

Twilight Mirage 10: Looking To Land

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[MUSIC - "The Twilight Mirage" starts, then pauses]

AUSTIN (as Primary): Local Recording 7.

I'm waiting, Satellite. It's all on a loud to-do. Watch and wait. And the thing is, even if I wanted to do more, I'm not really sure it would matter. I've been thinking about it a lot lately. Intervention. In so many of the dead societies that I've studied, people get caught up on this debate about intervention. If something in these cultures is a threat-- physical, environmental, political-- they spend just so much time arguing whether or not to do something. It's so arrogant, and it totally misses the point. This one place, they built sort of a false sun, a special generator. A seemingly endless source of energy. It brought in a Golden Age, it really did. Billions of people had their lives improve. But one day, that new sun began to collapse inward on itself.

[MUSIC resumes]

AUSTIN (as Primary): Slowly. Slowly. And they started arguing. Should they send in teams to fix it and risk their lives? Should they shut down the project, even after it helped so many? How much of the remaining energy could they sacrifice trying to fix this? By the time they started that debate, Satellite, our agents had already reported back the truth: the second they'd built that device, they were doomed. They hadn't built a generator. They'd strapped their world to a time bomb.

This is what separates us from cultures like theirs; we understand our limits. We know that sometimes there is no question of intervention. There is only an outcome prescribed by a mistake you may not even remember. People who think they know us say that the Rapid Evening is a group of self-appointed galactic police. That we butt in when it isn't necessary. But the truth is way more depressing. It's rare that we intercede-- not because we're cautious, not because we're callous, but because most of the time, it's already too late. We see disaster again and again and again, and do nothing, because in so many cases, there is nothing to do but watch. And wait.

[MUSIC ends]

AUSTIN: Alright. Balcony friends, how is it going?

JANINE: Um, so I wanna use my kinetic sash for realsies now.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yes.

JANINE: And I wanna basically shoot it out, and have it be like rigid.

AUSTIN: Ooh.

JANINE: And like, paint-scrape the, uh... the, uh--

AUSTIN: The iconoclasts?

JANINE: [laughing] Right, I lost the word. I was gonna say “antagonists”, which is also true.

AUSTIN: Yeah, they’re also that.

JANINE: But it’s not the right word. Like paint-scrape the iconoclast goop monster off the building, kind of?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: The move I’m aiming for here is Neutralize.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that adds up. Yeah, totally. Uh, how you feeling about it? Are you still-- you’ve been kinda peaceful, but up here how is it? How’s that vibe?

JANINE: Um, how close is it? It’s like right up there, like--

AUSTIN: Yeah, it’s crawling up. I think that the-- the bulk of it is still like three-- two or three stories down, but that’s not that far. And then it’s tendrils are now up closer to you. Um. Yeah, I’d say that it has its tendrils up around the balcony and is beginning to pull itself up.

JANINE: [sighs] I think I’m still feeling peaceful.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: It’s weird to say that. I have to think about it, because I don’t want it to be like a cop-out of like, a way to not think too hard about what she’s feeling? But I do think that like this is just...

AUSTIN: Like it’s not close enough for it to be...

JANINE: It’s close enough that she’s still, like, concerned?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: But that concern is the thing that's moving her to act. It's not necessarily like--

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: You're not scared. You're not feeling particularly powerful.

JANINE: No.

AUSTIN: It is like scraping paint away. Which is not--

JANINE: Yeah. it's very much like, "Okay, well this thing is doing this. What do I have to do to--"

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: It's like a kind of "solve for Y" thing in her head right now.

AUSTIN: Right. Totally. Okay. Go ahead and give me a Peaceful roll.

JANINE: Do I take plus one on that?

AUSTIN: Uh, yeah, totally.

JANINE: Because it's stuff, and stuff? Because it's like relying on this environment?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Or well I think specifically, maybe one way to think about it is, one of the things I told you is that it slows down when any bit of it falls down? And so, if you're focusing on that-- on like just scraping bits of it away so that it's forced to wait for it to be--

JANINE: The intention is definitely, like, splatter it and-- and make it very slow and awkward.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Take a plus-- Yep, so take another plus one on that.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So you can just roll it, and we'll add the one to whatever you get.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Uh, that is a nine. So, when you get a nine on Neutralize, you generate two hold, and also take harm in the doing. So... tell me what you do with the two hold, and I'll tell you how much harm, or like how the harm happens.

JANINE: Okay. Um...

AUSTIN: Or I guess you could still hit "suffer little harm" to avoid that. If you spend your hold for that, you know?

JANINE: Right. Well, first of all, I wanna inflict harm on it.

AUSTIN: Yep. Totally.

JANINE: [huffs] And... [thinking noise]

AUSTIN: Make a note of where its health is at... Which is like a weird thing to think about with this big goop monster, but.

[ALI chuckles]

AUSTIN: You know, it's one of those things you have to work out sometimes.

JANINE: Um, shit. Agh, I don't know! [laughs] Uh, can I just pick two harm?

AUSTIN: Totally. Sure.

JANINE: I just wanna hurt it real bad. Mostly.

AUSTIN: No, that's totally fine, 'cause that ends up being a really good image.

JANINE: There's so-- there's so few ways to hurt this thing that I just want to hurt it as much as I can when I can.

AUSTIN: Yep, yep. Uh, how much harm does your kinetic sash do?

JANINE: In this case, I don't know if the sash is doing the harm. If it's scraping it off the building and dropping it, I think that would be doing the harm, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Well, are you still--

JANINE: It's just like-- it's just forcing it to lose its hold.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Okay. And you did harm it twice, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, I'm actually just gonna briefly look at what, like, harm examples are? In terms of what damages are, you know what I mean?

JANINE: Mhm. We haven't done that much with the harm stuff.

AUSTIN: No. I'm just gonna peek at it really quick. So I can gesture. And also, like, it's a big huge paint monster. What's it mean to do that, you know?

JANINE: Yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah, I think you do a ton of harm to this thing. I'm basically gonna say that you do-- so like, their example is like, this pistol does two harm. Right? Uh, this other person's other gun-- or maybe let's look at the sword. This... like, ornate katana does three harm. I think you do four harm twice.

JANINE: Woah.

AUSTIN: Which is a great deal of harm?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But it's-- the thing to note is that like, the way I've stated it out, it's basically a mech. Right?

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Which means that it gets to reduce harm a lot. And I'm gonna be very kind? Right now? Which is...

[JANINE sighs]

AUSTIN: The way the rules work is that it's supposed to reduce six harm, after armor. Um, but I am going to say that this is eight as a single thing, instead of four twice. Do you know what I mean?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, that's-- you do damage it. You actually get past its armor by doing this. Which means like I think this--

JANINE: Wait, how does it get to have-- does it have physical armor? Cause we're not allowed to have physical armor.

AUSTIN: You're-- it's a digital thing.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like it's here digitally. Again, I just statted it out as a mech in this space, the same way that you would stat out a whatever, if-- I almost said "tinder" twice. If Tender had built you a weird digital mech, you would still get the minus 6 armor or whatever thing, right? So.

JANINE: Mokay.

AUSTIN: So, it's-- as it's falling, I think maybe it... Does your sash do anything special, like, electricity-wise? Or is it just-- is it just the fall is...

JANINE: I think-- um, its like power is really just the impact. It's not like electric, or--

AUSTIN: Oh, right, it's a very physical...

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

JANINE: My specific way that I described it before was, like, what it's actually hitting with is the cushion of air between it and the target.

AUSTIN: Right, okay, so I think maybe that's just like, you really-- you manage to not only get under it, like a paint scraper, but you manage to use the kinetic force to get like a really good push. And you remove a whole side limb of this thing that falls super far down. Um, and splatters against the pavement, and the thing that's really-- the thing that proves that you've done real damage to it is that it doesn't just turn back into little arms and begin crawling back up. Like a couple of them do? A little bit of it does, but not as much of it as there was that fell off.

And it kind of like-- it kind of howls, at that? Um, and goes to redouble its effort to climb up more quickly, but then remembers it has to wait for the bits that fell off of it to reconnect. So it's stuck in place. And just kind of like slugging its way up the side of this thing to you instead of crawling at full speed. But while you're doing it, one of the-- one of its tendrils like wraps around your back leg, and begins to just squeeze really-- like really tightly. And it does three harm to you, as it begins to like pull away at your digital leg.

JANINE: How do I mark that?

AUSTIN: So, there is harm, and it's "light, moderate", so that three would take you to the second moderate slot.

JANINE: Okay. But I have Armor of Faith which takes it to two.

AUSTIN: Yes. Armor of Faith totally still works here, because that's-- that is definitely--

JANINE: Also I just-- did you say "back leg" like I was an animal? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Well, the back-- like the leg that you're standing-- you know what I mean? Like your legs aren't in-- they're not perfectly horizontal, right? Like... you have like one leg forward, one leg back.

JANINE: When someone's standing? Probably.

AUSTIN: Ehh. I still have, I don't know, like... I was thinking about my legs, and I have a back leg right now. I have one leg forward and one leg back. Anyway.

JANINE: [amused] Okay.

JACK: Austin is podcasting from a bicycle.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Right, exactly. You know, like you're in a stance. You know?

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh, Tender, what are you doing?

ALI: [groans] Um, I-- man, I really wanted to come up here and do something with this villainous cloud, but now that-- I'm really thrown off right now. Um... [sighs] Do I notice what's happening to Signet?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. You can notice it or not, up to you.

ALI: Okay. Yeah, cause having like a thing stuck to her is probably bad?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: [laughs] So--

AUSTIN: I think it's just like--

JANINE: This--

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

JANINE: I was gonna say, this might be the point when Signet would mention, like, it can be trapped. Like it's susceptible to this environment specifically? Like it's stuck here, so maybe if it could be contained, Tender would be the one to do that.

AUSTIN: That would be a good time to explain that, yeah.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: Okay, hmm. Okay, well, first things first is that if it's, like, grabbing onto Signet, I don't wanna try to contain it and like, get her pulled in anywhere?

AUSTIN: [laughs] Sure.

ALI: Um, so I wanna like sh--

JANINE: I mean, I can-- I have ways I can, like, deal with that also.

ALI: Um, yeah...

JANINE: Don't let that be a barrier, is all I'm saying.

[ALI laughs]

ALI: Yeah, I guess the primary action should be trying to... 'Cause I'm the one who can do that. Umm... Can I, like... [clicks tongue] Can I like construct a... almost like a sewer grate under it?

AUSTIN: Like in the side of the building?

ALI: Well, like, it-- yeah.

AUSTIN: Or on the floor.

ALI: Or on the floor, like where it fell down onto. To like hold it in?

AUSTIN: Only like one limb fell down there.

ALI: Oh, okay okay.

AUSTIN: Like it was mostly destroyed. Most of it is still on the side of this building.

ALI: Um, it can-- okay, but it can go-- I can construct one on the street that like pulls it in, right? It could be like a vacuum situation?

JANINE: Like an intake fan?

AUSTIN: Like a fan or something? Yeah.

JANINE: Like a gigantic fan, like a little--

AUSTIN: A giant, a giant fan sounds good.

ALI: Like a vacuum or whatever.

JANINE: That leads to some kind of inferno, or?

[laughing]

ALI: Just, you know. Just a place that isn't here and we don't have to deal with it. Um, yeah I would love to try that.

AUSTIN: Uh, yeah. That sounds, again, like a Reconfigure.

ALI: Uh, yes. It does.

AUSTIN: How you feeling?

ALI: How do I feel? I think that I feel... kind of like, determined? I guess that would be a Powerful?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that-- determined would be powerful. Sure.

ALI: Yeah. I don't know that I feel powerful. I would like this to succeed so that I can feel powerful, sort of, but like--

[AUSTIN hums]

JANINE: Determined is powerful, though.

ALI: [laughing] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

JANINE: Like how-- I mean, maybe also-- it could see it also being peaceful. But..

ALI: Yeah. I'm gonna go with Powerful, 'cause it's still like-- it's an inclusive move, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's an eight.

[15:00]

ALI: And that is an eight.

AUSTIN: So on a 7-9, again, you get to choose. You choose one: you do not suffer feedback; the change is not noticed; or your subconscious stays repressed.

ALI: Um, I'm gonna try to suppress my subconscious.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um, the... So yeah, I think you totally make this. This giant vacuum hole at the bottom. And I think like, it begins to just suck in the little loose ones first. And then... it begins pulling down on the, uh, the big bulk of the iconoclast, and it's not quite giving up yet, but if you can push it, it will fall down in there. This is now a way for you to-- if you can get it off this building-- make it not come back up this building. That said, the... I think that this-- oh wait, you have to tell me what you remade. You actually, like, what did you take from the digital world to do this?

ALI: I think like the actual ground? Sort of...

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Like, yeah, it like opened up and... kind of suck in.

AUSTIN: So where does, like, the vacuum mechanism come from?

ALI: Um... from the actual, like, from the street itself?

AUSTIN: Okay. So like, is there like a...

ALI: Yeah. As if the street fell into like a hole, and then, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay, so then I think that the other thing here, though, is that the-- as you do it, it is totally noticed, and the white cloud begins to help you.

[ALI laughs quietly]

AUSTIN: And there is a-- you know how it's been copying over people from like, the other side of the cell block, and building them new simulations. You can see that it stops doing that, because you've had that kind of-- that filter on, so you've been able to see as it makes new simulations for all those other people. And it stops doing that, and begins to unmake the building underneath the-- the monster-- underneath the iconoclast, that it is currently hanging onto, and it begins to lose hold. Any attempt to hurt it now-- any attempt to attack it will have advantage.

ALI: Okay. That's the cloud, or the-- the thing?

AUSTIN: The thing. The iconoclast.

ALI: Okay.

JANINE: I mean, why would we not also attack it?

ALI: Yeah, can we just follow up with a...?

AUSTIN: Totally. Totally.

ALI: I would love to.

AUSTIN: How do you do it, then, Tender?

ALI: Um, I have my... [laughs] my like EMP [haliper?] gun thing?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: [laughing] Which is like-- I can just kind of lean up and hold over the edge of this balcony, and kind of like cock it and shoot that little, like, [makes "mrow" noise], and it's like a white light that... just [laughing]

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Like a what? What was that?

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: It's just a small cat.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. [makes cat noise]

JANINE: Just right in there.

ALI: [while laughing] No, we said last time how it was like-- it was like one of those tubes that when you move it, it makes like a [makes a "weow" noise] [laughs]

AUSTIN: Ohh, yes. Yeah, I got you. Yeah yeah yeah. One of the ["Waahp" noise] tubes, got it.

[laughter]

ALI: And also every time it shoots it makes like a, ["waahp" noise].

AUSTIN: Right. Uh huh. Go ahead and give me a Neutralize and tell me how you feel.

ALI: [still giggling] Okay. Um, I'm gonna stick with Powerful, and...

AUSTIN: Okay. Make sure you unmark Scared.

ALI: Unmark Scared...

AUSTIN: You got it. And make sure you hit the up arrow, here, so that you get the advantage roll.

ALI: Oh, word. Okay.

AUSTIN: Uh, okay. That's... it did before. You rolled twice. The first one was a success. The first one was a nine.

ALI: [laughs] Okay.

AUSTIN: Signet, do you wanna help and make that a 10?

JANINE: Yeah! Heck yeah.

AUSTIN: How do you help?

JANINE: Can I help by, like, doing a thing that would confuse the goop monster?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Like, I don't know how to help her shooting a gun.

[ALI muffles laughter]

AUSTIN: No.

JANINE: But I feel like maybe I could-- if I threw my sash in such a way-- This is almost gonna seem mean. If I direct the kinetic sash down with both ends sort of moving with the middle lagging behind so it's like a U shape?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: And I wanna catch that on the goop monster's, like, neck-type area?

AUSTIN: Ooh, yeah.

JANINE: [laughing] Like clothesline it? Kind of?

AUSTIN: Uh huh, yeah. Okay. Give me a, uh, an Aid. How do you feel? Or Help or Hinder, I guess what it's actually called.

JANINE: Uhh... I think maybe this is veering on powerful, because like, Tender's doing her thing and it's like, "This is working." It's not just like keeping your head above water at this point. It's like, "Oh, we're actually onto something." This could, you know, get somewhere.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Okay. Give me a Powerful. Hey, that's a 10!

JANINE: 10.

[ALI gasps]

AUSTIN: Look at that help! That means you're not even in danger at this point. Alright, so that means that you then, um, Tender, get to take three hold and take no harm. And you have the Neutralize options, which you can easily do the thing you wanna do here.

ALI: Okay, yeah. I don't even have to look at the Neutralize thing, 'cause I've explained what I would like to do.

AUSTIN: Yes. And it-- so it peels off from the ["mwow" noise] gun,

[ALI and Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: And like falls down...

JACK: How is that spelt?

AUSTIN: ["Bwow" noise] It could be two different ways. You could spell it ["Bwow" noise], or ["Mwow" noise].

JACK: ...Okay.

AUSTIN: It's either the B or an M.

ALI: No, okay. ["mrow" noise] is the thing that Tender says when she shoots it.

[laughing]

JACK: Oh, yeah, that's true, yeah.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

ALI: It's like a... hold on.

JACK: The title for this weapon's wiki page should be an mp3 file.

[still laughing in background]

AUSTIN: Yeah. That is [simultaneous with Jack] W-W--

JACK: [simultaneous with Austin] W-W-R-R-N-O-W, like the word "now" with W-W-R-R in front of it.

AUSTIN: [makes "wwrrnow" noise] Yeah, that's good.

JANINE: It's like a bad radio station.

[laughing]

JANINE: W-W-R-R Now.

AUSTIN: [in a radio announcer voice] WWR Now! Thanks for calling WWRR Now! What's the station with the greatest classics and oldies? [makes "wwrrnow" noise]

JACK: And the weather's looking great here today in Bluff City, and--

[laughing]

AUSTIN: Add it to the list, okay. Let's-- yeah, so I think you totally blast it off, and it's trying to get its way back up, and then you get the Signet clothesline and it just tumbles away. Signet, it just-- it's like trying to pull you out, but like, the rolls are good enough that you're just able to like, "No. Uh uh." And it loses grip on you. And falls down into this massive hole. And then for a moment there's just peace on your side of the whole-- the whole situation. What do you do? There's still

this cloud here. Um, and then like the second it's gone, it rebuilds the side of the building, and then goes back to trying to put people from the prison into their own new simulations.

ALI: I know that the cloud helped me, like I was able to--

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, totally. Yeah, you could like see it happening at the code level or whatever. You can kind of-- I imagine it's almost like... an overhead projector situation, where you have like different layers that you can-- or like a PSD, basically, right? Where you can, like in Photoshop, turn off this layer and see without it. And you can spread those out in your mind, because you're the Architect. And can do that, and can kind of see, "Oh yeah, okay. It is the thing that undid the wall there, so that it would fall." Or like give you an advantage.

ALI: Can I try, like, communicating with it again, in that case?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

ALI: And I like this continuing to be kind of a non-verbal thing, but I think that it can like... In sort of opening up that channel again, it can kind of feel Tender's kind of frustration? Or like... interpretation of it being a bad guy and an enemy? And she kind of wants to know why... it's doing that?

AUSTIN: Um, [sighs]. It gives you its name. Its name is Cthonian. C-T-H-O-N-I-A-N. And it repeats it as if that is an answer. Um, the way... the way that if you asked, you know, a dog why it chases cats, it would say, "Oh, I'm a dog."

[Ali muffles laughter]

AUSTIN: I know that that's not like a thing, I know. But like, you know. You know what I mean.

ALI: Right. No no no, yeah, I get it. Is-- hmm, can I try to explain that like, the impulse that it has is like hurting people?

AUSTIN: You can totally try.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: What's your-- is your goal to like convince it to stop doing this?

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: Um, yeah, you could try to Sway here.

ALI: That seems right.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna say that you'll be at disadvantage to do this, because you can't use words, right? You can only kind of evoke certain feelings. You don't have the advantage of having language. And you're not practiced at making that sort of communication with something like this, right? So this is-- you can totally roll Sway, but you'll have to roll it with the disadvantage button. The disadvantage, like, thing.

ALI: Yeah, I'm gonna try. Like, this isn't like a standoff in the way I thought it would be and I feel like this is gonna...

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: ...be the most practical thing? So I'm gonna--

AUSTIN: How are you feeling? Yeah.

ALI: Gonna take a disadvantage of, like... peaceful.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Um, 'cause I feel like this is a much more, like...

[AUSTIN groaning]

ALI: Let's find even ground. What?

AUSTIN: Mark XP.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Go ahead and mark XP, you rolled a four. That's--

ALI: Did I roll?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you rolled a four.

ALI: I didn't even know that I pressed the button.

AUSTIN: Yeah. You rolled three twos, in fact. [laughs] Which, you take the lowest-- you take the lowest two. Here's a good thing, though, is imagine if you had rolled with advantage. You would still have rolled a four. [laughing] So...

ALI: I can't mark this XP 'cause I'm already at full, and I have to choose a thing.

AUSTIN: Uh, just make a note. Make a note that you have to choose a thing and mark it back at one.

JANINE: Have I noticed anything about this cloud?

AUSTIN: You haven't done any specific investigation, so I haven't mentioned anything.

JANINE: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: If you want to now, you totally can, but this is... So, I think the thing--

JANINE: It's tough to know how much I could actually do, here. Because it's like a weird... data... cloud.

AUSTIN: Um, it makes you-- I think actually it finally says a word to you, Tender. It says

AUSTIN (as Cthonian): People?

AUSTIN: And then it like, it kind of-- it makes you an offer. Which is, it holds up one of the people that it's actually bringing over from the other system. From the other part of the kind of prison system. And like gestures that it would put it-- it would put that person back in their cell, uh, if it could give a part of itself to you. To store in your brain and take out of this place.

ALI: [makes disgusted noise] We're on this again.

[JANINE sighs sympathetically]

ALI: Okay, I'm gonna ask this in a way that is not sinister, but in a long-term thing, is this like a deal that I could go back on later?

AUSTIN: You can never put a genie back in a bottle.

[ALI laughs]

ALI: Okay. Okay.

AUSTIN: Like yeah, sure. Yes, of course you could go back on it, but then it would also have a response, right? Like...

ALI: Right, but could I be like, "Hey, we're pals now, and I made you this other bottle to hang out in so you're not always here?"

AUSTIN: You could make that roll.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: You know, in the future, but if you--

ALI: I'll make that roll in like two weeks or something, yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Sure.

[ALI lets out a long sigh that turns into a groan]

AUSTIN: Signet, yeah, what are you doing as Tender looks into this cloud?

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: [laughing] Yeah.

ALI: With her, like, swishing and her ears back in the way that, like, when cats are really scared?

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Yeah.

JANINE: And her mouth is a little upside-down V.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I think like at this point, it is even a physical thing. Like you can see that the cloud is eager to get-- it is getting closer to the building, Signet. You can see that actually physically happening. And getting closer to Tender.

JANINE: Uhh... Okay. I think the thing I want to do is, uh... Okay. So I think this cloud's getting closer and Tender's... being weird.

[AUSTIN and JANINE laugh]

JANINE: In a way that implies discomfort. Uh, I think Signet sort of steps forward and reaches out with, like... So, the thing that I call her interface-- I referred to it in my character sheet as a Divine Interface.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: As sort of a, a thing that's used to communicate with synthetic things.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: But not, you know, not like a way that's cheap necessarily. Like I don't think Signet can like talk to this in a way that Tender can't, of course. But I think she like extends sort of a thought-- Maybe it's that ripple again. That weird little like shudder, um, in things that is Signet's way of reaching through digital environments to, like, affect.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: And she's not trying to affect necessarily, she's just trying to like, you know, snap-- I just started snapping [snaps fingers] my fingers, and it's like that. [snaps]

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Uh huh.

JANINE: She's just trying to, like... to get its attention, I guess.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um, it... It has your attention. Or you have its attention. It has lots of attention.

[ALI snorts]

JANINE: I was actually aiming for a move, there.

AUSTIN: Okay, what was the move?

JANINE: [hesitantly] I was trying to do divert?

AUSTIN: Oh, I see. Uh, you could roll it. Let's see. Like, yeah, go ahead. "When you engage with someone in an attempt to distract, misdirect, or otherwise direct attention to yourself, or elsewhere, roll."

[JANINE hums]

JANINE: I'm gonna say, yeah.

AUSTIN: How are you feeling? What's the-- what's the--

JANINE: I think in this particular case, there is maybe a little bit of fear there. I don't think she feels powerful, 'cause this isn't her element.

AUSTIN: No.

JANINE: And to that extent she shouldn't be able to feel peaceful about it either.

AUSTIN: No.

JANINE: Because it's like, "This is a thing I probably shouldn't be doing."

AUSTIN: [amused] Yeah.

JANINE: But also probably need to do.

AUSTIN: Ah, yeah. Mark Scared and roll it. I should look at where--

JANINE: Wait, scared is the opposite of powerful, so I have to unmark a Powerful.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you unmark Powerful. Yeah, you got it.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Ah, that's a six.

[ALI makes a sympathetic noise]

JANINE: Crap.

AUSTIN: Um, yeah it totally gives you its attention. It doesn't take that attention away from Tender. Um, but yeah, you also now feel its presence here. It-- oh wow. Oh wow, yeah, this is... It is warm, and it is, um... There is something-- it's very powerful.

[29:57]

AUSTIN: Like if you think about it in reference to other synthetic lives that you've interacted with, other synthetic beings, it is... It contains a great deal of power, and it is-- and what that really means is that it's capable of doing a lot at the same time. Like, that's fundamentally, I think maybe in your experience as an Excerpt, one of the things that you took away from interacting with different types of synthetic beings, right? Like you've spoken to everything from, you know, robots that sell peanuts at an event to robots who operate the entire, you know, resource management of a spaceship, to Divines. And the things that Divines could do incredibly well was a bunch of things at the same time. And then they can also direct all of that attention at once to, uh, to a single thing as a way of kind of optimizing a solution. So long as they're directed right. Or so long as they don't stumble into, you know, some trap or something.

In this case, the thing that you notice is that on top of what it's doing here, it's doing a billion other things, right? It is-- it is... It is a vast field. It is not just a little meadow. It is not just a little break in the forest, it is a huge-- it is the rolling plains, right? Like, it is massive. It is much bigger

than the thing that you see here. And it is looking to land. It is looking for some way in, instead of being floating above everything. That's what you get on a failure, so you know, it's pretty good.

JANINE: Mhm.

[ALI sighs]

AUSTIN: But it also now is like, open to communication with both of you. And maybe we just get a shot of both of you looking at it, and then we jump back to Fourteen Fifteen. Who is looking for, like, a switch to pull, or something? Is that kind of-- or just kind of in--

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I wanna know, like, what are your hands doing?

JACK: There's like a specific sort of... there's a specific sort of thing here that I'm trying to-- Um, you know when you get something stuck in your hair, or someone has got something stuck in their hair, and in attempting to remove it, you... [laughs] You don't want to pull on the hair, or you don't want to make it worse?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um, and at the same time, it definitely feels like... it's a combination of that and absolutely the sensation of somebody putting a clip-on mic on you.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Uh huh. Yeah. I got you.

JACK: What are those called? Mono-- what are they called?

AUSTIN: Lavaliers. Lavaliers. Lav mics. Unless you're thinking of a different type of mic.

JACK: Yeah, and making sure that the cord is running right, and put that in your pocket. And the way that the person who is doing it is doing it in a way that's very practiced, 'cause they've done it a bunch.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: But also they kind of don't really wanna touch you, [Austin laughs] or bits of the microphone that shouldn't be touched.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Uh, and so Fourteen is trying to work out how to lift off this thing that's still presumably moving.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It is. Um, and I think it pricks your palm, and there is just this little bit of blood. And then you like-- we get a shot of you looking at it, and then looking up at Aura, and it's gone from her. She just doesn't have it on her head anymore, and her hair, like all matted and sweaty, drops down. And then like, she stands up and begins to like-- she doesn't know what to do. Like she stops playing. She stops playing, and suddenly you can hear everybody shouting her name again, and like... you get this moment of-- you see Sho get startled by the sudden lack of music and the arrival of all the shouting, for her name, and the people begin to pour into this room. And then I think maybe you go-- what do you do? I guess actually is what I wanna know.

JACK: What can I do? Am I attached to anything? Do I just have this-- I reach up to my head, is what I do, actually. That's exactly what I do.

AUSTIN: Your arm doesn't move. Your--

JACK: Oh, I-- Okay. [laughs]

AUSTIN: It's your suit. Your suit is now this, like, sharp golden... thing that's like-- Do you know those things they used to sell? Uh, for us-- for me they sold them at like Spencer's Gifts, which was like a novelty shop, that was in every mall in America. These things that were like a bunch of pins, and you could put your hand in them, or you could put your face into-- these like little--

JACK: Ohhh.

AUSTIN: Things that would--

JACK: That makes like a relief?

AUSTIN: Like a relief, exactly. That's what the suit is, facing-- like pushing into you. And as you move, you're kind of like-- it's almost like pushing out into the Mesh reality here, and leaving behind, like... Where your arm would have gone is now sharp pins in a relief of where your arm would have gone to, but your arm can't move there. And then when you move somewhere else, it un-pushes them in the direction you'd moved before, and then pushes them in another place. And so you're just this like-- almost like a wave form, even, right? Like it just-- in all of these different directions, your various limbs are pushing out into different places. And then you hear their name-- the name that they're calling switch, from Aura Antigua to Fourteen Fifteen.

JACK: Oh no. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Um, and... they begin to come up the stairs.

JACK: Do I have-- [sighs] So I can see this happening. This isn't-- I haven't been transported, either mentally or physically.

AUSTIN: No. You're in this. You're still behind her-- the big instrument that she was sitting at. Um...

AUSTIN (as Sho): [frantically] Fourteen, what am I supposed to do?!

JACK (as Fourteen): Uh, [laughs] run.

AUSTIN: She turns and like, shoots down at a couple of them.

AUSTIN (as Sho): There's a lot of them! Um...

AUSTIN: Aura says, like...

AUSTIN (as Aura): This way. Come this way. There's another way.

JACK (as Fourteen): Go with her.

AUSTIN: And Sho like runs back over to you, and is like

AUSTIN (as Sho): Do you want this back? What--

AUSTIN: And like holds out the gun in both of her hands. She sheathes her sword and like, [sighs]

JACK (as Fourteen): Hold onto it for me.

AUSTIN (as Sho): [quietly] Okay.

JACK (as Fourteen): I'll take it back. I promise.

AUSTIN: It's like... As you talk, it-- the suit, like-- your shirt becomes that too, under the suit? And then bit by bit it starts going up your neck, and coming like up your chin, the little pins. It's going to fully encase you soon.

AUSTIN (as Sho): You can't-- just leave you here.

JACK (as Fourteen): I'll be fine. I'll see you again.

AUSTIN: And Aura like grabs her by the wrist, and begins to like run away, down-- out the side of this temple on the top of this hill. And finds a pathway down, like through a bunch of trees and

dirt and like-- there's like caves and stuff-- and is running down through this back exit. Um, and then it wraps around you, and you're now living in two different realities. You're now living in the reality of these people who are coming up the stairwell, yelling "Fourteen Fifteen." Not yelling it, just like chanting it.

AUSTIN (as the constructs): Fourteen Fifteen. Fifteen, Fifteen, Fourteen, Fifteen. Fourteen.

AUSTIN: And they're even breaking it up more than that, so it's like

AUSTIN (as the constructs): Four! Four. Four-teen. Fif, teen.

AUSTIN: And like, there's almost something very mechanical about it, right? It is not the mantra of the iconoclasts, which has meaning. It is just an identifier. It is just sounds that are meant to point towards you. Um, and I think you also just are in the memory, as they speak. It's the memory of a kill that is not yours. It is the memory of Aura Antigua killing the previous Cadent. And you just get this image of her-- you get all of these memories of her walking into this bedroom every day, as a servant. Again and again and again. It's like the opening of a door, and she walks in, and then a door open and she walks in, and then a door open and she walks in. And she has fresh linen, or she has, you know, she has an instrument to play for the Cadent. Or she has a collection of letters. Or she has a message to deliver, specifically. Or she has, you know, a bowl of soup. Or she has just her own company, right?

She's coming in every day with all these, you know-- over and over again. And the Cadent's room, or the room that she's meeting the Cadent in, has a huge holographic display of all of the Divines in their-- in their orbits. And all of the ships in their orbits, and the fleet. And there is a number. Or a meter, I guess, actually. There's a meter that is steadily getting... more and more filled. And underneath, it says, "Memorius." And it's filling up, bit by bit. And it's filling up, bit by bit. And maybe we get a couple of her memories of being an artist growing up on Memorius. And growing up knowing the Cadent, actually.

And then we get the meter filled. And we get the note that Memorius-- we don't get the note. We get the image of Aura Antigua off to the side, like away from the stage, basically, listening to the Cadent talk about how-- what a terrible, sad thing it is, that we've lost another of our Divines. And you just get this brief, very intense feeling that-- I don't know, you can tell me. I'm curious if Fourteen has this sort of rage inside of them. Where like... [sighs] "Oh. I have to kill you now. You let this happen. I can't believe you let this happen." Just this deeply irrational, but still focused on a reason, desire to hurt someone. And I'm curious if that is a different feeling than what Fourteen has felt in terms of when they do violence.

JACK: Uh, I think it varies? I think Fourteen has been dispatched on a lot of, um, targets. And so I think to say-- I mean, I think explicitly to say, "This is the hitman's reaction to enacting violence," is a depiction of a hitman that I'm not super interested in.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: And like, "Ah, they always say, 'Requiescat in pace,'" or they like-- you know, like--

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right right right. So actually, let's ask the opposite question, then, which is... What is a time that Fourteen has felt a similar sort of anger while doing a hit? Or finding a bounty or whatever it is, like, you know.

JACK: Um, I think that it is... I think someone had been attacking restaurants, or had been attacking bars or clubs. A chain of them. Had been burning them down. Burning them down with or without people inside them, it's not clear why they were doing it. And this had been spreading across-- God, I wonder if this had been spreading across Curiosity, a place that...

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: That Fourteen considers to be home, and also a place that reveres, you know, not closing doors in this way.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Right.

JACK: And I think Fourteen would tell Castlerose, or would tell anybody who asked that they were angry because it took them a long time to find the person.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Uh, and I don't think that's why they were angry. I think they were angry because this had kept happening, and it had been a long summer of this happening, and they got there in the end.

AUSTIN: Right. Um, I think they just overtake you. And the-- the kind of blend of that memory and the memory of Aura Antigua killing the Cadent, and the current moment of all of these constructs piling on top of you just blend together. And it's just like, this very strange moment of being, you know, hearing the running water of a bathroom-- of a shower or a bath-- and then outside seeing the fire of these-- of these restaurants. On the Sky Reflected in Mirrors. And then just you on the ground, covered in people. Until finally they stop chanting altogether. I think we need to roll a thing.

JACK: [exhales] Oh God.

AUSTIN: We've never seen this happen yet.

JACK: Okay. Uh, I have a move here called...

AUSTIN: Well actually you have two things, right?

JACK: Yeah, which-- let's roll-- should we roll for symptoms first and then roll Gift? Which is more interesting?

AUSTIN: I think you roll Gift first. I think we roll Gift first? Yeah.

JACK: So I have a move called Gift. I'm gonna go through this because it's the first time this has happened. Um, which is basically the gift that my disease gives me. And there's a bunch of these. I could, like, be superhuman or run or jump very fast, but the one we picked is, "Your organic tissue regrows at a rapid rate. You cannot succumb to death, uh, until the disease takes you." And that's kind of what we've got going here.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: But that's us using the playbook to codify, uh, the jumps. The body swaps. When I die, roll +Symptoms. On a 10+...

AUSTIN: Which is currently +1, so.

JACK: On a 10+, it could be hours/days, and you awake confused in a foreign place. On a 7-9, you'll be out for hours, but none the worse for wear. On a 6-, you awake to the comfort of a friend.

AUSTIN: Let's see what that looks like.

JACK: So I'm rolling... [simultaneous with Austin] 2d6+1.

AUSTIN: [simultaneous with Jack] 2d6+1. Yeah. Uh, you still should-- I don't know-- you should still feel some sort of way here actually. Um, so mark a feeling. How do you feel as this happens?

JACK: Um, I feel powerful, because... Fourteen is not afraid of death, of their own death, in any context. They know that this isn't final death. And even if it were, uh, that wouldn't... be frightening. They know that they've gotten Antigua out of there.

[45:00]

JACK: They know that Sho is getting a great [laughs] training.

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: So this is... and also, absolutely it's the memory of the drowning and the bars burning, at the same time. So I'm gonna mark Powerful, and I'm gonna roll 2d6+1.

AUSTIN: You got it.

[JACK sighs]

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: You'll be out for a few hours, but none the worse for wear. And we'll come back to that in a bit. And maybe when we come back is when we'll roll the second half of this.

JACK: Okay. Sure. I'm up for that.

AUSTIN: Okay. Tender and Signet, and the cloud.

JANINE: I love that show.

AUSTIN: How's it going? How's it going as you talk to this cloud? Actually can I get a different-- I'm gonna do a different establishing shot.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which is, we're in the street below-- we're in the street in the middle area, and we have-- we see Blueberri Jin carrying, or like leading Korin away, and also has the Vice-warden under an arm. And they manage to find the way out of this simulation, back up into-- like they're running through hallways, basically-- or like they find a door, and they open the door and find their way to a hallway. And we see the camera kind of pan down as they step out of that-- into that door and into the hallway. And there's just a fire hydrant. And the side of the-- one of the knobs on the fire hydrant. Not the knobs, but the-- what do you call those? Like the things on the sides of the fire hydrant. To like keep it from the water coming out?

JANINE: Cap?

AUSTIN: Plug?

JACK: Valve?

JANINE: Valve?

AUSTIN: Valve? Yeah, I guess a valve. Begins to open. Um, and a little bit of black gooey paint begins to come out.

[JANINE sighs]

AUSTIN: Of all of the fire hydrants, bit by bit, in the city. Uh, but you're on the top. And then we pan up and see that skyscraper again, and you're all on the top of it.

ALI: [sighs] Okay.

AUSTIN: Note about how I'm not just being a jerk. "The iconoclasts are coming for you. They never stop; they've already taken the rest of your order." They-- there is no killing the iconoclasts. By default. So, they are still with us.

ALI: [laughs] So I have kind of a... compromise?

AUSTIN: Sure.

ALI: Like I wanna take this deal, but I want it to do it in a way that feels in character and like earned? So I [sighs] This is kind of-- I wanna try to build a construct?

AUSTIN: Ooh, interesting.

ALI: For it to like be in?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: So it can like hang out. Well I think the-- yeah. So she's gonna like accept it, and like try to make this thing so that it-- they sort of both get what they want.

AUSTIN: Do you communicate that this is what you're going to do? Or is this...

ALI: I... [sighs]

AUSTIN: Is this a trick?

ALI: I feel like if-- Hmm, if this roll fails, I feel like she doesn't have the control over this deal that she thought she did. And like she gets it anyway. But that's up to you to like, say. I don't know that it's like a bait and switch. Cause I feel like she's trying to be kind of open with it.

AUSTIN: It wants to be with *you*. I like-- I'm making that exceptionally clear. I think, like, it wants to be with you as you walk around town, not in a digital construct.

ALI: Right. [clicks tongue] Then I think maybe it is a trick. Cause I think that she, like-- There's like the compulsion there to-- there's the compulsion to know that like, if... It's really easy to just say yes, and then the people in this prison will be okay, and job well done, whatever.

AUSTIN: Yep.

ALI: But like, there's still the desire to like, have...

AUSTIN: Yeah, no, totally, I think that's--

ALI: A space there?

AUSTIN: A hundred percent with you, like that's-- yes.

ALI: And I-- I'm gonna-- I'm gonna roll Powerful 'cause I feel like it is a little bit of a sleight of hand?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Where like, she's trying to like, have her cake and eat it.

AUSTIN: Yep.

ALI: Um, so... [sighs and whispers] My God.

AUSTIN: That's a six.

ALI: That is a six. [groans and laughs]

AUSTIN: Tell me what the digital lobby looks like, Ali.

ALI: [sighs] Um, I think that it's like-- That's kinda shitty, I don't know. It's like a movie theatre?

AUSTIN: Hm.

ALI: Where like, the thing that it wanted is to exist in the world, right? And to be with her and see what she's seeing? And I think it's like, it still gets the ability to do that. It's maybe less like a movie theatre, but more like wearing an Oculus Rift. But you know that you're doing that, and you know that like the experience that you have isn't one-to-one.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: But it's still like a compromise in that way? Um.

AUSTIN: Um, it is there, in that space with you. Part of you is also there in that space with it. Um, you don't know how to get-- you can't shut it off, right now. It's not-- like the door is locked. To that part of your brain. Um, it's happy to be there. It's totally-- and in fact it dissipates. More of it-- like it offered, "Oh, bring part of me with you." The whole of it dissipates here in the prison simulation. And like as it does, the part of you that's still in the simulation sees all of the cells going back to where they were. Um, but it's with you now, and it won't be a single roll to get it to not be with you anymore.

ALI: [strained] Cool. [laughs]

AUSTIN: It's very happy. Like it's not aggressive, it's not... uh, it's not making any threats. But you now have this moment. Like you just have this space open forever. And I think actually the thing is-- the thing to note about it is, like, you would need to figure a way to shut it down in order to build a second one of these. Or like maybe I'll just give you disadvantage for whenever you have to build a second one of these digital spaces, like lobby things.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: You know? I think that's probably fair, is like... Part of your attention, when you're trying to build digital lobbies, is just on this other one that's always open.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: That way it's not taking the move away from you, but...

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Um, Signet, it just goes away. [laughs]

JANINE: Hm.

AUSTIN: It just dissipates. And wherever the kind of thunder and rain that was happening is also gone now, but you can see that the streets are slowly filling with this black goo again. It's not all of them. Like you can move through the city if you want, but like, you'll see it trying to like reform itself.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: As you do. What do you do, what do you two do?

[ALI laughs]

ALI: I think kinda-- Tender kind of like crouches for a second. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Just kind of like, head in hands. Just kind of like, takes a minute. While it dissipates.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And uh, we should probably mosey, but [laughs] that would be Signet's suggestion.

JANINE: I mean, I don't know. I don't know what to do. Cause like, we can't be done here until the goop is gone, but the goop can't be gone, so.

ALI: Oh.

JANINE: I don't know what the exit scenario looks like.

AUSTIN: At this point, I think the backup is done, by the way. The one that you had Blooming build.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You can look up and see this reflection of the city up there. You know. As it is. The cloud is also not up there, to be clear. The cloud was also never brought into the backup. Blooming is professional, like, you, and wasn't going to just like fuck up and bring the, you know.

ALI: The, um, the like distortion of the greater prison area is also like--

AUSTIN: Yep. Yeah. The other places-- in fact at this point I think it's returned to being just the regular city, not the city mixed between the, um, the two types of-- the like war zone plus the regular city. Like it's just the regular city at this point.

ALI: Um, I mean, is Signet's understanding of this that like, if she leaves, the goop wouldn't stay?

JANINE: I don't think so, because the goop hasn't been uniquely pursuing her. Like in this-- in this whole encounter with the goop, there was a period where it was pursuing her, and then... after a point, it seemed to have a goal completely about this place, and not about her.

AUSTIN: I think it was-- to be clear, it was going after that white cloud. 100%. Like that is the... I think that given Signet's experience with the Iconoclasts, the thing that she could determine using her history and knowledge is, it was going after something that it thought was very powerful, and that could aid it.

JANINE: Hmm.

AUSTIN: The way-- in the same way that, in previous encounters, it, you know, it might have picked up a chair to throw at Signet. Or that it might have tried to, you know

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Collapse a structure on her, or something. Or in which it might have been going for whatever-- like I don't know how long you've been dealing with the iconoclasts, right? But you suspect that, on top of hunting down your order, they also have goals, and sometimes their goals are... not just to kill you then and there, but to gain some sort of long-term benefit. So that they can better hunt the order all said. You know.

JANINE: Yeah. Okay. Um... So Blueberri and Korin, they're all-- they've left?

AUSTIN: They've safely-- they've safely escaped the city, yep.

JANINE: Okay. Um.

AUSTIN: I think that again, the overlay can reveal that. The like... You can just see, like, their dots moving through the simulated network, back towards the traditional cell block. Not cell block, but like the traditional holding areas.

JANINE: Okay, then the thing, uh... Well okay, I can try this, and if it goes really fucking bad, then... At least I tried something. So I think, um. Okay. So the city is cool, it's just the gross stuff, and a thing that we have a duplicate of, okay. I think the thing that Signet does is, they're sitting at the top of this tower. And she... sort of reaches out to take a hold of, um, Tender's hand. Signet is a very grabby character, I'm coming to realize.

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: She's not like reaching and grabbing without asking permission.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: She never, like-- I don't think she's aggressive about it, but she does just like definitely just like, reach out and touch people's arms and hands without asking a lot. Anyway, so I think she does that, and then she... says something that I don't know that she would say loud enough to be heard properly. It's again that kind of whispery thing. Because she's saying Belgard's true name.

AUSTIN: Okay. What is... is that a thing you wanna answer yet? Or is that a thing you're interested in an-- like does it-- in the anime of this, do we just see that she whispers something, and then for the next six weeks all the fans are gonna be online, like [whispering], "What did she-- what did she say?"

[ALI chuckles]

JANINE: [suppressing a laugh] That's absolutely it, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. Okay. So that sounds like Asylum to me.

JANINE: It is.

AUSTIN: Uh, what do you feel as you do this?

JANINE: Um, I think... [sighs] I think Signet feels sad? And I don't know if she feels sad for stupid reasons, but I think she feels sad 'cause like her understanding of what that cloud was makes her sad.

AUSTIN: Interesting. Okay.

JANINE: Like her understanding of--

AUSTIN: What is her--

JANINE: This could be super fucking wrong and I didn't really have to put it to the test in a serious way, but I think her understanding of that cloud was that it's supposed to-- it's kind of like, it was capable of-- like very very capable of doing what Contrition used to do. And maybe that it was put in place to do that, but didn't wanna be there? And it was imprisoned in the prison doing that sort of work.

AUSTIN: Huh.

JANINE: Again that could be totally wrong, but I think that's like... I think that's like the thing that she thinks it was in her very very brief brush against it.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: And that like makes her sad, because synthetic life shouldn't have to-- shouldn't have to try and stand in for Divines. Even if that isn't the case, that's like...

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: It makes her sad to think that like, that is a thing that's probably happening, is like Divines used to handle things, and now robots and people have to do, like, half as good if that at various things. It's a bummer.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Uh, God I hope this works. Okay. Fuck.

AUSTIN: That's a six. Oh, boy.

ALI: We're doing it tonight.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh, you know what you could do, still?

JANINE: What?

AUSTIN: Or I guess can they... Does it work the other way or does it only work-- Hmm. I thought I remembered that you could use True Name to aid somebody, but you can't-- they can't aid you back, huh?

JANINE: No. I also don't have a thing on Tender.

AUSTIN: Oh, I wasn't saying Tender. I was thinking of somebody else.

JANINE: Oh.

ALI: Um, could I aid it in just being, like, willing? Or like...

AUSTIN: I don't think just being willing does it. Like what's this-- what does this look like...
[inhales] God, what does this even look like? Um...

JANINE: Oh. Um, I feel like-- I have an idea of what the feeling of trying to do it might be like, and that also kind of leads to why Tender could help. You know like, when you're in a dream, where you can fly? And sometimes you have the conscious-- you feel like you have a conscious control over how high you're flying? And you feel like if you think a little bit harder, you'll fly higher? Or is that just me, does no one else have that? [laughs]

AUSTIN: I don't have flying dreams.

[ALI chuckles]

JANINE: Oh.

[all overlapping]

AUSTIN: I've never had-- I've had one flying dream, I think.

JANINE: Well sometimes when I have flying dreams--

JACK: I've had them--

[crosstalk ends]

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: I've had them like very occasionally, and it's always the best, and it's also exactly the sensation you described, Janine, of like--

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Huh.

JACK: Like, feeling like you're pushing against some resistance

JANINE: Yeah.

JACK: And... in doing so you enact flight?

JANINE: Like you have to expand or contract something. And then your height or speed or something will change.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. I can get with that.

JANINE: So it's maybe that feeling sort of around them in the Mesh. That sort of shudder thing-- shuddering, shivering thing, but also like a reaching, or like a trying to do something that Tender might be able to recognize and like... Facili-- not facilitate, necessarily, but.

AUSTIN: Like are you like the person pushing up, basically? Or like giving a boost sort of thing? I've never had flying dreams, I don't know what it feels like.

[ALI laughs and JANINE groans]

[1:00:00]

ALI: But I feel-- I feel like in the-- cause I mean there's an option for Tender to either still just be kind of a wet blanket. Like she's being physically right now, or to even reject any sort of like, "Hey I wanna do this thing with you right now," after this whole traumatic thing just happened? But like Tender being open to Signet trying to help her because she trusts her... could be an aid? I feel like?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I guess like, for me it's a question-- the thing that's interesting here is like, whatever you do to aid helps us define the contours of what this thing is.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Because like, if it does mean that you-- by doing this, you aid, that means that resisting would actually resist in the future. Do you know what I mean? Like someone saying like, "No, I'm not letting you do this," would be a way of giving disadvantage or hindering or whatever. So yeah, I'm fine with it, as long as we keep those rules in mind going forward. You know?

ALI: Yeah, I mean I would love to have that rule on the table for this move, so that's-- I mean to me that's what I'm calling it, but...

JANINE: Yeah, I think that's fine. It's hard to think of scenarios where-- I mean, it could happen, but generally Signet prefers that people are okay with the things she's doing.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: [laughs] Yeah.

JANINE: As a rule of thumb.

ALI: Yeah. Especially when it's--

AUSTIN: I could see a situation where you're like capturing somebody or something, you know?

ALI: Right, yeah.

JANINE: I don't know that the way she'd handle that was bring them to Belgard. [laughs]

[ALI giggles]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I-- listen, I don't know. There's always a--

JANINE: But yeah, it could happen.

AUSTIN: We got a year to play this game, y'all.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know.

ALI: Is this a 2d6?

AUSTIN: Uh, yes. 2d6 plus whatever you're feeling.

ALI: Uh, I th-- [groans]. I think I'm gonna go with Peaceful, 'cause that's sort of like...

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: The through line of the-- Oh my GOD.

[JANINE groans]

AUSTIN: Oh, buddy.

JANINE: It's just like sad and awkward now.

ALI: I just--

AUSTIN: That's another five. You should mark XP.

ALI: I'm giving, I'm at three now.

AUSTIN: You're at three? You're at three XP now?

ALI: I'm at three now.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um, what's *supposed* to happen here? Signet?

JANINE: I'm supposed to go to Belgard. [exhales]

AUSTIN: Uh huh. God.

[ALI blows a raspberry]

JANINE: I don't wanna get into details about how cool it is until it's actually cool, though, so.
[laughing] I don't wanna say any more than that right now.

AUSTIN: I actually think this is--

ALI: I'm so sad this didn't happen. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Well, no. Wait wait wait.

JANINE: I really hate that the first time I use this move, it sucks. Ugh.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: So what's it look like there? What's it look like when this happens? It happens. This isn't like-- this isn't like a thing where you're advancing to the end game? But you have just put pieces together that I didn't expect to be put near each other very quickly.

[JANINE and ALI groaning]

AUSTIN: So, what's this look like? Visually. Again, what's the-- what do the anime viewers at home see?

JANINE: [sighs] The thing I thought it looked like, when I conceptualized it and took the move, was... kinda the reason you can't hear what she says, because when she's like sort of halfway done the word, her lips are supposed to stop moving. And like she in general stops moving and then gets kind of like, dull?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: And then... just kind of... There's a moment delay where it's just sort of like, she's frozen. And then she just sort of collapses into a pile of like really iridescent little, um-- It was gonna be beetle shells, and then you used beetle shells! You made a lady with a beetle shell dress or something, so I-- I feel weird using that now? Um, but that's what it was supposed to be was like a bunch of sort of--

AUSTIN: It could still be beetle shells. Y'all from the same culture. Like...

JANINE: Yeah. I guess. But it was supposed to be something like that, and then you just kind of-- there's just like a pile of...

AUSTIN: Oh. You're-- yeah yeah yeah, okay.

JANINE: Where Signet and I guess also Tender were.

AUSTIN: [makes disgusted noise] Like, in place of you.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. And where are you?

JANINE: Well, that's when you're supposed to be at Belgard.

AUSTIN: I know, I want you to describe what Belgard looks like.

JANINE: [laughing] Okay.

AUSTIN: You're in Belgard. The move happened.

JANINE: Okay. I don't know where you're-- you're breaking things, so it's hard to know how far to go.

AUSTIN: I promise you will know when it is broken.

JANINE: [sighs] Yeah.

AUSTIN: I promise.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I've never been coy.

JANINE: Yeah. Uh, so--

AUSTIN: You rolled a five. I don't know-- did we say that you rolled a six, by the way? That both of you rolled sixes? Okay.

JANINE: Yeah. We-- I literally swore, so it's probably clear.

AUSTIN: Or a six and a five, okay.

[ALI laughs]

ALI: It's implied.

JANINE: Yeah. So, Belgard's cockpit is like-- I'm sure there are other areas of Belgard that can be accessed, but this generally goes straight to the cockpit. And the cockpit-- uh, Belgard herself is still attached to Thyrsus.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: Like a cocoon hanging off a branch is very directly what that is. But Belgard's cockpit is like a big open... kind of spherical room? It's like very round, there are some sort of straps hanging from the ceiling. There are like projectors in there. Everything probably has a very thin gold border around it, or something to make it a little bit less, like, utilitarian. Like it is still very black and dark and... and mechanical, but there is also this bit of gilding to it. And... it's otherwise pretty empty and non-descript. Like if someone-- Someone going there for the first time probably wouldn't know where the fuck they were, what this was-- like it's just a weird, black room with like stuff? Just around on the walls? And there's like maybe a couple shafts to go somewhere else, like you'd pull up a--

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah yeah yeah.

JANINE: Door on the shaft to go somewhere, but it's just like a big weird room.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Is this the first time that you've done this with Tender?

JANINE: Uhhh, I'd say probably almost certainly.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Uh, so now you're in the corpse of Belgard. Of the body of Belgard. What do the projectors traditionally project?

JANINE: I think the projectors-- they're sort of projectors that are meant to interface with... one's interface? I didn't think of how to phrase that when I should have.

AUSTIN: Mhm. [laughs]

JANINE: So they're not like projector projectors, but they're still sort of meant to... hollow lens style kind of... help make this... You know, when Belgard was working, this would have been like a 3D representation of whatever field or area they were operating in.

AUSTIN: Right. And, is Belgard--

JANINE: And Signet would've been sort of suspended in the middle of that. Moving through it to interact.

AUSTIN: Like via those harnesses and all of that.

JANINE: Yes, yeah.

AUSTIN: Where is Belgard now, physically? Is it still on the Thyrsus?

JANINE: It's attached to Thyrsus like a cocoon on a branch, that's what that was.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um, so you get here. Tender, how does this feel?

ALI: Uhhhhhh, weird? [laughs] Um, not good, probably? It's really overwhelming, and even outside of like the context of the day that she's had...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: I think like physically being inside of a Divine is kind of a sore spot. Being zapped into one via space magic is also a little weird. I think that it's like really disorienting, and I was gonna ask if this, um, this counts as a moment of intimacy? Cause I--

AUSTIN: Oh. Huh.

ALI: It kind of feels like it does?

AUSTIN: I think that's up to both of you independently.

[ALI sighs]

AUSTIN: I wouldn't say no, is what I'm saying.

ALI: Okay, yeah.

JANINE: I would say for Signet it probably-- like she has to trust someone a fair bit to bring them back here instead of like-- the choice was probably like, go here or walk through the goop streets and try not to die there.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JANINE: [simultaneously with Ali] And like hope the cell door would open.

ALI: [simultaneously with Janine] Or like have someone else let us out, or...

JANINE: And like, who even fucking knows?

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: But still it probably takes a degree of trust and comfort to just, like... bring a person here.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Yeah, 'cause I feel like this is an extreme that kind of represents that. In a way that like... I don't know. It seems like a lot.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Do-- if you want the Architect special to trigger, I think that's totally fine.

ALI: Sure, yeah. Sure. [laughs]

AUSTIN: "When the Architect shares a moment of intimacy with someone, be it physical or emotional, roll without adding a state." So roll, uh, 2d6.

ALI: [mumbling] Oh my God, if I roll poorly...

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: Just roll without adding a state.

AUSTIN: I th...

ALI: Oh. What?

AUSTIN: That wasn't the roll just now, right?

ALI: No.

AUSTIN: I was gonna say, I think you still mark an emotion here, because that's-- again, going back to what Fraser told me, which was, "Always mark an emotion."

ALI: Yeah. Um, hm...

AUSTIN: So like what does that moment of intimacy feel like?

ALI: [sighs] God. I--

AUSTIN: I think the like-- yeah, go ahead.

ALI: This is tough, 'cause like I feel like this might spike out my Peaceful.

AUSTIN: Huh.

ALI: In that like leaning on... Signet as much as she has today

AUSTIN: Interesting.

ALI: And like the relationship that they have, sort of...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Like, is bad? [laughs] Not is bad, but like... is emotionally affecting in a way that is disorienting, or like is what a spike sort of is in this system.

AUSTIN: Yeah. We should describe what that means once you mark it, but make your roll first and then mark it.

ALI: Yeah. And that's a four.

AUSTIN: [whispering] Oh, Jesus Christ.

[JANINE groans]

AUSTIN: Ali, you're rolling like it's Friends at the Table over here.

ALI: I literally... [laughs]

AUSTIN: You might level twice this game!

ALI: I might level twice this game. Hey everyone, I rolled a four by the way.

AUSTIN: You rolled a four. So what's the special say? Let's see. On a 10, everything-- on a hit, not a 10. On any hit! All is well. On a miss, uh, there is an NPC is added to your-- Or I guess wait, you-- Oh.

ALI: They are added as an NPC to my subconscious.

AUSTIN: Oh my God, Signet is added to your NP-- Okay.

JANINE: Woah.

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: That's pretty good. You wanna add that up there for me?

ALI: Yeah, I'm gonna write that in.

AUSTIN: Just go ahead and write that in. Signet is now--

JANINE: It's getting really crowded in there.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Well actually, funny story. Maybe that's actually what happens.

JANINE: Oh, fuck.

ALI: Stop it.

AUSTIN: You're just in the... You're in that lobby space. And the... doors open. Actually, no let's do-- you're in a fucking-- the lobby space is a movie theatre, right? So I think we get the like, hard click of the projector coming on. And then the [ticking noise], the shutter speed is spinning up. The reel is spinning up. And then there is just... live video. Or not live video. There is like old-timey footage of Signet in Belgard, like doing the jumping around moves. Doing like the-- controlling Belgard. And like in a battle or whatever. And then like it-- there's success, and she stops moving around, and she unharnesses herself. And walks towards the camera. And through the screen? And is in the movie theatre now with you. And I think it's that moment that you realize the cloud is gone. Um and Signet, you can see-- you can see Thyrsus. You can see the body of the-- the ship you're from, as the body of Belgard lights up.

[MUSIC- "The Twilight Mirage" begins]

AUSTIN: Uh, it's like-- like in my mind the sound is like the sound that's in science fiction movies as things turn on, which is like [makes a low percussive sound], you know?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Bit by bit, all these lights start to come on.

JANINE: So here's the thing I'm curious about, because my sanctuary already has a quality that might conflict with this.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: My sanctuary already has a voice that speaks to me.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. There can be more than one voice.

JANINE: Okay, I just wanna make sure that was known.

AUSTIN: That's totally fine. Um, in fact I think-- [laughs] No, maybe there is nothing here yet. No, there is a voice here, and the voice that you're familiar with says

AUSTIN (as the voice): This isn't me.

AUSTIN: And then like [low booting up noises] as the Divine comes back online. Um, and the cockpit door opens for you to leave.

[JANINE sighs]

AUSTIN: And then I think we just get this really great, like, Windows 95 startup sound. And then like the projector slowly replaces the outside view of Thyrsus with the view of rolling green hills, blue skies, and a single white cloud.

[MUSIC ends]