

COUNTER/Weight 38: Found Footage

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[00:00]

AUSTIN (narrating): Nine months after The September Incident... After negotiations and debriefings; after concerts and confrontations; the future of The Righteous Vanguard had been determined.

[MUSIC – *The Long Way Around* – begins]

AUSTIN: It would happen tomorrow night: all pomp and theatrics. Aria Joie would lift her arm, bright and golden, say a few inspiring words, and then: the party would be hers. In some ways, it had been hers all along. That's what Ibex said, anyway... Jacqui Green ran her fingers along her partner's brilliant new limb.

AUSTIN (as JACQUI GREEN): So... I have a question... Are you upset that... Paisley won't be here?

ALI (as ARIA JOIE): [scoffs] I'm more upset Jamil won't come...

JACQUI: I mean... she's... just... [scoffs] that's understandable, don't you think?

ARIA: No... I mean... why are you asking about *Paisley*?

JACQUI: I just... you know... you... you saved him, on September, after he... Whatever he became... He's not even a man anymore.

ARIA: [sighs] he meant a lot to me once, and... I... It's... my fault? So... I don't know... I... couldn't just leave him there; if there was a chance that I could have helped him, I would've...

JACQUI: [sighs] I'm worried for you, Aria...

ARIA: Why?

JACQUI: You know you can't save everybody, right?

ARIA: Yeah, but I can try to...

AUSTIN: She laughs.

[01:38]

JACQUI: I thought that too, once... Anyway; good luck: I'll be there for you.

ARIA: Thank you...

AUSTIN: And she stands up, and walks out the door.

[MUSIC ends]

AUSTIN: Hey everybody, welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focussed on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. We are presented by Streamfriends dot TV... nope! We are presented by streamfriends dot *cool* now, [Keith laughs] because we lost Streamfriends dot TV...

ALI: Hmm-hmm...

AUSTIN: By we, I mean... Streamfriends... [scoffs] Streamfriends is complicated... And Runbutton dot net.

KEITH: Hi; Runbutton's not complicated! [Ali laughs] It's very stable; check us out.

AUSTIN: Contentburger dot biz...

ART: I hear it's Runbutton dot coffee now? Go there for... [Ali and Austin laugh]

AUSTIN: That sounds OK...

KEITH: Runbutton dot coffee does sound pretty good... Find some guy... Giant Bomb has all that hot custom beer; I should get roasting some nice... Runbutton Beans.

AUSTIN: Yeah... Runbutton Beans! That sounds OK! We are playing The Sprawl by Hamish Cameron, welcome back to Ali, Art, Keith, and Jack.

ART: Hey.

ALI and JACK together: Hi.

AUSTIN: It has been a while since we played: we had a Faction Game, and I did a weird... short story game... where I just read some short story I wrote? It's not really a game... It's just, kind of, me reading short stories... [Jack laughs].

ART: Yeah, sorry about that guys...

[03:02]

AUSTIN: Naah, it's OK: it was me too, so... The Agenda for today is: to make The Sprawl dirty, hi-tech, and excessive; to make the big things bigger, and the small things smaller; to fill the characters' lives with action, intrigue, and complication; to entangle them in The Sprawl; and to play to find out what happens. Your personal directives, cos it's been a while... Aria: When you value heroism over the mission, mark experience; when your desire for fame draws unwanted attention to the mission, mark experience. AuDy: when you discover more information about the cause of your sentience, mark experience; When you continually broaden horizons, look for hidden... Oh... Continually broaden horizons, look for hidden things, cultivate saplings... when *these* hinder the mission, mark experience. Cass: when your former membership in the Apostolosion royalty hinders the mission, mark experience; and when you harm a Divine or their interests, mark experience. And Mako... Deceptive: when your smart-ass mouth... that's not deceptive at all! Just, in general... is that still the thing? When your smart-ass mouth ruins the mission, mark experience?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah...

AUSTIN: OK... And when you take something The September Institute wants, mark experience. Your mission directives are: You took experience when you took the job? When you gain actionable information on Rigour, take XP; when you locate and secure Maryland September, take XP; and if every member of The Kingdom Come leaves September alive, take two XP: and when you get paid, take XP... and then you're gonna get rich from this, if I remember correctly... At least; that was the promise that Ibex made you. When we last left off... it was pouring close to Maryland's cabin in the woods, but it was a beautiful day throughout the rest of Mode City. So... Aria, you dropped Paisley off at the hospital, where he's being taken care of; Mako you've recently discovered that an old classmate of yours, Maritime Lapel [raucous laughter from Art], was found dead... Do you not remember her name was Maritime Lapel?

ART (overlapping): I'd forgotten that name; oh my god!

ALI and KEITH: [inaudible comments regarding Maritime Lapel's name].

AUSTIN: It's so good... Maritime Lapel... was found dead months after you left The September Institute.

KEITH: And I had seen her...

[05:09]

AUSTIN: You saw her just walking through... yeah; from your, like... bedroom window... from your dorm room window. She is, umm... just to re-paint that picture of her... Deep brown eyes; dark shoulder-length hair, with, like... streaks of grey and white; kind of world-weary look to her? But like... not too good for anybody, do you know what I mean? Like... she isn't... it isn't that she's like... "Ugh... everyone here is beneath me..." It's just, like... she isn't super interested? She's never been super interested in, like... the day-to-day goings on? She's always been, like... head in the clouds a little bit?

KEITH: Right...

AUSTIN: But, like: head in the clouds in a real depressed way.

KEITH: You're talking about ennui?

AUSTIN: Hmm-hmm...

KEITH: Well then, I guess I've gotta stop studying and go find her; this takes precedence over my final [Jack laughs].

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah... And you're very much existing, at this point, in this strange state, of like... knowing that, at least some of this, isn't quite real, but also still feeling the pull of it? I think I described it as being similar to the time that you were in Order that time? Of just, like... "Oh! I want to just do the thing! I just have to do the thing that it wants me to do, because that's the thing I'm supposed to be doing." But you're a little bit more in control here, and you can, like... just... you can keep it together a little bit, at least.

KEITH: Got it...

AUSTIN: So I think you were... looking at the map, you were in House Rosemoon, here. And Aria; you were leaving the University Hospital, here... A real convenient thing I can do, as a GM, is just "Oh! Also... you see Aria, Mako!" And she is kitted-out in... in... her... her... House Blueworld seafoam uniform.

KEITH: OK... uhh...

KEITH (as MAKO TRIG): Why aren't you studying?

AUSTIN: Good... good! [Ali laughs]

ALI (as ARIA JOIE): What?

[07:02]

MAKO: We should all be studying!

ARIA (confused): [stumbles] I just bought Paisley to the hospital, what are you talking about?

MAKO (slowly and impatiently): For the Finals? [Art and Austin laugh].

ARIA: Mako, are you OK?

MAKO: Yeah, we got... I was studying for the Finals, like *you're* supposed to be doing, and then I remembered that... my friend might be dead, so I had to make sure that she's OK...

ARIA: Wait, wait... Who might be dead?

MAKO: This girl that I went to school with? She died after I left, uhh... So I had to make sure that she's still alive, so that we can...

ARIA: You just said that she was dea... wait: who?

MAKO: Maritime Lapel? [Austin laughs].

ARIA: Wait... I just spoke to her.

MAKO: Yeah; she... I think that she might have died...

AUSTIN: Oh right! Cos she ratted... That's what happened: I just remembered the thing that specifically happened... Was she the one? She helped you carry Paisley...

ALI: Yes...

AUSTIN: And then also told C-Sec... that someone had been shot; right?

Ali: Right... Yes.

AUSTIN: Correct. OK; good... Which is why campus is on lockdown, currently.

ALI: OK...

AUSTIN: It has been... it has been... *over a month* since we last recorded, so apologies... [Ali laughs].

[08:12]

MAKO: Yeah, so... I've gotta ... I've gotta go find Maritime to make sure that she didn't die when I went here years ago, so that I can go back to studying for my Final.

AUSTIN (sympathetically): Oh Mako...

ARIA: Umm... Well I came here to find you... cos this is really weird... And also... OK... We should find her? I guess; yeah... Let's go do that...

MAKO (Overlapping): Yeah, OK...

AUSTIN: I'm trying to think how you would find her? Like... what's your... how are you looking for her?

KEITH: Well... it's Finals week, so she might be in the Library...

AUSTIN: That's a good... that's a good pick. You know; I'm gonna give this one to you, cos that's where she is [Ali, Jack, and Keith laugh]. That is, in my head, where she was gonna go next... And you both know her; so... you know... it's... she has a little alcove that she goes to on the seventh floor of the Library that's just, like... what's a really boring subject? Cos that's the floor that the seventh floor is, like... no one is ever there...

KEITH: Umm...

JACK: Accountancy.

AUSTIN: It's accountancy; the Accountancy Floor [laughs]. Which is weird, like... "robots just do that for us now... why do we...?" "Well... we've gotta keep a library; we can't get rid of these books, so..." Maybe it's not actually books at all.. It's probably just lots of little...

KEITH (overlapping): Wall-to-wall full of Kindles?

AUSTIN (laughing): Yeah; it's wall-to-wall full of Kindles... [Ali laughs].

KEITH: But each Kindle is a designated book... You can't... In the future, each one has its own control.

[09:35]

AUSTIN (overlapping - laughing): That's very inefficient! [Jack laughs]. It's probably lots of, like... very specific... it's probably just, like... server banks... through the whole thing? And they are organised, still, by subject? And... and... if you want to go and consult with one of, like... the virtual intelligences, like... the kind of, like... recorded... things that we've been seeing throughout the entire season, of just like... "Oh! This is a waitress!" Like... it's still those... as librarians of different subsections? The accountancy ones are just *great*, let me tell you... Real... real interesting people. So yeah... you know that she studies up there. And I think you just... you probably just find her... I think her shoes are off, and she's resting her legs on a chair that she's pulled over as, like... a makeshift ottoman... and she has a couple of screens up around her, like... and she's reading from a couple of different sources at once... She doesn't even see you coming up.

MAKO: He... Hey!

(AUSTIN as MARITIME LAPEL): Mako? Wha... Aria? Hey! Hi!

ARIA: Hey...

MARITIME: How's it going?

MAKO: I'm sorry... I wanted to check you were OK.

MARITIME (overlapping, to Aria): Is your friend OK?

ARIA: Umm, yeah... he should be fine...

MARITIME: That was scary!

ARIA: Yeah...

MARITIME: I don't know about this place sometimes...

ARIA: Me neither...

MAKO: Anyway, speaking about it... I read a thing that said you had died!

MARITIME (laughing): Excuse me?!

MAKO: Yeah, I saw a thing...

ARIA: Mako!

[10:59]

MAKO: After I left... the school... I read a thing that said, a few weeks after that, that you had died... So; I was studying for my finals...

MARITIME: Mako, have you been hanging out with Ted?

MAKO: Ted? Not... more than usual... [Ali laughs].

MARITIME: Well, I'm fine... OK? Just... I'm fine.

MAKO: OK...

MARITIME: Let me study.

ARIA: Wait; how... how do we know each other?

MARITIME: What? What are you...? Rude... We auditioned together...

KEITH: They're in the same house?

AUSTIN: Yeah... we're in the same house: out of character: they're in the same house. But yeah, she says:

MARITIME: Rude... We've been friends ever since we auditioned together; since the first week at school. I'm... kind of mad that you forgot that.

ARIA (overlapping): I'm sorry...

MAKO: Yeah, Aria... that's super cold.

MARITIME: Thanks...

ARIA: I'm s... I don't think...

MARITIME: Are you two OK?

MAKO: Yeah, I just needed to... I just really feel like I have to get back to studying.

MARITIME: Alright, well...

ARIA: Mako, we don't have a test.

[12:03]

MAKO: What are you talking about?

ARIA: We have, like, a mission that we have to do: Cass and AuDy are waiting for us? Do you remember Cass and AuDy?

MAKO: Yeah, we were going to meet them in the library after I'd finished studying [Austin laughs].

ARIA: No...

MAKO: So... you're saying that they're here already?

ARIA (laughing): No! They're, like... off campus.

MAKO: Why? There's, like... a test... tomorrow.

ARIA (slowly): We're not students!

MAKO: Well, if we're not students, then how would I know that she was going to die after I gradua.... Whooooa! [Ali and others laugh].

MARITIME: I'm gonna go... You're... I'm trying to study... And this isn't... you're both scaring me; a lot.

AUSTIN: And she, like... hits a few buttons, and her screens, like... her screens fold down into each other, and then, like... go into a little... like a zip-lock bag that she closes and puts into her back pocket [Keith laughs].

KEITH: Can I... um... can I do an Assess roll?

AUSTIN: Totally.

KEITH: OK... [pause] I would like to know...

AUSTIN: Roll it first so we know how many things... you get.

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: Roll Edge.

KEITH: Edge, yeah...

[13:12]

AUSTIN: Unless you have a thing that changes that. Boom! Take three hold. So this edge is... so you're sizing her up? Are you studying a person, place, or situation? So... are you studying her? Are you studying the library? Are you studying this specific encounter?

KEITH: For my first hold, I am studying...

AUSTIN: It is... it is the same... you have to study the same one thing.

KEITH: Oh, for all three?

AUSTIN: Yeah, and then you can ask questions about that thing. The reason I ask this is because, like... if it's about *her*, then you can hold that... hold for a future scene? Whereas, if it's just about this situation? Then once you leave this situation it will go away.

KEITH: I'm gonna do... I'm gonna do the situation.

AUSTIN: OK. So go ahead and... three questions, then. Three hold.

KEITH: What do I notice despite an effort to conceal it?

AUSTIN: [pause] can we... let's wrap back around to that for dramatic reasons [quiet background laughter].

KEITH: OK. Then, instead... I want to know... What potential complication do I need to be wary of?

AUSTIN: [pause] you get the sense that... in... if this... things are playing out according to some... some... history? Some past?

KEITH: yeah...

AUSTIN: And tinkering with that could... mess up wi... mess up the, sort of... machine that's at work. It could set things off balance? So that's a *risk*... it might be a risk that you're willing, or that's necessary... that you're willing to take, or that you think is necessary to take. But you get the... you get the sense that, like... the way she's reacting? It's almost like you can hear the computer thinking. Instead of... when she normally talks, it plays out as if it was an easy answer for... for... her to arrive at.

KEITH: Then, uhh... who or what is in control here?

[15:15]

AUSTIN (slowly): *She* is... But she isn't alone? Like... she's in control of herself. But there is a second presence there that you don't have direct access to. You can tell... it reminds you of when AuDy checks... checks... their data banks for something.

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: That's the impression you get. Now... the thing that you notice despite... efforts to conceal it is... it's like... out of the corner of your eye that you spot it first, which is... you see... her walking past you, while she's also in front of you. She's a little out of focus, and she's carrying her books... and then, she's in the elevator at the end of the hall, and she's going down, and you get... you suddenly realise that this is her at different times? And... that if you... that if you touch The Mesh *just right*... you could scrub through history here, as if it were... a videotape.

KEITH (lightly): OK... Then... can I... *Jack In*?

AUSTIN: Totally...

KEITH: OK... [adopts sing-song tone] I am going to do that... And to do that, I roll this one... this button here...

AUSTIN: That was a lot of... that was a lot of noises [Ali laughs]. That's an eight. Are you going to do the thing that you always do? Which is... you've jacked in, and then... you can roll... because you rolled an eight, I get to activate a thing? But then you're gonna roll *Console Cowboy*...

KEITH: Right...

AUSTIN: So do that; so roll your *Console Cowboy*... you also get an eight, so then you're going to immediately spend that to stop the...

KEITH: Yeah; please don't do the ICE, please...

AUSTIN: Please don't do the ICE, OK... [pause] So I think jacking in here... again; all of the campus has this... the whole, like... multiple levels of different... Mesh visualisations happening? But because you're in the mode you're in now, everything just gets that really good, like... slight static-y look? As if it were a videotape. Everything becomes, kind of, holographic, except, I think, you and Aria. And... No; just you and Aria are the only ones who... who... seem to still have a physicality. Even some of the tables and chairs look like... there's a couple of times that you can see a chair? And then you can see another holographic chair right next to it?

[17:40]

AUSTIN (continued): Or like... like... overlapping with it? From when... from, like... the moment when you're zipped in... kind of... plugged into... *in* history, here. And now you can... I'd say... give me a *Manipulate Systems* if you want to... kind of, scrub back and forward through time here.

KEITH: That I definitely do... I also have... the thing that gives me extra hold when I...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Oh! Don't do *Manipulate Systems* at all, I'm just gonna let you use the *Research* move, and then take plus one ongoing to that, because of... because of *Sift*.

KEITH: OK... Wait... what is *Sift*?

AUSTIN: It's a... that's a program that you run? That gives you plus one ongoing to *Research* in a secure database.

KEITH (overlapping): Oh! Right, OK... I didn't know the *name* of it... didn't know the name of *Sift*.

AUSTIN: So, if you want to *Research*... If you want to ask questions from the *Research* thing... you can do that. And now that you're jacked in here? You can continue doing that, until you like... fuck up and draw some attention, you know...

KEITH: OK... And I'm still asking questions about this specific situation?

AUSTIN: Uh, no... this is now: "When you investigate a person, place, or object, or service, using a library, dossier, or database, or combination of them, ask a question from the list below and roll Mind." But now you're jacked in, this is just a thing that you can do... I'm just giving you this for the rest of the episode? With regards to stuff at September, that you can look... that you can, kind of, like... move through in this way. In this timeline way.

KEITH: OK...

AUSTIN: It's in the Basic Moves list.

KEITH: Oh, OK, I see it.. sorry: you were saying *Research*, and I was hearing *Assess*...

AUSTIN: OK; gotcha.

KEITH: OK, so I guess I'm going to use one now...

AUSTIN: Go for it...

[19:18]

KEITH: Yeah, ummm...

AUSTIN: So you have a plus one to it no matter what, but you still have to do a roll for *Research*.

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: It's just that I'm giving you this as a database that you have access to: that make sense?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah...I'm gonna roll Mind?

AUSTIN: Lots of rolls... there's a nine, so that's uh... OK, so you get... Oh yeah! It's plus one ongoing; nice!

KEITH: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Yeah, OK... So you'll take *Intel* from whatever you ask me here.

KEITH: Great.

AUSTIN: And you can ask... you can also ask a follow-up.

KEITH: OK. Who or what is Lapel most valuable to?

AUSTIN: [pause] Alright... [pause] [light background chuckles]. I think this is, like...

KEITH: Or is it a stretch that this is something that I could find within this system?

AUSTIN (overlapping): No, it *totally* is...

KEITH: OK, great...

[20:01]

AUSTIN: But... we're gonna answer it... I think, what we get here is a shot of you and Aria scrubbing through time? And watching her come and go? And, like... leave... walk... You scrub forward and walk past her out? Back-and-forth, back-and-forth, back-and forth, back-and-forth... And then... and you see like, the... kind of... day counter going up in the corner? As if it was security camera footage? And then one day she stops. And you go back a day before, and start following her from there. And... you see... all over campus, it says, uh... "Spring Formal." And everyone around campus just has this, like... air of like: "Oh man, it's party time!" And she has, like... a real dour look, like she's seen some shit... And she starts walking down one of the main thoroughfares here, towards this, like... the kind of, uh... cul-de-sac. And then we cut to, back to uh... the woods. Cass and AuDy... AuDy, you're on the porch when Cass arrives? With Maxine Ming? What do you do?

JACK: So I've identified... I can identify that Maxine is a Divine? But I don't know what...

AUSTIN: You can identify that, when Maxine walks in, you feel the presence of a Divine.

JACK: OK... Fine... I'm going to stand up...

KEITH (overlapping): AuDy points: "Divine! Divine!"

JACK (overlapping): [chuckles] I'll stand up, and wave at Cass, and say... and say to both Maxine and Cass:

JACK (as AUDY): I am experiencing a crisis of loyalties right now [Austin and Ali laugh].

AUSTIN: Oh AuDy!

ART (as CASSANDER TIMEUS BERENICE): What? [Austin laughs].

ART: I, like... back away... [Ali laughs]

KEITH: What a time for a crisis of loyalties!

ART: Yeah... what an... upsetting thing to say!

AUDY: Cass; things have rapidly become difficult, and I need to speak to *you*... inside the cabin... but just *you*...

CASS: You're being so rude right now... Maxine...

AUSTIN (overlapping, as MAXINE MING): Who's your friend? Why are they a robot?

[22:09]

CASS: Uh... that's... that's AuDy; he...¹ works with me on some outside projects. It's alright... I'm... I'm sorry he's being so...

AUSTIN (overlapping): AuDy, you can feel her touching your, like... consciousness, like... probing at it just a little bit. It's, like... the sort of thing Mako did once? And then you gave him that look? And he *never* did it again...

AUDY (with urgency): Cass!

CASS: Yeah, I'll be right there...

AUDY (overlapping): We've experienced many emergencies! [background laughter] This is... we need to talk! Now!

CASS: Yeah! Yeah... I'll be just... give me a second, I'll be in there... I'll be in there in thirty seconds [Jack laughs]. Maxine, I need to uh... I need to talk to AuDy for a second... he seems to have something private to say... I'll be right back.

MAXINE: OK... OK.

CASS: Alright...

MAXINE: I'll be right here.

ART: And I go... I go inside.

AUDY: Cass, as I understand it, you have had a checkered history with Divines.

CASS: Uh... [Ali and Keith laugh] yeah... there was a war [Ali and Austin laugh].

AUDY: Maxine is one.

CASS: Oh! Something really weird is happening on campus, and she was... she was *real* helpful getting out of there...

AUDY: What help did she offer?

CASS: She knew the way out of the locked-down campus.

¹ AuDy uses they/them pronouns.

AUDY: Actually, I have another question: what is happening on campus?

[23:47]

CASS: Oh... I don't... OK; so... [pause] You ever, like... you ever seen that episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*? [several laughs] Where...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Wait... Wait! [more laughter] Time out! Is this in character? [laughing continues].

ART: I don't know! It's just the best example...

AUSTIN (overlapping): OK, it's in character... go!

KEITH: It's no weirder than someone being a big fan of Dave Attell...

AUSTIN: That was off-mic; no one heard that bit!

KEITH: I was recording...

AUSTIN: OK...

ART: It's no weirder than someone being a big fan of Dave Attell now, honestly... [Ali and Austin laugh]. That's my new plan for us to get a little more exposure: I want us to have... to start beefing with other... entertainment personalities [background laughter].

AUSTIN: I think we might have a bigger following than Dave Attell these day; honestly... [Ali and Jack laugh].

KEITH: Hi; my name's Adam *Barolla*... [laughter]

AUSTIN: Dave Attell looks good! He's doing alright for himself... he has a good beard.

ART: Oh, that's good!

ART/CASS (partly in character?): So there was that episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the show that I know we've all seen, because it's really... held the test of time, and definitely didn't feel... dated in 2016 [laughter]. Uh... Where Buffy and Angel are, like... reliving this... this abusive... couple? Going to prom? And they, uh... they keep... they know they're, like... not doing it, but they keep reliving these events and shooting each other... It's kind of like that. It's definitely some sort of... trick being played on people that makes them think that they're students there when they weren't... There's costumes... there's a prom... It's all sorts of fucked up, man...

AUDY: Your friend is a Divine.

[25:45]

CASS: Yeah, I... I... I just thought she was a computer programme, I'll be honest with you... [Ali and Jack laugh]. I don't know... do you want me to go shoot her? I don't... [Ali laughs].

AUDY: No, no, no, no... not even a little!

AUSTIN (as MARYLAND SEPTEMBER): You're not going to shoot anybody in my front y... I... y... uh... front yard.

AUSTIN: I don't know what my words are! I'm Maryland September! [Jack laughs]. It's me! Maryland September!

CASS: I'm sorry Doctor September, that was very rude of me...

MARYLAND: [sighs] Who are you?

AUDY: This is Cass... he² is a doctor.

MARYLAND: Hmm... OK... well...

CASS: The other kind of doctor, though...

MARYLAND: Oh. Well... that's less impressive.

CASS (incredulous - probably out of character?): How dare you... No, it's fine...

MARYLAND: So you're with AuDy then?

AUDY: Yeah...

CASS: Yes, we work together...

MARYLAND: Alright, well... come inside and sit down, and once the storm passes, you guys can both be on your way.

CASS: Should we...

² Cass uses they/them pronouns.

AUDY (interrupting Cass): Cass, Maryland is not... Maryland is not fond of our plan.

CASS (surprised): No?

[26:53]

AUDY: Not at all.

CASS: Does... does she know... [drops to a whisper] does she know about... does she know about Rigour?

AUDY: She thinks he's³ a myth.

MARYLAND: [sighs] And if he's true, then I'd rather die here in my home than on some cold ship somewhere.

AUDY: See what I mean?

CASS: No one's gonna die... on our ship.

AUDY: Several people have died on our ship.

CASS: You're... what? Whose side are you on? [Ali, Austin, and Jack laugh]. This isn't how you get someone to go on the ship!

KEITH (overlapping): He did say "crisis of loyalties..."

CASS: Also... I think most people die... being pushed *off* of our ship [Ali, Austin, and Jack laugh]. Our on-ship mortality rate, I think, is pretty good! [more laughter] Well better than most ships in the fleet...

MARYLAND: I'm sure it's a very nice ship...I've heard Orth used to... captain that ship, and...

CASS: No; it's a shit pile... [Ali laughs] don't... don't... don't bother...

MARYLAND: I respect your honesty all-around.

CASS: But you... you can't... can't stay here, and die here... it'll... it'll kill Ibex, and only I get to kill Ibex [Austin laughs]. And probably... not yet.

³ Rigour is it/its.

AUDY (overlapping): No... That might have been the wrong thing to say...

MAYLAND: Well... he always was... very good at making friends.

CASS: No, that's the *opposite* of what I'm saying... to you...

[28:19]

MARYLAND: It was sarcasm, it was... I... believe me... *believe* me, I know... Better than anybody. But I'm staying here, and that's it...

CASS (overlapping/underneath): You should chat to my brother...

ART: Sibling; sorry!

CASS: Alright... it's really... it's [sighs]...

MARYLAND: Sit down, and... dry off...

ART: I wish AuDy had texting, so badly... [Ali, Jack, and Keith laugh] I wish I could text AuDy... [laughter continues]. Cos there's like, I don't feel like I have a way to, like... wordlessly communicate with AuDy, cos I just don't... I just don't know that I trust him for like... you know... body language signals, like...

AUSTIN: Sure...

ART: Like... (whispering): "Hey Audy, we could probably, just..."

AUSTIN (sternly): Uh-huh? [Austin and Jack laugh].

ART: I just like, I kind of like, go over to AuDy and, like... whisper, like...

CASS (whispering): We could... we could *take* her... [several snorts and laughs].

AUDY: Shall we speak to your friend?

CASS: Yeah! Sure...

AUSTIN: From a back room, Jacqui kind of... it's not a skip, really... but it's definitely a bound. She kind of bounds out of the back room and is, like...

AUSTIN (as JACQUI GREEN): Oh, hey! Everybody's... Oh... just... uh, hey Cass... where are... where's Ari... where's Aria and Mako?

CASS: Oh... Aria took Paisley to the hospital, and...

JACQUI: What?

CASS: And Mako was tricked by the... by the reality virus... [Keith laughs].

[30:03]

AUDY: Have you seen *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*? [all laugh].

AUSTIN: Fuck!

[laughter continues]

AUSTIN (maybe in character as JACQUI?): Big fan... Big fan actually...

AUSTIN: Uhm... alright...

KEITH: Jacqui's only seen *Angel*.

AUSTIN: Yeah, she's... it's weird, it's weird... She filled in the gaps, though. Are you heading back outside to... that's a really good end of set bit? But I'm not quite ready to go back to The September Institute quite yet, so... I think the next shot is... you going back outside to get Maxine?

ART: Yeah...

JACK: OK...

AUSTIN: And also, Maxine is gone? Cos... you didn't leave anybody behind to... watch her?

ART: I asked her to wait... rude...

AUSTIN: Yeah, well... Roll some dice next time you want it to stick.

JACK: Can I reach out to her?

AUSTIN: How?

JACK: I'm a Divine. That's a thing we can do.

AUSTIN: Sure: what do you... what's... how are you... so you're... I guess; here's the thing. You're opening up that channel, so to speak? [Jack groans, Ali and Jack laugh].

JACK: Uhh...

ART: It's probably fine.

JACK: No... actually, in that case? Yeah... I think I'll...

[31:16]

AUSTIN: Are you sure? You don't want to just... peek? Peek a little bit?

JACK: This sounds like you're gonna... add some exclamation marks!

AUSTIN (overlapping): I won't... I won't add any exclamation points, or Alerts to the thing... if you just peek. Now; what you do after that... is up to you.

ART: Do it... Do it!

JACK (lightly): OK, I'll do it.

AUSTIN: Alright. So... I think, normally, when you do this, there are... there's kind of a distinctive... like, a signature? That you're able to hone in on... like a sound that identifies another Divine; in the, kind of... communication network. So, you know... with Grace, it's this, like... beautiful, high... like... rising tone. And you're able to, like, zero-in on that. With... with... you know, Righteousness, it's this, like... hard, like... strumming... dedicated, like... repeated... riff that's hit over, and over again. With... here... here on September, there are two sounds, currently. There is the sound of a number of voices chattering. It's like an orchestra warming up. It's... it's... not in tune; it's not quite *beautiful*, but there is something attractive about it? There is something... even though it's not... organised... it's still, kind of... appealing. And then there's another sound, and it's a sound you know well enough that I don't need to describe it. And that sound is far away: but it's getting closer. You can find... you can feel a... uh... that one of the many instrumentalists, let's say, of the... large... kind of... diverse... Divine voice... is by itself? And is just, kind of, like... it's doing scales? It's just doing scales; and it's back around side of the cabin.

JACK: What's around the back of the cabin?

AUSTIN: It's like... to the side of the cabin. If you go right, and turn right again, you would come to it.

JACK: OK... I'm gonna relay this information, in totality, to Cass. And, I guess, to Orth and Jacqui.

AUSTIN: I think they stayed inside; they don't want to go outside in the rain...

ART: That doesn't mean it's close, does it?

AUSTIN: Rigour?

ART: Yeah...

[34:06]

AUSTIN: I don't know... Art, in the chat said, by the way, Righteousness is the guitar line from the Nirvana cover of *The Man Who Sold the World*, and that's about right... [Jack laughs] Yeah. That's about right.

ART (overlapping): Yeah... It's only a couple of notes, but it really drives.

AUSTIN: Yeah... So this... At the North end of this cabin, is where you're at... that, like... lone voice is over here.

ART: Let's go... peek around the corner, then. Cautiously, you know... Cos...

AUSTIN: Sure...

ART: Cos maybe she's... maybe she's dangerous afterall.

AUSTIN: You see Maxine Ming. like... miming? About twenty-five feet in front of you... Like... invisible wall-touching? Like... "Oh! I'm trapped in a box!"

ART: That's weird...

AUSTIN: But away from you, like... to the south... she's not facing you, like... "Oh no! Help me!" She's just, like... pushing up against something that isn't there.

ART: I... I... call out:

CASS: Maxine! What's...

MAXINE: Come and look at this! Just come over here... be careful, there's... you can't see them, but there are *wires* on the ground. I think...

AUDY: Cass; be very careful...

ART (overlapping): What? Can I see these wires?

AUSTIN: You don't see any wires...

ART: I think I'd like to make a roll! [Ali and Art laugh]

AUSTIN: Hm-hmm? I like it when players make rolls...

JACK (overlapping): Am I able to aid him?

[35:20]

AUSTIN: Sure, let's do that roll first. How are you aiding him?

JACK: Umm...

ART: It's an Assess roll...

AUSTIN: Sure...

JACK: I am... I think that this is just the version of a , sort of, like... Crystal Maze-style; one person walking very carefully, and another person going: "Oh! No! No!" [Austin and Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: Uh... Crystal Maze is a game show we didn't have in North America, and I wish we did...

JACK: Oh, OK...

AUSTIN: But go and look that up on the Internet, listeners.

JACK: So... What do I roll here?

AUSTIN: Uh, you road... [aside] road... It's been... it's been a *long* month. Roll your... plus your... you're rolling plus two, because you have two Links with Cass.

JACK: I'm just... two D6 plus two?

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: OK...

AUSTIN: Not a bad one...

JACK: No...

AUSTIN: Whew! Goddam, that was close! [sounds of relief from Art]. Cass, take a plus one to your Assess, but, um...

JACK: I rolled a seven.

AUSTIN: Yeah, but if... yeah, sorry... Jack rolled a seven. If you fail, then AuDy is also implicated in the result.

[36:20]

ART: OK, I'm just gonna roll it, and we'll add one to it manually.

AUSTIN: Sure.

[Keith, Art, Jack, and Austin all overlap here]

KEITH: Nice...

ART: Boom!

JACK: Nice! Nice! Nice!

AUSTIN: Nice! Good work! OK...

[overlapping ends]

ART: I'm the best assessor. Call me Real Estate, cos I'm an... assessor...

AUSTIN (overlapping): You're a pretty good assessor...

ART: Don't call me that... Just everyone forget I said that! [Ali, Jack, and Keith laugh]

AUSTIN: Alright. So, what do you... what's up?

ART: I'm gonna... I get three?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: OK.

AUSTIN: Are you studying the situation, I'm guessing?

ART: Yeah... this situation.

AUSTIN: Or you... OK.

ART: I'm gonna start with... who or what is my biggest threat in this situation? And then keep the other two for a minute.

AUSTIN: That's a hard question to answer...

[37:03]

ART: I can ask another one if you want, I'm (inaudible under Austin - possibly "willing to take") a second choice.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yeah, ask another one... Eh? No; you asked that: I like that one. You have three questions here, right?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Maryland September?

ART: Oh!

AUSTIN: She has an ease, and it's her home turf... and doesn't want to be taken, and it's your job to take her away from here.

ART: And remember how subtle I was about implying that we could just beat her up and take her?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah... super subtle.

ART: [pause] What potential complication do I need to be wary of? Is that too much the same question? Or just...

AUSTIN: No, no... there's different things there... there's different things there. I guess, as you, as you watch Maxine touch this invisible wall... it re-occurs to you that, like... September is a weird place... where lots of super-science experiments were done? And what seems real, and what is not is... deeply up in the air right now. And you... you suddenly get the... it comes to your... to the forefront of your mind that maybe it's not a good idea just to think "Oh! I made it here now... I'm safe here..." and, in general, you should never take... what seems like the real thing on September for granted... As being real.

ART: Oh boy... That was a... that was a bigger one than I [chuckles]... hoped for.

AUSTIN: Mmm-hmm?

ART: And what I hope is the coup-de-grace; where can I gain the most advantage? [Jack chuckles]

[38:41]

AUSTIN: Fucking... back on The Kingdom Come? Like... In this case, this just means... I think it... what I'll say is: you're able to approach here quickly and easily without being noticed by... anybody you don't want to be noticed by. Specifically, I'll say: you're able to do this quickly without Maryland noticing what's happening. You get close... and it becomes clear... it looks like it's raining in front of you, but you don't *feel* that it's raining there. And you don't feel any drafts of wind from that direction. And you realise that there's an invisible building back to, like... the side where the cabin should be... over? Where the cabin ends. There's a wall there, and it's, like... hard concrete. In fact: you touch the logs of the log cabin, and your hand dips into them for a moment. And it too is a projection.

ART: Oh fuck...

JACK: Oh Jesus Christ... Umm... can I see this?

AUSTIN: Now that... yes... yes: now you can all see this. I mean - it doesn't go away, you know? But you can see Cass' hand dipping into the logs. Maxine says, like...

MAXINE: What the hell is this? Where did you...? Why are we out here, Cass?

CASS: I needed to talk to Doctor September.

MAXINE: Doctor September is here?!

CASS: She's in the... she's in...

ART: And I just, like... I like... stop short of saying "the cabin," and I just... point.

MAXINE: She's been... gone for... years now.

CASS: Yeah... Weird...

AUSTIN: Let's cut back to The September Institute. So... where are you going? I was answering a question, right?

KEITH: Yeah...

AUSTIN: I was answering...

ALI: We were going to the dance to tail... Maryland? No, not Maryland... Maritime.

AUSTIN (overlapping): You were tailing, uh... Maritime... yeah.

[40:53]

KEITH: We're dealing with Maritime, Maryland, and Maxine...

AUSTIN: Yup... Lots of M's... and Mako!

KEITH: Yeah...

AUSTIN: [pause] I thought there was a specific... question that we were, sort of, answering with this thing, but I don't remember what. So yeah: you... you... you've kind of figured out that she went missing on the night of this... prom. And I'm gonna say, it's getting to be night time.: it's, like... sunset; people are starting to arrive; it's in this big pavillion here? So... for people listening at home, there's just, kind of, a big cul-de-sac, which is pretty near to where Paisley's café was... And to the North-East of that, there's this big pavillion, and, like...

KEITH: That's where that guy had two snowcones, right?

AUSTIN: Right: that is where the guy had two snowcones! Exactly...

KEITH: Yeah...

AUSTIN: But then, further North, towards the, kind of, rocks... towards the, kind of, big basalt... formations... these, like... big, red, geometric-looking rocks... looking out onto the ocean, while the sun hits it from... a direction... I don't know... I don't know what direction September rotates... it's very pretty: and, all through the, kind of... grassy area here? On the way to the pavillion? There are all of these, like... pillars? And... and, like... towers that have been erected? That are like... themed for prom? So... it takes you a few seconds to notice this, but, like... a lot of the students you see are dressed up in really goofy costumes? I think the first one you see is just, like... Someone in a long robe; and then someone else walks by with, like... strange, like... like, a weird metal suit? With a big metal helmet on? Like.. no one would ever wear that? Someone has a sword! It's very strange... [Ali laughs] And then you get close enough, and you see a banner that says, like... what would it say...? It would say: "Sunset by the Sea: a Fantasy Prom." And everyone here is... is, like... cosplaying for their prom as some fantasy show that you've never watched. Something about Hieron? You're not sure...

KEITH: [gasps] Gasp... [Ali laughs].

JACK: Fuck you, Austin!

AUSTIN: Hey! Hi...How's it going?

JACK: I'm in the woods!

[43:28]

AUSTIN: Yeah... you're in the woods. [Ali and Keith laugh]

ALI: You didn't give us a chance to dress up for this...

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK (overlapping): Aria; find me a Divine and I'll teleport to them [Ali and Austin laugh].

AUSTIN: But one of the robed figures walks up to you:

ART: Tell Rigour, he'll understand.

AUSTIN (as a new character): Yo, what are you doing?!

AUSTIN: So, it's a... it's a robed figure who's, like... has, like, a robe up, over his head, and there are, like... some floating Kindles [laughs] behind him... [Ali and Keith laugh]. Uh... And he flips the hood over, and it's Lazer Ted! [somebody applauds].

ARIA: Hi!

MAKO: LT! What's good?

AUSTIN (as LAZER TED): How you doin'?

MAKO: I'm doing good!

TED: Why aren't you in costume?

MAKO: I was studying, and then I realized that this wasn't real...

TED: Yeah... what is, though?

MAKO: Yeah...

TED: A'ight... so do you need some... do you need some looks? What do you need?

MAKO: Yeah... ah man; you got looks for me?

TED: Yeah...

MAKO: OK, let me see...

[44:19]

TED: Well, come with me to the museum [Ali laughs].

MAKO: You've got a *museum*?

TED: I mean... there is a museum... I have access to it.

MAKO: OK...

AUSTIN: And he leads you off...

KEITH (overlapping): That's what you call...

AUSTIN: Yeah...

KEITH (some of what Keith says lost in cross-talk): closet at the museum...

TED: It's the Magenta Museum; that's where I live [Keith laughs]. I'm kinda the janitor there, but they let me live there too, it's good... it's good...

AUSTIN: So, he leads you to the side, and he's going to hook you up with some costumes for this... for this... fantasy prom.

KEITH: Dope...

AUSTIN: What do you look like? Also: it's not *actual* costumes... It's... just, like... weird holograms, like what he gave AuDy that time [Ali laughs]. When he made AuDy a Republican [Keith laughs]. So talk to me about fantasy Mako and fantasy Aria; talk to me about... who in Hieron they're cosplaying as [Ali laughs].

KEITH: OK... So...

KEITH/MAKO (unsure if in character): I'm thinking of myself, sort of... as... I don't know, like... uh... a sort of rough-and-tumble, but goes with the flow... sort of... trying to forget my dangerous past, pirate sort of guy?

AUSTIN: Oh, really? OK...

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So is like, your neck all jacked-up? [Ali laughs]

[45:28]

KEITH: Yeah, my neck's, like, all jacked-up.

AUSTIN: OK...

MAKO: Maybe like a... ghost... like a... ghost pirate, king pirate?

TED: Oh yeah, cos it's, like... a hologram! I got the best idea! Hold still!

AUSTIN: And the he, like... slaps you once? And... your... your... regular body turns shimmery and clear. And now you're, like... a hologram ghost pirate [Ali laughs].

MAKO: Do I get, like... do I get, like... a... some sort of animal companion? Like, a seafaring friend?

TED: Nah, that's extra... [Ali laughs]

MAKO: That's extra?

TED: Yeah...like... if you've got a credit or two, like...

MAKO (overlapping): We go way back!

TED: Yeah, but, like... so do my... my debts go way back too, you know? [Keith laughs]. So I'm tryin' a pay those off [Ali laughs]. Get my credit right.

KEITH: OK... So Ted's looking to get a secure credit card?

AUSTIN (laughing): Yes!

KEITH: So he can get a house?!

TED: I'm just tryin' a get an apartment... [Ali and Keith laugh].

AUSTIN: So, what about Aria?

ALI: Umm... I think that Aria doesn't know how to make sense of this?

AUSTIN: I think Aria might be the only one who knows what this is, actually [Ali laughs]? Cos this is *definitely* an EarthHome property.

ALI: Yeah...

[46:38]

AUSTIN: Right? Or, like... it wasn't for a long time, and then the EarthHome version is the one everyone knows now?

ALI (laughing): Right... God...

AUSTIN: She probably auditioned for a part, and didn't get it...

ALI: Uhh, probably... Oh... poor Aria! I think... OK... No. So... she, like... recognises this property, and auditioned for the part? And, like... has the opportunity now to...

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: To be that person. She looks at Lazer Ted, and then claps her hands together and be like:

ARIA (clapping): Can I be the Queen? Do you have a Queen of Pearls outfit?

TED: You know... I was saving that one for later, but... a'ight; for you... for you, Aria.

ARIA: I'd look so good in it!

AUSTIN: And, like... he's like...

TED: One second.

AUSTIN: And he comes out with a real dress? From just... a room in this museum [Ali and Jack laugh]. Uh...

TED: But you gotta give it back by tomorrow, though.

ARIA: Ted... You know I got you.

TED: Yeah. I know.

AUSTIN: And yeah... you're just, like... dope, like... whites and opal colours... and, like... weird pearls, and like... it's good. It's a good look. Aria's dressed to the nines right now... [pause]. So, you get to go into this weird prom! You don't... in your... in your hurry to get dressed for prom, you don't know where Maritime Lapel is! [Ali, Jack, and Keith laugh].

KEITH: Can I...

MAKO: Hey, Ted; have you seen Maritime?

[48:07]

TED: Nah, she didn't want a costume. I tried... I thought she'd be a real good, like... you know... them girls with the laser guns? Like... she'd be one of them; they'd be a'ight, but... she said she wanted alone.

MAKO: Huh... You know if she's here? If she's...

TED: I don't know, like... I... I know no one asked her, but... I don't know; she's been creeping around a lot of places lately, so... She might be around? She might could be, I don't know...

MAKO: Creeping around?

TED: Yeah, like... she's, like... I don't know: she came to me a couple of weeks ago talking about secret laboratories and shit, I don't know...

MAKO (excited): Secret laboratories! That means we've gotta go to the Theoretical Science and English department...

TED: No, that's where my secret laboratory is; that's where I grow that real stuff [Ali laughs].

KEITH (laughing): OK...

TED: I keep it there 'cos no one would look there; that's just books [Ali and Keith continue laughing].

MAKO: Wait, you're saying nobody uses that whole building?

TED: No but, just like... why would my weed be there? [Ali, Jack, and Keith laugh]. Alright; I gotta go *dance*.

MAKO: OK; you go *dance*.

KEITH: Maybe... Maybe... Ah! Can we... can I use the thing to scrub through again?

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH Maybe we could see her... doing a thing. Do I have to roll for that? Or can I just...

[49:23]

AUSTIN: No... I'll just say, like... you're able to do... cos you basically succeeded at that earlier... She's definitely in that pavillion. She went in earlier today? Before, like... as things were still in the setup phase? Has not yet come out from there... but is... definitely... she definitely went in and was not in costume.

KEITH: So I guess I'll just look around and...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Oh! And then you come back, and because you fucked with this? Now [laughs]... You've... you go to hit play again basically, as she goes in? And... Fantasma Ted comes back up to you? And he's like:

TED: Yo, good outfits! I really like those! [Ali and Keith laugh].

MAKO: Hey! Do you have, like... an animal companion or something? Or maybe some sort of creature of the sky that I could have?

TED: Yeah, I got you... don't worry; give me a second [Ali and Jack laugh].

MAKO: Nice...

AUSTIN: And he just gives you, like... a big, black, like... stuffed bird? [Keith laughs]. And just puts it right on your shoulder.

TED: That looks good...

MAKO: Thanks Ted...

AUSTIN (laughing): But it's not... it's not, like... see-through? So it's just hovering on your weird see-through shoulder? [Keith laughs].

TED: One second...

AUSTIN: And he, like... reaches inside of his big robe pock... uh, not pockets... the sleeves? And gets some, like... twine? And he, like...

TED: I gotta tie this on for you real quick. I gotta make sure you look *good*.

AUSTIN: And, like...

TED: Alright; good.

[50:46]

MAKO: This reflects back on you, Ted.

TED: Yeah, exactly. My merchandise has to look good. I'm an entrepreneur? I got, like... seven businesses. A'ight... business number one: Costume Shop.

MAKO: One of them's gonna fucking take off, I can... feel it.

TED: Business number two: I sell drugs sometimes [Jack laughs quietly].

MAKO: Yeah, I got it...

TED: That was a mistake though. But, like... mostly, it's for me. Business number three: I have my own 3D Printing company [Ali laughs].

MAKO: Oh yeah?

TED: Yeah... I got a printer, and now I can do whatever I want. Four...

MAKO: Where did you get the printer?

TED: Wh... you know that... Four: uh... I'm a janitor? But like... Independent Janitorial Services. You know...

MAKO: Right...

TED: I clean things up; five...

ARIA: That makes sense...

TED: Obviously, I am an Entertainer. Six: I make music. And seven: I am a rapper, so... that's seven different jobs I got.

MAKO: And the mu... so, you make the music for the rapping?

TED: Nah, it's different.

MAKO: OK...

TED: I... I buy my beats; I try to give back like that [Ali and Keith laugh].

[51:50]

MAKO: Can I tell you; can I give you... I feel like, maybe you don't want to do this consolidating... but maybe you could... save a little bit of money if you just made your own beats.

TED: Nah, that's... I want to double the number of businesses I own.

MAKO: Oh... OK...

ARIA: You want to own fourteen businesses?

TED: Fifteen.

ARIA: Oh...

MAKO: Round-up?

TED: Yeah; gotta round-up. Round-up to the fives.

MAKO: Do you know what the next seven are gonna be?

TED: Yeah. Of course.

MAKO: Yeah?

TED: Uh... a'ight... [general laughter] So, that was the first seven... Eight...

MAKO: Eight...

TED: Windows... like... you see through 'em, and they're pretty... you can stain them sometimes, but like... with lasers... So that's, like... look at that dope...

MAKO (overlapping): Laser stained glass windows?

TED: Laser stained glass windows: you see it. Nine: like... Windows, like... the operating system; I'm gonna bring it back. I have a Windows phone... no one... People need to understand: Windows phones are dope! And... I'mma make 'em understand.

MAKO: OK...

TED: Uhh... that's number nine, yeah... Ten: uhh... I'mma do stage shows, like... for other people, like... pyrotechnics, and what-not?

[52:57]

ARIA: Oh!

TED: So, you know..., Aria; you hit me up.

ARIA: I will...

TED: Eleven... uhh... So I already do costumes... and now I'm also gonna do costume *cleaning*; as a separate business. That way, when you're done with your costume...

MAKO (overlapping): [beginning inaudible, but encouraging tone]... you're monopolizing on that.

ARIA (overlapping): That makes sense...

TED: Yeah; monopolies are allowed on September; that's one of the reasons I moved here. Thirteen... is that right, thirteen?

MAKO: That...

ARIA (overlapping): You were up to eleven.

MAKO (overlapping): We're on number twelve.

TED: Well, OK; thirteen [Ali and Keith laugh]: I'm gonna do fortunes. I'm gonna tell people fortunes, like... oh yeah; you gonna have a good day. Like that.

MAKO: OK...

TED: That was your fortune just now.

ARIA: Well, thank you!

MAKO: Yeah, wait; which one of us?

TED: Aria...

MAKO: What about me?

TED (overlapping): Mako... yn.... yn... not... Mako...

MAKO: Yeah?

[53:44]

TED: Not...

MAKO: My god... what?

TED: Yeah... anyway... I'll see you all inside!

MAKO: Wait; what is it? Hey!

ARIA (overlapping): Wait!

TED: Yeah, uh... thanks so much y'all!

MAKO: What's the last one? What's the last one?!

TED: I forgot...

ART: Monopoly; I'm bringing that board game back! [general laughter].

AUSTIN: That's the last one! Alright... He goes inside. I'm guessing you're going inside also? But let's cut back here... I guess; you go inside, and are able to... like... immediately, it's just, like... lots of people are in there, getting ready for things to pop off. And that's where we'll go back to the woods. So what are you guys doing outside?

ART: Hey, AuDy, real quick: if we were at a hypothetical Hieron-themed formal right now [Jack laughs], who do you think *you* would be dressed up as?

JACK (laughing): We're not allowed to answer that question! [more background laughter] We make bad decisions! [pause for laughter] in our lives... That would be cheating. But who would you dress up as?

ART: Oh, I don't know... it hurts that Lazer Ted took Fantasma... [Ali and Jack laugh].

JACK: There are no... there are no robots in Hieron...

AUSTIN: That's not true...

JACK: Yeah? Don't tell me... I'm wracking my brain... Look... I'll.... If we can get there, I'll... I'll...

AUSTIN: OK.

[55:08]

JACK: OK; so... Cass... [this exchange between Jack and Art possibly in character? It seems neater if it isn't?]

ART: Yeah...

JACK (laughing): Do we want to split up?

AUSTIN: Oh boy...

ART: No! What!? We're in such insane danger right now!

JACK: OK... Uhh... I'm just worried about Maryland now?

ART: I'm super worried about Maryland...

JACK: OK... but you still wanna... you still wanna go with Maxine?

ART: Can we bring Maxine inside?

MAXINE (overlapping): Things got worse when she left.

CASS: What?

AUDY: Yeah...

MAXINE (slowly): Things got worse... when she left. It wasn't... [pause]. You know, when I was here in my first year, one of the early ones, she was still teaching? And she was great. We had, like... a seminar. One of those, like... you know, uh... you're new, but... here, you're gonna get to learn from, like... a really good professor type-thing, and it was a... mixed-ages thing, and she was really inspirational. And then she left, and I don't... Everything... everything got weird after that.

ART: I really wish there was a polite way to ask her if she was real... Are these Maxine's real memories? Or...

JACK (overlapping): I could do that?

ART: Has Maxine always been this Divine?

JACK: OK... So... here's what I'm gonna do:

[56:32]

AUDY: Maxine.

MAXINE: Yeah?

AUDY: We know what you are, even if you might not...

MAXINE: I don't know what you mean...

AUSTIN: And there's something with her that is, like... coiling back from you.

MAXINE: I know what *you* are. I've learned about you... You're the one there's two of.

CASS: Did Maryland tell you that?

JACK (overlapping, laughing): I'm just, like... looking at Cass.

MAXINE: No, that was later. I learned that later.

CASS: Do you think Maryland wants to see you?

MAXINE: I don't know? It's been a long... she probably doesn't remember me.

CASS: I don't know... I think professors usually recog... remember their good students...
[pause]

MAXINE: I could've been better... I was always goofing off.

AUSTIN: She's like... she like... lowers her head a little bit? She's like... looking at AuDy from different angles, and like... walking towards them.

MAXINE: So, what are you doing here? [pause] Both of you...

AUDY (overlapping): We have been sent here on a mission.

MAXINE: Wait a sec... [laughs] I don't know... I don't... know... either...

AUSTIN: She's, like... coming-to a little bit here? And steps... back suddenly, after, kind of... walking towards you, AuDy?

MAXINE: I should go back...

[57:56]

AUDY (overlapping): Look out for the wires...

AUSTIN: She [scoffs] at that moment, trips and stumbles over them. And falls, and, like... her... her... dress gets very muddy. Remember she's, like... in Kesh clothing, basically? She's in... she's in the colors of, uhh... Whitestar, but it's still, like... dressed like... the, kind of...

JACK (overlapping): Oh yeah...

AUSTIN: Nineteen... the earl... the late Nineteenth Century clothing of Kesh... And is like... very close to losing her shit, and having a panic attack. Very deep breaths, and... then, like... holding her breath? And then, like... struggling to get back onto her feet in the mud.

CASS: Maxine! Maxine! It's OK... It's OK!

MAXINE (sternly): I don't know who you are! I know one of you is a Divine, and... what are you doing on September? I should tell security... this is...

AUDY: Please don't tell security. We mean nobody here any harm. This is Cassander Berenice, he⁴ is a doctor, and a soldier; he has landed on this planet in an attempt to make things better. You know who I am.

MAXINE (worried): I know who you are... Who's the other voice?

AUDY: What does it sound like?

MAXINE: I didn't hear it until I was here. It's a low... humming noise. It wants to talk to me.

CASS: Do not...

AUSTIN: She closes her eyes.

AUDY: Do not let it.

MAXINE: It's... huge...

AUDY: Yes... You mustn't let it in.

CASS (overlapping): Yeah...

⁴ Cass uses they/them pronouns.

[59:42]

MAXINE: It's... it's... coming to find its way in anyway. Someone will open the door. If not me, then someone else.

JACK (concerned): This is so outside AuDy's field of expertize here!

ART: Uh-oh... I was gonna look to you for guidance [Ali and Austin laugh]. [really quietly] I guess... we could probably shoot her...

AUDY(overlapping): Cass; I cannot impress upon you how dangerous Rigour is. It is far worse than you can have conceived.

MAXINE: Rigour...

AUSTIN: She says...

MAXINE: Oh no...

ART: Uh-oh... Umm... Oh fuck! What? Uh... I... [pause] I shoot her?

AUSTIN: Whoa! [Jack laughs]

ALI: Whoa! Uhh...

ART: She's a Divine, and she's letting Rigour in!

AUSTIN: You're jumping to some conclusions, but give me a roll...

JACK (overlapping): Now... OK... [laughs] you're going to shoot a Divine?

ART (overlapping): Well, I mean; it takes a second... I gotta... I've got to... rifle out...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yes...

ART (overlapping): If AuDy can think of anything...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yes...

JACK: Yeah, I... Umm...

KEITH: This is Cass; he's here to make things better [Austin laughs]. By shooting... *literally* by shooting you.

[60:58]

ART: So I, like... start taking my rifle out, and turning the safety off...

JACK (laughing): And then you drop it... and then you pick it up again...

ART: Yeah...

JACK: Umm...

ART: Looking at AuDy, like... Huh? Huh? [Austin laughs]. Huh?

JACK: [pause] OK... hang on a second: I'm trying to think this through... We don't want to take her to... Maryland, because I feel that's going to make things worse? I feel Maryland will... not... underestimating the strength of Rigour will do something that will wake it up?

ART (very quiet and hard to make out - sounds something like): She doesn't believe it isn't weak.

JACK: I think it's waiting to... I think it's waiting to... to... to... Rigour needs people. I think it's waiting to get someone.

AUSTIN: Is this in character, or out of character?

JACK: This is out of character.

AUSTIN: OK.

JACK: This is me, desperately, like... frantically... trying to work out how this is going to work.

ART: Bring her inside. What's the worse thing that happens?

AUSTIN: You're putting your gun away now?

ART: Yeah... I tried... I got a bad look? I put it back away!

AUSTIN (overlapping): She's giving you... OK!

JACK: Is there any way I can...

MAXINE: I want to speak with Maryland! With Professor September... Doctor September; right now!

[62:16]

AUDY: OK... try and hold on...

MAXINE: Right now!

AUSTIN: And she slams her fist against the... cabin? And the... logs... vanish, revealing a massive warehouse structure behind... where the cabin was. The cabin is, like... in shape, the right thing? It's, kind of, a nice, boxy, little thing? But then it... it... opens up behind that to, like... a football field long... warehouse.

JACK: Oh God...

ART: Holy fuck... are there any markings on it?

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: What colour is it?

AUSTIN: Gray and... and concrete.

ART: Do you think Rigour's in there?

JACK (overlapping): I'm beginning to suspect that... this might be... less of a good idea.

ART: I'm into it...

JACK: It's...

MAXINE: I don't trust you! I know her... Let me speak with her.

AUDY: Do you want to go for it, Cass?

CASS: Yeah, I guess? I mean, it's... I mean... yeah, yeah...

ART: I don't know the thing I was about to say; you don't know the thing I was going to say!

JACK: Can I... radio Orth and Jacqui?

AUSTIN: Sure...

JACK: Is the storm letting us do that?

[63:23]

AUSTIN: You're within this little zone, so yeah.

JACK: Uhh... Can I communicate via Morse? Can I... Is there a way that I can... I'm assuming that Orth will know...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Sure... Orth knows that; sure... And Jacqui would too, probably; they're both professionals. Or there's some, probably, better, more futuristic version of that, so... yes.

JACK: But I mean, like... Morse is real good, I guess...

AUSTIN: Yeah, Morse is OK...

JACK: So, I'm just going to transmit... "situation is not as it seems... we are coming, expect extreme difficulty. Rigour is on its way."

AUSTIN: You turn the corner, and... the front is still the log cabin. You walk inside.

ART (overlapping): What does the transition look like? Like... what does the corner look like?

AUSTIN: It's like... concrete until logs poking out. It's as if the logs were pasted on. Do you know what I mean?

ART: Sure...

AUSTIN: You turn the corner, and you walk up, and the screen door opens... and Maxine walks in, and... [MUSIC - *The Long Way Around* - begins] Maryland September looks up from drinking her tea, and smiles.

MARYLAND: Maxine Ming! What the hell you doing out here?

AUSTIN: And we'll cut back to... the prom.

[MUSIC plays out].

JACK: God... they're just having a fun time at a prom [Ali laughs]! And we're just, like... [Jack laughs].

AUSTIN: Oh god...I can't wait until all of this works out so that I... can... joke and laugh about it.

ALI (laughing): Oh my god! [Keith laughs].

[66:14]

AUSTIN: Let's, uh... let's prom! What's up with the prom?

KEITH: Hold on; just... Jack: I really want to say... just remember how sullen Ted got... *Ted - Lazer Ted* - how sullen he got, when just considering how my day was gonna go [Jack laughs].

AUSTIN: Oh boy... I can't wait... Fuck... [Ali laughs].

ALI: I'm gonna have a good day, so we'll be fine; it's fine.

JACK: So, Austin's just not even bothering to pretend to not be the villain at this point...

AUSTIN (overlapping): No... It's really good. There's some good shit coming, I'm just gonna say it.

ART: Austin never pretended not to be the villain, we all just projected 'not the villain' upon Austin [Ali laughs].

AUSTIN: That's correct!

ART: Y'all a bunch of puppets...

[EPISODE ends].