

PARTIZAN 36: The Witch in the Glass Pt. 2

Transcriber: Theo [Scared Civilian#8424] [0-4:21:58]

AUSTIN: Hey everyone. I just wanted to quickly give a note that this episode carries a few content warnings. Um, first there's the discussion of, uh, a broken and healing bone. Uh, there is the depiction of, uh, killing dog-like animals, um, as well as a scene featuring the, uh, the killing of humans via firearm. Uh, and a scene, uh, featuring near asphyxiation.

I don't think this is a particularly dark or grim episode. All of those things are dealt with, with, with a sort of degree of remove. So I don't think that it's necessarily luxuriating in any of that content. So don't worry about, about that. But just wanted to give everyone a heads up. And I hope that, uh, you know, all around, you enjoy the episode.

[Music begins: CENTERPOINT. STAINEDGLASS. BREAKNECK. by Jack de Quidt]

AUSTIN (as Gur Sevraq): My God, I am lost. And so to find myself, I turn to the three inquiries.

Here are the things that I know. I am here, but I am absent. I have been bound to Clementine by the whims of Perennial. She knows *that* we are bound, but not how. She is herself lost and wounded.

AUSTIN: Oh, also, um, before we do the next one, uh, what's up with your arm. Is your arm healed more from the surgery? Are you still using the, uh, Vessel's Gold's arms?

JACK: Yeah, I think so. I think, I think yes, to both of those questions. I think that, um, the, the measures that Clementine took are bearing fruit.

AUSTIN (as Gur): Here are the things I believe. That you are absent from this place, or that our connection has been severed. That Perennial is working towards some end. That however much the world would be better without Clementine, I cannot be sure that if I led her to her death, I would be free of her. And thus, that I am a coward.

JACK: I think Clementine is surprised that it is healing, but it is not necessarily healing um, um, smoothly?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Uh, I think Clementine still has less mobility in her arm than she did.

AUSTIN: Is she, is she also just like in a lot of pain?

JACK: I think so. Yes. I think it is something that she is managing, uh, with the, the, the stuff that she found in the Community. But I, I think that she is still feeling the pain of the arm and of the break.

AUSTIN (as Gur): And here are the things that I commit to do. To ease my own pain. To limit the damage she can do to others. To try to work through her as you did once through me, as if a reflection of light through the window of a dark room.

[exhausted] Never enough. Never enough. But something.

AUSTIN: I think it's time for you to embark.

JACK: Yes. And because our, this is our third pilgrimage. I get a little more direction. Right?

AUSTIN: Tell me what you have in mind.

JACK: I'd like to explore the area out to the west.

AUSTIN: Really quick, you're not exploring anything. You're going on a pilgrimage.
[Jack chuckles]

JACK: Yes, that's true. I would like to, I would like to go out on a pilgrimage out, out along the coastline to the west of the Community.

AUSTIN (as Gur): This is what I know. This is what I believe. This is what I commit to do. These are the limits and privileges of all who live: even you, my god. And even me, even now, *even like this*.

[Music fades]

AUSTIN: So I think one night. Um, maybe the night after that long night, after all the lights go out in the Community at Chorus Island. Um, remember how it's starless here?

JACK: Yeah,

AUSTIN: Which is, which is strange for many reasons, again, by the way, one being you're in the middle of nowhere. And that means the stars should be very bright. Two being, we know that there are fake stars in the sky that are supposed to be able to be seen from everywhere on the planet,

JACK: On every planet.

AUSTIN: On every planet here, there are not inside of the Community. When you look up, there are not stars. Um, but the next night. Um, there is a star in the sky, kind of a glowing, um, a light purple-pink star to the west. Um, and you only see it just as you're drifting off to sleep, to the degree that you're not even sure it was there. And so the day after that, um, you go on this journey. Presumably, you bring Gur Sevraq with you?

JACK: Yep. Gur Sevraq is coming. Also, on my way out, um, I would like to discard the Adversary.

AUSTIN: How do you do this? What's this look like?

[Jack ponders for a while]

JACK: I think, I think Clementine and Gur approach the gate. They go, they squeeze under the gate. They start heading down along that wall to the west and then Clementine picks up a rock and goes back to the gate and smashes in the camera and the screen above the keypad outside.

AUSTIN: It like, there is a moment there where the wall shudders because it's, there's a holographic projection, basically like a localized holographic projection — again, the sort of technology we have not seen much of in Partizan here. This is Counter/Weight era stuff, right? This is September. Um, and the, it smashes and Gur gives you a look. Um, and many of, you know, imagine their, their spider-like eyes raising in, in confusion.

AUSTIN (as Gur): Is there something you need to tell me? Or are you just in the mood to break things?

JACK (as Clem): I received a message some time ago. Keep walking. I'll tell you on the way.

JACK: Uh, and as we walk, uh, Clementine, uh, doesn't actually give any more information. [laughs] Just says,

JACK (as Clem): I received a message, the content wasn't important. Um, I don't want to hear from them right now.

AUSTIN: This is the pilgrimage of the lone star. That's bad. I can't say lone star cause that's like Texas. Of the singular...

JACK: You can see the lone star from a hundred miles away? [Austin laughs] Calling you back home?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah uh huh... This is the pilgrimage of the single star. Um, it's not long on your journey and you've done your best to, to, uh, err on the side of safety based on where you know those dogs were before. Um, nevertheless, it's not long before you hear them calling, and you find that same kind of border where the atmosphere gets, gets thinner. Um, and you can see them, they're all waiting, right at the edge, howling at you, daring you to step a little closer to them. Um, and, uh, and this is the first trial. It is a three of courage. At three, you know, they're not an immediate threat, but it's still, it's still kind of harrowing to have them howling for your blood, just a few steps away.

JACK: Yeah, I think, I think Clem and Gur, are fully on team, like, "fuck these dogs" now, after their attempts, after their, their, their multiple encounters with them and their failed attempts to capture one. They would be bored by them, were they not so frightening at this proximity and that there were so many of them. Um, uh, I'm going to play a four of courage, just one slightly more than Perennial's three, or Austin's three.

AUSTIN: What's it look like?

JACK: There, there is a verge of pale purple plants running alongside the line. And, um, Clementine, uh, goes to walk, uh, along the line. And one of the dogs just lunges and can cross safely across this line of purple flowers. Um, And so Clementine and Gur sort of, screw up that courage and, and pull back a little, and sometimes the, the line of flowers intersects with the, uh, breathable air and the safety and sometimes it doesn't, and finding out exactly when they can rely on it, uh... Is, is a, is an ongoing process.

AUSTIN: Um, Okay.

JACK: I don't know if this is Russian Sage, is the other thing.

AUSTIN: Right. Right. Doesn't need to be.

JACK: It is pale purple flowers.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah. Um, as you... You follow those pale purple flowers in a sense, until they open up into a wide field. Um, and I think maybe you're about to make that next step across them. Uh, the, the, uh, sorry, the wide field is not — they stop being just pale purple. They are, uh, kind of a proliferation of color, every color in the rainbow. But they're all the same type of flower. I'm imagining like an iris maybe. [**JACK:** Hmm.] Not an iris, that's not true. What am I imagining? What is this? What is this flower...

JACK: A hyacinth?

AUSTIN: No. Flower list...

JACK: A cosmos? A hyacinth.

AUSTIN: I have such a clear... Do I mean poppies? I kind of think I might mean poppies. I mean poppies.

JACK: You might mean a poppy.

AUSTIN: I think I mean poppies.

JACK: Oh sure, sure, sure! Yes, I see it!

AUSTIN: You know what I mean? Um, and they're just, it's just a thousand different colors, um, of these things, uh, just a million variations. Dark centers. Um, and then, and then just pink and orange and green and — which you don't see very often. And just a thousand colors. And before you step, you step in, Gur raises a hand and he says,

AUSTIN (as Gur): Wait. A sign.

AUSTIN: And points at a sign. Uh, and it says, um, uh, "No trespassing:" um, "violators surrender their lives." And raises or lowers, lowers his hand. And he says,

AUSTIN (as Gur): There is something in the field.

AUSTIN: This is the 10 of diamonds. You have to figure out how to cross this field safely without activating whatever has been... Whatever is in this field. I mean, I'll tell you, I, I should just tell you straight up. I think Gur picks up a rock and throws it as far as they can. And an explosion happens.

JACK: Oh, God.

AUSTIN: This is like a row of, of, of these, of these poppies that then rises up a hill. Um, and, and you know, that whatever you're looking for as across, is on the other side of this hill. Um, so. [laughs]

JACK: Hm. Um, is, is... What is the dog situation?

AUSTIN: Dogs are... You've passed the dogs.

JACK: Okay. We haven't... They didn't follow us all the way down the line to this.

AUSTIN: They did not follow you over here. No, no.

JACK: The air must've like curved around?

AUSTIN: Correct. Correct. Yeah.

JACK: You know, like the air curving around... like it does...

AUSTIN: When the air curves around. Yeah. Well, it's clear that they they've sort of treated certain parts of this island, or done something to certain parts of this island that, um, that have made it livable for the dogs. Um, they're not able to rein, or they don't have free rein across the whole thing. Right?

JACK: Cause that would be chaos. Could you imagine the Pact's like, park attendants having to deal with that?

AUSTIN: Totally, totally. It's basically, this is the challenge of needing to cross a minefield. That's all. No big deal, right?

JACK: A minefield disguised as a, as a field of, of extraordinary poppies.

AUSTIN: As beautiful flowers, yeah.

JACK: You can't really negotiate with a minefield...

AUSTIN: It's hard to...

JACK: It is tough to negotiate with the minefield. I do however have a passive buff on spades and, and on hearts.

AUSTIN: You do. And on hearts. And you have, uh, you also have, it's worth remembering, currently, seven dogma points, four interpretation points and one disappointment. Well, that disappointment is mine, but you know...

JACK: I can spend that dogma at this point, or is it a 10 that I spend?

AUSTIN: Five, it's five.

JACK: What do I spend five dogma on?

AUSTIN: Um... Grace. "The pilgrim may spend five dogma to make the divine choose a card from the divine's hand or the current trial and reshuffle it back into their deck. This essentially skips one, uh, one challenge during the pilgrimage. The divine may chose to show, may choose to show that card to the pilgrim, if it's still in their hands, and if they do, they should describe how they interceded on the pilgrim's behalf just to ease their journey." The Pilgrim may even play this in the last card of the pilgrimage.

[Jack thinks for a bit]

JACK: Instead of I'm just going to use the Queen's passive and, um, and, and ask for a new trial. I think, I think Clementine, you know, looks at Gur, and looks at the sign and, and turns and hisses and says,

JACK (as Clem): I'm not crossing a fucking minefield. Not with, not with her.

JACK: The implication being like with Perennial, who knows, you might be very lucky and no mines would go off, or you might be very unlucky and all of them would go off.

AUSTIN: Totally. So did you say you were using the queen's power? Is that what you're saying?

JACK: The queen, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. So when, when you use that queen power, again, this is not, not the second time you're doing it so you get to keep the queen. But it means that I will replace this 10 of diamonds, which I've now moved into my discard, with a new card from my deck. Which I will flip over now... And then determine what it is. Top card... The eight of courage!

[Jack chuckles]

JACK: Um, this is a frightening one!

AUSTIN: Yeah. Well, I, and I think that this is, um. I think Gur nods and says,

AUSTIN (as Gur): There is another path. If we go back, if we follow the, the poppies back, I saw one that goes closer, closer to the dogs.

AUSTIN: Um, so yeah, you can, you can go back and walk, like further north basically, and circumnavigate this, uh, closer to where those dogs are.

JACK: Uh, I think we come to a point where, um, there is like a, the, the place where the air is safe, uh, is bled into, um, by a place where the air is not. Essentially, a dog is able to pass in front of us. Is ab-, Is able to cross in front of our path perfectly.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Um, And there's no way we're going to get through without coming into contact with the dog. So I think we will! [Jack plays a card]

AUSTIN: [interested] Ooh, 10 of clubs! 10 of fights!

JACK: Um, what is, uh, what is, uh, what is a good, frightening way to kill a dog?

AUSTIN: To kill a, uh, uh...

JACK: An alien dog.

AUSTIN: An alien hyena dog. I don't know,

JACK: Stick of rebar, has found a piece of rebar. Um... Does Gur have any weapons? Did they, did they manage to keep any of their weapons?

AUSTIN: No, um... I don't think so....

JACK: Oh, I know what it is. I know what it is. Um, uh, uh, we, we enter the area, uh... Fists fling. Awful slavering teeth. Um, uh... Rebar strikes. Gur Sevraq, whirling arms, whirling metallic arms. The dog, uh, you know, uh, snaps at us and takes a step

backwards and takes two steps backwards and is blown 15 feet into the air by a poppy mine.

AUSTIN: [exhales] Oh, I love it!

JACK: That is just like, the seeds of it were scattered. You know, you didn't, you didn't get away from the minefield. You were always gonna go through the minefield. Um. It's just like, it's like a green poppy that was hidden in the verge.

AUSTIN: Yes. Totally.

JACK: Oh, because they are seeds. They're, they're sewn like seeds and you know, maybe if they...

AUSTIN: [amazed] Oh!

JACK: Maybe if they don't go into the ground, a bird will pick one up and...

AUSTIN: A bird picks it up, yeah...

JACK: It's not live yet, and then it grows.

AUSTIN: It's not live. It takes a while for it to grow and become, yeah, a live mine. I love it. Um, um, I think at some point Gur is like,

AUSTIN (as Gur): We should take as many of these as we can carry.

[Jack laughs in agreement]

AUSTIN: Uh, uh, just a little, just a little, a little pouch, like you're a... Like you're a DnD character. You know what I mean?

JACK: Oh? Are there seeds remaining? Do we find seeds?

AUSTIN: Well, I mean, listen, you can't, I mean... They're in the world now, right? So, uh, I wouldn't... I mean maybe yes, and maybe that's a thing that you can call on when you...

JACK: Maybe they rain down after it explodes.

AUSTIN: Maybe that's a thing that you can call on when you, uh... With a diamond or something, you know what I mean? But, but you don't necessarily have them... You would have to, you can introduce th—I guess what I'm saying is they are now an element of the setting...

JACK: Yes, they exist.

AUSTIN: In such a way that you could come up... That you could reference it. Um... Alright. So you make your way through the, the dog field, past the minefield, and to a kind of cliff looking down, uh, into what was beyond the, kind of in the valley, beyond the hills of poppies, of poppy mines. And there is, um... free floating, just in a long, low, flat, like, um, not even a field, just like a, like a, it's as if there is a desert here, right? Or like a cracked, hard, dry, you know... Less like, um, less like a, a desert filled with sand dunes and more like, I guess like the Mojave, you know, like flat and, and like scrubland style?

JACK: [in agreement] Mmm.

AUSTIN: Um, there is a free floating spherical structure, um, uh, that... It's, I guess it's... You see sticking out of one of it's — sticking out of the top of it is a huge lensed telescope. This is a planetarium of some sort.

JACK: Whoa.

AUSTIN: Um, and as you, and as you approach it, um, you know, and you you can see that this is now — that you've found your safe way there. Um, the, uh, you do see another sign that says, "The premises are patrolled." Um, and you don't know what that means until you have gotten into it. Um. I'm sort of imagining here, by the way, if you want to, if you want an image of, of this, I said planetarium, what I meant was, um, what I meant was a, what do you call it?

JACK: Observatory?

AUSTIN: Observatory, but it looks like there is, it looks like the Hayden planetarium, I think? Or no, not the Hayden one. The, the, it's not the Hayden one. It is the Nagoya City Science Museum planetarium. Um, which if you haven't seen, is just this wild...

JACK: Nagoya City Science Museum... Whoa!

AUSTIN: It just looks like a big spear hovering between two buildings. It's built into the side of those two buildings,

JACK: Oh, that's brilliant.

AUSTIN: But imagine that except a little lower to the ground, you know, like a story or two lower to the ground, still floating, um, uh, but not attached to any buildings. And then also with, uh, with a big telescope sticking out of it.

So I think you get inside and as you're trying to get your bearings in this place, um, you know, uh, uh, you hear the sound of scraping metal. Um, and expecting one of these dogs, you are surprised when instead you find a, uh, a figure, a humanoid figure, albeit

one that is fairly dilapidated. Um, that seems to be... I guess, we've, you've seen people like this before.

This is someone who looks like they're a member of the Black Century, whose life has been drained from them. Uh, but who serves anyway... Um, so again, kind of cybernetic being, a cybernetic human, um, or maybe in this case, an Apostolisian. This is definitely someone who's from the Black Century, uh, who raises, uh, raises their, their arm, um, which is holding, uh, an old battered Apostolisian rifle, and who fires it at you and misses... Um, they are not in, they're not in great shape. Um, this is the five of clubs.

JACK: Oh boy...

AUSTIN: I think you start to wonder in this moment, Oh, were they already working on putting soldiers like this on the field? Were the dogs step one? Is Motion and Motion's Black Century, which enslaves people to be soldiers for a hundred years, step two? Or it doesn't strike you, because what's happening is this soldier shooting a gun at you and you're like, ahh! But it may strike me, or you, later.

JACK: Is this soldier, um, mobile?

AUSTIN: Yes. Again, dragging their feet across the ground and their feet have this, like... Their feet have been, have been repaired so many times with just like scrap metal that's been laying around?

JACK: God.

AUSTIN: I, part of the thing I want to emphasize here too, is that there is a version—and this is probably not what's on Clem's mind, but it is certainly something, let's say, Gur Sevraq has thought about, uh, in, in, after meeting Motion for the first time and seeing, and seeing what she does, is like, "Yo, if you could just use that, this technology in a way that didn't enslave people, [Jack chuckles] it would be great to be able to like keep people alive, to help repair, you know, to help give them, give them medical treatment, to help support them if, if they lose body parts or are otherwise disabled!" But that's not how she uses it. Um, she specifically is almost happy to squander that technology or limit its use to be like, "yeah, if you want this, you have to serve me in my military."

JACK: God, in some ways, Gur Sevraq was born at exactly the right time, or was constructed at exactly the right time. In other ways, they would have loved to have been around X-thousands of years ago on board the fleet where they would be engaging in... Gur Sevraq would be the person saying, "look, utopia is a, it's a process,"

AUSTIN: A hundred percent, yeah!

JACK: "We can't just say that we've reached here." Um... Okay. Uh, I'm going to play the seven of hearts, which is the seven of courage.

AUSTIN: Yes. Well, you're playing the six of hearts.

JACK: But I have a buff.

AUSTIN: But it counts as a seven. Yeah, just making sure we're good on which cards have been played and which ones haven't been.

JACK: Um, I think, you know, the, the blast... They fire hard, hard rounds, right? People in ah, on Partizan, fire...?

AUSTIN: Yeah, these are not lasers or anything like that. Lasers, in fact, we've seen laser or energy type weapons a few times. They tend to take a long time to charge up and there's like a big blast. Um, or we've seen them be extremely rare or, or the, the, uh, you know, something powered by a Divine. Um, but this is like an old, this is like the equivalent of someone having an old like World War 2 M1 Garand basically, you know, um...

JACK: So I think like a bullet, you know, uh, shatters a, a piece of panelling above Clementine's head and she swears and, you know, takes five steps further in the room, and the thing follows her slowly and fires again and misses. Um, and I think that what this is is just this little, unbelievably tense game of cat and mouse with something that is very slow. And Clementine is relying on it not being able to hit her. Um, maybe the bullet, maybe a bullet grazes her.

AUSTIN: Sure. Uh, I think when Gur sees you, he says, um,

AUSTIN (as Gur): You'll need to have that looked at.

AUSTIN: Almost jokingly. Cause like who, there's no infirmary here. There's no doctor.

JACK: Yeah um, yeah. It's just —

AUSTIN: You find your... Yeah, go ahead.

JACK: Oh, you just, you know, when you, you know, when you play a stealth game and you realize that you can actually get very close to the monsters, uh, without like... This is just like, you're in a, you're in a five by five room with one of these things. And as it raises its hand to shoot at you, you just push its arm to one side and then it reloads very slowly...

AUSTIN: Uh huh, and then you can move on, basically. Yeah.

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: Um, and so you do, you and Gur get further into this place. If there are other guards, you don't cross them. You get the impression that there aren't, um, that whatever staging area this may have been at some point, maybe now is less that. And you find your way to the heart of, of the observatory, where there is the like interface for this telescope. Um, which, I don't know, what's the, what's the coolest way for you to look into this telescope? What's the, like, what's the most Partizan way for you to engage with this thing?

JACK: Oh, what if it is a, um, it is, uh, it is a camera obscura onto, um, or that looks out through a window looking onto the basin of the desert.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's good. Yeah.

JACK: You're actually basically looking at like some kind of bizarre, enormous... The way a sundial works or like...

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. I love this. Yeah.

JACK: Like the basin is a big refracting plate or, yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, well, you have this window that looks out and the basin itself, yeah, is like where this will be projected. Um, and then there are dials. Um, and there is a, there's like a sprig of Russian sage, like cut, you know, like a little, like a little cutting, you know, in a, in a vase next to all of the dials and buttons and everything else. Um, and, uh, there is a, uh, a single, there is like a single, again, kind of monochrome green screen. And it's, it's like an um an old word processor. I don't know if you've ever used a word processor, but there's an age of these things where like, you could get a portable word processor that did not have a huge monitor attached. It just had like a little screen that could display two or three lines at once.

JACK: Oh, I've seen these things. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, and this one just has the two phrases, um, "Find me. See what I have seen." This is the ace of diamonds. This is the ace of puzzles. How the hell do you use this machine?

[Jack chuckles excitedly]

JACK: Oh boy! God. I really love that Perennial has seen it in her heart to let us know that these buttons control the observatory, and no more than that.

AUSTIN: That's it.

JACK: Ah, the buttons! She will, she will like to know that the buttons do something. Um, god, Austin. I have two cards in my hand and they're both, they're both incredible.

AUSTIN: I'm excited. I'm curious.

JACK: I think this is very compelling. This is, this is one of the, one of the only direct messages. This is maybe the second time, or the third time that Perennial has spoken to Clementine. Once in the Sage house, once on the television where it just said "your name is Clementine." Uh, and then, uh, this is the third time. Um. Making the Sage house taller, that was actions, not words.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um.

[Jack ponders for a while]

JACK: I'm going to play the ace of spades.

AUSTIN: I love it.

JACK: Um, which you can't buff an ace. Sadly.

AUSTIN: Sure you can. I think an ace can be, I mean, you don't need to, which is the actual thing.

JACK: [jokingly] Yeah, it becomes the two... Um, but no, uh, uh, yeah. There's no, there's no, there's no, there's no secret card. I think this is a project. I think this becomes a project. Um, and I think that, you know, we just rapidly get, uh, the day, the night, no stars, except for the, the pale star, um... Clementine and Gur, sitting in the room, scrounging for supplies. Sitting in the dark and talking, cause there's no lights here or whatever. And they're just the most.... Gur is not a scientist, right? What were they before they were a preacher or a, or a monk?

AUSTIN: A child? I mean, this is, this is...

JACK: Right. They've always been a religious thinker.

AUSTIN: Well yeah, I guess what we've seen is. Or heard, I guess, is also a sort of military infiltrator, thief, scout, killer...

JACK: Yeah like a... Like a radical.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. Uh-huh.

JACK: But neither of us are scientists. Especially not Clementine. And it is just the most laborious process of trial and error of "What does this thing do?" "This does nothing..."

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think at one point Gur is like,

AUSTIN (as Gur): The irony in this. When the true divine spoke to Valence and I, they did it on a whim. They did it because we were at the right place at the right time, and the world opened to us. Perennial asks us to work!

30:09

AUSTIN: And shakes his head.

JACK: And I think Clementine says,

JACK (as Clem): Uh? What did you say?

JACK: Clementine, turning a switch on and off and looking at another thing.

JACK (as Clem): What was that?

AUSTIN (as Gur): Never mind, not... It doesn't matter.

JACK: Um, and I think we eventually get it to work. I think, I think it is a real moment of jubilation for both — it's like a shared excitement, uh, at, at succeeding here.

AUSTIN: Um, and what you see will depend on what relic this is. Let's flip this card, the 10 of clubs.

JACK: Oh my God!

AUSTIN: This is, this is perfect for me. So, I mean, two things happen at once. That, that empty, flat scrubland lights up with color. Um, this is every, you know, uh, 1970s psychedelic, like, "Humans need to go to space, look at the wonders of what our telescopes have shown us, here are the nebula, here are..."

JACK: It's Jodi Foster there for some reason.

AUSTIN: Exactly. Uh, you know, um, um, god, what is his name? Why am I blanking on his name? Carl Sagan is narrating [Jack chuckles] like that style of like, "look at the wonders of the universe" type stuff just being broadcast — Philip Glass music playing, [laughs] you know what I mean?

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah

AUSTIN: Like it is just like, it is that style of thing, except there is this like lower level thing happening. That's what's being visualized, but there is like, it's as if there is a hum coming through from the star. And there is, there is a sense of... You have now seen what she has seen. And at first you're like, "ah, yes, look at the wonders of the universe. Look at how everything is in existence, large and small," you know, you've zoomed in

basically on this purple star, this single star, and in that star is every life, every, you know, argument, every frog, *everything* is there.

Um. And then there is something else, a sort of... You're reminded of when you were on the highway, going back and forth, getting stuck, the roads not taken overwhelming you. You start to wonder, I'm seeing more frogs than there are. I'm seeing alternatives. Is this what it is to be Perennial, to see, to see the, the universes that don't come in to being, you wonder... Is this seeing other universes that might have been, is this seeing the past, when the cycle was once already, where, where it was, and now is returning to it. Old revolutions falling into the same mistakes, um, you know, old, old empires crumbling under popular protest, and then rising again within a generation or two, it's all hitting you all at once, and I don't know that either Gur or, or Clem have had this style of transcendent divine experience before, because what is being shown to you is like the floodgates have opened, a sort of mental experience that you were not built for necessarily, unfiltered and terrible. Um, and at the bottom of it, is this deep in your chest, heart, of a feeling of regret, or feeling of "I did what I had to do, but I don't love what I've done." Which I suspect both you... Certainly Gur recognizes in himself as a feeling that resonates. I don't know if that's something that Clementine Kesh has ever felt before, or if it's appropriate for her to think "I did what needed to be done."

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: I don't know what she's done that was needed to be done. But from Perennial, there is this, there is this sort of, you feel the Sisyphean arc, right? She is someone who seems to have pushed the boulder up the hill long enough to, if I'm stealing from Camus, to have realized the joke in it. You have to find the humor somewhere as, as the boulder falls back down. And it's demoralizing and also freeing for her. I don't know how you interpret it.

As the light fades, there is something left behind, uh, in the, in the desert, in the field. Um, the 10 of clubs, a weapon. This is a Hallow, one of, one of the Hallows that we saw forever ago in Armour Astir. Another old weapon delivered to Clementine Kesh.

JACK: Gosh. Uh, what does this look like?

AUSTIN: This is a very sleek-looking, um, machine. It doesn't have extra clunky bits. Um, it, it has like, uh, you know, um, its weapon seems to be, um, it was described at the time as looking like a stapler refill, you know, like, uh, just like, uh, a ream of staples in that kind of boxy, like a square, a square missing a corner, but then like a long rectangle of them. Almost like a long rail gun. Um, very high, like highly machined. Um, very sleek. There's no extra chunky bits or tubes. It's like, this is a quote. "It's just like a very sleek and precise looking machine." Um, it's also kind of a bluish silverish machine, um, which I think in the light here, it really, as the, the, the next day kind of comes in, you really get this like pristine blue-silver sheen off of it. This is the Day's Eye. This is the, this is the hallow of a witch. This is the hallow of Teasel Mode.

JACK: I think like Clementine is just lying on the floor of the, of the planeta-, of the observatory following the experience. Um, I think that she, she spent a lot of time like hiding from it, like ducking behind the console so that the light pouring in through the, from the basin wasn't as strong. Um, But I think that, you know, her and Gur... Her definitely, I don't know about Gur. Approaching the Day's Eye with real, real fear, um, at, at what has been delivered and if the intensity of the experience... If the same thing that gave me, this is capable of giving us the, that intense an experience, is this thing safe to approach or touch or interact with? Um, but I think that eventually, you know, we, we get it. We turn it on. It, it, it activates. Um, and we begin, we begin the journey back to the, um, to the Community.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um, the... I should note, this is why they couldn't be daisies before, because I knew that the end of this thing was the Day's Eye, which is where we get the word Daisy.

JACK: Yes. Yes!

AUSTIN: That's where the word "daisy" comes from. Um, and I'll know now, looking back at a transcript, thank you to, uh, the, the transcriber, uh, loftyinclination, of this, of this Road to Partizan game. Um, I did, I did say back then that this, "the Day's Eye is neither a hallow nor a hollow, I guess it would be considered a hollow by the Divine Principality, but it is still driven by a divine power. It's just that the divine power is not recognized by the Principality. Or the divine power is, but the fact that it powers this mech has not granted the mech quote unquote hallow status. Witches, the witch playbook in Armour Astir quote, "seize power through pacts with powerful creatures, knowingly or otherwise.""

[with emphasis] "Witches seize power through pacts with powerful creatures, knowingly or otherwise. And they channel that power into their mechs. In exchange, the creature in question gains influence over the witch."

JACK: Clementine has... This is, this is, this is ancient history for Clementine.

AUSTIN: This is a fable. It's a story. It's, it's uh, the way that we talked about the Armour Astir game, was that, this is an old Horizon fairy tale.

JACK: Uh, it's great...

AUSTIN: It's, who knows what really happened then, but the way that Horizon has mythologized it and told the story down the line was this very storybook way. You know, there's almost like, uh, you know, um, uh high fantasy, high fantasy meets mid-century sci-fi futurism, you know, um, stuff.

JACK: Yeah. I think there's a, there's something strange going on here, which is like Clementine of I... I, Jack don't know how long it's been since the fall from Icebreaker, but like Clem of that time would have said, "one, I don't believe in witches, and two, you

can't, a mech can be... Well, this mech is possessed? What are you talking about?" I think that Clementine here is very afraid and understands that in interacting with the mech, she is ceding something. Um, but I think, A. Doesn't know what the alternative is. And B. Is intimidated by the power of the entity. Who, having just provided this experience... You know, I think part of Clementine is like, "well, what happens if I don't take the mech?" Like, is that worse than taking the mech? What is this thing gonna do?

AUSTIN: Right. And so what do you do, what do you do with it now that you've brought it back? Also now that we are at... We're at four, uh...

JACK: Mm. Interesting...

AUSTIN: ...Tiers, four levels of the, of the, um, tower. The way this description works... Again, changes a little bit. So, uh, let me just double check how that works. Let's see. Um. "The pilgrim takes the relic, adds, adds it to the other cards, making up their tower and narrates, uh, explaining what they do with the relic and how the nearby area changes."

So at this point still, let's talk about what you do with it. And then when it's time to talk about how the area changes, now that we are at that fourth level, this is, this is where I get a little bit more, a little bit more, uh, uh, say.

JACK: You know when you're in college for the first time and you don't know how to decorate a room, um, because you don't have a lot of space and you don't have a lot of possessions, so you just sort of arrange things... In a way that feels utterly bizarre, laid next to a normal room? Similarly, in a video game with a car, you always, you know, park your car and go to do the mission and then get back and realize that you've parked your car in just like, I just put it in front of the mission objective. Um, and so I think that the Day's Eye, this legendary witch's mech is just standing in the street outside Clementine's house, outside the Sage house. No one is going to take it. It doesn't seem like rain or wild beasts are going to be a problem. There are no mech bays here. There are no mechanics or anything. Just fucking stand it in the street.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um, now, because we were at the fourth floor of your Relic, I get to say how it affects the area. And then you follow up with a sentence. As it's there, the first thing you notice is... this was on like a, uh, you know, maybe a day or two later, you're out for a walk, you're just kind of getting the sense of things. The dogs are further away. They're pushed back a little further from the Community. Um, the other half of it is, a fog settles in. The Perennial Wave around this thing is high. It's brought its own tide with it. You follow up with a sentence.

JACK: This is both frightening and comfortable.

AUSTIN: Now it's time for you to, uh, make a law.

JACK: I feel like this is a pretty transparent one. Um, I'm going to go with... God, imagine being shown everything in the universe and the, um, the, the humor in the futility of it all, and then be asked, "now, what do you think I'm trying to teach you here?"

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: "Everything that will happen has happened before."

AUSTIN: Hmm.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: No?

JACK: "Everything that has happened before will happen again."

AUSTIN: There you are. An important distinction, a small one, but an important one. Not that small of one actually.

JACK: It's wild how most of the words are still there. They're just in a different order.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Take four dogma.

JACK: Oh, my God, wow!

AUSTIN: Big one. That puts you at... Jack, that puts you at 11 dogma, 7 interpretation.

JACK: Me staring dead into the eyes of the, of the goddess of arbitrariness and saying, "Hello." Taps head three times.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Did not expect that. Alright. Um, it is now time for you to tithe. You have about half a deck remaining, which is interesting. And again, it's getting expensive to keep, to keep the lights on so to speak here.

JACK: Yes, a 10. Yeah...

AUSTIN: Queen is 12. Seven is 19... makes it 19... 29 is what you need to discard here to keep all these on.

JACK: Okay. Let's try and work this out. This is an ace of Clubs.

AUSTIN: Ooh.

JACK: What are the weapons of the Day's Eye?

AUSTIN: So this is why it's a 10 and not an Ace. Um, it has this, I mean, when it says...

JACK: It's a jack...

AUSTIN: Sorry, it is. Wait... What is a jack? What is?

JACK: Oh, no, uh, isn't the Day's Eye now a Jack instead of a 10, because it is buffing itself.

AUSTIN: Sure. But it is the 10, because the jack would be the, you know, and so on. It is... The card's identity doesn't change. Cause if it was a jack it would give you a special ability. It's not the jack.

JACK: Oh, you're right. Yes.

AUSTIN: It counts, it's an 11, but it's not a jack. If that makes sense. Um, uh, when it was, when it was what it was, right. Um, it had, uh, let's see... It had an incredible... "This mech is intended to be a flexible middle of the road design, a jack of all trades. Its primary enchantments can be altered, providing more specific capabilities for different situations." Its armament was a fireball SCR3 sniper/blast decisive, messy, reloading, magic. Its... It had this kind of magical cannon that Janine used to do all sorts of weird blood magic with. So like instead of casting big fireball, instead of being like a rail... A railgun that shot, you know, explosive rounds or magnetic rounds or whatever, it did weird blood magic at a distance. I suspect that element of this thing is not working the way it's supposed to. Which is why it's a 10 and not a King or a face card, right? So the frame of it is functioning, um, and it is still a very powerful machine. Um, but it's like, you're, it's like you've loaded into the level of the game where all of your, your equipment, your like main weapons are offline, and so all you have is like, "Oh yeah. And there's a little, there's a little cannon in the shoulder." You know, there's a little anti-infantry canon or, or whatever, you know? It's like you have your, your sub abilities, but not your main ones.

JACK: Right. Yes.

AUSTIN: Also it's a big mech. That's the, you know? It's a, it's a mech bigger than your house is.

JACK: And Clementine is an entirely adequate pilot.

AUSTIN: Really? Sure... With an ace, certainly.

JACK: Oh, I'm using adequate pejoratively there.

AUSTIN: Oh I see. Yes, yes, yes. As like mediocre, as in as in satisfactory.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. She is adequate.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Um. Ooh. Oh, Austin! I'm going to shoot down a ship.

AUSTIN: [intrigued] Ooh

JACK: I'm going to crash something onto the Island.

AUSTIN: [excited] Holy shit. What is it?

JACK: I'm giving you a gift.

AUSTIN: [amused] Oh! Thank you for this gift! I love this! This is good! This helps me for that for the next pilgrimage quite a bit. God, what is it?

JACK: Okay. Now can you...? I think I know how it crashes.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Tell me.

JACK: I mean, I think that I, I think I shoot artillery rounds at, I think it's some massive carrier. It's not like a monstrous carrier, but it's a big carrier of some kind. A crew of, you know, 15 or 20 people. Um, and I think that, you know, one of its engines bursts into flame and one of its, um, you know, like, uh, uh, three, three capsules, are depressurized and, uh, you know, that, that, that causes a...

AUSTIN: Pan pan pan! and then...

JACK: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Uh, like an oxygen-less fire... not an oxygen-less fire, like a flameless fire spreads rapidly in one thing, um,

AUSTIN: [makes whooshing sound] yeah,

JACK: The, um... You know, the copilot, uh, frantically talking messages into the thing, chokes suddenly on Russian Sage that bursts from his throat, um, and you know, uh, crumbling on the floor. He pulls at his seat belt, which, you know, uh, breaks apart into sticks and twine. Um, like wild birds fly in one of the compartments and their wings catch fire and spread the flames. And it's just like, Clem has absolutely no control over like any of this. Um...

AUSTIN: I wanna to give a little, a little extra color is one of the things I said was that the rifle isn't working the way it's supposed to.

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: But I know exactly what this is, which it like, it projects, it takes that fog and it shoots that fog of Perennial Wave. Like these, this hyper dense nanoclusters. Um, and

what's supposed to happen is it's going to light them on, into, it's going to use those to develop an explosion or a blood explosion or whatever is supposed to happen with this weird magic rifle, but that part doesn't work. Whatever the catalyst is that supposed to transform these clusters of nanomachine into some sort of more dramatic, explosive thing, it just pierces. It's just like a concussive, an extremely powerful concussive blast of tiny micro machines that just slams through the ship. And does cause all this stuff you just said, but I wanted to make sure we kept it, so that it's not, it's still not operating at peak power.

JACK: Oh yeah, no, no, no. There, also, there's there's no way Clementine is inside the mech going like, "I want to do this thing." Like the Day's Eye is, is, is in control in a lot of ways here.

AUSTIN: Interesting.

JACK: Um, and it just comes down. It's just a spectacular spaceship crash out over a hill.

AUSTIN: And I think we see that it is a Stel Nideo ship. It has the, it has the eagle of Imperium, the kind of symbol of Imperium, the Firebird on it. Um, uh, and it, it comes down in, in the middle of the, of the island. So that's your first.

JACK: Clementine, climbing out of the Day's Eye, goes over to Gur Sevraq.

JACK (as Clem): It works.

AUSTIN: [laughing mockingly] "It works." God... Alright. Ah, that's one, where, what is that? That's, how many points is that? That's a... A queen is a 12, so it's 14. You still have 15 more to go, huh?

JACK: Do you have a Nideo name, offhand? I feel like if we crash a massive carrier, we should name it.

AUSTIN: We should have a name for it. Their names would all be again these kind of false Twilight Mirage names. Right? So little phrases makes make sense to me. You know, something in the, in the, in the school of the By and By or the Sky reflected in Mirrors.

JACK: I have a whole document of these.

AUSTIN: You do. I have it open.

JACK: Oh sweet!

AUSTIN: Um, uh, I think that this is, The Snow in, The Snow In Summer.

JACK: Wow. "Nideo ship, ship of the line 114 The Snow In Summer goes down for unknown reasons over the top of Kesh territory."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Which, why was it there to begin with? Uh-oh...

JACK: That's not my concern.

AUSTIN: Nope.

JACK: The wheel turns. Kesh are going to fly ships, and Nideo are going to fly ships all over. Um... So that's 14.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Plus the nine of spades. Which is a nine of effort.

AUSTIN: It is.

[Jack thinks for a while]

JACK: Oh, perfect! Um, poppy, poppy seeds, growing poppy seeds.

AUSTIN: [laughingly] God, growing these mines?

JACK: Yes. But, uh, we grow them on. Um. Uh, Winter Cherry Street, which is like three streets out in my direct, uh, you know, out over there. And it's just like an abandoned house. All of these are abandoned... It's a, it's a, it's a Kesh house, just full of plant pots, scraped dirt, little tiny poppy seeds, you know, coming out.

AUSTIN: Mhmm.

JACK: Both Gur and Clementine have no idea at which point these become live. They just know that you have to grow them, or cultivate them. Um, so they are, they are terrified every time they have to go near this house. Because just like... is it ready?

AUSTIN: Alright, is it ready? Is it happening? Yeah.

JACK: Um, so that is now 14 plus nine is 23. What do I have to make, Austin?

AUSTIN: You need six more. 29.

JACK: Okay. Clementine and Gur holding poppy seeds. When they're in your hand, it's fine. You don't need to worry about that, but it's when it's, when you can see the — oh, no, I don't mean... When the plants are in your hand, you, you're in trouble. I just mean if you've got little dry seeds in your hands, they won't explode.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

JACK: Um, Clementine and Gur just carefully, you know, standing in a bathroom, you know, like a nice luxury bath, which looks like it has jacuzzi stuff in it. Uh, a, a toilet, a bidet, a shower with a brightly painted shower curtain that has now faded, uh, faded, you know, carefully potting little landmines in little seeds. Um, and I think Clementine says,

JACK (as Clem): We've seen her do all this. Why did you turn away from her?

AUSTIN (as Gur): I didn't turn. She sent me. She... I did not understand until what we saw. I think...

AUSTIN: And he struggles to make sense of it all.

AUSTIN (as Gur): I think she wanted me to speak to Autonomy Itself, to see it, to serve it, because there is a gap between them that she cannot cross... Like distant family, or a broken relationship. A canyon. A gulf. I was a dove, perhaps. And I rushed towards them. The True Divine offers certainty, clarity. Perennial is unpredictable. It is in her honor that I say this: tomorrow she might see us dead. The wheel spins. And often it spins on us. The True Divine promised something liberatory, final. Freedom... permanent. And yet now, I wonder if, however noble, such a project is unrealistic.

JACK: They say, planting a landmine. [Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. In a community of castles.

JACK: I don't know that Clementine has the vocabulary to, to do anything other than kind of listen, I don't think Clementine. Like, you know, like the conversation of two nights ago was "I think I am beginning to feel faith." Uh, and, uh, unfortunately she made the mistake of asking a priest, "Why did you turn away from your first God for a second?"

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: And I think, is like, is interested in the answer and is, is, is frightened of the answer. I think, I think, like before, there is probably a bit of her that reacts defensively. Um, when they say, you know, she might as well, soon, see us dead. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Dead. Yeah. "Not us..."

JACK: I think Clementine... Yeah. Well, I think Clementine thinks "she kept me alive."

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Like, I'm alive, you know? Uh, like, um, "Sorry, but I'm different. Perennial won't, Perennial won't kill me." Um. But I think that there is, there is a fear even in that defensiveness, which is that for once Clementine is feeling the glimmering of self-awareness of going, like maybe the reason you're feeling this way is because there is something that you're not wanting to acknowledge.

[short music sting]

57:05 [Shift to Millennium Break Scene]

AUSTIN: It has been three months since the red light fell on Oxbridge. Phrygian, the Figure in Bismuth and Sovereign Immunity, the three of you have been called to Cruciat at the behest of Agon Ortlights, one of the commanders of the Company of the Spade here, as part of a Millennium Break commission to study strange phenomena that have been occurring over the last few months. Starting just around the attack on Auspice by Motion, um, where two of you saw that divine used the Perennial Wave in, in a strange, and, as of yet, or as of yet *then* unseen ways. Uh, and in the time that followed, partially because of the Witch in Glass's stuff, but also just because of a seeming shift in things, there have been stories popping up all around Partizan. And in fact, says Agon, across parts of the galaxy, of strange things happening.

So the three of you, along with other agents, have been sent out to kind of just like find stuff, you know, kind of preliminary findings on if there is truth to the kind of notion that miracles are coming back to Partizan, um, uh, which is, uh, or, or back to the Principality. You know, the, the Miraculous Millennium was many, many many years ago. Um, but. But they want to know, is there's truth to this, and so she's called you in. I think the office that you're meeting her in is probably somewhere on Fort Icebreaker kind of docked in the Bay of, of Cruciat, kind of settled in the Bay of Cruciat if I remember right.

Um, and it's kind of like a clean room. I imagine it's like the sort of room that Q brings James Bond too, to do weird, just to show off new gadgets. You know what I mean? Um, uh, and you know, there are tables set up for y'all to kind of present your findings and Agon is here. Agon is a kind of, large woman. Uh, I would say she's like, you know, six, six foot tall, you know, 280, um, you know, a mix of, of muscle and fat, like she's just like sturdy as shit. Um, um, and I've said this before, but she has these little, like, I imagine them a lot of, have you all played Strider or played Marvel vs Capcom where Strider is a character?

ART: I sure have.

AUSTIN: Uh, do you know the, the little, little robot guys, they're called Options or Option A specifically from the Strider game? They're little like bulbous looking robots with little legs that Strider can call on sometimes.

DRE: Oh yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: Um, those, I think, I think that she has a number of those around that are kind of these assistant robots that help her do, um, just like daily tasks. Um, she has chronic fatigue syndrome and one of the ways in which she manages that is by having these kinds of worker robots, doing small tasks that prevent, that, that, uh, keep her from needing to spend that energy on like going across the room to get a file or pulling up.... Uh, you know, a projection of something, or like even just like helping to set the table, you know, little daily tasks that take out, take a lot out of someone who has a very busy schedule. Um, and so, um, so, you know, they're around, uh, in this scene, kind of, kind of like, helping to organize stuff for, for the presentation for her. Um, and, and also just kind of like bringing her a file to check as, as you describe stuff, so. I think, I think, you know, the three of you are here presumably in your best, in your best fits. Um, and I guess she starts with, with Phrygian, and kind of comes over to your little presentation. I guess I'll just say it as her.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Alright. Show me what you have, uh, Phrygian.

KEITH: Uh, I, I don't know, I don't know what, um, anybody else has cause I'm going first.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's kind of show and tell, I want to be 100% clear, really, let me, just like pull the veil back a little bit. What we're doing is magic show and tell. What we're doing is show and tell. And specifically we're doing, we're showing some of the ways in which the world is slowly becoming more and more like the one in the rules of Armour Astir, which kind of has these different schools of magic built into it. Um, and kind of been building this way quietly for a long time in the season. Uh, and, and so now, yeah, we're, we're going to do the kind of like... The three of you are going to show off some things you found in the world. I described this to be... Go ahead.

KEITH: It never occurred to me that it wasn't pronounced Armour Aster.

AUSTIN: I know.

KEITH: Because no, I never heard anyone say it, but you,

AUSTIN: I was corrected after we played it in the Road to Partizan and I felt like an asshole for getting it wrong the whole time I was like, "this game is great, Armour Aster." And then, and then yeah...

KEITH: But now, now I hear it right and it sounds wrong.

AUSTIN: I know, it's because we said it the other way for so long.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Anyway... If it was our game, I would just, you know I would just say it wrong, but it's not.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Anyway. Um...

KEITH: Friends at the Table loves saying words wrong. It's like our number three or four thing. Um... So I, Phrygian has this, has, I guess, an eclectic mix of things.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH (as Phrygian): The first thing is like a, um... It's almost like, it's like a peekaboo game for kids.

AUSTIN (as Agon): A what?

KEITH (as Phrygian): It's like a peekaboo game for kids.

AUSTIN (as Agon): You brought me a...?

KEITH (as Phrygian): Imagine like a VR.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Okay.

KEITH (as Phrygian): It's like a kaleidoscope peekaboo game. And so it like is reacting to a child or a baby that puts on this, like, screen helmet and it, it, it makes different surprises in the thing.

AUSTIN: So I... So Agon says,

AUSTIN (as Agon): So I put this on is what I do? I put this on?

KEITH (as Phrygian): Yeah, you put it on.

AUSTIN: Like, affixes it, I think she has like, you know, gray hair in like a smart pony tail kind of pulled back, pulls her hair down so it's not in the way, puts it on.

AUSTIN (as Agon): All right. Now what do I do?

KEITH: Uh huh. Oh, Phrygian goes, flips like a switch on the top of it. And I like say like,

KEITH (as Phrygian): I've turned it on.

AUSTIN: And what, what does Agon see?

KEITH: Um, well, I guess it's reading, it's reading Agon and, and finding something like, like a... You know, different, different movies and stuff will have a monster that can like read your fears.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

KEITH: This does that. Except it's not actually trying to scare you. It just like reading your surprises, like it figures out...

AUSTIN: Oh... right, uh huh.

KEITH: what kind of... So my cat jumps every time I slide my foot on our wooden floors upstairs, for some reason that sound like scares my cat, I don't know why. It does, it figures out what that is, and will cycle through that. Like on a level that will surprise, but not upset a child.

AUSTIN: Okay. So it's like, trying to get like a giggly response from a child.

KEITH: Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, so I think that she's like,

AUSTIN (as Agon): P — wh — these aren't. This isn't. What is this?

AUSTIN: And she like removes it and puts it down on the...

AUSTIN (as Agon): How are they doing that?

KEITH (as Phrygian): Uh, well, the short answer is that it's, uh, it's Branched technology.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Did you build this?

KEITH (as Phrygian): Magic, magic? Is it technology?

AUSTIN (as Agon): You tell me.

KEITH (as Phrygian): It's magic. It's essentially magic. It's not...

AUSTIN (as Agon): And it's being used to, to make a toy for babies.

KEITH (as Phrygian): For babies. For little, for young babies.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Who's making this?

KEITH (as Phrygian): A company. A Columnar company.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Okay. Columnar. How does a Columnar toy company get Branched technology?

KEITH (as Phrygian): From the war, from the war on us?

AUSTIN (as Agon): And they're using it to make this?

KEITH (as Phrygian): Well, I mean, they're using it to make all sorts of things.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Right.

KEITH (as Phrygian): They all, the same company does cars and bombs and toys and televisions.

AUSTIN (as Agon): And comm interfaces. Right. Of course. Yeah. All right. Well, it shouldn't be able to do that. And also we should probably get a bunch of them and figure out how they work. I'll put it in an order, I guess. I, alright. Do you have anything else or can we move on?

KEITH (as Phrygian): They deliver.

AUSTIN (as Agon): [laughingly] I presumed you didn't go to the warehouse for it. Well, thank you though. Thank you.

KEITH (as Phrygian): But they do deliver.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Okay. Is there anything else? Can I move on to the Figure?

KEITH (as Phrygian): Are we going to do a round? I just assumed it was round robin.

AUSTIN (as Agon): No, just if you have another thing, now would be the time. If you have like a big, if you were building to something, you let me know now.

KEITH (as Phrygian): No, they have a, they have like a wakeboard

AUSTIN (as Agon): They have a wakeboard?

KEITH (as Phrygian): Yeah. It's like a sport toy.

AUSTIN (as Agon): A sport toy?

KEITH (as Phrygian): Yeah. It's harder to fall off of. I don't know why.

AUSTIN (as Agon): You, *you* don't know why?

KEITH (as Phrygian): I don't know why. No...

AUSTIN (as Agon): Also from the, it's also Branched technology?

KEITH (as Phrygian): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Agon): And it just, you get on it and you...

KEITH (as Phrygian): And it's harder to fall off. It's easier to be on it.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Okay. Well, I can see — that actually sounds very useful. Alright. Well, that one I'm going to say is not magic. I think the thing that sees in my brain and projects an image of what will surprise me, magic.

KEITH (as Phrygian): Oh, no, it's magic. I just don't know what, why it works.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Okay. All right.

KEITH (as Phrygian): Imagine how good technology would do it, this does it better.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Right. Okay. I'd ask you for a demonstration, but we don't have wake in here to wakeboard. So...

KEITH (as Phrygian): Sorry.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Maybe next they'll invent a portable wake. Or maybe one of you two has something like that for me. Uh let's, the Figure in Bismuth, uh, we haven't met in person.

Dre (as The Figure in Bismuth): Hello.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Um, uh, it is, I've heard. Hi. Uh, I know that the circumstances of, everything around this have been strange. Um, but I appreciate your cooperation.

Dre (as The Figure): I don't see what's strange around it.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Well, I'm just saying.

KEITH (as Phrygian): What's strange around it?

AUSTIN (as Agon): Normally we aren't gifted, um... agents of your class from people we've had hostile relationships with in the past. I have no complaint. In fact, I'm eager. I'm eager! To hear what you bring to the table.

DRE (as The Figure): Uh, I bring, uh, this pen.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Can I touch it?

DRE (as The Figure): Yes.

AUSTIN: What's it, what's it look like Dre?

DRE: Um, it's just, it's a nice pen. It's not particularly, it's, it's something with like a refillable ink. But it's not like engraved or particularly ornate.

AUSTIN: Okay. Picks it up. Um, is it a clicky pen or is it like a fountain pen or is that like a..

DRE: A fountain pen.

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Okay, this has a good weight, what should I do with this? Is it safe to?

DRE (as The Figure): Yeah. Yeah. Just, just wait. It'll, it will sing to you.

AUSTIN (as Agon): It will sing to me? Okay.

AUSTIN: Oh, what's it do, Dre?

DRE: Um, I mean, I think it, it sings. It's not like words. It is, it's probably not actual singing. It's probably like chords or melodies.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: It doesn't have a mouth, does it?

DRE: Yeah. It's probably the sound of like, you know, people who know how to play glasses of water.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: It's probably similar to that kind of thing.

KEITH: Like an armonica maybe?

AUSTIN: What is...

KEITH: A glass armonica.

DRE: Armonica? Not harmonica?

AUSTIN: We're not going down this road.

KEITH: No.

DRE: Nope. Nope. [Keith laughs] Oh, this is wild.

AUSTIN: We can't — we've done this material already! We've already done this material.

KEITH: God, who been invented that?

AUSTIN: I hate you.

ART: No one knows. It's lost to history.

AUSTIN: FriendsAtTheTable.cash for all of your questions about who built the glass harmonica, armonica, sorry. Um, does it sing something particular or is there like, is there an emotional — I almost said resonance — to this thing.

Dre (as The Figure): You hold it with one hand and I will also hold it.

AUSTIN: And you reach out and also touch it or are you holding different pens? It's the same pen?

DRE: No, it's the same pen.

DRE (as The Figure): Now tell me what I'm thinking.

AUSTIN: What are you thinking? I'm not going to write that for you.

DRE: Um, I think they're just thinking like a number, like, they're just thinking like... 6,943.

AUSTIN (as Agon): 6,943.

DRE (as The Figure): Exactly.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Is this also, this is the Branched, this is the same thing? What is this?

DRE (as The Figure): I don't know. I've had this pen for a long time.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Had this pen for a long time... So Phrygian went out in the world and found a company making magical toys. You went in your drawer and found an old pen that lets me read your thoughts. I'm not being, I just want to be clear. I'm sorry. I'm not...

DRE (as The Figure): I can go check other pens.

AUSTIN (as Agon): No. [Art laughs]

KEITH (as Phrygian): I can not go to warehouses next time.

AUSTIN (as Agon): No Both of you are doing fine. I just... Well, we in the Company deal with...

Dre (as The Figure): Mr. Immunity, do you have a pen?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Um, I don't right now. No.

AUSTIN (as Agon): I have a pen. Here, hold this pen.

KEITH: I heard that as "Mystery Munity."

AUSTIN: Mystery Munity, the new, the new alias for Sovereign Immunity. [Art laughs] Um, and, and she pulls out a pen. She has like a, like a really like, um, sleek looking clicky pen inside of a pocket, pulls it out and holds it to you.

ART: Okay.

DRE: I take it.

AUSTIN: Does anything happen?

DRE: No, I don't think so.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Okay. So this pen is no good. That pen. Is there something special?

AUSTIN: Let me get her voice back.

KEITH (as Phrygian): Well, it's good as a pen, presumably.

AUSTIN (as Agon): It's a great pen. This is. Would you like to try it? It's kind of a great...

KEITH (as Phrygian): Sure.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Here, go ahead.

AUSTIN: It's like really good. It's a really smooth. For a clicky ballpoint pen, it actually has just like really smooth action.

KEITH (as Phrygian): Wow, for a clicky ballpoint pen, this has a really smooth action.

AUSTIN: There you go.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Thank you. Umm. So is there something special about this pen, then, Figure?

Dre (as The Figure): Uh, you could read my thoughts. [Keith laughs]

AUSTIN (as Agon): No. I mean, why do we think this pen lets us do that? You said you've had it for years. Is it special? I mean, I have lots of good luck charms, what is it?

Dre (as The Figure): Yes. When I would... Part of my previous devotion to the Divine Resonance was to journal my thoughts and my reflections and I would almost always use this pen.

AUSTIN (as Agon): A Divine...? Normally they bless Hallows, not pens. Trust me, I, you know... My teams and I have spent a lot of time praying, before a dig, before combat. Rarely have those prayers been so directly and easily answered. Is it possible that's changing?

Dre (as The Figure): I suppose.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Am I going to hear from some of my people from the Church of Commitment that the Divine reached down and gave them some little extra push, now? I'm sorry—I know it sounds like what I'm doing here is instrumentalizing your faith. I have my faith, you have your faith. I don't want to step on that... cross that line. That's not my intent, but my job with Millennium Break is to instrumentalize things because if no one does, we will not have the upper hand and... Really, think of it this way. Is it the case that the next time we have to fight Imperium's Plume, that it's not just their Hallows that will be blessed by their God?

Dre (as The Figure): I think sometimes instruments are just meant to be played.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Fair enough. Okay. Well.

AUSTIN: Hands you the pen back.

AUSTIN (as Agon): I appreciate it. And um...

Dre (as The Figure): I'm sorry if this has been distressing.

AUSTIN (as Agon): It's not distressing. It's the opposite of distressing. Knowing more means saving lives in the long run. First and foremost, I'm going to make sure to bring my own pens to all of the meetings I go to from now on. Cause like what if the other person there could read my mind with it or — don't — you know what? It's fine. [Agon sighs]

AUSTIN: Um, are, are people still calling you Sovereign Immunity at this point? Sovereign Immunity?

ART: Um, I mean, in the sense that neither I nor Sovereign Immunity wants to come up with a new name, I think so.

AUSTIN: I thought you did that in a recording recently... No, we came up with an old name, is what we did.

ART: Yeah. We came up with the old name.

AUSTIN: And then we had an old name, and then we had Byron, but now Byron is not even your name anymore, is what we're saying

ART: No, that doesn't make any sense anymore.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Um, why does that make sense? Did I miss,

ART: Oh, I just don't feel that it represents the point... Byron was the, was the name for the prison.

AUSTIN: Right. And now you're, um, she's going to call you, "Si," is what she's going to do.

ART: I thought about that one.

AUSTIN: I like it.

ART: I thought it was too cutesy.

KEITH: S. I. G. H. ?

AUSTIN: Eh, but she's a, she's basically, you know, she's a steelworker with a gun. She can get away with it.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Um, alright. Si.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Well, as you may have noticed, I brought this keg of beer with me.

AUSTIN (as Agon): [laughs] I thought that was for after.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No, no. It's part of this.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Alright, toys. Got it. Pens. Got it. Beer. Don't got it yet, I'm about to get it. I have a good feeling that you're going to show me something magical with this beer.

ART: Sovereign Immunity produces a small glass.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: And fills it with the tap on top of the keg of beer.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Is this going to sing too?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [scoffs] No, you sing after you drink it.

KEITH (as Phrygian): Is it going to make you more balanced?

AUSTIN: Probably going to make you less balanced. [laughs]

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): I don't get it.

KEITH (as Phrygian): Like the wakeboard.

AUSTIN: Like the wakeboard, like the wakeboard, you don't fall.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Like the wakeboard. Yeah, no. Yeah, you... Honestly. It'll make you fall over.

ART: Um, anyway, holds it up. It's a, it looks like a beer.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Sovereign Immunity drinks, about two thirds of it in one, one big gulp.

AUSTIN: Alright.

ART: And then is like,

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Okay, now watch this.

ART: Then starts like swirling the glass, like, uh, like, you know, like people do with like wine.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ART: Like that, and it goes fast.

AUSTIN: To aerate it.

ART: Yeah to aerate it and it goes faster and faster around, it starts to like spark, with little like electric bolts and it like ends up forming like a teeny, tiny little like, electric-y storm cloud and floats out of the beer and then dissipates.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Alright, this is... You bought a magic kit. Are you okay? You drank it?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No, no, I bought it from..

AUSTIN (as Agon): I saw you drink it and that's.... Gotta, it's gotta be hell on your guts.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No, no. It's beer. It's beer. I promise. See here.

ART: Refill the cup and passes it over.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Oh yes. This is Lambic House?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): It is, it's Lambic House. I, they wouldn't, they wouldn't tell me what's really going on with it. They're really not sure if I'm still a member of the order proper.

AUSTIN (as Agon): So to speak. Sure. Yeah. I'm not really sure what they are, so fuck 'em.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Yeah. But they wouldn't, they wouldn't give me the recipe, but they, they said that they've, they got a new process and that it's got some, some side effects and if you can see, you can kinda build it.

ART: And Sovereign Immunity produces, produces, like, a larger glass.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Again, I think this would kill at a kid's birthday party.

ART: Well, this is, this is a fishbowl this time, Sovereign Immunity produces a fishbowl, Sovereign Immunity, this very wide...

AUSTIN (as Agon): Is this going to kill at an adult's birthday party? What, what am I going to look at here?

ART: Um, fills it up.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Drinks a bunch of it. Um, and then starts doing, you know, agitating it again, aerating it, and it's...

KEITH: Releasing the volatile aromatics.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Yeah, it smells — you, you smell it though, right? It's got that, like, ionized charge. I think it's honestly very nice on the...

AUSTIN (as Agon): It's like if copper could be like a, like a berry flavor.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): That's yeah, that's a good, that's good!

KEITH: Wow. That sounds delicious.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): You should really consider...

AUSTIN (as Agon): Yeah. I thought about copywriting, but decided I wanted to blow up asteroids and enemy mechs for a living instead.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): What about sommeliering?

AUSTIN (as Agon): What's that? It's a wine thing, right?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): It's a wine thing, yeah.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Yeah..... No.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Okay.

ART: And you know, this makes it a much larger thing and it's like sends, it's, it sends tiny little lightning bolts down to the ground. It's like a little storm.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Again, this is, uh, an incredible trick.

KEITH: f I'm sort of made of kind of metal. Do I get zapped from it?

ART: Um, I think that's kind of up to you. Um, I don't think that this is a, it's not, it's not actually lightning, I don't think? I think it's more like it's discharging energy?

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Okay. So like static.

ART: Well, you can get zapped as you want to get zapped.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Okay. I get a little zapped. Cause I'm also only not, I'm not also really sure what I'm made out of.

AUSTIN: Fair.

KEITH: Keith is not sure what Phrygian is made of...

AUSTIN: What Phrygian is made out of. Yeah,

KEITH: But it's kind of metal maybe.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Okay. Okay. You're not impressed, but check this out.

ART: And Sovereign Immunity picks up the keg.

AUSTIN: [impressed] Just whole body! Lifts it.

ART: Whole body lifts it.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Are you—?

AUSTIN: I think like two of the little robots, she like gives a hand signal and two of the little robots to go over to like, make sure you don't fall.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No, it's fine. I can lift a giant scythe.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Okay.

ART: I'm capable of incredible feats of strength occasionally.

AUSTIN: Right. Of course.

ART: And just shaking it with, with all his might.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Are we going to need umbrellas in here? What's?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No, it's better than that.

ART: And all of the, the, it starts drawing in power from adjacent electronics.

AUSTIN: Lights start flickering, and like.

ART: Lights start flickering, screens turn on and off.

AUSTIN: [impressed] Ooh!

ART: And like you start to like, see it almost like, you know, the, you know, the scene in Poltergeist the "they're here." And like the thing re — like the opposite of that. Like if it was coming in and it's not, it's not a hand reaching out. It's it's, it's, it's like little lines coming in.

AUSTIN: Right. Um, and I think we're actually, in this moment, I think we see, I think that we see something really interesting happen here, which is. There is...

KEITH: Hopefully. [laughs]

AUSTIN: This is, I mean, I think what's happening is already interesting, but an additional layer of this is, we can see that like the people in the room are also kind of being pulled towards it. Like your own energy is being like, you feel some of your own, like, "alright, I gotta fucking put my feet down here or else I'm going to get yanked into this thing." And that's not too hard for you to do. The Figure in Bismuth, blessed by Perennial, has none of that happen to them. He is just like a rock. And I... Hmm, well....

[Dre laughs at the unintended pun]

AUSTIN: But you know what I mean.

DRE: Please, "a geode."

AUSTIN: A geode. Yeah, thank you. Um, um, because this...

ART: Stable as a geode.

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Right. Um, Because Profane Magic, the magic of Perennial, uh, in Armour Astir is resistant to, and it has advantage over effectively elemental magic, the

magic of Autonomy Itself, the magic of the True Divine, which is what you've brought to play with here, Sovereign Immunity. Um, and I guess for the record, what we're counting the Branched tech as, is Arcane stuff. Um, though, I will say like, that divine pen begins to fucking shake a little bit. Uh, that thing is not like immune to this magic that, that Sovereign Immunity has brought together with this beer. Um, so all of this stuff is shaking. Everything is shattering, not shattering, but, uh, clattering, clattering...

KEITH: Clanging?

AUSTIN: Clanging. Does this like lead to something Sovereign Immunity?

ART: Um, I think it's just like things start like going a little haywire and then he abruptly stops, puts it back down and says,

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): You can't drink it for a couple hours after that. It's all foam now.

AUSTIN (as Agon): You brought me beer that's like an EMP.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Magic beer. You need a lot of it though. And not a lot of people can carry those.

[Keith laughs]

KEITH: [laughingly] Giant limitation; you can't hand carry them.

AUSTIN (as Agon): We got mechs for that, and trucks.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): They don't got keg — they don't have mech sized kegs though.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Not yet. And also they fucking should.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): I don't, it's, they're hard to manufacture!

AUSTIN (as Agon): [scoffs] Eh. We do some of that.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Alright, I mean, yeah.

AUSTIN (as Agon): The Oxblood people, they do some of that. We'll figure it out. Get us this beer!

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Well, I mean, I don't know the recipe. You're going to have to talk to someone.

AUSTIN (as Agon): I'll call, what, Blossom. It's fine.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Yeah. They're over the moon about it. It tastes great.

KEITH (as Phrygian): And it does that.

AUSTIN (as Agon): And it does that. I guess you gotta ship it with a warning.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Yeah. Uh-huh. Can't put it in metal cans neither. It's gotta be bottles or kegs.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Yeah.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): You'll turn uh, you'll turn... The can gets agitated too much. You're handing out grenades.

AUSTIN (as Agon): [laughing] You never want that. Listen.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): But like worse than grenades. You'd rather have a grenade. If you wanted a grenade.

AUSTIN (as Agon): You and I have been on opposite sides of bar fights before. I don't think either one of us wants to bring anything but fists into that.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Yeah. Yeah. Gotta be careful.

AUSTIN (as Agon): You gotta be careful. Anyway, thanks. Uh, there's no further details. Uh...?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): It's not about the...

KEITH (as Phrygian): I feel kinda sad that my stuff lost.

AUSTIN (as Agon): It's not a competition, Phrygian. And what do you mean not about this Si?

KEITH (as Phrygian): I mean, once the, once the drink started being a thunderstorm, it started being a competition.

DRE (as The Figure): I do agree that I feel like I have also lost.

AUSTIN (as Agon): No one's lost anything.

KEITH (as Phrygian): I should have had you step on the wakeboard and pushed you off.

AUSTIN (as Agon): It's, it's fine.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): I just thought this was a...

DRE: I stand on the wakeboard.

KEITH: Okay. I'll, I'll push the Figure off.

AUSTIN: It doesn't happen.

KEITH: It doesn't work.

AUSTIN: Right. It doesn't work.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Si, what did you mean when you said "not about this?"

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): So I've been, I've been spending a lot of time on research lately as maybe some of you have noticed.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Yeah the beer. I saw.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No, no. Um, I came across something... Important. There's something at the North Pole and it's, I don't know what it is. It's redacted. And in all, in all — files that have, that have things you wouldn't believe in them, this is redacted.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Maps!

AUSTIN: And on of the little bots brings over a, like a small map, like a touchscreen thing. Um, kind of, it's not small, it's actually not, it's actually like, it kind of like unfurls a touchable map. Um, and that's all it is. It's just a map of Partizan that you can touch and zoom in on and stuff. Um, but it's like a foldable screen basically, and lays it out and zooms in.

AUSTIN (as Agon): North pole. Where?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): The very center, the, by the pole itself, there's a, there's a, in the middle of the, of, uh, of a jungle. There's a quarry.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Chasmata. Yeah, I, we...

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Encased in ice. And there is something under the ice that they want.

AUSTIN (as Agon): They who?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): They. The, the, the Pact.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Alright. Well, we have any idea of what it is, what it does?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Is it like this shit? Worse?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): I think it's something, I think it's something bigger. Something that you would erase from *everywhere*.

AUSTIN (as Agon): All right. Have you told anyone else about this yet?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No. It's not even in my notes.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Well, we got it. [huffs] I'll call Gucci. I'll get Jesset on the line.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Stress to them that this is dangerous. Anyone who knows this is in danger. Someone wants this to be a secret.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Alright. Well, thank you for bringing it to me. It means a lot. I know we haven't always seen eye to eye.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [stern] Be careful. With this.

AUSTIN (as Agon): You be careful!

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Okay... Look...

AUSTIN (as Agon): [laughs] I'm just... [Keith laughs] Anyway, pour me a fucking beer. You, you've got another keg right?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No? Another keg?

AUSTIN (as Agon): You said you were, "Oh, it was no big deal. I can carry a big scythe." What? You couldn't carry two kegs?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No, I can carry *one* big thing!

AUSTIN (as Agon): Okay. Well, not as impressive.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): You should've sent me with a cart. [Austin laughs] I know you didn't know that I went, but you should have made sure I had a cart.

AUSTIN (as Agon): I didn't know. It was a surprise. Who's giving you a cart? Listen, we'll get some regular beer that doesn't... Do you two drink? Or you need something non alcoholic, you want...?

KEITH (as Phrygian): Uh... I've never, no, I've never had...

AUSTIN (as Agon): We'll figure something out. We should go to dinner. We should stop talking about the thing on the map. Uh, we should celebrate a good report. I always find that it's useful to bond with the people you work with. And then we should figure out what to do about the quarry. The ice. Tomorrow. Yeah?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Yeah, tomorrow at the latest.

AUSTIN (as Agon): Tomorrow.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Tomorrow.

[short music sting]

1:29:41 [Shift to The Tower]

AUSTIN: I should place a Relic... draw myself a hand. Which direction are you going? And again, at four, you know, you get even more, you can now offer as much as a, as an additional clear sentence, besides just a general direction.

JACK: This is the penultimate Pilgrimage, right?

AUSTIN: Correct.

JACK: Let's go to the wreck.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Um. Smoke, just billowing black smoke for days.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, here. You'll see I've added it to the map already.

JACK: Excellent.

AUSTIN: Also, I've added the planetarium or the observatory and the field of flowers.

JACK: [amused] And the little field of flowers! It's pretty!

AUSTIN: It's, yeah. Very safe.

JACK: Do you remember when the Almighty crashed over the Tower, uh, in Destiny?

AUSTIN: Oh yes, I do.

JACK: And there was like an unbelievably gigantic column of smoke for about six minutes? It is not that, the smoke has not let up. Whatever is burning is still burning. It has swept through. The, the Perennial Wave makes it, in its own particular way, both easier and harder to breathe in the smoke.

AUSTIN: Sometimes an individual little clump of, of Perennial Wave fog catches fire. And so it's like, it's like lightning bugs in the fog.

JACK: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: Except it's this bright orange flash. And you have no idea why it happens to some and not others. It could happen to you. Who knows? It's very strange.

JACK: There's a glow from the crash site at night. In the daytime, it's just, it's just smoke.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um, I think you get there without, are you taking the Day's Eye? Or are you walking?

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: You're walking.

JACK: No, I'm walking. I am frightened of the Day's Eye.

AUSTIN: Okay. Fair.

JACK: And I, uh, and I don't want to meet these people in the machine that I used to shoot them out of the sky.

AUSTIN: Fair enough. Um, so you take a path that you understand, uh, will keep you away from... In fact, we also talked about how having the Day's Eye has made the dogs recede inwards, right? And so you make it to the, to a little, again, a little outcropping looking down on this crashed ship, it's crashed into a valley of trees. Um, uh, you know, you're looking down on it from a little bit higher up. And you don't cross one of these cyber dogs even once.

JACK: Excellent.

AUSTIN: So the journey to the place has been pretty interesting, or pretty simple. Um, this is, by the way, the Journey of Attention. And what we get here then is a final, like walk down from that cliff face to the ship crashed below. And it's kind of a perilous journey because this, whatever had happened on the southern end of this, of this island, where it had been, you know, "Oh, this is a hiking trail, this is where people are supposed to come and hang out or whatever," that is not this. This is just still raw nature as far as you can tell. And so the first trial of, of this journey is simply getting from this outcropping down to the vessel, down to the ship. Uh, and it is the four of effort. The Snow in Summer, is that what we said it was called?

JACK: Mhmm. Does it have — do Kesh...? Oh my God. I'm just, now I'm on the [stammers] I'm at war with Kesh in my brain here. Did the Nideo, did the Nideo ships have nameplates on the side or did they just have the eagle and...?

AUSTIN: Oh, absolutely. No, absolutely has a big, has it, has it sketched in like in script, you know, and just beautiful, handwritten. For sure. So, yeah, four of effort.

JACK: This is the seven of spades. Uh, becoming the eight of spades, but it's the seven of spades. There is no such thing as nature in Pact territory, especially not near, um, near, uh, the Community, this close to the Community. There is a, there is a trail, it's not a hiking trail, but it's a trail that might have been used by the engineers who were setting up the dog stuff. It might've been used by the, um, whoever, whoever built the planetarium or the observatory, whoever set up the, the awful Black Century soldier inside. It is poles, it is, they are, um, hidden, half hidden in the brush, or half buried under stinging plants or, um... Finding the path at first is not particularly difficult. Actually making it usable on the way down is trickier. Um, but, but, uh, Clementine and Gur, if... No, he has to come. Uh, Clementine and Gur, by reaching the bottom, have built a path that they can use to get back up to the top, rather than just muddled their way down.

AUSTIN: All right, that is the seven of spades. You make your way to the edge of the ship. Like you said, it's still smoldering. I think smoke is still coming up out of the, um, out of the ground. Um, and as you approach what you think is your best way in — I mean, what you find is that the vessel hasn't broken apart. It has holes in it. There are, most of the holes are too high up for you to reach. Um, or too hot or too, like, they look too dangerous to try to climb into, but you find a door kind of low to the, the thing's fuselage where you could theoretically open the door and get in. But there is a sort of reddish liquid pooling at the edges of this door, and something gives you pause. You don't know quite what it is. You know, this is like, this feels like a horror movie in some ways. If I, if we were shooting this, this is from *The Shining* or something, right? Whatever is there beyond is pushing outwards at you. It's not any immediate threat, but it's scary. This is the four of hearts.

JACK: This is the 10 of hearts. Meeting, uh, something frightening with courage. Um, I think, I think, perhaps misinterpreting Gur's conversation in the, in the, uh, garden, um, Clementine, with some genuineness in her voice, says, like, "Get behind me" or like

gestures back down, you know, like 'get to safety.' And is, you know, moves with the purpose of, you know, 'I fell from Fort Icebreaker. I broke my arm. I was given a mech. I was shown the scale of the universe. Uh, I, I destroyed all those dogs. It's red liquid on the other side of a door.'

AUSTIN: Yeah. And you open it?

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: And *rushing* out from this, like the ship, rushing out from what must be a cargo container or cargo bay is... Beer.

JACK: Hmm.

AUSTIN: Loose, maybe it was in a container previously. Um. It washes over you. This is what is brewed — and you smell it now. This is what — and it's, it's so overwhelming because it's so sweet, it's sick, it's sickeningly sweet. This is what the Blossom brewed at, uh, at the, um, the Lambic House. This is the Lambic of the Lambic House. Um. And as it hits you, there is something like, overwhelming about it because there is something in the smell or something in the texture or something in the way it interacts with the fog of the Perennial Wave. Gur gasps and says,

AUSTIN (as Gur): The Blood of the Exemplar.

AUSTIN: And you don't, I don't know that you know what that means.

JACK: No. I mean, Jack, all I know is that the Exemplar is in parts, as we understand it, and that Gur and Gur's, um, factional interests are very, very interested in finding the parts of the Exemplar. But, um, this is beer. It's, it's as far as Clementine is concerned. It's deeply evocative beer. I think Clem is bowled over by the sense memory of the palace, uh, in a way that is, that is, that is like a blow.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um, but I think Clementine has *absolutely* no idea what Gur is talking about. And I think turns around with like a look of annoyance on her face to be like,

JACK (as Clem): I was just hit by a wall of beer. [Austin chuckles] I'm experiencing extremely painful nostalgia. What are you talk...? Why, what are you doing? Come and help me.

AUSTIN: Um, he takes, uh, there's a moment here where it's like he doesn't want to step forward. Um, but he does. Um, and like, there's almost like, you know, in, in like, uh, 80s comedies or cartoons when like the villain has something in their hands and then like they lose — it like falls into the, into the, the grate, into the sewer grate, or it

turns into liquid and falls through their hands or, and they're like, "Oh no, I have to get it all! I have to get —"

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: There's a degree to which you could feel Gur wants like scoop up what's here. Um, but, but they restrain themselves and follow you in. Um, um, this is a reminder, the, the parts of the Exemplar are, um, uh, its, its beating heart in the sea, which we know is the Resin Heart. Its countless eyes under the Memoria Teardrop, which we know are the clarified memoria in, underneath the Vigil City Equiaxed, uh, commune. Um, the blood running through the springs of the Pique Ridge, which is where the Lambic House makes its brew. Um, and also the powerful voice in the windswept canyons of the Barranca, which we've not yet seen. But maybe by the time this episode is out, we've seen it. I don't know. Um, so we know that, I mean, this is, there is some connection here now between Lambic House and the blood of the Exemplar.

JACK: And I think Clementine is, Clementine is snappy. Clementine is un — she's just snapping like,

JACK (as Clem): It's just beer. Leave it alone.

AUSTIN: Just, *let's go*. Yeah. Uh-huh. Um, and follows you in to this, to this ship, which, um, is a, uh... Immediately you hear a, as you like step in, it's as if your, your, the added pressure has, um, activated some sort of, um... It's it's like the ship recognizes life signs on the vessel and so it immediately goes into emergency control mode or emergency, not repair mode, but like —

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: It's like, oh, we need to re-oxygenate the cabin. We need to lock down, you know, decks two and three so that — because they've been —

JACK: Sprinkler systems need to come on.

AUSTIN: The sprinkler systems come on and it's making navigating through this thing hell and so the next trial is a, is the nine of puzzles, the nine of diamonds as you need to deactivate or, or, or push through, presumably all of the weird... Um, they're not security systems. They're like safety protocols that have flipped on, uh, in order to keep you safe. But they're also making it impossible to navigate through this, this busted ship. [laughs]

JACK: This is the nine of clubs. Nideo ships don't have, and I don't think any of the Partizan ships have anything resembling the ship consciousnesses of Ancillary, right?

AUSTIN: Not at all. No. But, but —

JACK: But are there rudimentary ship intelligences?

AUSTIN: [sighs] I think what you find here... I think there shouldn't be. But that you find something like that here is... should be frightening.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And in fact, maybe the thing that happens here is... It's like, you've pushed through two rooms, and you hear the, you hear the voice say, and I'm here responding to what you've played, which is the nine of clubs. Um, uh,

AUSTIN (as Ship): Passengers identified: Clementine, Gur Sevraq. Sending signal.

JACK: Oh, boy. I think Clementine just wheels toward the source of this sound.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Um, which is a... Mm. How spooky? How spooky is it appropriate to get for a potentially illegal shipboard intelligence?

AUSTIN: This one is fairly spooky. It's not Perennial spooky though. This is...

JACK: Oh, no, no. There's all kinds of spooky.

AUSTIN: This is Pact spooky. This is Motion spooky. This is... What do you think?

JACK: Well, what... What do we know about the Pact? Oh, I'm thinking it is a basin of blood with something in it. It looks like a ship AI. Picture in your head—

AUSTIN: Yeah, no, totally.

JACK: A ship AI like you might see in Mass Effect. It's like a, like a ball on the, like, like a globe on the wall, like a security camera almost. Uh, there is a little low resolution Partizan screen below it. And then below that, with two wires, two electrical contacts, corroded electrical contacts running down into it, is a basin about the size of a bathroom sink, a shallow bathroom sink.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Full of, um, blood, drying blood, with a copper corroded contact just floating in the middle of it.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Well, and then, and then we know what this is, right? They have... It's as if the Lambic House beer is either refined or it's unrefined versions, or maybe it is

refined versions of the blood or, or, or is the version of the blood that you can transport safely that doesn't have the effect in it. Um, but what they're doing is powering this thing with the Blood of the Exemplar, which gives it a certain, which gives it a certain sort of consciousness also. Right? It is alive, because it's being powered by the Exemplar of the True Divine's blood.

JACK: Awful, awful. Clementine...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Again, low basin — and not just powered by, but like it's, the blood is flowing through this thing in a real way. Giving it life.

JACK: Yeah. But I do also like the idea of like every time, every time electric contacts have to come into contact with liquid, they always get just gross and awful.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JACK: And I just love the idea of these just bad electric wires draped into a basin of blood. Um. Clementine is repulsed by this. I think she's repulsed on two levels. One, she, uh, um... This is a, a, a perversion of the way AI and bodies should work, even for Clementine. Um, like you don't expect to see just a basin of blood with... And also you, ships shouldn't have intelligences in this way.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Unless they're Divines, in which case, you should revere them.

JACK: [laughingly] Unless they're Divines. There is something really uncumf-, even for Clementine, there is something uncomfortable about this. Um, and I think also, um, she is repulsed and confused, uh, because of what Gur said earlier, which she doesn't understand. And because it's a basin of drying blood with electricity. Uh, and so she just puts her hands on the contact and says,

JACK (as Clem): Turn off the fucking security systems, or I pull this out of you.

AUSTIN: Um, and so it turns off the safety security systems. And all... You know, the sprinklers stop, the, the extra oxygenation stops, um, the alarm stops, but you still hear a pinging from further up in the cabin. The signal it's sending has continued to send. This is the Jack of diamonds, and the comms center on this vessel. You don't know where it's sending a signal to. Who could fucking say?

JACK: Uh, how did it Gur react to, has Gur seen the basin?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. I think this is, I think this is...

JACK: Just horror.

AUSTIN: Gur is with you on this, which is like... heretical and, uh, or not even heretical, but disrespectful. Right? Because I don't know that Gur speaks in the language of

heresy, but Gur does speak in the, in the, in the language of disrespect or of, um, exploitation. Right?

AUSTIN (as Gur): To exploit the gift of the True Divine like this is disgusting.

[long pause]

AUSTIN: But again, going back to what Motion does with that technology, right? What this is supposed to be doing is supposed to be blessed, it's supposed to help people. And instead, what it's done is, is harm — I mean, instead what it does is it has been turned into the fuel of what seems to be at this point at least, like, nothing special. Just another...

JACK: Like a freighter.

AUSTIN: A fucking freighter. Yeah, exactly.

JACK: This is... [Austin chuckles] The Queen of clubs, the second most, third most violent card in the game. The first most violent card in the game Clementine used to shoot down the Snow in Summer. Um, is there someone on the bridge?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Like a survivor, someone sitting at a console.

AUSTIN: There's a team of people as you move into the comms station. Three of them. Um, and you recognize one of them, you don't know them by name, but maybe it clicks into place very quickly what you're looking at here. This is one of your mother's men. This is, these are, and they're in Nideo, they're in Nideo and not just Nideo, but Pact uniforms. These are Curtain operatives who stole a ship filled with the Exemplar's blood and are returning it, presumably, to the Curtain to Crysanth, in Kesh, and you shot it down.

JACK: What a coincidence!

AUSTIN: Are there? Perennial wonders...

JACK: [laughingly] What a coincidence.

AUSTIN: Or does the wheel turn?

JACK: Is there a flash of recognition, or?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think on, on his face, he's like,

AUSTIN (as the Curtain operative): Clementine?

AUSTIN: But the other two just pull guns on you, right?

JACK: Right. Yeah. Yeah. I think Clementine, you know, draws herself up to her full height, which is not particularly tall, and just says,

JACK (as Clem): Stand down, men. That's enough. Thank you. Thank you for coming for me. I assume you were on your way when your ship crashed. Um, I apologize for the inconvenience.

AUSTIN (as the Curtain operative): You'll be coming with us, miss.

AUSTIN: [makes gun sound effect] Cocked gun pointed at you. This is the, this is the queen of clubs, Jack. You played the queen of clubs.

JACK: Oh, um...

AUSTIN: Oh, you're getting there.

JACK: [excited] Oh, I'm getting there!

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay.

JACK: Yeah. Oh yeah!

AUSTIN: Apologies, I thought you were considering that a direct confrontation.

JACK: [scoffs] No way. Um, um.

JACK (as Clem): Uh, corporal, what was it?

AUSTIN (as the Curtain operative): Jansen, ma'am.

JACK (as Clem): Mother will be, uh, very impressed. It's been far too long, and I think it's time for me, as I'm sure you are aware, to return to the fold of Kesh. Have you left the ship?

AUSTIN (as Jansen): No, ma'am. Our orders are keep this secure. A team is coming for us.

JACK (as Clem): A great relief. (sighs) There are wild dogs, uh, dogs, um, um, constructed by the Pact of Necessary Venture, that roam this planet. They are extremely dangerous, I will need a weapon. Your sidearm.

AUSTIN: They look to each other and they say,

AUSTIN (as Jansen): We're not supposed to —

JACK (as Clem): That is an order, Jansen!

AUSTIN: And hands you the pistol.

JACK: And I shoot all three of them.

AUSTIN: You're like boom, boom, boom!

JACK: No! I shoot two of them and tell the other one to turn off the signal.

AUSTIN: There it is. Yeah. Um, and the last one, she says, like,

AUSTIN (as the communications engineer): Uh... Right away, ma'am. We don't really know how this ship works though, so if you'll just give me a moment...

AUSTIN: And begins to like, you know, try to rewire something, basically. Let me flip this card. [laughs] [Jack laughs] We have not seen two face cards, I think, in a game of this ever.

JACK: Oh, it's so expensive! A woman who has lived her entire life with no conception of cost [Austin laughs] has been faced with the most expensive tower of relics we have ever seen.

AUSTIN: A queen is a very high card, Jack.

JACK: The first queen is the, um... The arms, which I'm still wearing.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And that's about personal effort, right, but this is something else, 'cause this is about courage or a, you know, a symbol of courage in a sense, um...

JACK: Or a symbol of faith?

AUSTIN: Or faith, right? Yeah, definitely. Um, while this remaining member of the Curtain is rewiring, trying to rewire the signal, there is a, a flash of heat lightning, and then another, and then through the, the kind of bridge windows you see like snake-like lightning strike the ground, and it holds in place. And you realize it has the shape of Perennial. Russian Sage in the shape of a human nervous system. And you wonder for a moment, "Has she come for us?" And at the base, there, 200, 300 yards away is a ship.

JACK: Wow. Um, god... I think Clementine just says,

JACK (as Clem): Are you done?

JACK: To the, to the woman.

AUSTIN (as the communications engineer): If I say yes, will you shoot me?

JACK (as Clem): Of course not.

AUSTIN: And she says,

AUSTIN (as the communications engineer): It's, it's done.

JACK: Mm, I think Clementine just says,

JACK (as Clem): The wheel turns.

JACK: And turns around and leaves the ship with Gur Sevraq. Out through the front of the bridge.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: You know, just like, I think the camera stays with the, with the communications engineer who is just like, slumps down in a chair on the bridge. There's a pause, and then we see Clementine and Gur walk...

AUSTIN: Towards the ship.

JACK: Through the, through the front window of the ship.

AUSTIN: [amused] Okay, yeah and like slide down its nose. I'm imagining this thing as —

JACK: [amused] Oh, no. We —

AUSTIN: Or you're saying just —

JACK: I mean we see them through, it's like we have,

AUSTIN: Oh I see, we see them — right.

JACK: We are over her shoulder looking out at the front window.

AUSTIN: Right, I see.

JACK: As Clementine and Gur make their way.

AUSTIN: Towards this vessel, which I imagine as being, um. So this is, this is a big ship. This is a bigger ship than we've seen.

JACK: It's a ship also seemingly created from nothing by Perennial?

AUSTIN: Created by lightning.

JACK: Sure. Lighting is something.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's it's... This is a mythical ship. This is the Constellation Class carrier Hellebore, AKA the Ivory Prince. This is one of the earliest Horizon vessels, which means it's unfortunately a very weird thing for you to try to operate. You know, it's not, it's not the scale of like Icebreaker Prime or anything, but it's a big vessel. It was big enough to hold three Hallows or Hollows or mechs on it, right? It's a carrier. It would traditionally be operated by a crew of a dozen people or something. Just on the bridge, on top of engineers and repair people. This is the vessel that, from the Armor Astir game, Captain Briar Brightline commanded. Uh, so you know, kind of a big deal thing.

JACK: The Brightline family still exists, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, absolutely. We just haven't, we've only seen their operatives here, we haven't seen them. Um, Gucci Garantine, uh, is a descendant of, uh, a person who worked with, uh, with Briar Brightline.

JACK: What Stel are they? The Brightlines.

AUSTIN: Kesh.

JACK: Kesh?

AUSTIN: Kesh. Oh yeah. That's where Gucci is from, yeah. That whole, that whole... Horizon is an evolution of the original Rapid Evening.

JACK: Right, right, right. Who the fuck knows with factions anymore? Like, there's this new, there's this new squad that's rolled into town. They've got weird dogs.

AUSTIN: They got weird dogs.

JACK: They got members from every Stel. So is this just...

AUSTIN: Um, so I'm imagining this being... Go ahead. What were you going to say?

JACK: Is this just, like half flying, half dragging it across the ground — well, no, I mean, I suppose fewer crew members doesn't doesn't necessarily mean fewer feet off the ground.

AUSTIN: [laughingly] No, it does not. It means...

JACK: That's not how ships work.

AUSTIN: That means that it's, it can't be... You're not going to be able to pilot this thing well, you know. What is that type of shell that like spirals a little bit. It looks like a spirally shell. You know what I'm talking about?

JACK: I think any kind of spirally shell in the water moves that way, right?

AUSTIN: No, I just mean, in looks. The one that I'm just talking about, I'm trying to describe this thing.

JACK: Oh, oh. A spiral shell...

AUSTIN: It's like a, almost like a, you know what it is, you know, what I'm thinking of is... uh...

JACK: Is it a Nautilus type thing?

AUSTIN: No, what I'm thinking of is a, let me see if this is true. Uh, I'm thinking of a narwhal tusk, is actually what I'm thinking about. That sort of spirally white unicorn style horn, right?

JACK: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's what this thing kind of looks like. It has like that style of, you know, swirling detailing.

JACK: What color is it?

AUSTIN: White, it's a white ship. Um, it's that, it's that moment where art nouveau turns into art deco.

JACK: Right. Yes, yes.

AUSTIN: Right? It's like that light overlap of uh Mucha into what comes after, you know?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Anyway. Uh. So... That is the end of, of, uh — and here's actually, so you get into this thing, you go to the consoles, this is ancient technology at this point, it shouldn't be working. You wonder if it's even working only because of the Perennial Wave, um, which thankfully is being broadcast around, in a sense, it's being produced, or being called.

JACK: The nanomachines are piloting the ship almost.

AUSTIN: Or are at least giving it the wave on which it rides, right? The sea on which it rides. Um, um. The smell of the lambic is just all over you, though. Um, and I think there's a moment where as you're leaving, the, that lightning strikes again, um, and this time it's red. And then it's gone. Anyway, let's get rid of these cards. What do you do with the Ivory Prince?

JACK: There's nowhere to land anything as big as this — uh, well. Hmm. Yes, actually there is. There is a landing, there is a landing pad. It is in the water. There's a, there's a, a spar. It almost looks like a, like a boat dock, except it is just stretching out into the water, uh, and has like a big landing pad, uh, with reflective paint on it that is now faded. Uh, and, um, uh, and it just, it just bobs in the water. Uh, the catch is that it is a real fucking hike away from the, uh, the Russian Sage house. Um, and so it's the only place we can put it down, but it's like, uh, it's, it's like an hour's walk across the Community.

AUSTIN: [amused] Ha, right.

JACK: Um, to get back to the house from it. So it's like being, you can leave your car somewhere, but the only parking spot that's available is like a real walk away. And I think Clementine is frightened of it in the same way that she's frightened of the Day's Eye. You don't see objects like this appear from nowhere. Um, and, and if the Day's Eye came at a cost, what is the cost of the Hellebore?

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JACK: Better to leave it on the pad — where we can get to it if we need to! And it's there. But, uh, but it's some distance away from the house.

AUSTIN: I, now, because this is the fifth one, get to say how it affects the area. You don't get to say anything. One day you walk out there and the woman you left alive — um, her name is Emaline; Emaline Eccles — is working on it. Is like repairing it. And she has one of the little dogs with her. One of the hyenas. It's as if she's tamed it.

JACK: I don't care for this!

AUSTIN: Um, and you know, she finishes for the day and then you see like, she comes back onto the ship and, you know. I think maybe the camera sees, you don't see this, but goes to some crew quarters, um, and pets her cyber dog and goes to sleep. She was like the engineer on this team of Curtain members meant to like, she's the one who got the ship working, who got the, the, the Snow in Summer working, despite not knowing how the fuck the weird blood engine works, the basin.

JACK: Oh, right. They hijacked the ship. Like they must have just been like, "Ah good, a Nideo ship. We know the internal functions of these. Oh no!"

2:00:50

AUSTIN: Oh no. I think, I think they were specifically sent to capture this ship with the blood technology in it.

JACK: Oh, right, right.

AUSTIN: For the Curtain, and bring a bunch of the blood to the Curtain.

JACK: Like the, um, like the way the biologist is trained in, uh, uh, in fungus, in, um, in Annihilation.

AUSTIN: In Annihilation, yeah yeah yeah.

JACK: These Curtain members must've been like, "okay, blood science, here we go."

AUSTIN: Yep, blood science, here you go, let's see if you know how to make this work. Which, you know, you've got a blood gun, so...

JACK: Who has a blood gun?

AUSTIN: You do. You just haven't fixed it yet.

JACK: Oh, right. Sorry, I thought you were talking to the Curtain, the Curtain members.

AUSTIN: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. The Curtain — eh, not yet.

JACK: Who the fuck knows. They probably got warehouses of stuff they haven't sorted through yet or whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's true.

JACK: I can't respond to this. So I'm not going to.

AUSTIN: You can. You're allowed to respond to it. You're not allowed to tell me how it affects the area. And also you do have to respond to it by creating a law.

JACK: The, the, the subtlety, (laughs) or rather the lack of subtlety of the wave that these cards has decided to come up in terms of being a game about wealth and effort is... Chef's kiss.

AUSTIN: It's incredible.

JACK: Thank you, Perennial.

AUSTIN: It's so good. Thank you, Perennial!

JACK: Shout out to Perennial.

AUSTIN: Was it, Emaline Eccles is what I said her name was right?

JACK: Yes. Like the cake.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: This is that vibe when you have a really nice spot on the beach and someone comes and sits too close to you, and you're like, "I thought this was my bit of the beach." Um, so, the laws so far are law one, there is a reason why I am alive... (types)

Law One: There is a reason why I am alive.

Law Two: If it is not effort, it is absence.

Law Three: I am bound to Gur Sevraq with Russian Sage.

Law Four: Everything that has happened before will happen again.

Law Five... I've been given a ship that I cannot fly by myself.

AUSTIN: But that does have, I should emphasize, it is the queen of courage, right, which means there is something about looking at it that does produce an effect.

JACK: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. [chuckles] I've got it! I've got it. You ready?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Perennial... First time we've uh... would she say Perennial? I think she's frightened to say Perennial.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: "I have been sent Emaline Eccles." Law Five.

AUSTIN: Period! The end! "I have been sent Emaline Eccles." Incredible. Um, all right. Time for me to award points. Let me think on this one.

JACK: Wait, I want to change my wording.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

JACK: "Emaline Eccles is a gift."

AUSTIN: [laughs] All right, take two interpretation, one dogma, one disappointment.

JACK: Hm!

AUSTIN: Which now puts you at, let me see if that was right. Whoops. 14 dogma, 11 interpretation, 2 disappointment.

JACK: So I can spend interpretation now, definitely, to pull a card from the discard pile?

AUSTIN: It's only five to do either dogma or interpretation.

JACK: Yeah, I could do it twice. Uh, and I could spend dogma nearly three times to...

AUSTIN: Almost three times. Almost certainly three times if you spend interpretation to get another dogma point.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Yeah. This is what it means to be in the good graces going into the final pilgrimage. Uh, though also you are about to have to tithe and that's going to be... (sing-song) expensive!

JACK: Okay. The total, the grand total here is, it was 29 before.

AUSTIN: It was. Add 12 to it.

JACK: Now it is 29 plus 12, which is...

AUSTIN: 41!

JACK: [laughingly] 41!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: [laughs tiredly] Oh boy... Okay. Gonna draw four cards. Okay... This is a 10 of diamonds, uh, which is, uh, uh, a struggle of, of intellect or skill. And, uh, the, the, the difficulty that Clem is experiencing here is working out how to introduce herself to Emaline while also *despising* her and despising any kind of gift that she perceives she has.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: And it's just... It's it's it really is just like, makes the hike to the landing pad. Um. And has like brought something. It's food! It's, it's it's food from one of the houses. It's like a, it really is like your neighbor showing up with a plate of cookies, um, and Clementine trying her, just trying her absolute best to be generous and open and genuine with this lady, um, of just being a good neighbor. You know, um... A choked half apology for the bad business on the ship when she killed her two... you know...

AUSTIN: I think her thing there is that she's like,

AUSTIN (as Emaline): We all have our roles and, well, I've read the dossier?

JACK: Just like a brittle smile from Clementine.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Emaline): It's also just a wonderful ship, isn't it?

JACK (as Clem): It's very beautiful. It was given to me.

AUSTIN (as Emaline): I don't know what I was looking at. Uh, it must have always been there. We just, our scanners, maybe... some sort of cloaking device on this, or...

JACK: Clementine is now on firmer ground. [Austin laughs] Like a wise smile, a shake of the head.

JACK (as Clem): She is strange in the way that she works, but she does. Beautiful... dog. Where did you... Where did you find them?

AUSTIN (as Emaline): There's this field! You wouldn't believe it. Uh, poppies. It seems to go forever. And this, this dog was there. Something was wrong with its leg and it had trouble breathing, and I brought it back to The Snow in Summer and... fixed it up. Her name is Poppy now.

JACK: It is a complete mystery to Emaline why Clementine responds so frostily to this. This is a good story of a dog being healed and a beautiful field of flowers.

JACK (as Clem): Um, yes... [sputtering] I'll be back next week. [Austin chuckles] Have a good day.

JACK: Um, okay. I'm going to spend a...

AUSTIN: It was a 10 that you spent just now, right?

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: This is a jack of effort. It is the middle of the night, a week or so has passed. Clementine wakes up with a start and doesn't know why. Is able to see the, you know, there's no stars except presumably still the purple one is visible up through the...

AUSTIN: I think now the purple one... is its own constellation. We see the constellation of Perennial now. That nervous, that nervous system. Loose, it's not connected, right,

but you can, if you know what you're looking for, there it is. Um, and the purple one is like, is like the brain, is the top of it.

JACK: She doesn't quite know why she's woken up. Um, but she can hear like night birds calling and she thinks maybe — you know, there's no walls, maybe the, she was just woken up by night birds, but the air is nice. Uh, and so she gets up and she climbs the stairs to the, the ground floor and goes and stands on the street. The, uh, the Day's Eye is beside her and, uh, four houses on Winter Cherry Street explode, um, on the skyline. Just, just, uh, an enormous explosion. Um, and so the next couple of days are spent putting out the fire that sweeps down that street and trying to recover the seeds that we can from the thing and replanting them in a, in a, in a street further down, but just like. I think that like, you know, within an hour Emaline is down and is going, "What has happened?" Um, it's just, this, this is a group effort to like, stop a fire spreading through the Community.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And perhaps realizes now why the poppy field was supposed to be so scary.

JACK: Oh, right. Cause Emaline has to... It is, it is, it would, it will be a comfort to Emaline, right, to know that she is being looked out for on some level. Or do you think it's better that she just doesn't know?

AUSTIN: I think she just thinks she got lucky. She just thinks she got lucky.

JACK: Does she just thinks she got lucky.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

JACK: 'S not properly devout. I think Clementine feels that way.

JACK (as Clem): [bitterly] You didn't get lucky.

AUSTIN: God, this fucking spin. Ugh. Nightmare.

JACK (as Clem): Didn't get lucky.

JACK: Um, this is a four of clubs.

AUSTIN: Huh.

JACK: Um, the, the animated crew of the Black Century that, uh, that are on this planet, I don't even, uh, are they part of the Black Century or are we just calling them kind of Black Century adjacent?

AUSTIN: They are part of the Black Century. Whatever this place was... Or they're part of Motion, at the very least, you're right. They might not have been part of the Black

Century, but they have been blessed by Motion with ongoing life in honor of her, in service to her.

JACK: I think a group of them take, or try to take, uh, The Snow in Summer. I think Emaline goes back to it, and, uh...

AUSTIN: Emaline isn't yours, but. As long as you're not going to have her do something.

JACK: No, no, absolutely not. I think, well, I think she comes back and she says they have taken The Snow in Summer.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yes.

JACK: Uh, and so Clementine in the, um... A mech versus a ship, the mech could just torch the ship. I don't think that happens. I think Clementine and Gur go out to The Snow in Summer and flush out the, the Motion troops.

AUSTIN: Okay. You still have 16 left.

JACK: Mm-hm. This is a three of diamonds. I think I'm going to stay up with Gur Sevraq and try and track the movement of the constellation across the sky.

AUSTIN: Huh.

JACK: Um, and I, I, I don't know that it, it moves slowly enough that we don't see it move. Um, so it is a long and frustrating process to be like, straining your eyes, uh, to try and pick out, has there been any movement? Trying to build tools that might help you do this, but like, again, neither of us are astronomers. I think what it comes down to in the end is some sort of ritual practice, um, or like, it becomes ritual practice. Because it's...

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JACK: What, what genuinely begins as scientific inquiry through the, um, obstinacy of Perennial or through, uh, Clementine's inability to do that becomes instead like, "Well, I'm going to wake up at this time and I'm going to see if the stars have moved and I don't know how to interpret the results that I've made." Um, but yeah, looking, looking up at the stars in that respect. What's my total?

AUSTIN: You are left, now, Jack, with another 13. (laughs) So you've added up total so far, what is it, 10, uh, 21, 25, 28, I believe.

JACK: Can I shut down relics if I can't tithe?

AUSTIN: Yeah. You have to shut down relics if you can't tithe.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which is interesting, given what you have here. As a reminder, you have the queen of spades, which are the arms of Vessel's Gold. You have the seven of hearts, which is Gur Sevraq. You have the 10 of clubs, which is the Day's Eye, Teasel Mode's mech from the ancient times, from the, uh, the, the Miraculous Millennium. Uh, and you have the, um, the Hellebore, the Ivory Prince, a vessel, a ship, um, a military frigate, the queen of hearts.

JACK: God...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. It's a toughie.

JACK: I have a really, I have a really good, I have a really good idea that I think is, is very consistent with Clementine's... with the potential response from Perennial to Clementine's awful spin on devoutness. Um, that I prefer rather than just spending like, a two.

AUSTIN: Oh, I'm also wrong, wait.

JACK: And trying to get up and then...

AUSTIN: We, we're off by a little bit, because. You have cards, these cards are higher because of that. The Jack is plus one and the clubs are plus on, so you're actually, you only need 11 more, not 13 more, right? Or no. The, is that right? Club is plus one. Yes, that's correct. Wow. You have, yeah. You have two hearts, yeah, but you haven't played a heart. Okay. Yeah yeah. So, so you actually need 11 more.

JACK: Um. The Hellebore leaves. Emaline leaves. Um, she manages to get the ship working. She is a trained Curtain agent who understands how to fly.

AUSTIN: No. You can't control her.

JACK: Oh, you're, you're absolutely right. She, she, she leaves. I don't know what, where she goes.

AUSTIN: No, she doesn't, Jack. She doesn't go anywhere. You can't make her go anywhere.

JACK: [in realization] Oh!

AUSTIN: I control her. *You believe* that she's a gift from the divine, but she's not a relic. She's not under your authorial control.

JACK: The Hellebore leaves.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I don't fucking know what's happened to Emaline.

AUSTIN: Emaline is in the, in the town with you.

JACK: When it goes?

AUSTIN: Yeah. You can do whatever you want to your relics. You can say something else happens to it. You can tell me it goes, you can tell me it blows up, you can do whatever you want to it, but you can't touch Emaline.

JACK: Okay, then I don't think it leaves. I think it disappears. I think it goes. I think it, I think as, as a — no, it doesn't even fucking need to go in a lightning storm. No, I think it just disappears.

AUSTIN: One morning, it's gone.

JACK: One morning.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And, and, and it is, it is utterly mystifying. Um, it is mystifying to Clementine, who believed that it was a gift to her in a lightning storm by Perennial. So the fact that it has not just gone, but gone with no trace that it was it ever there, is...

AUSTIN: Yeah. When you walk to it the next day, or the day that it disappears, there is a lot of bread on the ground and seagulls are eating the bread. You have no idea what it means or where the bread came from. It's not the bread from the Community. In fact, it smells like fresh bread from a bakery.

JACK: Extremely we've got a chest that makes food voice, "I've got a ship that turns into bread!" It makes food, right? Or does it make carpets? No, you, you steal their carpets.

AUSTIN: Uh, car, it's a car — yeah, I, yeah, uh-huh. We put our food inside of the chest. This is a classic.

JACK: And the orcs wake up and go, "Oh my God!"

AUSTIN: We got a fucking chest that makes food! That turns carpets into food!

JACK: This is great! Um, I don't think Clementine thinks that the ship has become bread. I think that Clementine is, is... I think Clementine realizes that a message is being sent to her here, um, and is, and is furious and guilty and abashed.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. The birds laugh at you.

JACK: Just like, attacked by a, uselessly attacked by a bird on the way back, like those birds that divebomb people on the street. But I think I'm paid up now.

AUSTIN: Yes, because of the extra from the points. Yeah. You're good. You're good now. Mm-hm. I think at one point, Emilline is like,

AUSTIN (as Emaline): Why didn't we just take the ship and leave?

JACK: Like, Clementine shrugs, and then says,

JACK (as Clem): It wasn't time?

JACK: Like with a question mark on the end of it. Like,

JACK (as Clem): [scornful] It wasn't time for us to go, Emaline.

[Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh... Well.

JACK: Clementine, quote, "I'll learn my lessons, but I won't do so good grace" Kesh.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Also just one more check in here. Uh, how is Clem's arm doing?

JACK: It has improved since we, since we heard about it last time, I think Clementine has gotten to the point where she is able to, um... to do some form of strength training or some form of conditioning, um, in order...

AUSTIN: But it's not like, guided by anyone right? So,?

JACK: No, and as such, I, I, I think that she's doing the thing, that I find that I do, which is push myself too hard or, or recklessly.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um, I think that she is smart enough to be like, my situation or she, she has the presence of mind to be like, "If I really screw this up, this situation is, is absolutely fucked."

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um, so I don't think she pushes herself too hard, but I think she is absolutely —

AUSTIN: Has she ever done something like this — has she ever had to go through like sports rehab before after an injury or anything like that? Or is this completely new for her.

JACK: Yes, but it's not completely... It *is* completely new for her because she has had the winter doctor and like Clementine has probably like sprained a wrist once in the past, or like wrenched or dislocated a shoulder with rowing or polo or something and has had just the best medical care and has had someone to be able to, who knows how to thread that difficult needle of like, "Princess Kesh, you need to take care of yourself, and also I'm not going to overstep my boundaries in telling what you can and can't do." Here she's just on a balcony, uh, and I think that, you know... But, but I'm not saying it's getting worse.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Or that she isn't attempting to take care of it. It's more just that her haste or her desire to be able to be stronger is getting the better of her sometimes, but I think as, as she embarks, she's definitely feeling better than she was.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Yeah. I think that's good. Maybe it'll be something that she has to live with for quite some time, honestly, right, like.

JACK: Yeah, absolutely.

AUSTIN: Sometimes you heal, but like, you're just not going to have the full range of mobility that you used to have, or you're going to have just like a little less strength in that arm and it's just... and it's just part of it, right.... It sounded like I said something weird there, I involuntarily, unconsciously tongued a missing tooth I have. [Jack chuckles] So, thinking about bodies in this moment, and change, and time. Um, very, very, you know, sometimes your brain just does the thing for you.

[short music sting]

2:20:37 [Shift to Millennium Break]

AUSTIN: It has been four months since the red light fell on Oxbridge. Thisbe and Millie, where is it that Kal'mera Broun finds you when they do?

SYLVIA: I think Millie is... right now, uh, she is spending time on sort of the outskirts of the, like, not the outskirts, but like the forested area around Lake Timea, um, with her mech, sitting on her mech on watch duty. She's sort of like staying there right now and is helping them out with sort of like basic stuff in return for like, food, et cetera.

AUSTIN: Right. It's like calibrating the guns, going on patrols, just being another body.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Thisbe, are you, are you hanging out with this happen, with this, this watch duty tonight with, with her?

JANINE: Yeah. Um, I think Thisbe, Thisbe's been pulled in to help with some network issues. They're in the middle of the woods. They don't have LT. Um...

AUSTIN: Right. Sure. Some bad storms knocked out the tower.

JANINE: It's, I imagine it's probably more of a coincidence than anything else that Millie's there at the same time. Um, or just that shit is bad enough that they really needed to call people in super bad.

AUSTIN: Broun, is that kind of why you, you pulled the trigger on this moment is one of those things where it's like, "well fuck, they're both there at the same time. Let me, let me swing through."

ALI: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, I think this was like a text from Eiden situation. Like...

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: "Oh Thisbe and Millie are here and also, yadda yadda."

AUSTIN: Oh God. It's probably one of those texts where it's like, clearly there's the subtext that your friend is trying to get you to act on something, that... Yeah. [Ali laughs]

ALI: Um, Yeah, I think it's really funny if Broun just like comes walking through the trees while they're on this patrol, just being like,

ALI (as Broun): [excited] Oh my God... [sighs] Eiden told me you were here and then I asked to where, and he just said the woods? Hi!

SYLVIA (as Millie): Hey, what? Broun?

ALI (as Broun): [giggling] Hi! Oh my god, you both look great. Hi!

JANINE: Does Brown have a fun new haircut?

ALI: Oh... [all laugh] Does Broun have a...

AUSTIN: Good question.

JANINE: Does Broun have a fun new ponytail that is all very tight back with a hat over top of it?

AUSTIN: I have to say, I one hundred percent was going to specifically ask Sylvie if there was a new look, uh, for, for Millie. And then I didn't, because I didn't want to not ask everyone that? [all laugh] But like time jumps are such a big thing.

JANINE: Sorry.

AUSTIN: No, but now we're here. So tell me, Broun, is there a new haircut? Is there a new law? It's been 150 days.

ALI: Oh my god... Oh fuck... Um, I actually have to be kind of annoying cause I had like a new season two hairstyle picture? And I think that actually in this moment, I get to build the path towards that by saying that like Broun shaved their head, but because this is four months later, it's grown out enough, but it's like...

SYLVIA: Oh my god...

ALI: There's like maybe an inch of hair there or something. And like, I think you can still see some of like the iridescence from their scalp. So it looks really cool.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. I think that that's good. Good haircut. Millie and Thisbe, do you have different looks now?

SYLVIA: I think just conversely Millie's hair has just gotten a lot longer since the time — she just hasn't like really cut it much. So it's just like, in, in like a, like, it's, it's always tied up some way, unless she's like, sleeping basically. She just does not have the, she cannot be bothered to get it trimmed right now. It still gets in her face all the fucking time. But like she's in the middle of the woods. With a bunch of people that don't know how to like, like there, I'm sure hyphans have personal styling in a similar way, but probably not haircuts, right?

AUSTIN: Probably not haircuts, I guess. Yeah. Do you have, have you adopted the, sort of like any of the goth witch aesthetic?

[Ali laughs]

SYLVIA: I think just by being there, she has to have, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Like, I can't do that to people. I can't not say yes to that question.

AUSTIN: I love it. Um, all right. So let me shut the fuck up and let Broun get on with whatever it is they're here to do.

JANINE: Hey, you didn't ask if I had a changed look!

AUSTIN: Oh I'm sorry. I did ask —

JANINE: And then you kept going.

AUSTIN: And then I just stepped over it and didn't wrap back around. Sorry.

SYLVIA: What's Thisbe's new hair? [all laugh]

JANINE: Thisbe's just, just got like, you know, uh... pigtails. No. [all laugh]

AUSTIN: Great. Ahh.

JANINE: I was going to say that this is, I was, I was gonna say this as a joke, and then I started to like the idea, the more I thought about it. Um, I think Thisbe has transparent plastic fingerless gloves. Um... [Sylvi gasps]

AUSTIN: Okay. Is there a, what was the...

JANINE: Because, um, she has those hand screens and they're like screen protectors because she also does a lot of manual labor.

SYLVIA: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: I love it. Yeah. Fair. This is — you —

And someone and someone like someone like looked at her and was like, "Oh, you're going to get all scratched up. And it's such a pain to repair those."

AUSTIN: A really important thing to know for you, Janine, is, I referenced those hand screens in the previous scene where you are not here as part of the recording. So the audience would have just thought about those, uh, either this episode or last episode,

JANINE: Perfect.

AUSTIN: Perfect. I love that. That's good.

JANINE: I think they have little, little belts around the wrist just cause it looks cooler.

AUSTIN: It does. That makes it look really cool.

JANINE: Otherwise they would just look like gloves that were cut off or something.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that look. That's good.

JANINE: I want it to look a little bit, not trashy, but you know.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. No new actual fashion, no new clothing though, right? Because I know we did, we did see you go shopping once for like a sarong, right?

JANINE: Yeah, I, um, I don't think so. I consider, I considered. I also, other things I considered was Thisbe getting a tattoo, but I couldn't justify it.

[all laugh out loud]

SYLVIA: Oh my God!

AUSTIN: That's sick though. Are you sure?

ALI: Oh my god wait, Thisbe with like sick ass nose art would be like the coolest shit in the world.

JANINE: It just feels uhm...

AUSTIN: By nose art you mean like war plane nose art?

ALI: Yeah yeah yeah. Like the things that you put on...

JANINE: Thisbe with a sexy lady airbrushed on her thigh?

ALI: Nooooo, but like...?

[All laugh]

JANINE: I'm on board but it's not gonna...

AUSTIN: I mean, no explanation.

ALI: It's gonna be sick, don't get me wrong, but.

AUSTIN: I mean, listen, a lot can happen in 150 days!

JANINE: I was thinking about it specifically in relation to being with the Ashen and stuff, but it still, considering how much of that relationship has been built on Thisbe being like "I'm different," and them being like, "yeah, you're different." It felt weird to be like, "and then she got a witch tattoo."

[Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: Yeah. That makes sense. That makes sense..

JANINE: That's a little cheesy.

AUSTIN: Though. Though though though, what if there was some sort of witch tattoo that was explicitly about having lived through betrayal? Um, and it's like...

JANINE: [impressed] Oh that rules!

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah, because this is the thing that's like, yeah, you know that you're kind of this weird, terrible, like you were designed as an, as like a living insult to these people. Um, um, and that will always separate you from them in some way, you know, that you're not like Ashen, you're not Hyphan. But you definitely both got betrayed by Mourningbride. You were definitely both — and in some ways that's a unifying relationship. I don't know what it looks like. You tell me, if you want to.

JANINE: I um, so I think, one, it has to, it has to be a thigh tattoo.

AUSTIN: Okay. Rule number one.

JANINE: Um, I think it's, I think it's like a sort of garter belt position tattoo, but it is just a, I want it to be like extremely, extremely simple? Um, so I think it is, it is like a solid black band. Um, and then in the front it just has, it has like a gap with... It has like a gap and then in the gap is like a set of interlocking triangles. You know what I mean?

AUSTIN: Sort of, yeah.

JANINE: Kind of...

AUSTIN: Are they, which, or what way are they oriented?

JANINE: They're on the inside of the gap.

AUSTIN: But are they facing up or like, or like si — or hor — or are they... Is the third point —

JANINE: They're interlocking like teeth almost. With a space between them.

AUSTIN: Okay. I got you. I got you. I got you.

JANINE: It's probably just kind of, it's probably just like three triangles, like two on the one side, one on the other, that are, that interlock.

AUSTIN: Now I understand. Yes.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, and it's on one thigh or both thighs?

JANINE: One thigh.

AUSTIN: One thigh. Okay, asymmetrical. Love it.

JANINE: Left thigh.

AUSTIN: Great. So, so when Broun said "you both look incredible," they were not lying. They were actually responding to stimulus. Yeah.

[all laugh]

JANINE: Everyone got a goth makeover, even the robot.

AUSTIN: Even the robot. I love this. I love this for you all.

ALI: Yeah. I'm also loving this scene because it was just like Broun running up, so like the montage of the scene of like Broun finishing the patrol with them, is they're like, the montage of them, like telling you about Thisbe's tattoo or like haircuts or whatever.

2:30:11

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Um, and then, and they're eventually... This was the, these are where the red sands are, right? These were the cool red beaches?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think that that's true.

ALI: Yeah. So I think that, you know, when the sun is starting to set, or one of them... or however suns are supposed to work on this planet.... They're on one of those red sand beaches with like a fire and like just chilling. Um, and then this is Broun finally being like,

ALI (as Broun): [clears throat] You know, I should have apologized to both of you sooner for... bailing... But, uh, I think I had to.

SYLVIA (as Millie): I, I mean, I don't know if you even need to apologize for me to me, I bailed right after you did, but like, appreciate it. Um. It was bad there.

ALI (as Broun): Yeah. It seemed fucked up.

SYLVIA (as Millie): Yeah, at kind of a certain point, I realized, um, that... When Clem came back, I had been working for Clem lite the entire time. Um, so it's just... fuck em. Fuck it. I don't know. I don't blame you, I guess is my point.

ALI (as Broun): Thisbe, did they treat you okay?

JANINE: Uh... I, man. I. I think Thisbe just says, I think Thisbe just says like, "yes." Like I, I can't imagine her even noticing if they didn't, to be — I mean, she would, she would, if it was like really bad, but like...

AUSTIN: Yeah and it wasn't. There was nothing.

JANINE: What is, what is, what is treating your work robot good?

ALI: Broun wasn't, so it's not like it's really that bad... [laughs]

AUSTIN: The answer is honestly, definitely not worse than Broun did.

JANINE: Yeah. There were a few months without as many like extremely life threatening situations probably.

ALI: Mm. Yeah. Speaking of that, uh, and Broun's like, scratching their elbow.

ALI (as Broun): Um, I wanted to ask you two if you were interested in something.

SYLVIA (as Millie): I knew there was a pitch. I *knew* there was a pitch!

ALI (as Broun): It's not a pitch, it's like an offer, it's like a favor really... Um, I I'm, I'm leaving. I'm like, finally... I'm gonna go. And I think that the both of you should come with me.

SYLVIA (as Millie): Wait, like, go, go?

ALI (as Broun): Like off of Partizan, like fuck this for real.

SYLVIA (as Millie): Okay, so that's actually a pretty good pitch. That's...

ALI (as Broun): Yeah!

SYLVIA (as Millie): Okay. Nevermind. Way, way better than what I expected.

ALI (as Broun): Yeah. I have like a spaceship and we have the launch codes finally, and we just need to, like, there's just like only a little bit more to get in line and then it's out of here. And then that's it.

SYLVIA (as Millie): Okay... What's the, what's the one more little thing that we have to get.

ALI (as Broun): Well but it's like, you know, I mean, you have to like go through the gate. You have to like... and it's like a whole thing. Um...

SYLVIA (as Millie): Yeah. Okay, that's fair.

ALI (as Broun): I mean, me and Jesset have been researching it and we're putting a mission together and it's going to be literally fine, but it's going to be, I mean, it's not going to be easy, but it's going to be fine.

SYLVIA (as Millie): I mean, when, when is anything ever easy with like the people that we know?

ALI (as Broun): Exactly.

SYLVIA (as Millie): Um, so sure. Fuck it. Ugh, I'm I'm so fucking done. I'm so fucking done.

ALI (as Broun): Yeah! Fuck it!

AUSTIN: Are you, are you going to tell them that, that part of this plan is then spreading some Millennium Break shit across the galaxy? Or are you just going to leave that part up —

JANINE: I think Thisbe's next question is, is like,

JANINE (as Thisbe): Is operant City also leaving? Like why is Jesset involved in you getting out of dodge?

ALI (as Broun): Um, Jesset's involved, um, I don't know if Jesset has decided on leaving yet, but I know that he — we're going to keep in touch, is the thing. Um, you know, Jesset's dealing with Millennium Break stuff here and needs me to bring something back. It just feels, you know, convenient! And like a good idea.

SYLVIA (as Millie): Look, if this is like the last time I have to deal with Millennium Break, that's fine by me.

[Broun inhales nervously through their teeth]

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: I love it. Thank you for putting it right over the plate. I love this.

ALI (as Broun): So technically...

JANINE: Offer, pitch or favor.

ALI (as Broun): I mean... They're gonna, you know, they're paying for it.

SYLVIA (as Millie): [disappointed] Oh... Cool...

ALI (as Broun): And like... You know... And Jesset's the one dealing with me and it's like still, but like... Listen, if Millennium Break is going to be anything, it's going to have to be something fucking off of here. The Principality exists everywhere. Like, fuck this.

[Sylvia lets out a deep sigh]

[Ali laughs]

SYLVIA: Millie's just like, kinda staring off into...

SYLVIA (as Millie): Yeah... I mean, I guess you're right. [heavy sigh]

JANINE (as Thisbe): Do you believe, do you believe operant City will be able to provide the support necessary?

ALI (as Broun): Well, yeah, I mean, yeah.

JANINE (as Thisbe): He didn't before.

ALI (as Broun): Jesset uh... You know.... um. He's been helpful, is what I'll say. And what I'll also say is that if you guys just want to get the fuck out of here and have me drop you off at a spaceport, that works too. But at least you're out of here.

SYLVIA (as Millie): I like that part. I like that idea a lot actually.

ALI (as Broun): Yeah!

AUSTIN: Really quick, Broun, it is probably worth, you know, that, you know, it's been months of you working with Jesset on this now. You get that a big part of why he is throwing in so hard on this is guilt, because of not coming through with supplies last time. I don't know that that's a thing you would share with Thisbe necessarily. Um, but. I mean maybe it is, but. But I mean thing I think you're smart enough to have picked up on, that it's like, a lot of this is Jesset beating himself up for not figuring out.

JANINE: I mean, that's the thing that Thisbe is alluding to specifically.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yeah yeah yeah. Not figuring out how to get...

JANINE: It's like sending, sending like three people on that kind of mission is, is nonsense. It doesn't make sense logistically.

AUSTIN: Which, which, which, sorry, which mission? The, this new one or the one where you went and got Valence killed?

JANINE: No, I meant, I meant, I meant the, I meant the Valence one.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like I think to Thisbe, Thisbe doesn't need to be in a meeting and see Jesset being like, "No, that's all you get" to be like, "This doesn't make sense. This is, this is going to be a costly one."

AUSTIN: Right. Mm-hm.

JANINE: And considering it, considering Broun's state when Thisbe last saw them, um, I think Thisbe thinks it's weird that Brown and Jesset are just cool.

ALI (as Broun): [exhales] Um, listen, the Jesset thing... You don't have to worry about it. It's, it's smoothed out. Um, he, um. Sometimes you make a bad call and you learn a lesson and, um... You know, um, Valence... Valence had things that were important to them too, and it sure as fuck wasn't on Partizan, so... I think that's part of why he's in on it. So are y'all in?

SYLVIA (as Millie): You know what, I haven't been getting any better offers.

JANINE (as Thisbe): I too have no reasons to stay.

ALI (as Broun): Then let's go! Let's do it! Team space!

[All laugh]

SYLVIA: Millie is laughing in character, by the way, at the that.

AUSTIN: I love it.

JANINE: I think Thisbe has a moment of looking nervous. Uh, just, just cause she doesn't know how soon Broun means, and, and was like, actually, wait, I do have a reason to stay for like a couple more days. Uh. For the, the shit they have agreed to already and are currently doing.

[Ali laughs]

ALI (as Broun): Oh, yeah. You know, we still, there's, there's, there's strings to, to, to still pull on here. Um, but yeah. Yeah. Um, start preparing. I'll add you all to the email thread.

[short music sting]

2:38:55 [Shift to The Tower]

AUSTIN: All right, so. The final pilgrimage of Clementine. I am going to deal myself the hand for the final journey.

JACK: Ooh, and so am I.

AUSTIN: [sighs] Are you ready... for the final pilgrimage?

JACK: I am ready. Yes.

AUSTIN: Where are you going? At five, you can give me a destination. At five tiers of the tower. Five floors.

JACK: I think... Do you see how the, the water gap... there is a presumably a very narrow tidal gap here, beyond the wall?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's, it seems like a very narrow channel,

AUSTIN: Yes, it's a very narrow channel. Yeah.

JACK: And, you know, if... humans have always built things on where the channel of water is, is narrowest. Um, the wall is a fucking dead, dead loss. The place is confusing as hell, and all I got out of it was one robotic priest. Um, who, who is teaching me the value of faith.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Or struggling to. Your weakest of the relics, too.

JACK: Yeah. I mean, Gur Sevraq is just a person.

AUSTIN: I think it also should... [stammers] It should signal something else, but, you know. I have been quiet about that.

JACK: Yes, that is... Yes. Uh-huh. I've also been wondering about this. Gur, Gur Sevraq's been awful quiet.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um, funny. But I think I'm going to try and, I think I'm going to try and head to that area, because even if I'm not thinking of leaving just yet, I would like to know if it's

possible. Um, or how it might become possible. Uh, so I am going to travel to the channel in the north where the, the stretch of the water is narrowest.

AUSTIN: This is the pilgrimage of the present day.

JACK: First time I've spelled pilgrimage correctly.

AUSTIN: Are you going by foot or by... How are you traveling?

JACK: Um, I think that, um... It's tough, right, 'cause like the mech would just make this trivial, the actual getting up there trivial, right?

AUSTIN: It depends on if you're bringing Gur Sevraq, if you bring Emaline. Emaline would love to go with you. Obviously you can accept that or not.

JACK: Oh, I think we're in the car. I think we're in Clementine's car.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Uh, all of us piled into this, this, this bulbous electric car, um, um, striking up north on a road trip.

AUSTIN: Okay. So, um, as you drive up, um, you you're driving up this highway, which is interesting because the road does eventually tuuurn back that way, and goes up like this kind of northern coastline. Um, but you see something about two miles out. It's, you, it's one of those great highways, that's like the coastal highway, you know what I'm talking about, where like, "Oh wow, look at this beautiful view."

JACK: It's gorgeous.

AUSTIN: It's gorgeous. Down below, there is a figure moving through the trees. It's kind of this long, horizontal, like, like tube that has these like tendril-like legs sticking out of it. And it becomes clear to you that this is the body of The Snow in Summer, having been resuscitated and transformed into a walking fortress of its own. Much smaller than the Icebreaker Prime, obviously. But those same tendrils that you recognize from when you fought in Motion, that have kind of like brought it back to life, and given it, you know, uh, the ability to move.

JACK: Fucking hate Motion.

AUSTIN: Um, but that's not even what this card we're about to play is, because it's a smaller thing. There is a, you see a number of smaller machines. These are Con-cons, which we don't see that much of in this game. Uh, converted construction... units? Converted construction units, they're like, they're like little mechs for building things. And you realize these are the mechs that must have built the Community at Chorus Island, whatever Pact base you haven't seen on this Island still somewhere.

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: Um, they're, they're like, you know, half the size of the Day's Eye and they are being piloted — there's like three of them — and they're being piloted by soldiers in the, um, of the, of, again with the sort of, are pilots that have been reanimated by Motion. Um, this is the three of clubs.

JACK: This is the eight of clubs. Clementine takes a hard left off the road, the car, Emaline, Gur... tumbling down an embankment, uh, into a tall pine forest. Um, uh, you know. It's, it's a beautiful day. The, the green, the moss on the ground is glowing green with the, with the light. There's bluebells. Uh, the car hits a tree and, you know, rights itself, tips back up onto its, uh, its wheels again, uh, and, uh, the, the Con-cons come crashing down the thing into the forest with us. Uh, the car is nimbler for a bit, for just a bit, but, um, eventually it gets stuck and everybody piles out of the car. And one of the Con-cons is, you know, hacking at, uh, a tree that is fallen and blocking its path. Another one is scrabbling to climb over something else. Uh, and in the confusion, I think we manage to, to pull the hydraulics out of the like leg or foot of one of the Con-cons. Just these, these three p — oh, also I guess Poppy is here too, um, and Poppy is just, just getting under everyone's feet and snarling and biting, including our feet.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: But once one mech is down and the, the, um, pilot is pulled from the cockpit and killed, um... flailingly and violently, it is able to, presumably with Clem at the, the controls, um, messily dispatch the other two con-con units.

AUSTIN: All right. Um. But now it has your scent. And The Snow in Summer, like a giant wild beast, more, more than a walking fortress really, comes charging through the woods, knocking trees over and releasing a burst of cannon fire. Like it's like a rapid three — it's like a three shot burst, but it's a three shot burst of cannon, so it's like [Austin makes cannon and explosion sounds] across the cliff face.

JACK: Trees exploding.

AUSTIN: Exactly. And it has this like under, it's like an under chin gun almost, um, uh, that has been attached to it by Motion. Um, and, uh, it is firing, uh, its its shots at you, um, as you're trying to, to, uh, manage to stay in control or get away. This is the six of confrontation, the six of clubs.

JACK: This is my second queen of spades.

AUSTIN: *How?*

JACK: Um, because the first queen of spades is from you, actually.

AUSTIN: Oh!

JACK: The first Relic comes from the...

AUSTIN: Is the queen of spades. Yeah yeah yeah, is from the divine. Yeah. All the relics come from the divine deck.

JACK: Oh yes, that's true.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um, this is the queen of effort, or of labor. [Jack thinks for a bit] Oh, I think it's awful. I think it, I think it's a chase. I think we go to ground. And, you know, what we are relieved to have been a narrow escape just keeps going, just like, "Oh, it found us again." And we manage to slip it for 40 minutes across like, you know, whatever it's shooting at, it is not able to hit us.

AUSTIN: Uh huh, yeah.

JACK: And like, I think that, I think this goes on for like days. We are forced to double back, we are forced to come around... Like, there is this, there's this massive, again, nowhere near as big as Icebreaker, but there is now this, it's like a Colossus from Shadow of the Colossus, that is just hunting us across the northern part of this island. Um, but I think we manage to, we manage to slip away from it, but who knows if we've done it permanently, right?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Oh, it hasn't seen us for, um, for, for seven hours, but who knows whether or not it's going to spot us in hour nine or whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Well, and that becomes the, the remainder of the, the part of the journey that is a journey. You're on foot. You're in what is, frankly, enemy territory. Um, there's a degree of this that is just hard work. How do you stay out of, out of sight? How do you keep yourself from being seen? There's three of you. You're not all equally trained in — I mean, she's a Curtain agent, so actually that's not true. All three of you have been trained in this sort of stuff.

JACK: She's probably the most skilled.

AUSTIN: Yeah, in many ways, right. Um, and... Also, the four of you, sorry about Poppy, Poppy is also still here with you. Um, but it's, it's difficult. Um, and so this is the jack of effort as you walk through the hills.

JACK: We have to expend so much...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Can it smell us? Can it even smell? Is that something we even need to worry about? Like we're wasting time...

AUSTIN: Who knows? Right. Right.

JACK: Trying to cover as many... Can it see? Who knows if it can see. Um. Like, Clementine, just snapping, like,

JACK (as Clem): Is it tracking your fucking dog?

[Austin laughs]

JACK: I am going to play the King of diamonds. Now what is a...

AUSTIN: What is a King tier maneuver here?

JACK: It's like a ploy. What is a King tier ploy? It's like we have to get it off our scent. How do you get a building off your scent in a way that is narratively good? Um, I want to trap it. I want to do, you know, you know how they say that if you like draw a, draw a circle around an ant in chalk, the ant won't, you know, won't be able to leave the circle.

AUSTIN: Right. What is...

JACK: Um, or like, like that great image of all the turkeys walking around the cat.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Like Motion, Motion lives to move and lives to pursue its goal. How do you trick it into just doing that forever? Is it some feature of the environment? Is it... Oh God, I know what it is! Uh it's um, it's it's — there is a narrow valley that if... that we find through just sheer luck through the, like, when you're fighting a boss and you go, like, "he's got his arm caught, he's got his arm caught on the wall. Why has he got his arm caught in the wall, can he not move?" Um, if we lead The Snow in Summer down this very narrow valley, like it's almost like a, like an embankment. As it reaches the end of the valley, the sound of its footsteps are heard at the other end of the valley and it pauses, and doesn't know what the footsteps are, and snorts, and turns, and drools, and goes clattering back down the valley to the other side.

AUSTIN: The blood of the Exemplar running out of its mouth, out of its cockpit like a drooling mouth.

JACK: And it hears its footsteps again, and is just, and is getting increasingly furious because it knows it's being fooled, but it doesn't understand how or why, only that the sounds of footsteps of some big creature are being heard on either end of this, of this

valley. And we just leave it there, just this, this increasingly angry building stamping from one end of a valley to another.

AUSTIN: You make it through the valley. You make it past the trees. You make it to the coastline. And in front of you, you see the channel. To your west and to your east, the waves are riled up, splashing like they're angry, cresting high, but to your north, in front of you, the water is still. Still beyond still, still beyond it being water. It is frozen. A land bridge connecting the island to whatever is north, the Estate Lands. Here is your bridge away.

[brief pause]

AUSTIN: And as you cross it, something appears in a flash, a figure towering above you. A figure large enough that it was not even dwarfed by Icebreaker Prime. Present is here, and Gallica in it, and there is no pomp to this, except for the flair of what she is doing to you. You don't know if it's a test, you don't know if it's a... simply the easiest way she can see of getting rid of you. I guess, I guess you suspect there's a, there's a degree to which this is... This is cruelty mixed with theatrics, maybe. So maybe it's unfair to say there's no pomp. With a pincer-like grip, she reaches down and lifts you up, and she could cut you in two, in this moment. She doesn't. She uses the ability of Present to move herself, and your body with it, into space above Partizan. And lets go of you. Lingered alone in space. This is the ace of courage. There is no air to breathe here. **Hold your breath and pray.**

JACK: People who like Partizan, and I'm sure there are some... who consider the sacred moon a beacon or something to be revered, would long for the opportunity to get the view of the planet that Clementine does. Uh, the, the, the vast Prophet's sea is visible. The lands of the five Stels are marked out, you know, flawlessly. Clementine, even 20 minutes ago, would have said that the view would not have impressed her very much, it being a backwater... as far as she was concerned. Uh, but in the moment now, uh, she has absolutely no time for anything other than terror. Um, you know. If she was asked to recall this moment, she wouldn't really be able to, uh, even, even picture the planet below her, or the moon below her. Girandole, gigantic!... on I would say the horizon, but there is no horizon there.

AUSTIN: It's just the planet. Yeah. You're caught between these two things, right? It's like there's blackness around you, and it forms like a line between Girandole and Partizan. And, you know, you look certain directions and you can just see all of the stars in the sky. And it's interesting because it's a star, it's, you can see the satellites from here. You can see the production of the Principality and you can see the stars beyond that and, and you can tell that there is something like undesignated, unrecorded, something wrong about this view, because it's not the view that you're supposed to see. 'Cause it doesn't have the, it's not been boxed in yet. You know? This is what space really looks like, in a sense.

JACK: Um, and I think, um... Clementine blinks and her eyes are frozen shut. Um, just by, by the vacuum of space. I don't think there's any romanticism in our sci-fi show of characters...

AUSTIN: Especially this season. Yeah.

JACK: But like we are all so planetbound that it would be easy to go like, "Oh, you can be in space." No. She's — her eyes have been frozen shut. Um, and I think that with the strength that is available to her, she prays to Perennial. And I'm going to spend five dogma. Or five interpretation.

AUSTIN: Which one?

JACK: And... I want to hunt in my discard... Ooh [clicks tongue] oh man! Austin, this is the last challenge of the game!

AUSTIN: This is. So what do you do?

JACK: What will you do? You'll give me another challenge?

AUSTIN: No, no. A dogma ends it. This is up to you. But this is, for me this is color. I mean, this is the, the, the, I don't know if you've done this on purpose or not, but you could have solved this entire journey after the first challenge. With the first challenge you got, you got your 15th dogma point. At that point...

JACK: And then I could have just bought my way out.

AUSTIN: You could've just bullied your way through. Or not bullied, right? In this way you would have, you would have — if you spend five dogma points, I just skip a challenge. You just skip a challenge. You say, "no, put that card away. Perennial will get me through this." You didn't do that. You pushed through, you dug deep, you played cards that are a high value. And now you've reached this last one. And the question is, do you play cards from your hand? Do you, um, do you expend a Relic? Cause you could, you could, or you could spend the queen ability for instance, and get a new card dealt instead of this one. You could spend dogma, and when you do that, what you do is get saved by the divine. Or you could spend an interpretation: look into your own past, find some solution here, and play it from, from the deck or from the discard pile.

AUSTIN: Um, uh. I think it's fascinating that Clementine Kesh could not eschew her ego enough to take the easy win and cash in on Perennial's favor. But I don't know. I don't know if that's the reading or not. Maybe the reading is that she didn't feel like it was, that she *should* turn to Perennial yet. Maybe she felt like there is, there needed to be something that pushed her that far. Maybe she felt like... Or maybe it was ego. Maybe it was selfishness or like the feeling that like, "no, I need to be in control." I don't know. I think all of these interpretations are up in the air. I get to decide what Perennial thinks, certainly, but... And with Gur, et cetera, but...

JACK: I think she's been backed into a corner... finally, by someone who has picked her up, teleported her into space. You're right, like. I think, I think that you were, that you were right, you know, on both counts where, "oh why didn't she buy her way out?" It's it's that she wanted control, and it's also that she felt this, this inchoate feeling that she was being tested in some way, that she had to, you know, um, demonstrate some, some worthiness or some... But again, like, Clementine is not someone who knows how to talk about faith, especially her own. Um, and so I think in this moment, I'm going to spend five dogma and pray. This would usually... If this wasn't the final challenge of the game, this card would go back into your deck and be, uh, possible to be pulled out in future, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. The ace of hearts would come back into my deck and at some point maybe it would show back up.

JACK: And hearts, um, you know, we've used quite a lot in this game as a way to talk about, um, faith or a test of faith. Um. And so I think the prayer that Clementine makes is... God, so she, I think she just starts by saying, "send me back to Partizan." Uh, and then I think she says... [in realization] Yeah, I think, god, I think it is, I think it is both a genuine plea, and also, because it's Clementine, she doesn't know how to phrase it as anything other than a demand. What is the difference between a prayer and a demand? Gur would know. Clementine doesn't. I think Clementine says,

3:00:15

JACK (as Clem): Send me back to Partizan. Give me something else to do. Or give me something other... Send me back to Partizan. Give me something other than this.

AUSTIN: I mean, this is going to work because you're spending the points, right. Um, I think there is a moment. What is the ideogram for "name?"

JACK: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: Or "self." Big one, I know.

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah. Let me look at the list we have so far and see if there's anything. Uh, is it something to do with, uh, like a hand holding a pen? Is it a, um, is it, uh, is it a, it's a... It's a stylus. Or...

AUSTIN: It's a stylus. I like that. Yeah. So. As you say this prayer, some of those satellites, or maybe the stars themselves, you can't tell, and maybe you're hallucinating, realign themselves in front of you. And it is just the symbol "name" and the blinking pulsing purple star. Like the period on the screen that said "your name is Clementine." But here there's a sense that it's a question and you don't know if she's asking you to

say her name or to give yourself a new one, or to name your enemy, or to name something, but she's asking you for that.

JACK: Oh, God. Um. I don't think Clementine, I don't think Clementine knows what the right answer is. Uh, and so she just, she, you know, she just begins, ice forming around her lips, to say, you know, like,

JACK (as Clem): My name is Clementine. I was born on Lanophon 5 in 1400. This is the moon of Partizan. My mother is Crysanth Kesh. Um, um, you are Perennial. Um, Gur Sevraq saved my life.

JACK: Um, it's just, it's [stammers] someone waking from a dream and trying to work out what the person wants them to say.

AUSTIN: Is there something — this thing I like about this is, instead of giving the grand act of "and here it is, my new, my new cynosure, my new..."

JACK: I'm giving myself a...

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. What you're doing is an accounting of your life, which I don't think Clem has ever done before in her life.

JACK: And I don't think it's a good or complete account of her life.

AUSTIN: No, no.

JACK: Is the other thing. She's not, this is not a confession. She is not saying "I have treated people badly." She's saying things like, um, you know, uh, she's saying like, "I was on the rowing team" or she's saying, like, "I swore at the galley staff." There are elements where, where there is a confession, right? There are elements of confession here, but this is not, this is an accounting, not... This is a, um... This is not a perfect accounting, and I use perfect there in the sense of completeness.

AUSTIN: Right. The gaps are revealing, in a way.

JACK: Right. Yeah, absolutely.

AUSTIN: This is interesting because it reminds me of a mechanic from The Veil, which we used in the first half of Twilight Mirage, in which one of the characters could draw on the true name of, of someone in order to do something magical, basically. And what we determined was that no one has a single true name.

JACK: [enthusiastically] Yes!

AUSTIN: This is not about like learning the heart of someone. Um, it's learning about a heart of someone. Everyone has many true names. Everyone has the name that their

parents call them. The name of their, that their lover calls them. The name that their best friends call them. The names that they use in private spaces, online or, or in clubs. They have the role they play on their teams, or they have the name of the band that they're in. All sorts of little true names. Um, and I think there's a, uh, an, a reflection — again, not a, not a beautiful reflection of it, necessarily, not a moral reflection of it — but of Clem... of this being part of Clem's true name, is how she thinks about her own life.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: In any case. You're in the fucking sea. And you go from one sort of suffocation to the next, as you scramble up through the, the water and the ice, you are *freezing* cold. And you are not alone. Um, you see the bodies of Gur Sevraq and, uh, Emaline, also having been crushed down into the sea at some point, perhaps while you were up in space. And Present is gone, seemingly. Assuming you've been dealt with once and for all. But you haven't been. And you drag the bodies of your compatriots — actually — fuck that. [Jack laughs] Emaline drags you out. Uh, I think actually you kind of just, you're in the ocean. You're, you're, you know, flailing around, you see Gur in the sea, you lose consciousness... And when you come to, Gur is next to you back on the beach and, you know, in between, breaking the sight line as, as you kind of look at them groggily, is Emaline kind of poking her head down with her big glasses. Um, I imagine her with a bun, uh, and, and she is like,

AUSTIN (as Emaline): It's all right. It's all right. It's, we're fine.

AUSTIN: Uh, you're left to look out on the coastal, coastline and there's something you didn't see before — not now at the, the, um, the bridge of ice, which is cracking and clearly not safe to cross. There is a little ship, not a spaceship, a little boat, you know, like a, like a, like a sailboat... that is just like docked off to the coast by about a mile away, walking. And you're freezing cold as you start walking that way. Um, but you're able to get there. And this is the six of effort, your final relic. There is, uh, when you go onto the ship, there is a, uh... and you get into the bridge and you begin to warm up. There's like a heater. Gur walks over and hands you, um, the, the, or like shows you something that they found, and it's like the registration documents to the vessel. Um, and they say, uh,

AUSTIN (as Gur): It seems like it's all on the up and up, but it hasn't been given a name yet. How did you sur—... [sighs] What should we call this thing?

JACK: There's what would I name a boat and there's what would Clementine name a boat.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Which are very different things.

JACK: What was the full name of the Hellebore?

AUSTIN: The Hellebore or the Ivory Prince.

JACK: Yeah, I think it's the, I think it's the Hellebore. [Austin laughs] I think Clementine, through chattering teeth... Clementine, through chattering teeth, says,

JACK (as Clem): Perennial returned the Hellebore to me.

[Austin laughs]

JACK: Um, And, and, and like, and real — this is a joke. Realizes that it's a joke. Or, you know, who the fuck knows this might be the Hellebore returned by Perennial, but like Clementine knows that that is the joke. This isn't Clementine being like... Or, no, actually there might be level that Clementine is like, "I have been gifted the Hellebore by Perennial," but from the, from the look on Clementine's face, you know, like, um, bruising around her eyes and mouth from the, from the change in pressure. Um, this is, there is something funny about this.

AUSTIN: Um, and you smell the, you have the smell of fresh bread.

JACK: Yeah! Oh...

AUSTIN: "My ship turns into bread, turns into a boat!" Who could say, who could say.

JACK: It's incredible!

AUSTIN: So. This is super interesting. At five floors or above, uh, you are no longer able to flee your faith, no matter how hard you wish for it. So you cannot walk away from it. The way this works is, including points earned and spent, consider the state of the tower. As we narrate the end of this game, we are going to exchange, uh, you know, authorship, and it's going to go in a certain order, depending on how much dogma, interpretation and disappointment there is. Low disappointment: so, uh, not that one. I believe — did you ever spend inter — you spent, you spent interpretation once, right? Because there was the ace.

JACK: Uh huh. I spent dogma and interpretation once each.

AUSTIN: Oh, you did sp —or right, yeah yeah, right, correct. So it should be, the dogma is minus five to a 10, uh, and then interpretation is actually the highest here, which is interesting. Bcause you spent it once, which means it was actually... you had, you gained 18 points of interpretation, because you currently have 13 points. Which means that as we narrate the end of this, the Pilgrim narrates at the beginning of the ending, then the divine interjects, and then the Pilgrim concludes.

[long pause]

AUSTIN: What's it look like as the Hellebore, the Day's Eye, the arms of Vessel's Gold, the prophet Gur Sevraq, the engineer Emaline, and her dog, Poppy...

JACK: [laughingly] Her landmine-blessed dog, Poppy.

AUSTIN: Come to the end of this journey?

JACK: I think that Clementine is, is warming up, and is deeply regretful that she did not bring any Russian Sage from the island.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: It's too late to turn back. Um, she, she, uh... She wishes that she had a memento, but she thinks that if she asks Gur Sevraq about it, they might be able to offer some sort of, some sort of, um, saying or perspective that will make her feel less bad about that. And at that point, the boat's propeller becomes choked in a long, um, like a seaweed, like the Sargasso Sea, you know, of, uh, is this what I'm thinking of? There's a particular image. Yes. Google the Sargasso Sea.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

JACK: Uh, of just like the bay, *of course* the bay is fucking full of, of russian sage floating on the water. Uh, and, uh, uh, Perennial is not going to let Clementine get away with just like... Who knows, Perennial might just be like, "Oh, fuckin, of, it means, take some Russian Sage. It means nothing to me." Um, and so Clementine reaches over and cuts off a sprig of Russian Sage and puts it in her hair, or tucks it behind her ear. And the boat, the boat begins to pull away out of the russian sage and out of the bay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Into the Prophet's Sea.

AUSTIN: Um, so. Now it's my turn. I think, you know, behind you as you leave, um, we get another shot of the, the Community at Chorus Island and it is covered in the stuff, you know, it is, it has been, it has been Annihilation-ed. You know? The, the sage has covered each of the buildings here. Um, and, um, in fact, you see, uh, or maybe you don't see, but the camera sees, that there is now... from where the, um, the sage had been, had been growing south through the Community to the, to the coast, a dock built, as if to say, "anytime you want to come back, you can come back."

[Jack chuckles]

JACK: We don't, Clementine doesn't know this, or Gur doesn't know this, right? We're not able to see this.

AUSTIN: No, no. But I think the world, the world has adjusted such, in that way. Um, um, well, and, and so I think here's the final thing is, when you look up, when *you* and Gur, and I think maybe this is part of the journey, look up to the night sky... I think one night, Emaline sees you looking up at the night sky in your ritual of tracing the constellation of Perennial. And she is like,

AUSTIN (as Emaline): What are you looking at?

AUSTIN: And it takes her a while, but after a few days of the journey, she starts to see it. And you realize it takes a certain sort of thing to see the constellation. Um, and I think it, it takes her like un, uninitiated perspective to, to make you realize this. She says like,

AUSTIN (as Emaline): It's so hard to see 'cause it's constantly changing.

AUSTIN: Um, and it's like, um, it's like seeing... You ever look at helicopter blades, as they spin, and you know that thing where like, they go so fast that you can't tell that they're moving.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: They look like, solid, especially with like, through a certain camera at a certain frames per second. Um, she says this and it kicks in and you can see that the constellation is like, moving in the sky, but it's moving so fast that it's like, you only could catch certain frames of it before. You could only see it as a solid object. But now with this new initiate's perspective, um, you see it moving. You can, you can just, you can force yourself to see it. And you know that soon enough she will stop seeing it moving unless she tries really hard, you know? Um, it's like becoming, it's like forgetting, it's like being unable to see the other half of an optical illusion. Um, but the wheel spins, right? Um, I think there might be a moment here where you feel a little bit of what Gur Sevraq felt during the early conversations about faith with you, which is like, "okay, you got a lot, you got a lot to learn still." I mean you're still... Emaline is *very* outside of all of this.

JACK: Yeah. Yeah. Is it like, is she like, um, so can we pr, is there a bit of her that's like, well, "can we predict what she's going to do next?"

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And like, whoa!

AUSTIN: Yeah, slow down. No.

JACK: [chuckling] No.

AUSTIN: Not at all!

JACK: Not even a bit! Um, yeah. And I think that, um, you know, the boat is adrift, it's moving, but it's not necessarily moving with particular purpose. We're going to run out of food, but we're going to be able to get somewhere that...

AUSTIN: Has food...

JACK: Like theoretically, the risk, you know, we can pull into a port somewhere eventually.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: We know where we are, there are there are documents. But the boat is drifting and Clementine is asleep in a, lying just lying in the bottom of the boat. Um, she's, she's, uh, balled up some blankets or something that they found in a, in a trunk. And in her dream, she wakes in her blue bedroom in the Winter Palace. And her butler is there and the, the person who comes in and helps her dress, and, uh, uh... In the, out of the window, she can see Crysanth, um, you know, working in the garden — not working in the garden, *walking* in the garden, doing probably what Crysanth does, which is very calculatedly move a flower and say I'm, you know, I'm being the good host to the, to the person that she's talking to or wining and dining.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Inaudible. And, uh, you know, uh, further down the gravel path, walking with purpose towards the house comes Sovereign Immunity. Um, breakfast is being laid out for Clementine and, uh... It is, uh, you know, it's... It's like eggs Benedict or something. Um, and there is a glass of, a little carafe of orange juice, and a little carafe of Lambic beer, which is strange, Clementine thinks, because, well, first she knows she's dreaming. And then, I was never served beer for breakfast. Uh, it would have, it would have been a faux pas and, and who knows that I like this Lambic beer anyway? She raises the beer to her lips to take a sip and it begins to drown her. Just, just, uh, the room tilts so she is now lying on her back, the water pours down on her, it's pressing down on her and, um, she can feel it on her face and, uh, around her eyes and it's stinging her eyes. And in that moment she wakes up and it is with real palpable relief and comfort that she raises her hand to her face and goes,

JACK (as Clem): Oh, it's just the sprig of Russian Sage growing over my eyes.

JACK: Not in the Annihilation sense of like, it is, it is becoming part of me, but the Sage that was in her hair has grown down over her face to form a mask over... I don't know whether or not it's a mask over the full top half of her face, or if it's just more of a mask around her eyes.

AUSTIN: Almost a blindfold of Sage.

JACK: Like a blindfold of sage. Um, of the, of the pale purple sage. But it is with, it is with absolute familiarity that Clementine goes, "I am not being drowned in beer. The sage is just growing over my eyes." Uh, and turns in her bed and falls back asleep again.

AUSTIN: I think as you drift to sleep the camera at kind of the, the rear of the ship holds still, uh, as the ship slowly pulls away, as your boat pulls away. Um, and, and so it's almost as if the boat gets further away, more of its direction is revealed. Um, and there far in the distance, almost, uh, in, in the side of some hills on the shore, probably a day or two away, you see, or, or the viewer sees, um, as you sleep, gold and glass shimmering in an overcast sky. It is the body of Past, still damaged, but somewhat repaired, um, in a little cove hidden away from the rest of Kesh territory that you have been guided to. And I don't know that you know that until you awake.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I almost imagine this is like a deep dreamless sleep as you get closer and closer. Um, um, and in fact, I want to, as you, as you wake up at a dock nearby, just a little, not a dock, but like, you know, uh, or not a harbor, but a little dock, just a little wooden, you know, thing. Um, you feel Perennial's presence diminished here. It's still there. The, the wave is still here. It's as if you're swimming in the water, but the, the, the coloring of the water or the smell of the chlorine or something, the characteristic of the pool is missing, or is diminished in some way. Um, And, you know, I think Emaline is, is kind of kicking her, her feet off the side of the boat. Uh, kinda sitting on the side, petting Poppy. Um, Gur is in the kind of, uh, captain's, uh, you know, like with the pilot room.

JACK: The bridge?

AUSTIN: The bridge, the bridge. Thank you. Of this, of this boat. Um, and looking out on this thing, on Past. What do you do?

JACK: Gosh. I think like a, like a, like a glance, like a shared glance with Gur Sevraq. Um, and I don't know what, I don't know what Clementine is hoping for, to receive from Gur. Um, but I think that, that Clementine is looking between Gur and between the, the body of Past, which, it must just be gigantic.

AUSTIN: It's gigantic. It's a city, right?

JACK: Is there, there's broken glass on the dock, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's like when a window breaks or something and it goes everywhere. This is a city made of glass, this is...

AUSTIN: Even just like, in the moving the, the, the bits that they recovered from Apostolos, plus the creation of what was missing before. I, I mean, as a reminder, that's the thing that's weird about this image is like, you saw the divine Past crash against, against the, the desert, outside of Obelle.

JACK: Far away.

AUSTIN: Right. And, and there's something with the way this thing is being rebuilt, where it's not being rebuilt... It's not being rebuilt the way you see like a construction site and it's being rebuilt. There is something weirdly ritualistic in which the damage is being retained. Um, you know, normally you'd be like, all right, "well, let's knock out all the broken windows all the way, and then we'll come back in and we'll do windows and then we'll come back and we'll do, or we'll do core structure stuff." This is like, it's almost as if it's healing more than it's being, um, more than it's being repaired, if that makes sense?

JACK: Mm. Yes.

AUSTIN: Um, as if it's stitching itself back together in the, in the shadow of this kind of hilled cove. Um, uh, and I think Gur, at seeing that look, first of all just kind of has a sort of, I don't know if you read it as concern or if you read it as distraction, but looking out on it — or if it's a reaction to Past, or if it's, you know, taking in all the last few weeks of what this has been, um, but there is a distance here between you and Gur, um, that there hasn't been on the journey so far. I don't think it's, it's not anger or anything like that. Um, but it's, but it's there. Um, and I think they say, um,

AUSTIN (as Gur): Do you think she wants it? The body of Past?

JACK (as Clem): I don't know whether or not it is our place to determine what she wants. We know for a fact that we have been brought here. I certainly wasn't steering.

AUSTIN (as Gur): [slight laugh or sigh] Well...

AUSTIN: And begins to head off the dock, or the ship, then the dock, and onto the beach and walking towards this divine.

JACK: Yeah, like, crunch of broken glass under Clementine's feet.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's just something. You say it, you say it's it's healing. Are there people here repairing?

AUSTIN: There are. So there are people here, but it's almost as if they're in an oversight capacity more than, uh, more than... I mean, I want to be clear, yes, there are,

there are parts being brought in. Um, but, but there's that sense of like... You've played Inside?

JACK: Yeah, I love Inside.

AUSTIN: You know those bits throughout Inside where like, things go in and other things come out, and there's like, there's, there's a, one of the things that game does really well is opacity. Is like it, um, opacity and then revelation, right? Um, it feels as if raw materials are being brought in and then what's coming out is Past, but you don't necessarily see the engineers or the...

JACK: Or the interim steps.

AUSTIN: Right. You don't see the depths. You don't see... There aren't the amount of people necessary to rebuild a city this quickly here, which...

JACK: What colors are these people wearing, are they wearing insignia or?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. These people are in the uniform of the Curtain. Uh, just the same as what Emaline was wearing when you found Emaline. And the other people from the Curtain that you killed, uh, as a reminder.

JACK: Uh, what's Emaline doing, is she just following? Her and Poppy are just following Gur up the um...?

AUSTIN: No, I think, I think they're staying on the boat. They assume that you're here to do something. Um, and I think about 200 yards from a gate, Gur stops. Um, and says,

AUSTIN (as Gur): I believe, I believe she wants you—... I can go no further.

JACK: I think the time when Clementine would have been surprised at the return of something from the dead is long passed. What's the first? The first, the first law is "there is a reason why I'm alive."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um, and, and I think that to be... This all began for Clementine — okay, this isn't true. This all began for Clementine when she was born. Right? When the scion of Stel Kesh was dressed in, in the finest, chicest baby clothes and the silver spoon was taken from her mouth.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Clementine, for a long time and probably still inside her, believes that this began when Past crashed into the desert and when the Rapid Evening and her were sent out.

Um, and I think that, I think that, um... I think that Clementine is not surprised that things move in circles and that she has been led to the body of Past. Clementine is alive. Gur is alive. Trials have been overcome. A boat has been brought to the body of Past. [Austin chuckles] Um, and so I think Clementine, you know, nods at Gur, uh, and says,

JACK (as Clem): Wait here, keep an eye on the boat.

JACK: Uh, and, and, and crosses the gate towards the working Curtain agents.

AUSTIN: So. As you get closer, you feel that that distance between Perennial getting even further.

JACK: Not a good feeling.

AUSTIN: I thought about playing, I thought about playing the card that I still have in my hand. I know we ended the game, uh, but you may recall that at some point I took a card from you and I could just play that again. I could just right now say, actually, let's hack this game, I know we finished that trial, but let me just do this. But I actually think the thing that, *again*, you realize as you draw closer is, at this point, at least, Perennial is absent from Past. Or. It's as if you've crossed the chalk line or the line of salt or that the vampire hasn't been invited in. Do you know what I mean?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And we know this to some degree already about the Perennial Wave. We know the Perennial Wave doesn't affect Divines. And here from your perspective, I think maybe the camera, at least, if not Clementine, can understand a little bit that whatever that is is real, that there is a distance there. Um. And as you get close, I think you see these Curtain agents kind of like, you know, do what the other ones did, who failed, by the way, to report back, as you might recall. [Jack chuckles] Um, uh, uh, and they kind of like take up a defensive position. Um, and, and I'm curious if this is a moment where you realize, or wonder, "Is this it? Did Perennial breathe life back into me so that I could invite her in to the Divine Past? So that I could breach the wall that she couldn't?" Um, because you are Clementine. Uh, and I think as you get closer, they do look up to you and they go,

AUSTIN (as Curtain Agent): Ms. Kesh?

AUSTIN: And one of them salutes. And the other one says,

AUSTIN (as Curtain Agent): What are you doing here? You're supposed to be... I believe funeral preparations are...

JACK: There is just a great yawning chasm of anxiety in Clementine of feeling this distance, um, and feeling this, um... By now, Clementine has learned not to ascribe intention to Perennial or not to, um, not to assume, after, after the fiasco with the, uh,

with the golden ship. [Austin laughs] Uh, and after, and after everything, it's just like, you are wasting time if you try to second guess things. Um, uh, but I think that... I think that in that discomfort, Clementine reaches out for the feeling of being in the Sage house. The feeling of looking up through the flowers with Gur... And, and finds that as lessened as that proximity is, there is still... And it's not a comfort. Perennial is not a comforting presence. It's a... It's something around which you can, um, you can hold yourself and be held. Um, and, and so I think that, you know, uh, though we don't see it, uh, Clementine resolves herself, as this, as this figure, as this agent. We don't see that. What we see is, you know, Clementine straighten her back and, you know, adopt, uh, the, the, the, the mask of imperiousness, uh, of the scion of Kesh and salutes the two, uh, guards and says,

3:31:23

JACK (as Clem): Stand down. Thank you for your concern. We've got a lot of work to do.

JACK: Uh, and without waiting for a reply, just like, uh, boots across broken glass into the, the facility of Past.

AUSTIN: As you move through, it's, that sound of boots across broken glass is constant. Um, uh, you know, I think that there are like, you know, um, high-anime ways we could play this and, you know, kind of realistic or naturalistic ways. And I want to hit a tone somewhere in between, which is that like you've begun to carry the sound of broken glass with you... um, a little bit here as you move through this place. Um, it's not quite, the glass hovers around you. Uh, you know, you are not actually, uh, a, um, a full-scale Destiny witch, uh, at this point. But, uh, there is that there is that extra sense of, of something as you move through the halls of this place. And eventually as you... I think that they like give you a tour, they're like, ah, "here's where we're at with this. Here's the degree that this is is done. Um, it should be a few more years until it's *complete* complete." Um, and then they lead you to what I guess you would call the heart of it? Which I imagine to be almost like a, an hourglass in shape. Um, uh, I don't know that it's actually an hour — I don't think there's sand falling in here, right. But like, uh, it is that, that shape of kind of bronze and glass. Though maybe there is something moving in there maybe it's like, maybe it is like little, little, um, you know, particles of something moving back and forth inside of this structure. Or seemingly falling forever. It doesn't move back and forth. It's like, it's always, it's like an hourglass that's always going down, but never depletes. Right? And never fills up.

JACK: Awful.

AUSTIN: Um, uh, and you feel the space where Perennial was in your self, um, pushed in against, by the Divine Past, who you realize in this moment, um, feels shackled. Uh, I think that you see that there are, that there are devices kind of attached to this part of the vessel. Um, and you realize that this is something... The Curtain has done this to Past.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: To keep it... to let it heal, but not give it freedom. After all, Past is a member of the divine pact or the, not the divine pact, the Pact of Necessary Venture. Um, uh, and so, uh, I think that there is a moment here where this thing is trying to, like a leashed dog, snap at you, but also, you know the snapping is because it's hungry. Not because it's cruel. Though maybe it's also a little cruel, but you know what I'm saying. This moment of snapping is... It doesn't want to be chained up in this way. And, um, um, yeah, it's, it's, it's looking for, for, for freedom.

JACK: What, what is a divine without a body? Um...

AUSTIN: I mean, it has a body. The body's already — you're in the body.

JACK: I mean, but what happens if you... Can you sever it from its body? What happens if we break this?

AUSTIN: I, well, we know that what would happen is... Oh, so when you say break it, do you mean to break the, the kind of hourglass structure? Or do you mean to break the chains, so to speak?

JACK: Yeah. Break the hourglass structure.

AUSTIN: Right. I think the hourglass structure would, would. Revert the... The healing, so to speak, the structural healing would remain, but you would lose access to all the information here. You would lose access to its ability to fly. You'd lose access to the things that make it a body and a ship. Um, uh, freeing it, I think would be a weird negotiation, potentially? I don't know.

JACK: There is no way Clementine is... There's no way Clementine is releasing something like that.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Firstly, because of her — like, she was just dropped from space by Gallica. Um, and so maybe more than ever before, Clementine is someone who believes, and always has been, who believes in the, the, um, scope of the universe working as it relates to her. Uh, and I think that, you know, she has, she has. She has encountered the Pact personally and violently more strongly than she had in the last six months of her time with the Rapid Evening.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And so, firstly, there's no way that she will release, release that. I think also on some level she won't release it because she is Clementine. Because she believes fundamentally in the value to her of having something on a leash.

AUSTIN: Yeah. More and more you remind me of people from past seasons, Clementine. People who held thrones and thought that things look better on leashes, is all I'll say.

[Jack chuckles]

JACK: And found themselves, found themselves in close proximity to Divines.

AUSTIN: To Divines, yeah. Uh-huh. Thought they knew fucking best. Um, so I guess that's my question then. I guess the, the, the kind of big question is, do you then invite Perennial in and keep Past on a leash? Are you commandeering this thing? Are you, are you taking something from it?

JACK: No, I think it just, I think the wheel turns and I think it turns in, in, in, in manners both inexorable and very sudden. You know, I think, I think that when Clementine reached into herself and reached into that well of faith as she crossed the threshold, um... she was placing herself in the hands of what was going to happen.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And I think that, you know, work crews shift schedules. You know, maybe one day Clementine feels the presence closer and then feels it abated again, uh, and, and changes her angle slightly.

AUSTIN: [amused] Do you like immediately say, "all right, you, no reporting outside of this unit. No one is allowed to know, uh, what's happening here. High orders, uh, very secret operation. Don't, don't tell my mom."

JACK: I think she just replaces somebody with Emaline.

AUSTIN: Oh, right. Instantly. And Emaline suddenly is following you around as like your attaché, as your like secretary almost.

JACK: And then maybe... Do other people show up? Maybe just like another boat arrives?

AUSTIN: A boat of refugees arrives. People fleeing from one of the nearby skirmishes. Um, they pulled into the cove unwittingly. Um, you know. We've said this, we said this during the Kingdom game, um, boat traffic is historically very carefully monitored, which is why you could hide a city in a cove, uh, because there aren't free traders in this world, like you don't just go get a boat. Um, even rich people have to stay on certain territory. The imperial waters are very carefully controlled.

JACK: I guess there's no international waters on Partizan because everything is so locked down.

AUSTIN: There are, the Isles of Logos area is kind of it, right. Um, is the closest thing. Um, but yes, exactly. But when, but it turns out, when you have war and strife, people are going to go try to survive. And so, yeah, I think just like a boat showed up at Icebreaker in the middle of the sea, looking for a home, a boat of people shows up here and many of them are injured and wounded. Um, many of them are distraught. Um, Uh, but what you just told me is Clementine looks at things and says, "what is their value to me?"

JACK: Always has.

AUSTIN: Miserable.

JACK: Um, I think there are some very big exceptions. I think there are some *very* big exceptions. I think that, um, the, the, the mask of purple flowers over her face is an area that she feels on spectacularly shaky ground with. Um, but it's, you know, on some levels, I think she feels that that empowers her to act.

AUSTIN: Yeah. By the time this happens, I think, if Emaline is here, if Emaline is here and you're here, I think maybe the question of like, "do you invite Perennial in" is wrong. It's "when you reached for her from inside, you brought her with you." Right? Um, and so I think over those days, even ahead of the refugees showing up, um, you get, you know, little bits of the Russian Sage growing throughout the ship from the cracks in the corners as if, as if there were seeds planted in the walls and the floors. Um, um, and I think Gur does eventually... is able to come in, um, uh, with, with the safety of Perennial, um, and begins to advise you more directly. Um, not to just paint him as a Wormtongue immediately. Um, but like when those refugees show up, Gur Sevraq is the one who is like, "we have supplies."

JACK: Uh huh. Uh huh.

AUSTIN: Like, "we should take care of these people."

JACK: And, you know, differently to before... Clementine is listening. Not always listening in good grace, and definitely not always listening with perfect understanding, though she might believe that she has it. But as opposed to an Icebreaker where, you know, Gur and Clementine would fight constantly, where Gur would give one piece of utterly sensible advice and Clementine would shriek and stamp her feet and say, absolutely not. Um, Clementine has time for Gur in a way that she didn't necessarily have before.

AUSTIN: Right. I think even for Gur that is having maneuvered the board right. Um, there is, there is something like dark and unhealthy still about this relationship in a big way, because it is still basically two people looking at each other and saying, "how do I best make you useful?"

JACK: [sarcastically] There's something unhealthy about the relationship between Clementine and Gur Sevraq?

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Well, and underneath that I think is... For Gur, at least, probably not for Clem, but you tell me, is Gur saying, "how do I make myself useful?" given the circumstances.

JACK: I think Clementine feels that way, but not, not towards Gur.

AUSTIN: Right. Right, right. I think like a few weeks in. while walking around this place, you start to notice a sound, and I don't know how quickly you, you put it together, but it is the mewing of a cat, or I guess I should be more specific. It is the sound of many cats.

JACK: God.

AUSTIN: Um, I don't know if you remember this.

JACK: [amused] An escalating number?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh huh. At first you're like, "I think all those cats I killed and sacrificed in the name of Perennial as a naive and foolish way of offering the Adversary something, because I don't fucking understand how religion works."

JACK: Or anything.

AUSTIN: Or anything.

JACK: Well, what I understand is pain and activity.

AUSTIN: And activity.

JACK: So let's kill some cats... [chuckles]

AUSTIN: Um, at first you're like, "they're all back" and that might be true. I actually, I suspect they went missing and here they are, but that doesn't stop. They keep showing up.

JACK: God...

AUSTIN: Um, the body of the divine Past is now filled with cats. Not filled, you know, it's not Trouble With Tribbles. It's not, it's not comedic.

JACK: Right. We don't open a door and a bunch of cats start pouring out.

AUSTIN: No, though, that happens every once in a while. [laughingly] Do you know what I mean? Once a month.

JACK: It's just like, Clem goes to sit down somewhere and there's a cat there.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent.

JACK: Or like, or like, um, you know, a delegation from somewhere or another like sneezes and Clementine is like "oh jesus christ, what..."

AUSTIN: "These fucking cats." You open your bedroom door and a cat runs out, which you did not know was there, and you have to think, "did this thing make a fucking mess in my bed?" Did this — what happened?

JACK: And sometimes it did.

AUSTIN: And sometimes it did. Yeah. Uh huh. Um, so, you know, all things — the wheel turns, I believe is what Perennial says.

JACK: You know, the wheel turns, the wheel turns for everything. It turns for blades of grass. It tends for spoiled princesses. It turns for tabby cats lying on the pillow of people who don't expect or want them to be there.

AUSTIN: It does. Over the next, you know, month. Weeks. Weeks? I guess, let me think... I guess it's not that long from here when you lift off. Um, and by then, and I'm 90% sure it's

Emaline's fault. You find that the people who've come to join your ship, to live on, uh, this, this new home of yours. Um, in this new court. This has kind of a fae court vibe also, people go missing and they show up in, fucking, the body of Past. Um, the kind of new arrivals have begun to call you something else. Um, partly it's because of the sound you make when you walk around, partly it's because of the, uh, the characteristics of your vessel, which I don't know if you want to rename it or not, because right now it's just called Past, but I doubt... You're not the elect of Past, by any fucking means!

JACK: [with contempt] No way! Yeah, I think, I think that, I think that this. This, this vessel, this thing that was and is kind of a Divine that has been inhabited like a cuckoo in the nest of another bird by, uh, a Divine and someone who's, who's not the elect of that Divine either, who's sort of a...

AUSTIN: Well there couldn't be, right? Perennial does not. Perennial is not a Principality Divine. She does not take elects by any means at this point.

JACK: I'm sort of a zealot. A sort of a witch, right?

AUSTIN: A witch. Right. Well, this is... It's funny you say that because, because of the sound you make, because of your perspective, looking down in the rest of this glass structure, they start to call you the Witch in the Glass. Sometimes the Witch in Glass for short. You are the witch of Perennial now, uh, which does not mean the things we often think about with witches. Um, uh, I mean, sure. You've begun to dig into the, the hall of records of Past, to find new and strange ways to heal people who are hurt. Emaline has taken up, uh, that, that, uh, as well, um, as an engineer. Um, but, but you settle into that role nicely. I don't know. I don't know — what do you — there's an old Batman animated series episode in which it's revealed Bruce Wayne only ever thinks of himself as Batman. When he thinks about who he is internally, if says like, I am blank, what he would say is I am Batman, Bruce Wayne is a face I put on. Um, and I'm curious, I'm guessing, you tell me, is Clementine still Clementine?

[Jack thinks for a bit]

JACK: I think so. Yeah, I think so. I think, I think that. It's it's how she felt when she was tumbling over the moon, right? Um, but at the same time underneath it, like a, like a, like a drone in music, you know, adding color to a chord, um, there is this, this purple of the russian sage.

AUSTIN: And it's growing.

[short music sting]

3:46:58 [Shift to Millennium Break]

AUSTIN: It is approximately one day before the red light falls on Oxbridge, and Sovereign Immunity, you are being escorted by the Figure in Bismuth to the Reflecting Pool, to the body of Past, for your audience with the Witch in Glass. Um, but before you get there, uh, let me just paint you a picture — of like what's going on in the revived body of Past, which has now become a sort of home to a new, like refugee commune led by the Witch in Glass and seemingly powered not only by the divine power that's already in Past but also, uh, by, by some extra weird Perennial magic stuff going on.

AUSTIN: Um, I think as you move through the halls of like, you know... This is glass and gold, all of the stuff that we associate with Past. You see a lot of things. One is like, it's, it's working. Um, you know, it's, it's a huge city that flies around in the sky. Uh, it's almost like a giant, it almost looks from the outside, like a giant greenhouse or something, right? Like even one of the touchstones here is specifically and always has been the World's Fair Crystal Palace, uh, in, in London. Um, and, uh, from the, from the outside, it's just like these huge walls of glass. Uh, but inside it's always been just kind of like rows and rows and rows of, um, you know, bookcases and server banks and things that hold information. There's, there are a number of museums in this thing probably. Uh, and all of it is like...

AUSTIN: Imagine you're walking through a space where you've been given the set design or someone set designed it according to like this idea of something being halted mid-repair or like mid-revival. Um, and, and the way it's, it's like that it's almost as if things have been left unfinished, but not unfinished in the way that like... not like, okay, if something has to be built out of 10 parts and it, you put down part one, part two, part three, it's not that like, "Oh yeah parts seven through ten are missing." It's like parts two and eight and four are missing. And that stuff makes the whole thing feel sort of corrupted, or again, kind of unfinished. Um, but there are people who are finishing that work.

AUSTIN: Throughout the halls of this place there's almost like a, the sense of this kind of collective effort to finish the work of repairing this flying city, and to kind of make it suit the needs of the people here. Um, you know, you pass by dozens of people. Many of whom are people who fled from, uh, the various battles across Partizan, some of whom, you know, were recovered from battlegrounds, uh, or from, you know, the destroyed cities, the way that the Figure in Bismuth was. Many of them have clearly have been gifted, you know, some sort of similar Perennial blessing as, as the Figure in Bismuth, the kind of a crystalline structure, or a lot of people have plant life seemingly integrated into their bodies along with more traditional prosthetics and, and, uh, other sorts of stuff. And also there are some people here who are, who don't show any physical, you know, sign of wound or damage or disability, uh, who are here because they simply fled and were brought on board.

AUSTIN: And everyone seems to be working with a sort of purpose. I don't mean like a droning zombie-like purpose, but like a sort of like collective, "I know what I'm working on, I believe what I'm working on" sense. Um, you've seen similar stuff in like Oxblood-run factories before. Or, where you're from, in Nidean temples right, like the sort of like "buy in" way where people really buy into what they're working on. Or Apostolisian military, right? Um, the, the sort of like, "okay, I'm part of this thing." Um, and I think you are led by a woman who, who is again a little peppy, a little, a little, um, a little... Just like more excited to be in such a weird place than you would ever imagine. Um, uh, and along with the, the...

ART: Some like Isabelle energy.

[Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: [enthusiastically] Yeah! You know? is that right ,Jack?

JACK: Yeah. Is this who I think it is?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. This is, this is, so the...

JACK: Is there like a truly awful dog following her as well?

AUSTIN: [enthusiastically] Yeah! Uh huh. There's a truly awful dog that has some cyborg parts in it, um, uh, that is just like, I think it probably like sniffs you as you come up, Sovereign Immunity, and then kind of like sits like a — it's like a big, like, you know, you know how some dogs are big when even when they just sit and they try to sit up straight, it's like, they've kind of flopped to the ground. Um, that's this dog, this giant hyena robot dog has done this. Um, and, and this is Emaline Eccles who is, who is one of the people who kind of are in the, whatever, council, I guess, of the Witch in Glass. Um, and she, along with I think the Figure in Bismuth, lead you through this place, give you the kind of like short tour, the sort of like, the tour when you're on your way somewhere where you go, "Oh yeah, down there, that's where the good sandwiches are." you know, and you keep going. And eventually lead you to the throne room of the Witch in Glass. Jack, do you want to, do you want to describe this space and whatever whoever's in there or anything like that again for us?

JACK: Yeah. It's like a long room with glass walls and possibly a glass ceiling. I think light falls into this room very brightly, and whatever shapes there are forming the window frames are like, cast long shadows across the room.

AUSTIN: Can you see out into the world from here or do the windows just look out on to other parts of Past? Or it it both?

JACK: I think that, I think it's both. I think that several of the windows look out, almost like a ship's bridge onto the deck of the ship below, but another window is clearly onto like a sheer surface, just dropping straight down below. Um, uh, Clementine's throne is in the center of a long room. It's, it's essentially like a long rectangular room with the throne, uh, in the middle of it, rather than at one end. And it is surrounded by a circle of flowers, of poppies in little individual, little individual vases. There's this really weird fragility to the whole thing. It's, it's like a fairly simple chair surrounded by a circle of flowers. Um, standing behind the throne is Gur Sevrak. Um, how much, are they resting an arm on the back of the throne? What's this image here, Austin?

AUSTIN: Gur has, Gur has always been in an attendant mode when, when you look at them, you know what I mean? And so I don't think it's ever as relaxed as arm, *arm* on the, on the chair, but, but hand on the chair for you, maybe, you know what I mean? Like that, that style of thing?

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: In a position where, where they could quickly lean down and whisper something to you.

JACK: Um, and I, I think that as you, as you enter, um. Oh, well, do you want a moment with Emaline? I don't know.

AUSTIN: No. I think Emaline just like shows you in. Shows, you know, the Figure in Bismuth and, and, uh, uh, Sovereign Immunity in and kind of says, you know, um. Probably is like,

AUSTIN (as Emaline): [whispers] Good luck!

AUSTIN: [laughingly] And gives you a little thumbs up and then kind of quicksteps away.

ART: I'm sorry that I broke the fan art for this character. I really am.

AUSTIN: Now, now.

JACK: [chuckling] By describing her as Isabelle?

AUSTIN: You haven't seen it, you haven't heard it yet, but the game of the tower that Jack and I recorded, I think she kind of already had big Isabelle energy.

JACK: She exudes this big Isabelle energy.

AUSTIN: She really did, so.

JACK: Yeah, she crashes a massive spaceship and goes, "right, well! So I can make the best of this!" [Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah! "Alright, time to make a life on this island." It's just kind of an alternate start to New Horizons.

JANINE: My question is, if, if she's described as Isabelle, then, Isabelle with a, with a big dog, then does it become Isabelle with a human villager?

JACK and AUSTIN: [laughing] No, absolutely not!

JANINE: Okay. Just wanted to clarify.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I appreciate it.

ART: Isabelle with her grotesque human cyborg villager pet. [all laughing] The real bad ending of Animal Crossing.

AUSTIN: "Hey guys, I just got back from, uh, Past? Everything up there is fine! No one should go!"

[all laugh]

AUSTIN: Um, anyway. Yeah. Are there other, are there other people there too, Jack? I know we talked about like Clem's council. You know, Gur is obviously a chaplain, Emaline is like probably a steward. Who would, who do you, I guess the Figure in Bismuth is kind of a marshal.

JACK: Uh huh.

AUSTIN: Who, who do you got for your, uh, what are we missing? We're missing chancellor. We're missing spymaster. You don't have —

JACK: Ah, spymaster.

AUSTIN: Hmm. Yeah.

JACK: Oh boy. Wow. The greatest spymaster in the galaxy, unfortunately, uh, [with conviction] I would never work with, even if she were alive!

AUSTIN: [laughing] Right. Yeah.

JACK: Um, I think, I think that there are, you know, there is, uh, there is, uh... A long-faced woman standing at the back of the hall, uh, and a shorter man standing next to her, uh, standing next to her, writing in a book with all of the, like — you know when you have to write in a book and you're upright and there are no tables or anything and you're just sort of like, you have this weird half slouch.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Uh, and this is someone who is clearly working on something, that they want to see Sovereign Immunity arrive, but they also need to be writing this thing. And so they're just like. They're not taking notes on the meeting, they're just doing something —

AUSTIN: [amused] They're not saying, "and then Sovereign Immunity came into the doors and there was that dog. I think that dog's kind of creepy, but kind of cute."

JACK: No if you look at their thing it's just like, uh, you know, uh, doing maths to sort something out. Catching up with something or another.

AUSTIN: Right, "seventy-two brass tubes." Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, totally. Yeah.

JACK: Um, uh, and I think Clementine turns to them, uh, and says,

JACK (as Clem): Thank you very much, you can go now. Sovereign immunity. Thank you for coming.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [suspicious] You're welcome. Quite a... Quite a place you've got for yourself.

JACK (as Clem): It is, isn't it? Uh, it was a lot of effort and I'm very proud of what me and my compatriots have accomplished. Um, Emaline, you can go now too, thank you very much. Bismuth, you can stay.

AUSTIN: Um, Emaline kind of like does like a little bow and, and heads out the door. And like runs over to the person with the book to like, be like,

AUSTIN (as Emaline): [whispering] Seventy-three brass tubes! We lost another one!

AUSTIN: And then, and then, you know.

KEITH: Just then, something about that.

AUSTIN: Just now. Yeah.

JACK: Just then. A clang is heard distantly.

[Austin and Keith laugh]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Congratulations on all your success. What can you do for Millennium Break?

JACK (as Clem): [sarcastic] Oh, you — no pleasantries? We're skipping right to business?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [irritated] I said congratulations on all your success. That was the pleasantries.

JACK (as Clem): Oh, it was just one.

AUSTIN: I think Gur leans in again and is like,

AUSTIN (as Gur): Clementine, let's not fall back into old habits.

JACK: Clementine like takes a moment to compose herself in bad grace, uh, where it's like, "I don't need you to tell me this," but doesn't say that. And sort of like takes a deep breath and says,

JACK (as Clem): Bismuth has already relayed my offer to you. I'm happy to explain it in more detail or lay out some additional aspects of what I'm able to provide you.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [cold] Yeah. Let's, let's just really drill down these terms. I don't want to, I don't want any surprises.

JACK (as Clem): Of course. Would you like a seat?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [cold] I'm doing great. Thank you.

JACK (as Clem): [sassy] I'm sorry, I'm waiting for you to start drilling down into the deal.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): It's your, it's your offer!

JACK (as Clem): Okay. I understand. Cas'alear will die if we do not help them. We have resources aboard the city that can stabilize them and enable them to recover. When I met Bismuth he was in a very bad way, and now I'm sure you will agree, he is looking and sounding much better.

JACK: Grins at Bismuth. [Austin laughs]

DRE: I think Bismuth also grins.

AUSTIN: From underneath the crystalline head structure?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Good. As a reminder that Bismuth has like this bright, radiant, like rainbow effect, right? Like it's it's... [**DRE:** yes.] Bismuth has this really cool, like chromatic vibe.

ART: But to be clear, I didn't know Bismuth right?

AUSTIN: No, a hundred — Bismuth, did we say what Bismuth was?

ART: So when she says "Bismuth looks great," it's like, I dunno what Bismuth used to look like. [Austin laughs]

JACK: I assumed that they used to have most of their head missing, right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Compared to with the crystal, correct.

DRE: No, Bismuth was a, they were a teacher that was basically collateral damage and almost died.

ART: Sure. Um. But it's, it's a, it's a weird comparison. It's a weird ask. Um.

JACK (as Clem): So that's Cas'alear. Would you like to continue to discuss that aspect or should we move on to the next?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No, I agree that Cas'alear needs dire help and that we should take what we can get. [deep sigh]

JACK (as Clem): The second thing that I can offer you is... [grave and serious] Sovereign, a red light is about to fall upon Oxbridge. I have seen it coming. And I know the nature of it. You would not be prepared in one year of trying, and it comes tomorrow. I can offer you, and those close to you tactically and personally, an opportunity to get out. You're more than welcome to stay, but I will make it clear to your friends that I warned you.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [hesitant] I'll bring that to, I'll relay that... There are definitely people down there that would rather die.

JACK (as Clem): Than join me?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Yeah.

JACK (as Clem): [nonchalant] Then let them die. That's of no massive consequence to me —

AUSTIN (as Gur): Clementine...

JACK (as Clem): I'm giving you the warning.

4:01:45

AUSTIN: Gur again leans in and says,

AUSTIN (as Gur): [whispering] We have to win them over. You know the stakes.

JACK (as Clem): In addition, I would be prepared to offer you the services — if he were willing to agree — of my right hand, the Figure in Bismuth. He is capable. He is good hearted. I find him wholly reliable. And I think he would be a great service to the Society of Banners and Bright Returns, if they are not destroyed in Oxbridge.

ART: I make eye contact with, with the Figure.

DRE: Uh... They wave at you

[Austin laughs]

ART: A wave is...

AUSTIN: I love it.

ART: That's really good.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [suspicious] Um, and what do you get?

JACK (as Clem): Oh, it's just a straight trade.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): What's the trade?

JACK (as Clem): I want the Resin Heart and I want one of the Eyes of The Exemplar. The other eye, and...

JACK: Oh, sorry. How many eyes are there Austin?

AUSTIN: There's countless, there's a lot. Well, not countless anymore. So, there are a bunch of them. There were...

JACK: So are we talking like twenty thousand or are we talking like sixteen?

AUSTIN: We didn't talk about how big they are, so, it's more than sixteen, less than twenty thousand. [Jack smirks] Um, we blew up half of them. Valence blew up half of them. Mow carried out the other half.

KEITH: So that's more than ten, less than ten thousand.

JACK: [laughing] Less than ten thousand.

AUSTIN: Let's keep working on this. More than fifty, less than a thousand? Is that right?

KEITH: Are there, are there seven hundred? Are there more or less than seven hundred?

ART: Are we Price is Right-ing this?

AUSTIN: Yeah. We're trying to get there.

ART: 701.

AUSTIN: 701, there's seven hundred and one of them.

ART: Sorry, Keith I had to.

KEITH: After half were destroyed?

AUSTIN: After half are destroyed.

JACK (as Clem): The other eyes, you can do what you want with. And if you managed to find any other parts of the Exemplar, I suppose that you can keep those too. In exchange for my services and ongoing, uh, what do they call it? solutions, I ask for the Resin Heart and one Eye of The Exemplar.

AUSTIN (as Gur): You don't think we should explain why, Clementine? This is not — I'm sorry. You should speak.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Hey, who even has the, who could even, who could even say yes to this?

JACK (as Clem): You could.

AUSTIN: You have the eyes.

ART: I do?

AUSTIN: SBBR has the eyes. Uh, yeah, actually you, yes. You and Thisbe came back with them. [laughing] So Thisbe does. Mow does. Um, and then the Resin Heart is with the Church of the Resin Heart, which is missing its prophet.

ART: Sure. It's one of those things where like, this is a deal where if I say yes, I don't know that I have it, you know?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK (as Clem): I have faith in you to bring these to me. And I would be more than happy to — I'm sure Bismuth would be very invested in helping you get them. The fact is... Things are about to get very bad, Sovereign Immunity. I've been trying my best, and in return, all I have gained is a slightly better position and a sense of the manner in which things are going to go bad. All across Partizan I have seen reports of people, hah, of certain people finding that they are able to manipulate the Perennial Wave. Something is in the air and it is about to break very bad indeed.

Now, I think you and your friends very capable, very powerful. I wouldn't have come and spoken to you if I didn't think you could. Millennium Break, I'm not so sure about them. [Austin laughs] Uh, I'd like to deal with, I'd like to deal with, with you and your friends in the Society. But. What is about to fall upon you will tear through your ranks and it will tear through any parts of the Exemplar that you have. I need some in order to keep them safe from what is about to happen.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [sighs] Okay. I mean, I can't make this kind of decision unilaterally.

JACK (as Clem): That's fine.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Um, and I'm really sure that I could get you an Eye. You know, just the way things are, you know?

JACK (as Clem): Oh, yeah. I remember prison.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): But the Resin Heart might be, might be a hard sell. I mean, we lost their prophet.

JACK (as Clem): [confused] Did you?

AUSTIN (as Gur): [nervous] Clementine, um... Just tell him that he'll figure it out.

JACK (as Clem): Sovereign Immunity, I've always had faith in you.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Hmm.

AUSTIN: I think this is the moment the camera makes a revelation to the audience. Which is, Gur Sevraq kneels down to say that to Clem. And then when we come back, it is at Sovereign Immunity's perspective and there is no Gur Sevraq standing next to Clementine Kesh. Jack, I am sorry, but you are haunted by the ghost of Ger Sevraq.

JACK: Ah! [breaks out nervously laughing] Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: [amused] I've been sitting on this for months. It has been very hard.

JACK: Did you know this before the tower?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Jesus Christ! That's a really effective ghost.

AUSTIN: What did it do? It talked to you a bunch.

JACK: Yeah. Uh huh. [fascinated] Yeah, I was wondering why Gur was, you know, despite themselves actually being fairly helpful. But.

AUSTIN: Well, I love that Clem just rolled with it. Clem was just like, "yeah, of course."

JACK: Well, you know, um, they're here for a reason. They're bound to Gur Sevraq with Russian sage.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Um yeah. Okay. So I think Clementine, I think Clementine looks back at, uh, Sovereign Immunity and says.

JACK (as Clem): I do not foresee the Church of the Resin Heart being a problem. I'm sure that if you make it clear to them that their greatest relic will be safe aboard my city. Or! Hey, you don't even need to tell them that it's coming to me. Just tell them that it's going somewhere safe.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): They're gonna find out!

JACK (as Clem): Are they?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): They're gonna know!

JACK (as Clem): We kidnapped their prophet.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [exasperated] Everyone's gonna leave!

JACK (as Clem): Leave the church? I, that's fine, I think.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No, mm, that's, that's not, come on. If a bunch, we can't — they're going to find out. They're gonna, you can't think that this is subtle.

JACK (as Clem): I'm not interested in subtlety.

AUSTIN (as Gur): We should bring the church aboard, Clementine.

JACK (as Clem): We should bring the church aboard.

ART: [Art stammers] I'm sorry. I have, I jumped my own gun — oh my God. [Austin laughs] I reacted too soon.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): The people down there, they don't, they — you're not remembered fondly!

JACK (as Clem): I suppose so, but they wouldn't be dealing with me. Or, I can tell you for sure that they wouldn't be dealing with Clementine Kesh. I have good people who I work with. I'm sure you could be one of them.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): That's not necessary.

[Austin chuckles]

[construction beeping]

ART: Hey, is that coming through the microphone?

JACK: The beeping?

ART: Yeah.

JACK: There's a gentle beep.

KEITH: Yeah, I little bit.

AUSTIN: I think...

DRE: That's just Sovereign Immunity backing up out of the room.

ART: Yeah,

[all laugh]

AUSTIN: I can, I can I can make it diagetit. Um, it is the sound of something appearing on, on the sensors. Um, I think you know one of these windows has some sort of like UI element that like, um, you know — I don't think it's like a, a fancy, like jet fighter, uh, UI. I think it's like one of the, those things that's like, um, like a mechanical user interface where there's like two long, you know, things on, on long sticks of brass, like two long sticks of brass, and then like, kind of like a, uh, like an empty square, you know, like a frame, um, and it like [psssh whoop] and like goes across the window and then down the window, uh, and, and lands on something on the horizon, in the distance. Um. And what, how did you describe it before, Jack? You said a red light?

JACK: A red light is falling on Oxbridge.

AUSTIN: On Oxbridge, where there is something red out there. It's, it's, you know, a little greater than a pinprick at this point, um, but it's about a day away. Uh, and the fact that you can see it kind of coming over the horizon like this, growing taller, tells you something, which is just, whatever this thing is, it's at a scale that is terrifying.

JACK: I think Clementine stands up, steps carefully over the circle of flowers and walks to the window and says,

JACK (as Clem): Come and stand next to me.

ART: Sovereign Immunity does so.

JACK (as Clem): Okay. So this is the Red Light. It's going to approach and then it's going to kill everything that you care about, again, personally and professionally. I cannot stress enough how unprepared you are. I have seen this. It is not good. So! Let's go over the deal again. Cas'alear aboard my city. They will be stabilized and they will be healed. Part two, the Figure in Bismuth, my right hand, will join you. I understand that you're suspicious about having one of my agents working alongside you. I do not blame you. You can put them under as much surveillance as you want. You will not catch them doing anything untoward.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): I'm not worried about you getting the better of me.

[Austin exhales like "oh damn"]

JACK (as Clem): Part three. I will offer you and your compatriots in a way out of Oxbridge before that thing tears you and every building in that city to shreds. In return, I would like the Resin Heart, and one Eye of The Exemplar. The Resin Heart shouldn't be a problem. We can move the group aboard the city. And you said so yourself that the Eye should be a fairly easy matter. Those are my terms.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Okay. I'll bring them to, to the people at SBBR and Millennium Break at large. And again, I'm, I... I don't know how it's gonna go, but I'll, uh, I'll keep in touch.

AUSTIN: And I think with that, Jack, I need you to virtually hand over your sheet because you are done playing Clementine, once Clementine Kesh, now the Witch in the Glass, the Witch in Glass, uh, uh, you know, ostensible leader of, of, um, the Reflecting Pool, of the body of Past and the community within it.

JACK: Ostensible leader of the Rapid Evening and then ostensible leader of the Reflecting Pool. May we one day find out the ways in which those "ostensibles" are similar and different.

AUSTIN: Um, and you know, I just, for me, there is something, there is something about leaving this character haunted by Gur Sevraq forever...

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: That is good. I'm excited. Well, not leaving it. I'm I'm taking her from you. She is mine now to do with as I please.

JACK: Yeah, this is the other thing right. This is without, without hesitation or, uh, or, um, what's it called? I have no stipulations her, tight? I'm I'm, I'm handing you this character, I suppose the

stipulations come from the fact that it's a character that we both like and are interested in seeing in stories. So if you turned round and said, "and now Clementine climbs into a jeep and goes sailing over the waterfall for some reason."

AUSTIN: "And now Clementine opens an orphanage, uh, and, and renounces all ambition." No.

JACK: It's like the shit end of Little Women. [Austin laughs] The end of Little Women is very good, but. And they are still very ambitious at the end of it, but they do happen to put up an orphanage.

AUSTIN: Right. Or that sort of, I mean, to some degree she is accepting people in, but, but for very, for her uses.

JACK: Very different purposes, yes.

AUSTIN: There is no altruism here necessarily and I guess, I would say here, maybe it's probably worth it's worth pulling the curtain back a little bit, um, and saying that this is to some degree...

JACK: Curtain...

[Austin scoffs at the pun]

AUSTIN: Um, uh, where we were, where we were planning to go to some degree — I guess we didn't know. We, when Gur and, and Clem fought on top of Icebreaker, Fort Icebreaker, Icebreaker Prime: that we knew was a fake, a fake finale for them.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because I think we knew that Clem had a second life as an ambiguous power, um, who would continue to herself haunt the world of Partizan. Um, uh, and you weren't quite ready to hand her over at that point, right?

JACK: Yeah. I think, I think what we needed was we needed some sort of... We needed some sort of process of transformation or process of growth that would get the character to where she would need to be for that to happen. I think that's actually probably what I said when you said it, which was like, "I'd love to hand her over. I don't think we're there yet. Let's see if we can, let's see if we can do the work as storytellers to try and to try and move the pieces into place to get us there."

AUSTIN: To someone who has power and is an antagonist, but also is, uh, is, is, uh, is a third power on the board, almost, right?

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: Um, because if I just taken her from you at the, I mean, I guess the thing worth saying is. When we finished the Kingdom game, she did not die. She went back to her quarters and cried. And you were going to keep playing as her. That was, there was no, that death was

not a thing that we arrived at, that fight was not a thing that we arrived at in play. That fight came after we were not happy with her living through Kingdom.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, and then we realized like, Oh, we should do this Tower game. How do we set up a Tower game with, with her? What if she falls from the top of Fort Icebreaker?

JACK: Yeah. Um, and like. Yeah, there was like a lot of the virtual equivalent of people in writers' rooms,

AUSTIN: Yeah. Everyone on the show.

JACK: You know, making lots of notes on whiteboards and then, and then wiping the whiteboards and going, "Oh Jesus, okay."

AUSTIN: That doesn't work.

JACK: "How do we do this, or how do we do that?" Um, and, and. And, um, I'm very happy with where we've gotten her to. I think the thing that we talked about a lot was like, what does a... And also being honest with ourselves about what our intentions with Clementine are, right? Because there's a version of this where she comes off Chorus Island and goes. "I've made terrible mistakes and I want to make right. And I'm prepared to do the work to make right. Gur Sevraq has brought me through."

AUSTIN: Nope.

JACK: But, but instead it's like, I think we talked about it like a kind of reverse road to Damascus moment where like, what if someone had spoken on the road to Damascus to Paul and rather than, rather than saying, "look I need to, I need to mend my ways," Paul had said, "Right, I understand what you're saying. I've got it! I have to, I have to continue on my path in a slightly different, arguably worse way."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

JACK: Um, and just by encountering, uh, uh, by encountering a scaffolding of faith that comes from someone as obscure and as, um, oblique and, and, uh, capricious as Perennial, I think Clementine... It seemed like such a fantastic, uh, figure to have Clementine fall into the arms of.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And we'll see who is, who is using who in this relationship, right? Uh, between Clementine and Perennial.

JACK: I mean, one of them is, uh, an *ancient* being in the center of the galaxy. So I feel it's not going to go well for the...

AUSTIN: Yeah. But who can't, who seemingly cannot go some places or, or do some things directly. Right?

JACK: Right. Yeah. And we've already learned that people who say that they are the right hand of people can act outside of their best interests sometimes.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Austin and I, and everybody, sat down with these problems with a real open book. You know, there is stuff, there are secrets on the show that Austin keeps from us, and there are secrets that Austin tells... Secrets, I say secrets like we have a big list.

AUSTIN: Yeah, secrets isn't right.

JACK: No, there are developments. There are, there are important developments.

AUSTIN: Directions, yeah.

JACK: That, uh, Austin will tell Ali and I, or that we will, you know, work on. But, uh, most of this Clem stuff was, was an open book, uh, for us. Except, uh, Gur.

AUSTIN: Except for Gur haunting you forever.

JACK: Austin did not tell me.

AUSTIN: Or not you. Haunting her forever. Sorry. I wanted to keep one secret for me because, uh, because Gur Sevraq — I never. You agreed to killing Gur Sevraq, right?

JACK: Yeah, totally. Absolutely.

AUSTIN: And I — whereas I agreed...

JACK: You said, "well, what if Gur shows up on Chorus Island?"

AUSTIN: That's what I, and then I made Gur show up on Chorus Island.

JACK: [amused] And I said, that's sick. That's wonderful.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh. I even said to you, "I have this idea of where like the body shows up and Stel Nideo has it and they're using it for propaganda. What do you think of that?" And you were like, "I think that's great."

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: "I think that's fantastic."

JACK: Yeah, absolutely. Cause it's fun, 'cause we get to pull the wool over people's eyes. And, but, I was —

AUSTIN: But you don't get to take back killing Gur Sevraq. Instead, what you've done is doomed them.

JACK: The wool was being pulled over my eyes.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. To this, to this afterlife of being in Clem's head forever. Um, which...

JACK: But the, you know, the double-edged sword there is what poor Clementine has to deal with...

[Music begins: TANAGER. PERFECT. TOUCHPAPER. by Jack de Quidt]

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Yeah.

JACK: The spider priest.

AUSTIN: I'm only sad we won't see more, more of that banter directly, but I'm very excited to see what Clem is going to get up to in my own hands over the next season, presumably. Not just this season, but.

JACK: Oh, it's very exciting!

AUSTIN: I guess we'll see. We'll see if she fucking makes it out.

JACK: Yeah. Who knows.

AUSTIN: Um, for, for now, for now, what I will say is, she is very serious about her warning, about the Red Light coming to Oxbridge.