. They're fucking great! Waltz is totally on board with this.

JACK: Yeah! Well I think it's not only that, I think Waltz just says "let's go!" And The Bolero Smooth is there.

AUSTIN: Is there- boom! And Waltz has Adri, the robotic AI that makes up the-

JACK: Oh yeah! That pilots the ship.

AUSTIN: Alright. Ali, Tender, who are you bringing?

ALI: I am bringing Pie-on. Pinion?

AUSTIN: Pinion, pinion yeah. Pinions are like feathers, right? Am I right about that?

JACK: Pinion is the- is one part of a rack and pinion, which is used to convert wheel motion to forwards motion.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay.

JACK: And it also means to hold down, and it also means to clip a bird's wings.

JANINE: I thing the pinion feather's specifically the longest feather at the very end of the wing that's like integral for steering.

AUSTIN: Okay, but it's also-

JACK: -and if you take it offbird can't fly.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Gotcha x5. Cool. Great. That's a good name- you got a good one there. And then, is that it? That's everybody. Gig, no Gig. Who are you bringing.

KEITH: Hi, I was thinking of maybe bringing Ballad.

AUSTIN: Sure!

SYLVIA: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Woof.

ANDREW: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: Ballad's like no I got it. I'm good. I can pilot- so actually Even, the old- the Independence model does show up. And it's- Ballad's does show up, but the like Advent logos in it have been like laser cut off? And also it's wearing a cape now.

ANDREW: Aw hell yeah!

AUSTIN: It might have an eyepatch also.

JACK: The mech has an eyepatch?

ANDREW: My mech high fives his mech.

AUSTIN: Okay. [Dre chuckles] Sylvia says hell yeah, hell yeah! That's my big brother! [table laughs in joy] Yeah okay. And has a big crystal sword, it's good. Anyway, I think it's time to play this game. We've done a lot of talking.

AUSTIN: [continued] Conducting the Skirmish, go around the table on your turn, choose an enemy and make a demand. If they don't submit or withdraw, they immediately make a demand of you in return. After you've given your answer, play passes to the next player. The Skirmish ends when only one side is left in the fight. So, we're gonna start with Even, since it's Even's move. And we're gonna go to the right on this list. So it's gonna go Even, Fourteen, Tender, Gig, Signet. So, Even, if you look at the next page it says list of demands.

ANDREW: Yep yep yep. Yep I-

KEITH: They're bad.

ANDREW: I remember these.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh. They're not the way you think they might be written.

ANDREW: No.

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: For listeners who haven't played this game before-

AUSTIN: Yeah do you wanna help, do you wanna help explain what you're looking at?

ANDREW: Oh god.

KEITH: Oh boy.

JACK: I'll just put it- so we have to ask these questions, and I'm just gonna pick one at random. It says: submit or withdraw or one of your units engages and then [a blank space] at close quarters and carves their guts out. And I have to fill that blank space with one of my team.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Do you wanna bring some more NPCs, or are you good with these? Is this it?

JACK: It's fine. It's not like we're fighting some real tough- Ali in the chat just say "you had to bring Waltz"

[Ali and Art chuckle]

AUSTIN: Waltz will be fine. Waltz is a robot! Waltz is-

JACK: We literally saw Waltz explode falling down an elevator shaft, and then they showed up like "I'm in a band with Kajj and Lily".

KEITH: Waltz is the only one whose brain isn't there.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Mine- me, but I don't get to do that anymore.

AUSTIN: No, you don't get to do that anymore. So?

ANDREW: Alright Austin. Withdraw now, or you get the drop on Kent Brighton and take him prisoner.

AUSTIN: Oh, poor Kent. Advent has Kent Brighton now, huh. What does this look like? I think that it is- it's not so much as they get the drop on Kent, what's Kent flying? Kent is flying your old Angler maybe?

KEITH: My old angler?

AUSTIN: No, Even's. Cause Even's in the Independence right?

ANDREW: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: So, Kent is like- Kent thinks that he's going to be really a hot- just a complete hot shot, and he goes right for Castlerose's ship, and it doesn't go well. Like he lands on- ah ha! Like, now I've dismantled this thing from the inside! And it's just like, you know what, they used the trick they learned from Gig, and he like breaks into the side of like the cargo hold, and then immediately gets magnetised to the ceiling.

[Keith and Andrew laughs]

AUSTIN: We have fun here. Who's next? So that was- oh so I immediately make a demand of you, right? This is how you're gonna win this one. It's fine, it's fine! It's fine. Kentuck- let's see. Submit, now Even, or you zero in on MacManus on my flank and blow the hell out of them.

ANDREW: Yeah MacManus is gonna get the hell blown out of them.

AUSTIN: Toasted. So you just destroy this Independence unit- what's it look like in your Independence Mk. II up against their Independence Mk. I?

ANDREW: Yeah what kind of guns do I have on this thing, Grand?

AUSTIN: Wow. Throw it back, huh?

ANDREW: Or what kind of weapons- yeah what kind of weapon systems are on this? Or is it like a blank slate and I get to pick?

KEITH: He did say missile launcher.

ART: You have to unlock missile launcher.

[Ali chuckles]

KEITH: Is that a bonus feature? That's not standard.

ART: Yeah. Okay, you know everyone's least favourite gun in Halo?

AUSTIN: The Needler?

ART: I do mean the Needler.

KEITH: The Needler's great.

AUSTIN: Squish.

ANDREW: The Needler's a great gun.

ART: What if that wasn't awful?

ANDREW: Okay.

KEITH: It's not. So the Needler-

ANDREW: Okay.

ART: Alright, it's like that.

KEITH: Great.

ART: That's the primary weapon, it's a Needler style-

KEITH: So it's homing, explosive-

ART: Homing, explosive-

KEITH: -shards.

ART: -shards of Q-glass.

AUSTIN: Q-glass.

JACK: That's horrible!

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's bad.

ANDREW: Yeah it's not great.

AUSTIN: So yeah what do you do with that? Is that the thing that happens? You needle this?

ANDREW: Yes.

AUSTIN: This pilot? He just can't keep up with the Mk. II. Just cannot keep up.

ANDREW: Well yeah. It doesn't matter what I was flying come on. Can't keep up.

AUSTIN: I think it's like, it's one of those shots that really reveals that though, it's that the gears that are turning in the- like it can't make as smooth of turns the way that Grand suggested before, you know? Alright. Now it is Fourteen's turn.

JACK: Oof.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: God, these are all-

KEITH: Yeah, they're all rough. They're basically all death.

AUSTIN: Some of them are capture.

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: One of them is-

AUSTIN: Two of them. There's two prisony things, or there's three, because there's a surrender. There's also that. And there's a retreat.

KEITH: And there's some that just say 'take you down' which is not- some would say deadly fire.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Some of them say like, you're done.

AUSTIN: Some of them say yeah, you're knocked out. And some of them say, carve their guts out.

KEITH: Your guts are ripped out.

AUSTIN: So. I have a really good one.

JACK: [overlapping] The thing is that, I have Waltz Tango Cache, who is Award Winning.

AUSTIN: I have a fucking good one Jack.

JACK: Yeah, which one are you thinking?

AUSTIN: We should- let me message it to you and see if you're thinking the same one.

JACK: Okay alright.

ANDREW: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: I don't want to say it and take away your thing.

JACK: No, no, no.

AUSTIN: That one?

JACK: Mmm. Yeah. I was [chuckles] I was considering that one.

ANDREW: Oh I hate this.

JACK: Ohh! I wasn't considering that! Hoo hoo hoo!

ANDREW: Hoo hoo!

[chuckles all around]

JANINE: Oh my god.

ALL: I hate the two of you.

ANDREW: Yeah.

[more crosstalk exclamations]

JACK: Alright fine. Look. Waltz's flying kind of weird. Submit or withdraw now, or Waltz Tango Cache, my least experienced soldier, surrenders to your mercy.

AUSTIN: Waltz Tango Cache gets surrounded by Kentucky's Corona, and—who's the other, who else?—McCartney. And I think Fourteen you go to like intervene? From inside of The Bolero Smooth? Waltz Tango Cache is just out there, by the way. Like Waltz Tango Cache is just out there. Not in-

JACK: Like, can breathe in zero oxygen?

AUSTIN: Yeah! Yeah yeah yeah a hundred percent!

JACK: I have thrusters mounted on my arms and legs-

AUSTIN: A hundred percent, is just flying around, throwing- y'all didn't get to see this when you fought him, but he has a harpoon gun that he can use now? In space, that was- basically worked- I was gonna roll a dice whenever I used it, to see if it would explode? But it only explodes like, one out of every six shots.

JACK: God he's so fucking cool. It's a shame he has such little experience.

AUSTIN: It's a shame. So he like [Andrew laughs] shoots one of these things with the harpoon gun, and like grapples it and he like, pulls on the Independence unit, as though it's going to pull it to him, but of course they're going to pull him to them. But then he hits like a button and like the little drone cam shows up and looks at- you can see him Fourteen, and he's like taps his head three times "I got a good idea, don't even worry about it." And they capture him.

AUSTIN: [continued] In exchange—I mean—this is this thing, right? McCartney brings him in, and it's- it is submit now, or you catch [blank] out in the open and strike them down. And [blank] is McCarntey.

JACK: Yeah I'm trying to think about how this looks.

AUSTIN: Oh it's just the end of the second part.

JACK: Oh you think? Okay, right. So what it is, is- it is Fourteen at the bridge of The World Without End, I guess just kind of looking with their hand on the weapon systems, and then suddenly their eyes just like widen, and their mouth opens, and Waltz Tango Cache's grenade head explodes.

AUSTIN: And blows the Independence unit up from the inside.

JACK: And just completely destroys, both Waltz Tango Cache and McCartney?

AUSTIN: McCartney, yeah.

JACK: Who is just toast now.

AUSTIN: So, he got captured then got immediately opened his grenade head and blew it up. [Keith laughs] And then The Bolero Smooth likes flies by and grabs the body of Waltz Tango Cache, right?

JACK: It's like that great bit in Batman where he gets picked up by the flying drone thing? It's just like The Bolero Smooth [Austin laughs] comes past like incredibly quickly and picks him up.

AUSTIN: Keith in the chat says: "and the nominees are..." [table laughter]

JACK: We got 'em. McCartney and Independence unit. We got previous award winner Waltz Tango Cache.

AUSTIN: You know I'm just honoured to be nominated every year [Jack cackling].

JACK: Fucking love Waltz Tango Cache.

AUSTIN: God, replaces his head with the new award, perfect. [more laughter] Alright, next up.

KEITH: It's a mercenary award so the award is also explosive.

AUSTIN: Yup! Perfect, perfect. It is just a golden grenade?

[Keith laughs!]

AUSTIN: Tender.

ALI: Oh. It's my turn. Okay.

AUSTIN: It is. You're doing good though! They're down to two people, so.

ALI: Yeah! I mean- how pretend- this is my choice, okay now.

AUSTIN: Uh huh! [Ali giggles] It's your choice.

ALI: Submit now, or you catch Pinion in a sharp crossfire and tear them apart.

AUSTIN: They do not submit. So what's this look like? So this is going to be Castlerose and Kentucky's Corona? And it's- Kentucky's Corona in an Independence unit, and it's Castlerose in- in her ship, which is the Veronica. And I think- Veronica is like shooting out a barrage of grappling hooks to try to like, peel the kind of- you know how Gumption is made out of a bunch of just like, metal sheets and doodads, and like junk that's been kind of piled together in a really cool way? She's literally just peeling it off his body. And then the Independence unit that Kentucky's Corona is piloting loops back around and shoots the now armour- like de-armoured area, and makes a big explosion happen. And it's Gumption, so Gumption's able to like repair itself at first, but it's not going well. And I think Corrective calls over to you, Tender, and is like,

AUSTIN (as Pinion): Not gonna last long as an Excerpt.

ALI (as Tender): Everything goes full circle, huh?

AUSTIN (as Pinion): Does this count as 28?

ALI (as Tender): You know what, sure.

AUSTIN (as Pinion): I hope I helped a little bit.

ALI (as Tender): You did. You did your best. I'm actually proud of you, and that's been weird.

AUSTIN (as Pinion): What do you think comes next?

ALI (as Tender): [chuckles] You know I have no idea. But if I see you in my head again, I'm going to kill you again.

AUSTIN: He says, he looks at you like deadly serious, and he goes,

AUSTIN (as Pinion): We both know there's no room in there for me anymore. Be careful.

AUSTIN: And then, they like rip Gumption apart down the middle. Like, pull it from one side and the other. And Corrective gets spaced.

ALI (as Tender): Rest in peace [giggles].

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: I think Tender says like an actual thing, there's probably like a-

KEITH: Contempt.

[Ali chuckles]

AUSTIN: Fuck you. Contempt.

ALI: No there's probably like a, like a fleet phrase or whatever for like condolences or whatever.

AUSTIN: Mm. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ALI: That she actual says but like under her breath.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: God, what a guy.

AUSTIN: What a weirdo.

You can say a lot of things about Declan's Corrective, but he definitely had a life. [Ali chuckles]

JACK: I- yeah. I'm happy he didn't get killed by MacManus, because that would be Declan MacManus is the real name of Elvis Costello, so that would have been- we dodged that bad pun [Ali still chuckling]. Alright, back to you, I will say that- did we blow the hell out of them? We already did that. Okay. Submit now, or my force spreads itself too thin, there are only two of us now, and you pick off McCartney, who is straggling. I think McCartney is very much like bragging over the death- like,

ART: I thought McCartney went down in the-

AUSTIN: Oh so that was Corona. That was Corona, wasn't it? That was Kentucky's Corona. So Corona is now bragging, is like,

AUSTIN (as Kentucky's Corona): We're the Concrete Town Particulars. We're built to kill Divines.

ALI: I think that-

AUSTIN: Pick off Kentucky's Corona?

ALI: I do do that.

AUSTIN: What's that look like, and also what are you- you're in the Independence unit, you said?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: But I think Tender actually like opens up comms to Fourteen, and is

AUSTIN: Hey, turn your like left camera on.

ANDREW: Jesus Christ!

ALI: And then there's- because there's a sun now, she like goes between [Austin, whispering: "yes!"] the like wreckage of Gumption? Poor Corona's like, hell yeah, I did that, like, just cuts them down.

AUSTIN: Nice.

JACK: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: Good. [Ali chuckles]

JACK: Incredible.

AUSTIN: Good. Trying to get an award out here, I swear. Alright!

JACK: So, late nominee.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Gig.

KEITH: Hello.

AUSTIN: Hi.

KEITH: Hi. Submit now, or you're able to concrete fire on Ballard and gun them down.

AUSTIN: A line opens to you, Gig. And it's Castlerose. Actually it's to all of you. And she says- cause she's alone now, right? She says,

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Per the treaties that we've all agreed to, I officially am surrendering myself to your capable hands.

KEITH: What a piece of shit.

AUSTIN: And turns herself over- because she doesn't- she will die in the next turn.

JACK: And if there's one thing Castlerose loves, it is being alive.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Ballard like lands on the bridge of the ship, and is just like "I just put this fucking sword in here real quick, I can do it, I can do it!" And does not.

AUSTIN: [continued] Skirmish ends when either one of you accedes to a demand, submitting or withdrawing. One of you loses the last soldier- or one of you loses the last soldier from your own force, in which case you must immediately withdraw, or one of you is killed or captured, which has not happened. So, it's over, what do you all blow this whole fucking spaceship, like space station thing up?

KEITH: Do we get our captured people back, cause we won? Or they-

AUSTIN: I think the captured people are fine, yeah. But like, Declan's- Pinion's not coming back.

KEITH: No. This is separate. Gumption's still alive?

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: Mm-mm.

KEITH: But wouldn't that count as two people dying-

AUSTIN: No.

KEITH: -in one turn, no?

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: An Excerpt and a Divine are you know.

AUSTIN: I mean they are both living things, but I'm not- I'm not cutting that thin here. Gumption got torn the fuck apart.

JACK: They're not so much two sides of the same coin, but they're very close.

KEITH: Are you sure we can't have multiple contempt tokens?

AUSTIN: [Janine and table chuckles] Hundred percent sure.

ALL: I mean like, if we wanted, there would like, be like a clock to fix it?

AUSTIN: Yeah! I think you can have a clock to fix it. I would happily let you have a clock to fix it. In fact I might lower the Divines thing to just neutral until you do that, right?

JACK: Mmm. That's-

AUSTIN: -fair, I think that reflects the actual board state. So someone wanna blow that spaceship on the map? I guess we already drew poop next to it.

JANINE: We didn't blow up their space station did we? We just fucked up their special things.

AUSTIN: Aw fuck that, blow up that space station!

JACK: Yeah that space station's done.

AUSTIN: Fuck that!

JACK: It's like that GIF you posted- where's it from, what's it called, High Dive, Austin?

AUSTIN: Yeah it was the-

JACK: It's just an incredible GIF of some like anime missiles blowing a thing up. And this is very much just like a space station getting absolutely destroyed by the weird combined mights of these very-

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean, here's the thing to know-

JANINE: Woah!

AUSTIN: Okay, that's explosion. That's pretty good.

JACK: Okay!

AUSTIN: Hey, missiles work. Uh-oh.

JACK: Oh, no.

ALI: Wait what?

AUSTIN: Quire's. Quire's dead.

JACK: Quire's gone.

[Sad and nervous Ali chuckle]

AUSTIN: That's a good laugh, Ali!

JANINE: [Ali starts wheezing] That's the laugh of someone who has a lot of missiles?

AUSTIN: I guess- it does sound like that! [Ali shriekes]

JACK: Also Cascabel is just like, well shit.

AUSTIN: I mean Cascabel still makes the best guns, right?

JACK: Right. True.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And also, my guess is? A lot of people haven't noticed yet, right? In any case-

ALI: Now we're making a huge attack on Advent with a Divine.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: Like this is on a camera.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Mhm.

AUSTIN: They know now, right? Alright.

JACK: Two Divines right? because Signet showed up.

AUSTIN: Signet- Belgarde were there.

ALI: Jesus.

JANINE: Three Divines, because I brought Blooming.

AUSTIN: Blooming was there. Y'all contributed I'm sure. Advent was not really here, you know? Advent didn't have many- I have to come up with some new names for Advent people because now it's Kitcha Kanna? And a captured Soft Stone, and a captured Mrs Castlerose, so. That's your turn, Even?

ANDREW: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: We just have to take out the bird and that's it?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

KEITH: All that's left is the Bird Leader of Advent. [Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: Totally. Who's up next?

KEITH: More like Turd Leader of Advent.

JACK: It's me.

AUSTIN: Okay! Drawing a card. Oh, that is, the Ace, ooh. What is this? Let's see.

JACK: Oh lord.

AUSTIN [overlapping]: I'm gonna stop moving it.

JACK: The Community becomes obsessed with a single project. Which one. Why? Choose one: they decide to take more time to ensure that it's perfect, add 3 weeks to the project die. They drop everything else to work on it, all other projects fail. If there are no other projects underway, the community becomes obsessed with a grandiose vision [chuckles]. Amazing. Hold a discussion of this vision in addition to your regular action for this week. So the only thing we have open at the moment is-

AUSTIN: Oh my fucking god.

JACK: -the Quarantine Task Force.

AUSTIN: Right, but that makes perfect sense! The task force is there to stop Volition, and Volition is a giant sun now!

JACK: Right, so is this the “we decide to take more time to ensure that it’s perfect”? Cause it’s like-

AUSTIN: What else could it be?

JACK: I literally can’t be at a- this is very funny though, because I think what it is, is we- I reckon that we pull Split Spool to be like, we’re nearly there. We’ve got all the people, we’ve got all the ships loaded up, Split Spool is just like it is a sun now.

AUSTIN: It is a sun now!

JACK: We need more people!

AUSTIN: We had to retreat, we had to pull our space stations further away, because we would’ve evaporated!

JACK: Please send more resources immediately!

AUSTIN: Right. But also like, we still need to watch it, what if it still makes, I don’t know? Maybe- it’s a sun!

JACK: This is the other side of what you were saying earlier about like, it’s really important that the twist isn’t Volition is still bad. But these people’s job is to watch Volition, and boy howdy do they have a lot to watch right now.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes, yes. And you know what, here’s a thing is like maybe this clock fills and is like, oh wait, hey. Hey hey hey. We know Volition is okay now, you know?

JACK: Yeah. Totally. Yeah. Absolutely! And if anything, this staffing the QTF, gives Seneschal’s Brace some level of-

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: It's whatever the opposite of plausible deniability is. It's like no, look. We can explicitly prove that things are going on okay here now. We have put the effort into staffing these people.

AUSTIN: Yes. yes. Alright. Raising these clocks.

JACK: How are these clocks looking?

ART: Real bad. We can only potentially stop one of these things?

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

ART: One of these three-

AUSTIN: So The NEH has an 8 clock. The DFS has an 8 clock, both of those are at 6 of 8.

ART: And the Rapid Evening has an 8 clock that's about to go to 6.

AUSTIN: Oh I forgot to make- yup thank you.

ART: And yeah, we can only stop 1 of them because we do not do good clock management.

AUSTIN: There's the Volition becomes like- finishes becoming a Divine?

JACK: I'm less worried about that one.

AUSTIN: It is a Divine already but you know what I mean, that will finish next turn. Raising Trust will be next turn, also for the Qui Err Coalition.

JACK: Oh that's cool.

AUSTIN: Staff QTF now needs another 3 turns. It was very close, it was now less close.

JACK: Okay. So. I have my suspicions about what's going on with the DFS.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

JACK: I don't love it. Essentially, are we more concerned about the NEH or the Rapid Evening? This is an open question.

AUSTIN: If it's an open question you're having a conversation.

JACK: Oh, okay. Yeah and if I make that a question to the players we get close to playing clocks, which is-

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Which is a good point.

AUSTIN: What does Fourteen do with their time? Also, how does Fourteen feel about Castlerose being imprisoned?

JACK: They have kind of mixed feelings?

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: I think on the one hand they are like-

AUSTIN: What is Castlerose is who gives you this information? About one of these projects?

JACK: Ohhh.

AUSTIN: Because then we could have a conversation about it. I thought actually we could just frame that scene quickly, you know?

JACK: Yeah, totally.

AUSTIN: Fourteen visiting Castlerose in the- I guess probably not on the brig of the Kingdom Come. I bet The Bolero Smooth has a brig.

JACK: But I think we've moved to

AUSTIN: -back on Seneschal, right? Okay.

JACK: Like I feel like- I think that we've kind of been mechanically discussing, but not so much narratively discussing, is that these days must just be like unbelievably busy, you know?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: You know when you see like schedules of leaders of countries and you're just like "oh my god, they're just doing stuff constantly!"

AUSTIN: Literally all day, yeah.

JACK: And there's just ships rushing planet to planet carrying diplomats-

AUSTIN: And also we should say-

JACK: Troops moving-

AUSTIN: It has been an amount of time. It has been weeks, months. It's been months, probably.

JACK: But there's an exhaustion to that as well, right?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: There's this very ant colony feel of like we're just moving always. So we've- I think we've rushed back from Crown to Seneschal.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Crossing two territories, or crossing one territory, yeah. And I think I'd like to investigate- I think I'd like to investigate the Rapid Evening project. Because I think like Tender, Fourteen has this thing like, unless we get- we can't do anything if we get nuked. So I'd like to see what's going on with them.

AUSTIN: Okay. So I will reveal it to you.

JACK: Oh! This is a light attack.

AUSTIN: Yeah, no. It's an investigation.

JACK: Oh it's free!

AUSTIN: Which you don't have to do- yes investigating's free.

AUSTIN: So. I think- I think Castlerose calls for you, and says that she has information for you, Fourteen. What's the place where she's being held like?

JACK: It is a Seneschal's Brace- the Mirage has always had interesting ideas about confinement, and about sort of carceral thinking? But they don't have the functionality- and don't want to pretend they have the functionality to run something like Contrition's Figure in every brig in every city.

AUSTIN: Right. And there is also the NEH's like feelings about incarceration seeping in here too, right?

JACK: Totally.

AUSTIN: Which is a much more punitive feeling. There is a-

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: -it can still be a liberal feeling, which is they- what's the word I'm looking for? Paid their debt to society style-thing? But they do see it as paying a debt, which is not how the Divine Fleet saw it.

JACK: Yeah. So I think that there's this sort of thing going right, where it's like, the cells are comfortable. And the lighting is warm. And you're allowed time to move and go out, but it's still a fucking prison. Like, it's still very much just like we've built a room that humans go in. And I think Fourteen is just sort of like, I think this is such a Seneschal's Brace thing, right? Because I think Fourteen is there like, yes well we still have some progress to make here.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: And then there are also like, now what am I doing tomorrow, I'm going to see so and so to talk about this or whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah. So I think Fourteen goes down to see Castlerose.

AUSTIN: Castlerose is in an impeccable suit. Very shiny shoes. Her shirt- her blouse underneath her jacket has the biggest lapels you've ever seen. They're like sleeves, just all the way down.

JACK: She's smoking.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. And like, you know, ashes the cigarette, and is like visions of Corrective but worse, you know? And she's like,

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Now Fourteen. Not the circumstances I hoped to see you again. You look good. The gold suits you.

JACK (as Fourteen): So you're with Advent?

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): I'm in a prison, is who I'm with.

JACK (as Fourteen): I thought you threw your lot in with the Earth people.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Now, can't go home again, hm?

JACK (as Fourteen): You worried that they'll do something? Or do you just think that there's you know, more likelihood of profit with Advent?

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): The Earth, virtual- the Splice, is this what they call it? Not much need for my work there.

JACK (as Fourteen): So profit.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Progress. Activity. Stretching my limbs. Putting my skills to work.

JACK (as Fourteen): How's that going for you?

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): The game is long. Always some setbacks.

JACK (as Fourteen): [chuckles] Well. We'll see about that.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): We will, which is why I've called you here.

JACK (as Fourteen): I've been summoned again.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): [chuckles] Yes. One more mission for old time, yeah?

AUSTIN: And she like produces some sort of mini projector-

JACK: She just produces a fucking dossier?

AUSTIN: Yeah, a hundred percent!

JACK: Jesus Christ.

AUSTIN: Because she's like snuck in here- you know it's like- she didn't get here because she's bad at her job.

JACK: Right, no!

AUSTIN: She's very good at her job and then was outnumbered and outplayed, which happens, but she's still like, a spymaster, you know?

JACK: She's also like, she is presumably the person who trains Castlerose agents,

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: And the thing Castlerose agents are good at, are preparedness for situations, so it's just fucking ridiculous that she's just smoking in a jail cell treating it as her office and being like yeah, I run the Castlerose agency it's fine.

AUSTIN: Out of here now!

JACK: Out of this jail cell.

AUSTIN: And she says,

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Now listen. If I were less wise, I would frame this as an exchange, Fourteen. I would give you the dossier in exchange for my freedom, but again the game is long.

AUSTIN: And so she activates the dossier and reveals that:

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): We both have enemies that need to be dealt with before no one can deal with anything at all.

AUSTIN: And she reveals that The Rapid Evening has been building a node. A node that will more closely connect Crystal Palace with this place as it continues en route. Once this node activates, The Rapid Evening will be able to stop any investigation, light, or medium attack. So the only thing you'll be able to do is do heavy attacks, or attacks that they want you to do. So like- I want to be clear, not on Rapid Evening, on anybody. So the only way to overpower the knowledge of Crystal Palace successfully- I mean you could effectively do a medium attack if you think that's what your character would do, and then lose. Like we would have to-

JACK: That doesn't happen.

AUSTIN: You try it and the worst outcome happens, because Rapid Evening interferes.

JACK: Jesus.

AUSTIN: And so she says,

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Now it's scheduled to be a long game, but this advances things quite quickly. I think you'd agree.

JACK (as Fourteen): I don't know why I think this is a trade. I don't know why you think this is a trade.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): I don't.

JACK (as Fourteen): No, you say this is a long game situation.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): It is. You ensure that there's the board, that means I get to keep playing. You know the old saying the only way to win is to not play. Well, the only way I win is to ensure that players remain in the game-

JACK (as Fourteen): [interrupting Castlerose] You don't win in any fucking way!

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Do you know how many times you've forgotten telling me that?

JACK (as Fourteen): What? You're in a jail cell, Castlerose.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): For now.

JACK (as Fourteen): We're done. Whatever we did, we're done. You can like bullshit all you want with "oh I'm playing the long game here" but you're gonna be in a jail cell for a long time.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Maybe one day you'll join me.

JACK (as Fourteen): Bullshit!

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Why not?

JACK (as Fourteen): No fucking way!

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Why not have one of the many people who you've killed for me, their families, come for justice?

JACK (as Fourteen): Why not have one of them come for justice?

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Yes.

JACK (as Fourteen): Then I'll face that justice.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): And you'll join me in here.

JACK (as Fourteen): I'll join you in a room further down the fucking hall.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): I look forward to it. Because there is that. There is that I could let Seneschal's Brace, all of it, know how many people Fourteen Fifteen has killed.

JACK (as Fourteen): I killed 2 or 3.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Oh! Oh honey. No no no. You killed 2 or 3 the first week. It has you. It has you bad.

JACK (as Fourteen): I did my job for you, and then I walked away from it.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Oh you did your job. Yes. That argument always holds up with folks like you.

[Keith chuckles]

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Take care of Crystal Palace will you? Be seeing you.

[heavy breathing from Jack as Fourteen]

AUSTIN: And just like goes to sit back down, like lays down on the bed and starts reading a book.

JACK: I think I go over and just take the book and leave.

AUSTIN: Great.

JACK: Just this like, this like absurdly petty gesture.

[Austin chuckles]

JACK (as Fourteen): I'll take that.

AUSTIN: Step on your cigarette. Alright. Tender. Well. We did not get all around the table.

JACK: Is that the king?

AUSTIN: King. A natural disaster strikes the area, choose one. You focus on getting everyone to safety, remove an abundance and a project fails. Or, you focus on protecting your supplies and hard work at any cost, several people die as a result. What is the natural disaster [someone whistles], and which do you do?

AUSTIN: [continued] We can understand this natural disaster- ohhh. Do you know what it is? I have a suggestion if no one else has one. Aperture is still out there. Volition's last Axiom, Aperture, could cut a hole in the Mirage. But I'm happy to here any other natural disaster you have in mind.

ALI: Sorry [chuckles].

AUSTIN: No, you're good.

ALI: Yeah I guess we should probably go with that, because it's also a plot device thing, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Cool. So what's that look like? What's it look like when there is a hole cut in the Mirage?

ALI: I mean does it open up like, it's as if there was a second sun, right? Like, there's this thing in the sky that people look at now. Like in a flash, like as if it were lightning, or whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: It's just like, there's also like a black hole, cause you can see into space.

AUSTIN: You can see into space! Yeah!

ALI: And nobody knows it's space [laughs].

AUSTIN: Right! Right, right! There's just a hole out to space now. You see stars and shit. And! Oh! Oh oh oh! They move real quick! [Ali laughs] Cause time is fucked!

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Like you can see the galaxy rotating, right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So there's just this black hole with white dots spinning constantly, white stars in the distance.

ALI: God. And like, all of the planets move so it's like as if like the sun is at noon, and then the weird black thing is at two, and-

AUSTIN: Right!

ALI: Just fucking! That's just you know, how we tell time now

AUSTIN: Cool!

ALI: I guess, I don't know.

AUSTIN: Right! And also, we're in weird No Man's Sky universe, where all the planets are also still in the sky sometimes. You can make out- you could make out Thyrsus from Moonlock, you know? You could really make out Skein from Moonlock. So like now, also there is a weird black hole into nothing, it's great. So,

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Go ahead, which of those two things you do?

ALI: We only have the one project, so I think that it likes get repurposed?

AUSTIN: Mm.

ALI: First it was like, okay we're still going to look at Volition because it's like good now. And now it's like no you're going to like-

AUSTIN: Study this thing.

ALI: All of these people that we send your way- what's the abundance?

AUSTIN: Yeah, what abundance do you lose?

ALI: I feel like the most obvious one is the Independence ones? Because we just send those people to like take care of that Axiom. But I don't know if that's the most interesting thing.

AUSTIN: Oh that Axiom's gone, right?

ALI: Oh, right.

AUSTIN: Once it opens that door it's like peace, I'm in the world now. Or is it not? I think if we spend the Independences, maybe that is like, and we stopped it before it fucking escaped, right?

ALI: Right, but we still have a leak. Oh I guess that's why it gets repurposed because it's like [unintelligible]. Okay, hold on.

AUSTIN: Right right right. Yeah, so you spend the Independences, not all of them, you just drop it to a neutral?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right? And it's like, we have to stop this Axiom that can cut holes- you know all the other Axioms have really cool weird looks. I just keep imagining those fucking Christmas gnomes. Those Icelandic Christmas gremlins? [table chuckles] I don't know why. I don't know-

KEITH: But as Aperture?

AUSTIN: Yeah! As little shitty- like not actually the gnomes, it's actually the way you can imagine- you know the way that they like move? You know the way the terrible Christmas boys move?

KEITH: Sneak around? Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Slink.

AUSTIN: It's like what if it's a can opener that does that. Like a living can opener like. Grrngaaah! I'm going fucking open holes in things! Grrngaah!

KEITH: I'm gonna steal your food.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna lick all your plates.

ALI: I- it's- eating like a Boston Cream and then, turns into a normal doughnut? God.

JACK: So these just like fucking awful gremlin things?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah yeah. That's what Aperture is. It's a collection of awful little metal gremlin things. They have like-

JACK: Thanks I hate it.

AUSTIN: You know the- you know when the- you guys remember when the fork ran away with the spoon?

JACK: Mmmm. Mhm. In the national anthem?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh huh. It's the fork. It's a bunch of little of those forks that like- fork people. That's kind of what they look like. They're not actually forks, right? But they have like that sort of like-

JANINE: Do you wanna- you could Goo- do a Google image search of glass cutter and see if you like what those look like. Because that's like a sideways fork, almost.

AUSTIN: I'll take a sideways fork, like that. Yeah, it's like that.

JACK: Yeah It's like a-

AUSTIN: It has some limbs? Presumably? Or it just doesn't have some limbs. Can you make those- can you just bend in weird ways? They are like glass cutters that bend and laugh and love to open things. Love it.

JANINE: When they do stuff do they like wiggle and then make a sound like when you get a muffalo for a trombone, and you go bwom bwom bwom bwom bwom bwom.

AUSTIN: No I think it makes a terrible sound. I think it's the sound of glass being cut actually.

JANINE: That's better.

AUSTIN: It's that terrible, or like nails on a chalkboard style? I appreciate that they could be making the Charlie Brown adult sound [Janine and Art chuckles].

JACK: Does Volition look at these things and even now and is like “nice!”

AUSTIN: I think there’s an appreciation, but like, there’s also the feeling of looking at the drawings you made as a thirteen year old? [Jack chuckles]

JANINE Oh right that thing. Oh god I did.

AUSTIN: And you know like god, fuck. Oh fuck. Right?

JANINE: I gave Goku a centaur body what the hell? [table erupts into laughter]

ANDREW: Hey. That sounds pretty sick.

AUSTIN: Damn, my mind was rad as hell as a thirteen year old, fuck. What happened?

KEITH: Now I just draw Goku with a regular human body, what’s wrong with me?

ANDREW: I sold out!

AUSTIN: Alright. Cool. So remove that- okay perfect. So then I’m gonna fail the QTF.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because those people are now looking at the hole like “yooo uhh, I don’t know”. Oh you know what this also does? This gets rid of the system wide resource negative scarcity of “Escape”. There’s a hole in the Mirage now.

JACK: Oh damn, Grand.

KEITH: Do we also remove an abundance for Seneschal’s Brace?

AUSTIN: Yes. That was the Independence Mk. II.

KEITH: Oh right.

AUSTIN: Which they spent. So some of those got opened up.

KEITH: Right gotcha.

AUSTIN: Like who- y'all lived, but I guess, I'm gonna say that went from a- maybe they were in the shop now? Using them again- they would become a scarcity, is what I would say. They took some serious damage, y'all took some damage while doing that. Alright so, what is- I'm gonna tick some clocks, and then it's time for you to decide a thing. Trust raises. Y'all raise trust over at the Qui Err Coalition.

ALI: Oh hell yeah!

AUSTIN: Good hustle.

KEITH: Thank you.

AUSTIN: Back up to neutral trust. I think that the attack on Advent probably helped a lot?

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So-

KEITH: That was what I was hoping for.

AUSTIN: Yeah that lines up really nicely.

ALI: What am I allowed to do.

ART: I mean, just like as a strategic point, like one, we're about to get a bunch of new clocks. Two, you can either stop the Rapid Evening project, or identify one of the other two mystery projects and see if you trust-

AUSTIN: Grand.

ART: -me to pick the better one to stop?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Although Crystal Palace node is pretty bad, we might have peaked at that one.

ANDREW: Sounds pretty bad.

ALI: I fucking hate Crystal Palace. I mean people can help though, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

ALI: Cause I wanna-

AUSTIN: You wanna heavy attack Crystal?

ALI: I think I wanna heavy attack, and I was like considering doing a medium attack but we're late enough here at the like.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Blow that shit up.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So what are you spending?

ALI: So I'm going to spend Charming, because I'm going to reach out to Morning, Demani and Grey?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: And then ooh, what else, does anyone wanna help me?

ART: Do you want help?

ANDREW: Yeah I'll pitch in on this.

AUSTIN: What are y'all spending?

ANDREW: Ali is your plan really, really out there? Cause if so I'll give you my Daredevil.

ALI: [chuckles] I don't have a plan yet! I'm just like destroying the thing, right?

JANINE: Yeah, I kind of wanna know what the plan of attack here is.

AUSTIN: So the dossier reveals that like they are basically building a giant- what are the, what's the thing I'm trying to think of- you ever see those videos of someone who's taken a Rube Goldberg machine, and turned it into an instrument, or made an instrument out of a weird Goldberg machine that has like ball bearings and stuff?

JANINE: Yeah, the marble machine guy.

AUSTIN: Yes, the marble machine guy, yeah.

JANINE: Wintergatan?

AUSTIN: Something like that, yeah. It's one of those but massive, and it's sort of like quantumly connected with Crystal Palace, in a way that's giving it more data. It's like a physical computer, it's like an old school physical computer with like slots and ball bearings and pulley systems and, you know.

ANDREW: Oh, I know what I can give you. I'll give you my Weird, because even if it's an old piece of tech, I can still talk-

AUSTIN: Still talk to it. Love it. You wanna cross off Weird?

ANDREW: Yup.

AUSTIN: Who else is helping?

SYLVIA: I was gonna help. Can I just use my contempt token for that?

AUSTIN: You totally can.

SYLVIA: Okay I'll just toss that back in there.

AUSTIN: So what's this look like, Tender?

ALL: Sorry I was looking at the like, Firebrand stuff, but this doesn't have to be like a scene scene?

AUSTIN: It does, because it's a heavy attack, heavy attacks do.

JANINE: Free For All might be good.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I can imagine this just being a find with the Welkin Absolute, which is the ship that Keen Forester Gloaming has, that is like, a big weird space like- it's not a worm, but it kind of moves like a snake or a worm in space? [Ali chuckles] It's also ribbon like, sort of like Ache was? Big blue- and it can kind of make lightning attacks and stuff? It's cool. So that might work. Think the three of you there.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. So, everybody plays, everyone's characters meets in their mobile frames to do battle. Ask your chosen partner where the free for all takes place. Is it at the- it's like on the border of the Mirage? Like out past the shore- at the edge of the shore, basically? And is being built like right on the boundary between inside of the Mirage and outside? It's just like super dense Mirage clouds? It's like straight up possible to visually lose someone in them out here. So it's just like pink cloud that y'all are moving in and out of, basically. Who's- you're in- are y'all in the Independence units? Or I guess, wait, it's- yeah yeah yeah. You all have Independence units, right?

ALI: I do, yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so it's you three in your three Independence Mk. IIs that Grand got you? Built you? Buy 'em from the store [table chuckles].

ART: I just sent the plans. They theoretically had to get them manufactured.

AUSTIN: Okay. They built them. They got them built. So during a free for all, anyone may ask for additional details like location, landscape, and circumstances, what do you notice about each other or what have you heard? I think Keen Forester Gloaming has been watching you since the beginning of this arc? The beginning of this like half of the season, so since the Miracle, Tender? Because you are a—why am I blanking out on our own fucking—Stratus. Like you're part of a special Stratus file that he keeps? As someone who could be a potential agent or someone who could be a real potential problem?

ALI: Well guess what.

AUSTIN: But he didn't- Uh huh. Yeah, here you are. [Ali chuckles] But he sees you and immediately you're moving in small micro ways he can't predict? Because your brain isn't all there. You're partially thinking about Anticipation stuff in the back of your head. Which means you're like syncopated, you're moving just off of prediction, and that is what he notices. What do you notice about the Welkin Absolute, or about this weird Crystal Palace node?

ALI: That it sucks.

AUSTIN: Good, good. Oh I should tell you, Gloaming is played- fuck, I figured out who Gloaming is played by recently. So it is this dude- it is Temuera Morrison, who is a Maori actor? I'm gonna paste a picture of him in our chat, because he's good. Boom.

ALI: I mean it's tough saying what I notice about like someone I've never interacted with?

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: But I think like, back to like pre-Miracle, Tender is just like what even is your- why are you even doing this at this point? Is like-

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: What you would want to kind of pin down.

AUSTIN: Yeah so I think that the thing that you pick up from him is like, it's a bigger version of the Ballad thing? Which is like, Ballad feared that there was no way to go back home, and that you couldn't turn the clock back, because Advent was so powerful. Keen Forester Gloaming- I said this in an intro to the downtime episode? And I'm presuming maybe y'all have not actually listened to that yet, because that's fair, that was a very strenuous episode that I would not have necessarily jumped back to listen to but, the thing he points out is that like, you know, a lot of new recruits to The Rapid Evening occasionally see Crystal Palace get something wrong, and it shakes their faith for a while. Which is fair.

AUSTIN: [continued] But then over time what they realise is, it gets 99.99999% of things right. Which is like, everything: when you cut yourself shaving, the shoes you'll choose to wear, the way that you bite into a sandwich, the way that foreign states you know change their diplomatic policy, the outcomes of wars. Even inside of its broadest you know, inside of its broad view of the universe, everything that's happened within the Twilight Mirage is dwarfed by the number of things it predicts correctly. And so for him, it's not just a fear that he can't go outside, it's knowing he wishes he could just go be with his daughter, and hang out, but knowing that he can't. Or that, even if he did, it would only be a thing that was pre-ordained. And that working for Crystal Palace is better than working under it, or living blindly- he can't bring himself to do that.

AUSTIN: [continued] And that is immediately what your kind of Stratus read of him is. It's this like, he's frozen in place. He can't get out of this thing. He is not Ballard, he will not be moved by- his daughter's tried. His daughter's tried to move him here. But- but he won't. Gray can't convince himself to give this up. So. Let's play this game real quick.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Everyone plays, blah blah blah, go around the table, you each get two turns. You go first. On your turn, choose an enemy player's character and give them a challenge, they answer it freely. When everyone's had two turns, make challenges and it comes back around to you for your third turn, choose an end to the battle. Choose the one that best fits the action to that point. After the free for all, remind everyone that the battle has left them with unfinished business, a grudge, or a real tactical objective, or if it has, they should bring it up in their next game.

ALI: Okay. I rush you, I'm faster than you believe, can you react in time and get away? How?

AUSTIN: Yeah. There is like the shock of lightning and the Welkin Absolute twists away back into the clouds. You're faster than he believed you'd be, but like, it's still Crystal Palace, it's still The Rapid Evening you know, he thought you'd be there at second three, and you were there at second two point five, he was gone by second one. You know? Now it is- let's go- wait who- Tender, Echo, Even, me. Echo? What do you do? What's your challenge?

SYLVIA: I'm going to use the- I get the drop on you and hit you with a roaring jet of flame still meltingly hot. Can your frame take it? How?

AUSTIN: Absolutely, right? Rapid Evening has technology far beyond anything you've ever seen. There is no heat that any Independence, anything can produce that could melt the Welkin Absolute. So it just stays there, and you burn it, like, you use all the force of the explosions inside of the Independence unit and it just holds. Even.

ANDREW: I'm on your back and I outmanoeuvre you at every turn. Can you shake me? How?

AUSTIN: There is just another stroke of lightning, and it's not even trying to shake you anymore? It turns to face. you. And my turn. I fall out of the sky like a hunting bird, do you survive my attack? How? Even Gardner.

ANDREW: What- what is- what are you like attacking?

AUSTIN: So it's like- it is basically carrying a thunder storm around with it? And so it's going to try to encircle you and then strike you with lightning. Its actual- the body of it is also electrified or can be electrified, and so it's going to try to like charge you, and catch you with a lightning strike also that way. So it's kind of like trying to pin you in with lightning and also slam against you that way.

ANDREW: I do survive. But I think the- like the force of the lightning strike like overrides the systems, and my Independence unit is like, offline until I.

AUSTIN: Okay cool. Are you like blinking with it to talk to it, or do you just manually reboot it?

ANDREW: Both?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ANDREW: Actually no, I think it's probably so offline that there's like nothing to talk to.

AUSTIN: Oh that's interesting, okay.

ANDREW: It's very much the fucking 08th MS Team where- oh I forget the protagonist-

AUSTIN: Shiro. Shiro. Yeah.

ANDREW: -probably it's like. Shiro is like pulling out like chips and shoving them back in and, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. Tender?

ALL: I keep to cover circling with tactical precision, I'm almost impossible to spot. Do you see me coming, how?

AUSTIN: So I'm going to say no here, because Gloaming is occupied with finishing Even? And like, the Clock says he gets hit, he gets hit. And so your crystal shots hit the thing, and like that shakes him loose, and turns back to face you like it hasn't done damage to him necessarily. But you have his attention. The two of you have his attention is the thing that I'll say here, you know. You have a tactical objective which is this thing, so maybe that's a way to win this fight. Is probably what passes through your head at that moment, you know? It's like hey, we have to blow this thing up, if we can keep this guy fucking busy, then. Echo.

SYLVIA: Alright. So I like the idea of trying to distract him. Going with: I hold back, lighting up the sensors on comms, zeroing you in for my allies, are you able to evade, how?

AUSTIN: Ooh that's good.

SYLVIA: Means we can keep a beat on him?

AUSTIN: Yeah, is that like- what if it's not just sensors and comms, what if Echo sends over like new simulations? Do you know what I mean? Like different predictions, different models?

SYLVIA: Mhm.

AUSTIN: To kind of like, hey deal with this! Here's thirty different ways this fight could go.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so on that one, it's like, not able to evade. And I think at that point, he is like, we get this shot of Gloaming running back and forth on the bridge- or Gloaming

isn't doing it. Gloaming has officers to do that for him. He's just like get me the projections. That's not his voice, He's Southern, I forgot about that.

AUSTIN (as Gloaming): Just turn off the comms! Just like- we don't need to talk to them.

AUSTIN: But his officers are like "uhh but we have all this other information!" So, so yes. Cannot in fact evade. So he is distracted. What is it now- Even's turn, right?

ANDREW: Yeah. So taking this- taking Gloaming's like unit out is like not our goal here, right?

AUSTIN: Correct.

ANDREW: It is to-

AUSTIN: Destroy this node.

ANDREW: Yeah. This last one that I do [blank] is that basically a fill in the blank here?

AUSTIN: Yeah, so it's "I do [blank], can you survive it/dodge it/hold me off, how?" Is kind of just like- hey, do the thing you wanna do here, cool?

ANDREW: Yeah. I think Even can only bring like the main thruster online.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

ANDREW: And basically just rockets straight at the unit-

AUSTIN: At the-

ANDREW: Is basically-

AUSTIN: At the node?

ANDREW: At the node.

AUSTIN: Cool.

ANDREW: Yeah. And is basically going to just try and time it and jump out of the cockpit to like land on the node and sabotage it.

AUSTIN: Totally. I think this is how we're gonna-

ANDREW: Can you hold me off?

AUSTIN: Totally, so. I- where is it. Far across the landscape I raise my rifle, I can put a shot into your reactor core, slice off your comms antenna, unhinge your knee, put out your eye, do you avoid my shot, how? And that's at Even, who's on this device.

ANDREW: Is it at me as I'm on device?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it is.

ANDREW: Or is it, yeah okay.

AUSTIN: Just like, huge sound of thunder and a lightning strike begins to- and you're able to see it. I mean so Tender's able to see it super slowly because Stratus powers.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But you're able to even see it like as the Independence system reboots, you're able to like see it zeroing in on you.

ANDREW: Do I have anything here that I can like use?

AUSTIN: I have a theory.

ALI: [chuckles] Yeah?

AUSTIN: What's yours, Tender? I wanna hear yours.

ALI: I was just going to say that I could Stratus power like hack your unit like take the shot, if you're outside of it, right?

AUSTIN: I think- oh you're saying like Even could eject-

ANDREW: Yeah I thought that I like, what I described was basically like, this thing is like rocketing forward and I like can't control anything like I basically just have to set it, and then I time it so I jump out of it-

AUSTIN: Gotchu gotchu gotchu.

ANDREW: So I land on the unit.

AUSTIN: Gotchu, I thought you were landing the whole machine on the unit. Well yeah, then yeah. Then I think you can totally do the thing you just said, which is- yeah. It's going to hit the Independence unit, not you.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. So that's why you get saved but the Independence unit is thrashed.

ALI: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: Mechanically, I'm going to leave it at neutral here, because you still have 2 of the 3, but you lost yours, and they haven't rebuilt one using the plans yet. So yeah, so I think and the lightning strike hits the Independence unit and also hits the node, right? Then the whole thing shatters, like just breaks apart. And you just get him slamming his fist down on the mantle of the ship, and the- the thing breaks into pieces. Tender, you now can choose an end.

ALI: Is there a way to-

AUSTIN: I think it's the- I think it's the third one on the first set? Probably? That's literally the thing that just happened?

ALI: Okay okay yeah. Yeah, so the fight's explosive, we do an enormously amount of damage to the landscape and to the node. When the fight ends, I guess everyone is still standing?

AUSTIN: Yeah. All of y'all, Tender and Even and Echo.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. So you destroyed it. Good hustle. Good job stopping that thing that would have fucked y'all up pretty bad. And it is the end of Autumn. Or the end of Meridian. And we're moving into Twilight. Who just went? Tender just went?

KEITH: Tender just went.

AUSTIN: So it's Grand's turn, the beginning of the new year.

ART: The fourth time period and only the second time period I've had a turn in.

AUSTIN: That's funny. That's actually very funny.

ANDREW: God, buddy.

AUSTIN: Alright. So I need to look at my clocks really quick. Alright so-

KEITH: Look at how many clocks we didn't stop.

AUSTIN: Oh just wait my friend. [Keith laughs] Real quick, I'm gonna mark the one that you did stop, or that you didn't stop that was good, rather. Raise trust, look at that, nice work.

KEITH: Thank you.

AUSTIN: I mean it was always going to be this game. It was always going to be some clocks are going to advance, you know? And other ones aren't. So, it's Advent's turn to reveal some clocks. And that's right, I said some clocks. And the good news is, all of these reveal all the way immediately. So. They are- and the reason that is I think Grand, you just- they could not be more public about this internally? They are launching three major projects internally. And they wanna know which one you want to be a part of you know, you kind of get the sheet like "alright sign up time!"

KEITH: Oh is Grand back with-

AUSTIN: Oh Grand went back to Advent like-

KEITH: Okay I wasn't sure-

AUSTIN: Grand wasn't hanging with the Qui Err right, Grand?

ART: I thought you were like going to require me to do something to do that, but because a whole time system has shifted it makes sense, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So you get the note that's like- in fact like we kind of- when the camera fades back up after the destruction of the Crystal Palace node I think, what we get is- after a commercial break or the episode break, whatever this ended up being, we get you looking at a kind of- I don't want it to just be an email from Kitcha Kana, but I kind of want it to just be an email from Kitcha Kana, like a company-wide email that's going over what the projects for the next quarter of Advent are? It's like, you know,

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kanna Email): We lost some people that left us. We wish them the best luck in their future endeavours. You know, we- we're going to take them out there in the market. We're going to really show 'em that they shouldn't have left. You know, we're all still committed to the dream of Advent, the Advent Group. And with that in mind, this next quarter's going to be a very exciting one. We are kicking things off of course by-

AUSTIN: I have to move this to the right layer over here-

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kanna Email): -by going right after some more Divine relics.

AUSTIN: Can y'all see the name tags on this?

ART: Not yet, no.

AUSTIN: Well, let's do it now.

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kanna Email): We're going to go round after some of those Divine relics. There's this place called the Temple of Lost Altar, where there's just hundreds of these relics of Divines, and given what we got from Memorius, we think it would just be a great opportunity to double down and just get as many Divine relics as we can. You know we know that the clock is ticking here, so we're kind of like- let's get the most out of this system before it's time to leave.

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kanna Email): [continued] And then you know we also think it would be cool to have more people. We think that Advent has seen so many great competitors out there in the field these days. And we think we could attract some more people to our ranks. We lost obviously the Volunteers of

Seiche, and so we have some free roles to fill right now. And so we're gonna try to convince some people from the old New Earth Hegemony. We think that those folks- especially some of the ones who are a little more militaristic, and a little less forward thinking with the whole Splice thing, we think maybe those people would make a great fit for Advent. You know, people like Templeton's Fair, and folks like that mostly. And then finally-

AUSTIN: We have another eight step clock here, and that is, you know-

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kanna Email): We heard about this interesting black back door built into the Splice. And we just think that would be a great addition, just to have a little more information about what everything's- what's happening out there in the system. And so they are going to try and break into that and flip that around to something they can have for them, you know? Just a little extra something, does that make sense?

AUSTIN: And so those are the things that they are doing. Those are the three new eight-step clocks they have revealed.

KEITH: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. So. That's one. Two, we also get a new clock from the NEH, which I don't think, you shouldn't be able to read that one right? No.

ART: No.

AUSTIN: No. Good. Oh boy. I have no idea what this one- I have to change what this one is for the DFS. God.

ALI: [scared] Why?

AUSTIN: Because it used to be a Volition Strike Force, and it's not that anymore. So it's gonna be something new. They are something else. Okay. But that will be a six step clock. And then, nothing from Volition. And that's it. Good hustle out there. Got rid of Volition, nice work.

ART: Rapid Evening?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah [chuckles]. My bad. Thanks. Thanks again, Grand.

ALL: [exasperated] Arthur.

ART: He wasn't gonna just not do it! He wasn't going to be like "oops I forgot to put The Rapid Evening clock out!"

JACK: Fucking Grand Magnificent shit out here.

JANINE: Mr. Gym Teacher sir I thought you said we were gonna run laps today.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Oh, Lordy! Lord.

ART: It's not better if we can't interact with it.

AUSTIN: Alright, Art. Are you ready to draw a card?

ART: Yeah, uh huh.

AUSTIN: Alright. Four of Twilight. All the animals and young children and crying and won't stop, hold a discussion about this in addition to your regular action this week. Or, a great atrocity is revealed, what is it, who uncovers it?

KEITH: What's an atrocity to Advent?

AUSTIN: That's a good question.

JANINE: Children aren't crying.

[table laughter]

KEITH: Or alternatively, let's hold the discussion- how can we keep this children crying thing going?

ART: I feel like I have to do 2.

AUSTIN: Uhhuh.

ART: I am curious about what this should be. Who can be most harmed by this? Which of the antagonistic factions needs to not have committed atrocities the most?

KEITH: Against them?

AUSTIN: No I think Art is saying is like, who is in a PR sense, most-

KEITH: Most able to take the hit of having committed-

AUSTIN: Least.

ART: Least able to.

KEITH: Oh, least able. Got it.

AUSTIN: I just don't think you can play it that way though. You're not playing this card to like get an advantage on someone. Like, this card- you as Grand Magnificent, in the same way that a great threat is removed from the board was played from the perspective of Signet, I think whatever you see should be a great atrocity to Grand, but also should be like- we should not want that thing to have happened because it gives us points, do you know what I mean? It should be bad enough that whatever PR win it is, is not worth it.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: You shouldn't be gaming it like it.

ART: Can we at least be taking points off of-

AUSTIN: No, I don't think so. That is why you have attacks. If anything an atrocity committed should give someone bad something good.

ART: Alright, then I guess I have to pick the other one. I haven't read hold a discussion in a minute.

AUSTIN: Oh, you ask a question, or big statement, and then everybody at the table gets to say one thing.

ART: Do I have to establish what this-

AUSTIN: Sentence with the- yeah. What the- I don't think so, maybe!

ART: Are we discussing what it is? Or are we spectating on what it is, or am I establishing what it is, and then we're talking about it?

AUSTIN: So all the animals and young children are crying and won't stop. That's everywhere- I think it's probably like across the Mirage, all the kids and animals are upset. And then it's, you could choose to open with a question or declaration, starting with you and going clockwise, everyone gets to weigh in once, sharing a single argument comprised of one or two sentences. If you open with a question you get to weigh in last. If you open with a declaration that's it for you.

ART: So can my question be what do we think's happening here?

AUSTIN: Totally.

ART: Or is that-

AUSTIN: That's fine. Is that your question?

ART: Yeah. Uh huh.

AUSTIN: Right so one or two sentences, Echo. What do you think's happening here?

SYLVIA (as Echo): I think people are scared, like. Crystal Palace has been like threatening us for a while and it's- I don't know if people would know that it's getting close but they could probably feel it, and like there's a hole in the Mirage? Things have been going bad, of course people are crying.

AUSTIN: Gig.

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised if this wasn't a direct result of Quire dying.

AUSTIN: Mmm. Signet.

JANINE (as Signet): We don't have the ability to take care of people as closely as we used to. There are a lot of things that go unfulfilled and can come to a head and cascade.

AUSTIN: Even.

ANDREW (as Even): A lot of people who are very well known have died, and that means that probably a lot of people who are not named NPCs or who aren't considered famous, have probably also died.

AUSTIN: Mm. Fourteen.

JACK (as Fourteen): Are we sure that we can live outside of the Mirage? Has this hole being opened done something to our physiology?

AUSTIN: Tender.

ALI (as Tender): The despair that we all feel lives in all of the dirt underneath our feet. Of course this is happening. We can't control this.

ART: Can I close with like a rhetorical question,

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: Like a question that doesn't need an answer but is just my way of making a statement?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART (as Grand): Is it possible that changing Volition has created some sort of you know, background noise that we can't perceive?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Alright. So.

AUSTIN: Wait. I have to tick clocks.

ANDREW: Hell yeah.

AUSTIN: Two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, is that all of 'em?

KEITH: I hate this game.

ART: Yeah you ticked the wrong section of the NEH clock, but I'm going to give you a pass.

AUSTIN: I'll slide it over.

ART: I would like to try to do something dramatic, but one I don't know how to do it?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: And two, I don't know how it works with the actions. Three, I'm gonna kind of have to leave everyone else to fend for the rest of the factions.

AUSTIN: Okay...

ART: I'm gonna try to decapitate Advent.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: [chuckles] Okay.

AUSTIN: How do you do this?

ART: But if I do that, I don't know that I can help with the other stuff.

AUSTIN: Because you will have spent all of your resources decapitating Advent?

ART: Maybe.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: So, so Grand- when they send this sign up email, which of these three projects do you say would get Grand the furthest away. Just Grand is just not near the catapult.

ALI: Probably- oh sorry-

AUSTIN: No no what were you going to say?

ALI: The Divine one.

AUSTIN: Yeah I think so too.

ALI: Because you would be on Altar.

AUSTIN: [overlapping with Ali] You would be on Altar. Which is where Sho is.

ART: Sure.

ALI: Yeah.

ART: So Grand signs up for that one, and goes.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: And then wants to have a meeting with Kitcha Kana, the Avian Boss-

AUSTIN: -of Advent.

ART: Yeah, of Advent.

AUSTIN: The Bird-

KEITH: The Bird Leader. The Bird Leader?

AUSTIN: Yeah, the Bird Leader of Advent.

ART: [Ali chuckles] I think you're mistaken about that.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ART: I think it's the other thing. And Grand-

KEITH: He says he's on our side but he's still repping for the Avian Boss, so.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ART: Grand tries to arrange a- arranges a meeting to be conducted with the same mech that he sent to the-

AUSTIN: Okay. So this is- so what is this, is this a heavy attack? What are you doing? I mean I know what you're doing- I know what you're doing.

ART: You know.

AUSTIN: I do.

ART: You know.

AUSTIN: But what is it?

ART: I guess it's a-

AUSTIN: What are you spending for it? What are you doing costs more than anything we've talked about spending.

ART: I'm spending my token, my contempt. My "Conflicted".

AUSTIN: Yeah you're not that anymore.

ART: I'm spending "Innovation."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Okay.

ART: And if you want more I'll spend "Guns".

AUSTIN: Yeah I think all of those are the right ones.

ART: Because I-

AUSTIN: -is my question, okay.

ART: I mean I'm taking out- I think I'm taking Material and vague gesture this?

AUSTIN: Yeah I- yeah. So- the thing that I think you're going to do will still leave Advent as Advent? It just will be a less formidable foe, right? By a long way.

ART: I'm trying to make it so that they can't- they can- I'm trying to seriously hurt their ability to operate here.

AUSTIN: Right. Maybe I think what it is then is it, introducing a new scarcity? That represents-

ART: Like a scarcity of Leadership?

AUSTIN: That's what I'm thinking. What's this scene. Because it needs to be able to fail. But it's not any- it's not a basic attack. Is it just a conversation?

ART: I think it is just a conversation.

AUSTIN: If you spend something else that's actually yours, I think I can swing it. Without it being a- like a fight, you know what I mean? Cause like that conversation- or is it something metaphorical here that we could be doing? I mean it is a conversation, the scene that you're framing to me is a conversation.

ART: Right this scene is a conversation but I don't know if the game is a conversation.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Because I think this is like-

AUSTIN: It could happen after this Art, if you wanted it to. Like it could happen, and then it could also have to happen. This is all great radio I know. You should explain what you want to do. Cause I know what you wanna do, because I knew something about that sequence that happened. I know something about the downtime that nobody else at the table knows.

ART: I didn't say this to Austin till after the recording was over.

AUSTIN: This is true.

ART: But something I had in my back pocket during the downtime episode. Is that Grand's- the mech that Grand sent to dinner, was a bomb. That Grand was not building a mirror, he was setting a fire. And then didn't go in a way where Grand thought he had to do it-

AUSTIN: Kill all of his friends!

ART: It was an emergency, it was a contingency, and it wasn't needed.

KEITH: Mmmmmm. [Austin laugh]

ART: That dinner didn't go well, but it didn't go murder bad.

AUSTIN: Bomb bad! No!

ALI: You sent a bomb to our Christmas party?

KEITH: No it's okay! It was just in case! [Austin shrieks]

JACK: It's like Grand saw the-

KEITH: Just in case he had to kill all of us!

JACK: It's like Grand saw the bomb he delivered on The Restitution of All Things and was like, how can I prove this? Checks notes. Know that it was a bomb.

[Austin laughs]

JACK: Intend for it to explode. Okay.

ART: But now, now I'm gonna use it for good!

KEITH: Yeah, but now is like Grand Magnificent's calling card.

ART: Grand Magnificent's heart grew three sizes that day you know. No one walks away from that book angry at the Grinch, come on.

JACK: Is your heart also a bomb?

ART: I mean we really haven't gotten there.

JACK: Is this your last bomb. Be honest.

ART: It's the last bomb I have written down.

JACK: Okay, alright.

AUSTIN: It's just a conversation, I've decided that it's a Conversation Over Food. And it's- I think it is. I think it's going to introduce a negative of leadership, or of- like if this works, Advent gets completely scattered, right? Well not completely scattered, but like, it's a bunch of- it's characters who don't have names anymore. Literally everyone else is accounted for at this point. And so, it's secondary and tertiary people, maybe that's not true, but what was that guy, the card game trick, Even? That guy has a name still. Greg, probably? Is my go to.

ANDREW: What was his name?

ART: What about the guy with the voice?

ANDREW: Oh yeah! Keith's voice.

ART: Keith's voice guy.

JACK: Flanger- Flanger-

AUSTIN: Oh Flanger becomes the-

KEITH (as Flanger): Ahhhh!

AUSTIN: Yeah, Flanger will take over the-

KEITH (as Flanger): Ha ha!!! My day is finally come! [Jack and Ali laughs]

ART: Unless Flanger comes to this conversation.

AUSTIN: We'll have to see after- play to find out what happens, you know?

JACK: What's Flanger's surname?

AUSTIN: Johannes.

ANDREW: That's great.

KEITH (as Flanger): Yeah! I knew. I wanted to see if you knew.

AUSTIN: Let's see this conversation. So what is it- what happens? He just shows up for dinner? What's the equivalent with the Bird- the, is it the Avian Boss-

KEITH (as Flanger): Bird Leader of Advent.

ART: Avian Boss-

ANDREW: Feathered Manager.

AUSTIN: And a mech. You're not eating anything, right? But you're catching Kitcha Kana in a meeting- or in a- you're catching Kitcha Kana, you're catching. Kitcha. Kana. In a conference. Call.

[Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: You're catching Kitcha Kana in a meal in between conference calls. Kitcha Kana has been on screen briefly doing a thing like- Kitcha Kana can actually hold a conference call with like thirty people at once, that was one of the intros. Including with his own limited self projectors, to get like, the- so I think that is happening here. I think what is happening is he's on call with twenty five different people, and he like talons your mech in. Like come on in. And you know, mutes himself to all the calls, and says- sorry the person in the lowest social standing takes the first turn, so you go first.

ART: Oh yeah it's certainly me.

KEITH (as Flanger): Can I go first?

AUSTIN: No, you're very powerful.

ANDREW: You're turning into [unintelligible]

ART (as Grand): I'm feeling expensive. What do you want to know about me?

AUSTIN: I love that you walk into this person's office [Keith roaring with laughter] in the middle of him scarfing down cold spaghetti as he's on the phone with twenty four people who report to him, and you're like "so how're you doing? What do you want to know about me? You want to know my birthday?" He's like, he wants to know, okay

here's what he wants to know. He wants to know what do you want from the world after all this is over. What's the post Mirage dream? Like he kind of frames it like,

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): We're getting out of here soon, Grand Magnificent. Tell me, what your world will look like from beyond the confines of this rainbow disaster.

ART (as Grand): Hopefully quiet. I would just really appreciate less cacophony in my life, you know?

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): I'm feeling generous. What favour do you ask of me?

JACK: Ask him to just transfer several million credits to your account before you kill him.

KEITH: Will you hold this bomb? As a favour?

ART: I think I still- I think I'm still good on all of those things.

AUSTIN: I'll note that Grand has not yet crossed off Rich from his character traits.

ART: I sure didn't.

ALL: Just be like "hey we need a bunch of resources over on--"

AUSTIN: Yeah that's not bad.

ART (as Grand): We're doing really badly on Altar. It's rough, I just think we need more, more of everything honestly, anything you could spare should be sent to Altar we're making great but very slow progress.

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): Of course.

ART: Is it Flanger's turn?

AUSTIN: No, Flanger isn't here.

ART: Oh right. [table giggles and laughs]

SYLVIA: He's on the call though.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent.

SYLVIA: You can hear him through the headphones because he's so loud.

AUSTIN: Grand?

ART (as Grand): I need you to reassure me about the incompetence of the other Advent leaders who remain. Can you?

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): Grand. I have to let you know-

AUSTIN: This is not the voice I normally do; I don't know what this is [Andrew laughs]. I have to back out, I mean eject, and find 'em again.

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): Grand Magnificent. It's a wonderful name. Have you considered stepping into a more executive role here at Advent? It's just well, Castlerose got herself caught. And of course Ballad betrayed us. And Flanger. That pile of ooze.

KEITH (as Flanger): You called me? You need me for something?

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): Yes, of course Flanger.

KEITH (as Flanger): Always good to have an audience with my Bird Leader!

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): Can you go get me some rocks from outside?

KEITH (as Flanger): Absolutely! Big, medium, or small? Huge pile or small pile? What color? What shape?

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): I need the largest pile of brown rocks you can find from the asteroid belt outside. Please make sure not to get any slime on them.

ART: Ew.

KEITH (as Flanger): Anything for the Bird Leader of Advent. A pile of asteroid medium brown rocks with no slime coming up.

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): Extra hot.

KEITH (as Flanger): Extra hot coming up!

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): No whip. I hate it!

KEITH (as Flanger): No whip coming up!

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): It's so extravagant. Unnecessary!

KEITH (as Flanger): Humble rocks coming up!

AUSTIN: I accidentally spilled the secret that Advent is going to leave pretty much as soon as these things finish. I covered it gracefully but do you pick up on- sorry- [does the Kitcha Kanna voice] I covered it gracefully, but do you pick up on it anyway? [background chuckles]

ART: Er yeah, I think Grand does pick up on it anyway.

AUSTIN: Okay. Your turn.

ART: Interesting but useless information. I'm trying to keep you occupied while the final ignition sequence on the mech bomb goes off.

AUSTIN: Yeah, and I think it's like this, I think Kitcha Kanna- did you respond to the question about leadership, about stepping into a new executive role, because I feel like that's an opening for this.

ART: Yeah, I mean, I think Grand accepts knowing that it's not going like- like yeah can I get it in writing right away?

AUSTIN: Right.

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): I'll have- you know, give me a moment. Beep. Could everyone hold please? Sorry I was not paying close attention. Beep.

KEITH (as Flanger): They're all so heavy can I put them down?

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): Lift them higher please thank you. I like to see them through the window here. Beep.

AUSTIN: And begins to like type up a recommendation for you, basically?

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): Come closer, can you tell me how to spell it again. Magnificent. M.

ART (as Grand): It's- It's just how it sounds.

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): Mag, M-A-G-N-Y-P-H

ART (as Grand): No, no. It's- No, uh un. It's almost-

KEITH: Not the Bird Speller of Advent.

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): Mag, M-A-G-N-Y-P-H

ART (as Grand): No, no, it's a-

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): S-C-E-N-T. SCENT.

ART (as Grand): It's I-F.

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): I-F what? If what?

[Keith cackling, Ali cackling, Andrew cackling]

ART (as Grand): Instead of Y-P-H. It's I-F

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kana): It's I-F what?

ART (as Grand): Okay so, IF it were spelled correctly, it would be-

AUSTIN (joking in Kitcha Kana's voice): Third base!

ART: We can keep doing this as long as you want.

AUSTIN: Boom! [more table chuckles] And yeah, thank you Dre for spelling out what I said. Cause I- oh no, there's actually an S in there, because I spelled SCENT like smell.

ANDREW: Okay, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: MAG-NY-PH-SCENT.

AUSTIN: [continued] Yeah, and also Ali yes. Correct. Kitcha Kana has also definitely killed his own boss before. Just didn't see this coming though, cause Grand's not even here. So yeah boom, explosion on top of the Advent Tech Main, that giant space elevator above Gift-3, I should draw that and blow that up real quick, that's fun. That's a fun one.

ART: So am I the Prick Leader of Advent now?

AUSTIN: I don't think- no sorry, I don't think that you're the Prick Leader of Advent, no.

KEITH: What kind of leader of Advent do you think he is?

AUSTIN: I'm not sure. But no, I think that this is- you're spending enough- this is people know that your fucking robot went in there and then it blew up. No one-

ART: Those callers were on hold. [table laughter]

JANINE: Twenty five people can't be that stupid all at once.

AUSTIN: No.

JANINE: Half of them maybe, right?

AUSTIN: I think this is your play. Like, you have to have just had to made that play, right?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: So what are we at? Negative leadership? And what do you spend on this? Guns-

ART: Guns, and Innovation, and Conflicted.

AUSTIN: Okay! So they still have the Splice, they still have the Stitch, they still have food, and they still have materials. So really the only thing they still have that they came in here with, is material. Everything else is kind of a universal plus, you know?

ART: Because even though I got them to commit to it, he didn't actually send anything huh.

AUSTIN: No, no. I think Flanger becomes the new leader, which is fantastic if you ask me.

KEITH (as Flanger): I'm an excellent manager.

AUSTIN: Great, good.

JANINE: He was assisting.

AUSTIN: He was assisting, he's always helping you know? Gig, it's your turn, you ready?

KEITH: It is not my turn, it is Echo's turn.

AUSTIN: It's Echo's turn sorry, my bad. Sorry Echo.

[MUSIC - "Twilight" starts]

AUSTIN: [continued] Ready?

SYLVIA: Yeah I'm ready, I'm good to go.

AUSTIN: Well!

SYLVIA: Wow!

ANDREW: Woah!

JANINE: Damn!

AUSTIN: Okay!

ANDREW: Woah!

AUSTIN: That's! Interesting! So this is the King of Winter. Crystal Palace is arriving on the horizon, right?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: And-

JACK: What does that look like?

AUSTIN: Like Seance, it looks almost exactly like Seance. Like it is a long octagonal floating city like Seance was except instead of being this like remarkable mixture of different cultures like Seance, which reflected all the different Divine Fleet subcultures that had found their way onto the ship, the city around Crystal Palace is fairly uniform. It's like very Victorian, there's ridges on roofs, and there's the light trim around windows and doors, and there's some strap work and detailing. And most of the buildings have this kind of light brown or red, and lots of brick and iron and cloth and cobblestone, and there's this sort of like this haunting light of lanterns pointed upwards at the structures.

AUSTIN: [continued] And in the middle of it all, is Crystal Palace, who towers above everything and it wraps around the entire exterior of this huge octagonal tube. And it sort of brings the entire world into order, it has like an organising presence, it's like a lord or a river.

[music ends]