

The Road to PARTIZAN 02: Dialect Pt. 2

[Jack de Quidt's "[HOURGLASS. SUNRISE. CRYSTALLINE.](#)" begins playing]

Austin (as Cymbidium): I discovered something interesting while walking your halls today, Past. It is something you know already, of course. Something you've known a long time. But I remain your elect, so humor me.

Apparently, years before our noble Principality encountered them, before they—before we—were marked with ash, when we were still called the Hypha, my people had a different name for you. For the past. You were *the Verb*.

And I think it's a more honest name, actually. When something is in the past, it's gone. You've moved *past* it. But nothing gets past you, does it?

You have always been an action. A verb. An echoing reverberation. A wake left behind by the roaring engine of history, yes, but a force in your own right, too.

And I cannot help but to wonder: Who got caught up in that wake of yours? If one were to think of you as a verb, then, well, which objects might you have taken?

Do not worry, my verb, I will of course do my service as your elect. But know this: If I must aspire to your erudition, then I will learn to capture your gravity, too.

[00:01:42]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. Today we are continuing on the Road to Season 6 by continuing our game of *Dialect*, a game of language and how it dies by Kathryn Hymes and Hakan Seyalioglu. If you want to support the show or if you want to hear the rest of the Road to Season 6, you can do that by going to our Patreon, [friendsatthetable.cash](#). Those games will continue to come out on this main feed, that have been... with edits and with new intros and stuff, over the next, you know, few weeks/months leading to PARTIZAN which will start in December. But, again, all of those games are available right now for all \$5 backers or above over on our Patreon.

Last time we started the game, and we went over the process of creating our culture and our characters. I'm gonna do a quick reminder rundown, just so that we're all on the same page, 'cause it has been a week.

We are playing as the Hypha, a culture of spacefaring nomadic deer-like humanoids, and we have three key beliefs. First, we have to follow the Strand, which is a kind of colorful arcing shape in space that guides us from world to world, and it is detectable by the Strati. I think we only really land on worlds inside of the Strand, within the reach of the Strand. We never leave behind the bodies of those who died on the worlds, or in the vastness of space. And

three, we protect the mysteries of the Chorus Bond, which is the technology we use to transform some members of our civilization into Strati.

I was playing as Timea Asche. You spell that T-I-M-E-A A-S-C-H-E. I use she/her pronouns... Timea uses she/her pronouns, and Timea is a Thread-Runner, who is a young Stratus and pilot who flies ahead of the fleet as a scout to explore and also kind of sort of guide the Strand. It's kind of a blur there, in the doing.

Dre, you were playing as Asper Mykell, A-S-P-E-R M-Y-K-E-L-L, who is a Concomitant, and used they/them pronouns for Asper. And a Concomitant is someone who helps those in grief process the death of those they loved and also guides people through the process of how their dead will be... how the remains of the dead will be used.

Which brings me to Janine's character, Sabil Nodra, S-I-B-I-L¹ N-O-D-R-A, using she/her pronouns, who is a Chorus Binder and a Dust-Eater. You are one of the people who does the Chorus Binding, who turns people like Timea into a Stratus by doing cool tech shit with our antlers.

We did one of three Ages, so it's two more Ages to play through still. In that first Age, we introduced a bunch of new ideas and words, because that's what *Dialect* is about, it's about introducing new words. To run those down, just so that we can continue to use them kind of casually in this session. Those words include:

Brightsky, which was a colloquial way to say, "Wonderful," and that comes from the kind of reference to the Stand and the kind of bright colors and shapes that it makes when the Chorus Bonded look up at it.

We also introduced vawtiv and vawtेश. ...Brightsky, one word, as it's spelled, bright sky, but one word, but collapsed. Vawtiv, V-A-W-T-I-V, is the feeling you get when logically you know that the thing you're going through, whatever you're struggling with, is not unique to you, but because of how powerful the emotion is, you're kind of overcome by it, and you still feel just like, disconnected, alone, bad. Vawtेश, V-A-W-T-E-S-H, is the feeling of overcoming, or it's the act of overcoming that feeling, maybe seeing yourself as part of that larger community instead, you know?

Finally, Sabil, Janine, you introduced Verb, (like a verb), which is our word for the past, and it's both generally, like, you could say Verb in a general sense about the past, but you could also use it for specifically this feeling that the Chorus Bonded get, feels like an echo or like a wake of a ship. We can be in the Verb, the Verb can be kind of all around you.

Janine, you also added Diverb, as a variant which indicates the moment that the present becomes the past.

¹ Should be S-A-B-I-L.

We introduced all of those through scenes, mostly of us just doing our jobs, talking to one another, and consulting each other about tasks that we had, and talking about our jobs and abilities. And then we came to the end of Age 1, and when we came to the end of that we had to choose between two paths the story would take—we, the players, not really we, the characters. And the one that we ended up choosing was... There are kind of two paths... One second, let me find the exact phrasing here...

We chose the red path, which was “Dark rumors precede us—people are convinced we work evil magic, communicate with spirits, and lay curses upon those who cross us. How can we convince fearful outsiders that we are harmless, so that trade might continue and we might eat?” And to communicate that that had happened what we did was, we touched down on a new world. And we found that the Divine Principality, a group we had never met before, had arrived in the many years between our last visit to this place, to this planet, and now. And the Divine Principality had colonized it, and turned the people there against us. Which we knew when we saw a large stag skull on a stick at the town gates.

And that is where we kind of let off, which means it’s time to move on to Age 2, though before we do that there’s one more thing. Two more things.

First, which is how long has it been? And I think that’s super easy, I think we should pick back up... Age 2 should only be like a week or a couple months after. I don’t think we can go any further than that, we should talk about what is happening immediately after encountering the Divine Principality, and kind of the events therein.

The second thing though is how does the community react.

[00:08:32]

Originally transcribed by Ril (@kaorukeihi)

AUSTIN: And I think we are, like, afraid, right? Does that make sense?

DRE: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And here’s a thing. How do the Bonded feel specifically? Because the threat is specifically about our Bond. And maybe this is something we can actually tie into the second part which is:

“Each Age Transition brings about change in the Isolation. This change will transform an Aspect in the community. For any Transition except when entering the Legacy, complete the following steps before moving into the first turn of the next Age:

As a group, choose an Aspect to evolve. The Aspect must be in the current Age. Discuss how the Age Transition has brought about a change."

"Decide on a replacement for the Aspect. Write it on a new index card and place it in the ring for the upcoming Age. This new Aspect should be directly next to the Aspect it is replacing, but closer to the center." And the other Aspects just jump ahead, they just move ahead. So like, the example that they had in the book is that they had like a bunch of like space truckers, and they had an Aspect that was "We are running from the past," and then that became "We are fighting the past." Um, so. Which of these...

JANINE: I have a suggestion.

AUSTIN: Please, go for it.

JANINE: Since the Bonded are kind of in the root of this thing, I wonder if people stop like volunteering and like seeking it out as much?

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah.

JANINE: Because, you know, it would be like a bonus for the most part, like "Of course I wanna be able to do this cool thing," but then it becomes the thing maybe where instead of people voluntarily pursuing the procedure and picking their doctor or whatever, they have to be like nominated? It becomes more bureaucratic, it has to, it's like... We need a certain number of people with this ability to keep functioning...

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: But people are less like eager to do it.

AUSTIN: Right. So, do you think it becomes that... the Chorus Bond becomes like... not drafted, or is it a draft? What is it?

JANINE: Yeah. I guess it might be, like...

AUSTIN: I'm a little afraid that this is so reactionary and harsh for where we're at.

JANINE: Yeah, I think it maybe is a step... Maybe the change is just that like people aren't volunteering as much.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: It's... There's a dramatic wane in interest, and then part of the play becomes "What do we do about that?" Like...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Right.

JANINE: Where does that go?

AUSTIN: Right. Like the Chorus Bond is... "There's not enough people in the Chorus Bond anymore" becomes an Aspect. Okay, I like that more.

JANINE: Like maybe it becomes, like at least one person of every family, and then instead of that, it's one person from every, like, neighborhood.

AUSTIN: Right, right. It becomes way less rare, or way more rare rather. Here's a question. Do people... Can people remove it?

JANINE: You can cut your antlers off. Like...

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can't just remove the reliefs or the...

JANINE: The way I had described it up to this point is like you're basically hollowing out the antler, and the antler that remains is like a veneer basically on top. Like a shell.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: So, you could snap those off, sure.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um. I wonder if even that starts to happen. Voluntarily, of people who are like...

JANINE: Yeah. Oof, yeah.

AUSTIN: "Listen, I don't want to die." So.

DRE: Jeez.

AUSTIN: I also bet it's not... God, like, yeah, that's a scene that we can have, but I bet it's... I bet someone comes and knocks on your door for this, Sabil. We'll talk about that in a moment, probably.

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Um. Let me make sure there's nothing else. Oh! Last thing, and this is useful. "Each player may discard a card and redraw from the Language Deck for the upcoming Age." So, if there is one more you wanna get rid of, you can do that again now without having to make a Variant. I think we're good?

DRE: I'd wanna get rid of EUPHEMISM.

AUSTIN: Okay. I'll grab it.

JANINE: I think I wanna get rid of DEATH; I think we've moved past that.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You wanna start making stuff that has to do with new stuff, basically?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Boom. NARROWING for Dre, for Asper, and CREATE A WORD for Sabil. I think I'm gonna get rid of BAD OMEN. I think the time for omens has passed [laughs a bit]. Unfortunately. I think we're in the shit. CREATE A WORD! Okay.

[00:13:00 - Age 2]

AUSTIN: So. It is Age 2. We've evolved some Aspects, and we have... We wrap back around, and I'm gonna jump back to my cards. My options are:

DISCOVERY. "Something new is discovered. A geographic feature, a piece of technology, or something about ourselves which was previously unknown. Name this new discovery." And the prompt is "Hope in an unexpected place."

An EPONYM... Eponym? I always don't know how to pron- where the emphasis goes on that... which is...

JANINE: Epona [ee-po-nah].

AUSTIN: Yeah, epona [ee-pOH-na]. I got it, Epina. ...which is an Action card. "A piece of language based on someone's name. Sometimes the story behind a word is standing right in front of us." And in this case, the thing that it changes is instead of just doing the thing where like, "Oh, I'm gonna play this card and put like, to this thing," "Make a Connection: Pick a player character and a concept. Explain why their name is attached to that concept." Then "Build a Word: Make a word for the concept rooted in their name." And then their example is: "Silhouette originated as a jab at a French minister of finance, whose frugal policies", uh, it's very tight, "were mocked in comparison to the simple portraits that now bear his name." And then the prompt there is "Finding yourself in an unexpected place." So I could use that to be like, "Oh, I want there to be the word Sabil or Sability or something to mean something." Um.

Then, the last one I have is CREATE A WORD with the prompt "A surplus," Op! [laughs] "A surprise for some." Misread surplus as surprise.

[00:14:25 - Turn 1]

I think I want DISCOVERY. And I think it's gonna be fucking terrifying. I think all of us should be here for this scene. I think I'm gonna tie it to the Strand. No. Mhmm. I'm gonna tie it to 'Never forget your dead.' Here's a question. Do you think, do we think that the Divine Principality knows it's the antlers? And the dead part?

DRE: As in that's what they are... made of?

AUSTIN: As in... Yeah, yeah, that we build the Chorus Bond by way of that. Probably not yet, right?

DRE: Yeah, I would say not yet.

AUSTIN: Okay. I am going to put it up here, on the Strand. And the discovery is of a Divine. I think we see a Divine for the first time. Ever. And it becomes our stand-in word for new bad discoveries. Do you know what I mean?

DRE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: God, like, you know? It's either gonna be the name of the specific Divine, or it could just be "Divine". I kind of like it just being "Divine." Yeah, okay. So. We are the last of the ships to arrive at a new place, right? That was the thing that we kind of set up was, that we're kind of at the tail end of the fleet.

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: We are coming to land on a new planet... I think it's all three of us, and it's kind of like the rear of our stuff, the rear of the fleet, the final five or six ships... And we see the arrival of the Divine Principality's like... not a huge military force or anything, right? But like a collection of colony ships with... transport vessels that presumably have food and supplies for their colonists. And they're escorted by this thing that looks almost like—I actually think they probably retake humanoid form in a real way with the Divine Principality—but I almost imagine it like a... I think that it is just this massive suit of armor that has... like it's almost as if it has moons orbiting it... It is, it is huge, right? Like it's as big as our biggest ship...

JANINE: Big Zenyatta.

AUSTIN: ...Which Zenyatta? What?

JANINE: Big Zenyatta? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, yes! That Zenyatta. I was thinking who... I was thinking of Zenigata from Lupin III...

[Dre and Janine laugh]

DRE: Same difference.

AUSTIN: Like, “Big Zenigata??” Yeah, big Zenyatta with those, like that style of orbs all around. But it also has this just like... is kind of flying through space all like surrounded by all this much smaller ships that are carrying transport goods. And orbiting around all of them is, yeah, orbs a la Zenyatta, and those are each... We get like the slow close-up, and we realize like—Oh, there are people living on those giant orbs. There are people who are working inside of them, and it’s like a living... it’s almost like it is a living micro-planet of its own that has a pilot. And everything orbits around *it*. And this is Unity. This is the Divine Unity. And I think that is the connection, the word for discovery is Divine, and it’s explicitly a bad type of discovery. And so it’s like... there’s a degree of like built-in sarcasm to mean like... You know, you go to the doctor, you get some bad news, “It’s just Divine.” And this is why we say it that way.

But I think I want the scene of us on the ship figuring out why is there hope in an unexpected place. And I think this is like, we’ve all been called to like some central ship that is safer, and there is some sort of like... there was some sort of speech, and now we’re... Like, what are the public spaces on our ships? Are they open and green? Are they... I kind of like the idea of there being almost... We’ve already described it as like there are city streets on these ships, so like, are there also parks? If you gathered a lot of people, where would you gather them on a ship like ours?

DRE: Hmm...

JANINE: I think they need to be open, but also because our deer people are gonna be in crowds larger than crowds that deer would be in—

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yes.

JANINE:—and we’ve also established that like, you know, regardless of genders there are antlers...

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: I think a thing that would be important is in this public spaces some kind of thing that sort of delineates where people stand. Like I don’t know if it would be like with velvet ropes or if it would be just like circles painted on the ground... ‘Cause I imagine getting your antlers caught is...

DRE: Oh, yeah.

JANINE: And like, if you’re in a crowd and like everyone’s antlers are cracking the other, why would anyone ever be in a crowd? [Dre laughs; Austin hums.] So that means some sort of like, I don’t know, maybe they have like the way they pave the ground or something is with big round stones, and it’s like, you know, okay, well, this particular large stone is used in this

exact measurement so that everyone would stand... If everyone stands on one they won't... their antlers won't crack around like... [Austin hums] I feel like there needs to be some element of that. Just for comfort's sake.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I like that a lot. So, I actually think... I'm like thinking through really like—Okay, well, we would've already used this word at this point, so I think it's probably already... we've already seen this thing for the first time. We've... People are, the people who are already on the planet are on the planet, but we're stuck in space. And I think maybe the scene that I want is the three of us in... Again, still in a big group of people, but like... We think that we're going to be seen. We think we're going to be caught. And instead we are... for some reason, we are not, and maybe that is where we find our hope in an unexpected place. So yeah. So, I think we're in that scenario that Janine just described, and I am not in a good way. I think... I don't think... I don't know that we've ever met necessarily, Asper, so there is just this young deer with, you know, inlaid antlers being like...

AUSTIN (as Timea): [in a whisper] Oh man, oh... this is the worst possible thing... This is... I...

AUSTIN: Oh, I should explain why it's connected up there. I just realized did not, which is... When it arrives, it disperses the Strand.

DRE: Hmm.

AUSTIN: And so like, the first... the rest of where we were supposed to go during this run of the Strand gets lost, and that's part of why we're lost in space—We know what planets we could have gone too, but like the Strand isn't there anymore. We have to run a new Strand, and that's not a thing you normally do. I forgot a big part of what Unity does, right? So yeah, it disrupts that part. So for Sabil and I, like, we straight up can see that it's gone, right? Anyway. So, Timea is just like,

AUSTIN (as Timea): Ohh, this is the worst. Oh. I wasn't supposed to do another Thread Run for another... for *years*, really. [Sighs] I'm sorry, I'm freaking out a little bit. Sabil, I'm not trying to diss you, but you're older than me... [Janine laughs quietly.] Have we ever gotten through anything like this before?

JANINE: Uh, I mean... I wonder if... Mm. I was about to wonder if like, she's so wrapped up in her own shit that she wouldn't even have an answer for this... Um... I don't think it has happened before, but also, I feel like it's one of those things that like... as a little... as a little fawn... skin-fawn... [They all laugh quietly.] she like, probably asked one of her parents like, "What happens if the Strand goes away?," and then—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: —her parents were like, "We just go and pick it up again, like when you drop your rolling ape toy or whatever the hell." [Dre snickers.] "You just, you go back, and you pick it up, and it's fine." I think she like...

AUSTIN (as Timea): You can't just pick it up! [Janine laughs]

JANINE (as Sabil): Well, it's not gone forever, it's... You get a new one, right? Like...

AUSTIN (as Timea): I don't know! I think...

JANINE (as Sabil): Statistically it must have happened before, and we're all still here.

DRE (as Asper): Timea, instead of trying to figure out whether this exact specific thing has happened before, I want you to think about where is another time that you have felt this upset, this confused, this scared...

AUSTIN (as Timea): My last... my last Divine, yeah. Uhhh... It was... it was, you know, long in the Verb... [sighs] I... We were planetside. I was being chased by my big brother; he was bullying me. And I ran into the woods. I thought that it would scare him away, but it didn't. He kept looking for me. And I found my way back home. And he didn't. And he was just in there. And a day passed. And, you know, that's... If ever there was a feeling of vawtiv, it was that. I felt like... of all the people you choose me for something like this?

DRE (as Asper): And yet you became vawtesh.

AUSTIN (as Timea): Yeah. But only after I found him. I made Divine. He did not leave those woods walking. Someone wears him now, and that is... good. Maybe it will help us.

AUSTIN: And I think maybe like there's a moment here where like... something must happen, right? Maybe... You know, they know about the Chorus Band; they know they don't like it, and maybe we know why. Like, this thing gets close enough to where we should be detected or some ship does, but Sabil, you and I, and everyone else who still has the Bond feels a moment of tuning, right? Feels—I know we said we weren't gonna use tuning, and then we used tuning forks, and now here we are again [He and Janine laugh a bit.]—but like, if we focus ourselves just so, we can be invisible. And this ship passed by that should catch us. But it doesn't. And in some ways, like... that's Divine for them, you know? But on the other hand, the other thing here is like—this is all the more reason why we need more Chorus Band members because this is something that could theoretically save us even though it draws a target on our back. I think that's my scene here.

Am I forgetting a step? Let me check my steps... Turn structure... "Have a conversation", we did that, "Draw a card." Gonna draw a card... Oh, I gotta get the new cards out! Hell yeah. And put the old ones away; we don't need those Age 1 cards anymore... or those Age 2 cards, actually. Age 3! We don't need the character archetypes either. There we go. Shuffle those. Age 3. Alright, Asper.

DRE: Hmm.

[00:26:58 - Turn 2]

AUSTIN: Your options are...

DRE: FILLER WORD...

AUSTIN: FILLER WORD which I love, but I almost wish we had it already, you know?

DRE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: NARROWING. "A specific instance of something we hold dear surges in importance. Take an existing word and make it more specific. Add more context, meaning, or intent behind the word. Make a Connection: Pick a previously defined word. Explain how its meaning has become more specific. Skip the Build a Word phase." And then still frame the scene. And the example is: "Starve once meant to die of any cause, but now means to die of hunger." That's interesting. And the scene prompt is "A wager with high stakes."

And then GREETING. You have GREETING still which is how we greet one another and "Meet in an unexpected place."

DRE: Hmm. I think I might go with NARROWING.

AUSTIN: Okay. Where are you connecting it? Or which past word are we using here?

DRE: So, I could put this on the cards that are already in place, right?

AUSTIN: Correct. Yeah.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: 'Cause you'd be narrowing one of those. Could be Verb? Could we start referring to a specific thing as Verb? Or could it be... hm.

JANINE: Verb could get more imminent. Because we're dealing with more people [AUSTIN: Right.] kind of close to us in a way where we kinda have to pay attention to their tracks, so Verb could become a more like...

AUSTIN: Oh, right!

JANINE: Like an imminent thing. [Dre hums]

AUSTIN: Like it almost retracts back into like... Does the presence of the Divine Principality's ships and stuff, are they so powerful and so strange that literally they are immediately producing wake that we are... like psychic wake or radio wake, audio wake, that is making Verb a present thing instead of...? Like, it originated by being, "Oh, this is a sound that we

hear; this is a reverberation,” and then it became, “Oh yeah, the past.” And now it’s like we live in Verb. Verb is everywhere.

DRE: Yeah. I like that.

AUSTIN: Um, and then is there still, there’s a different... It’s “A wager with high stakes”, that’s interesting.

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: Alright, so I’ve added NARROWING to Verb. “Skip the Build a Word phase.” Okay. We don’t have to build it ‘cause the word is Verb. So.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It sounds like... So is the NARROWING that Verb is now about... that Verb returns to being about the feeling of the wake, the audio wake in your antlers, or is it about we are alive in the Verb like the present? Does the past become the present in this way? Have we Diverbed? [Dre laughs] Or has the Verb become a specific past which is pre-Divine Verb?

DRE: Hm... I think it might be that, just because the Verb is now a pre-Divine experience...

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Because if it is messing with the way that like people that are Chorus Bound are like... just like taking in reality, that seems like a very marked difference.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Right, right. It used to just be the Verb. Now it’s the Roar or something, right?

DRE: Mm.

AUSTIN: We can fix that with a Variant, if we want, in a bit.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, what is the scene? What is the wager with high stakes?

DRE: [in a whisper] God.

AUSTIN: No outsiders still, so this still should be... You know, I think, I think that you’re allowed to have NPCs, but they should be only interior... only, again, people from the Isolation, and no outsiders, full stop.

DRE: Okay. Okay, here is the wager with high stakes. Since we discussed that going into Age 2... I think, Janine, you had said that people are not becoming Chorus Bound as frequently as they used to?

JANINE: Uh-huh.

DRE: So, I think like Asper is increasingly noticing that like there are... there's just that materials from bodies not being used. And also noticing this now... change in like how people who are Chorus Bound are experiencing things. So, I think she comes to both Timea and Sabil with a proposal of... do we need to consider further augmenting or improving or something to people who are already Chorus Bound?

AUSTIN: [laughing quietly] So you're like showing up to be like "If only there were a way to do the thing that you already do that we don't know you already do." [Janine and Dre laugh.]

DRE: Or maybe it's...

AUSTIN: I like that! No, that's not me—I wanna be clear I'm not dunking on that at all.

DRE: Yeah, yeah. The only other way that I can think of—and maybe this is a much higher stakes wager—is that since the Chorus Bound are now reacting to the Divine, is there a way that we can reverse-engineer that so that either we can push the Divine away or like, protect ourselves from it?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. And in this case we're understanding wager in this really broad way, right? Which is like, we're taking—"Let's take a chance on something, and we'll see if it works" versus...

DRE: Well, and I think... Yeah, well, you're also like wagering like, "Let's radically alter a huge part of our culture and like, what we use these materials for." [laughs a bit]

AUSTIN: Right, right. But it's not, you know, "If I win this footrace then..."

DRE: Oh, yeah, no, no.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I like that idea. But it would require... Sabil, are you interested in opening up that secret to us?

JANINE: Um... I mean do you mean me as the player or as the character?

AUSTIN: Both. The player, the player, Janine really is what I mean.

JANINE: Yeah, no, I don't mind. I think, I think the objection to it is different. I think the reason Sabil just does it to herself is less like... I think it's been a combination of things like, one, the material hasn't been that abundant in the past.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Hm.

JANINE: And two, I think there's a degree of it that is like when a doctor can't get approval to test a vaccine, so they're just like, "Well, shit, I'm just gonna eat some... someone's gross germs, and then I'm gonna inject it myself, and we'll see what happens." Like.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Right. In a weird way we are literally like giving you a... like a legitimization to do a thing you've wanted to do anyway.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or wanted to experiment with.

JANINE: But I don't know that she even knows that it is like, cool to do... 'cause you know, she... you know, I've gone over already how she like doesn't super look well... And she doesn't like leaving the ship because it's too loud on the planets, and like all these little things of like... I think she'll probably need to be talked into it because... not out of like keep her secret, but out of like "I don't know if this is actually a good idea."

AUSTIN: Okay, so let's zoom in here. I think the camera opens back in your office again. [laughs] So, we're in outer space, but mostly we're in weird orb offices... Um, and Timea is like...

AUSTIN (as Timea): Asper, I told you, I asked her. She said she doesn't have any special abilities or anything [Janine laughs quietly] just 'cause she has more stuff in her antlers! I would do it. I would take—I would be the risk. Like I would be the— I already asked her for it, and she said that it's not a thing!

DRE (as Asper): Umf. There just has to be... [They sigh.] I don't know. There just has to be something we could be doing.

AUSTIN (as Timea): I wanna get back to Verb as much as you do, but like... I don't know...

AUSTIN: They're...we're just having this loud discussion in your waiting room. [Laughs a bit.]

JANINE: [laughs] I think like Sabil probably like tries to just let y'all talk it out for a bit, [Austin laughs quietly] but is eventually just like... you know,

JANINE (as Sabil): It's not that it doesn't do anything; it's just that the effects might not be wonderful. They might not be what you have in mind.

AUSTIN: You know how like deer eyes are already pretty big?

JANINE: [laughing] Yeah. [Dre chuckles.]

AUSTIN: Timea's get *real* big.

AUSTIN (as Timea): [gasp]

AUSTIN: Okay, here's a really important question. Do the Hypha have human ears or deer ears?

JANINE: Ew! They have deer ears!

AUSTIN: [placatingly] Okay, just to make sure. Then they do that little deer ear flicker, you know what I mean? [He laughs. Dre also laughs.] And she's like...

AUSTIN (as Timea): Then you have to do it to me! Asper was saying that like... If we ever want to go back to the Verb, like... we could try to use the Chorus Bond and like all the extra dust, all the extra... Like, people aren't doing it, but I'll do it five times!

JANINE (as Sabil): Do you remember when you came into my office, and you were so, so worked up about the Verb, and the Diverb? And telling them apart, and it was just so loud for you?

AUSTIN (as Timea): It has been Divine after Divine since then, so no. Like, excuse me, I don't really remember that! What I do remember is that like... I wanna get back to... I wanna get back to drawing the Strand in the air, and I wanna get back to guiding people places... This is me at full vawtesh. Like, I... Let me go. Let me do it!

JANINE (as Sabil): [after a pause] What if it goes bad?

AUSTIN (as Timea): Then it goes bad! There's a big weird metal... moon man out there! It's gone bad. Take the chance.

JANINE (as Sabil): Okay, but...

AUSTIN (as Timea): And also, if it works with me, maybe it works with other people.

JANINE (as Sabil): [sighs] I'm just saying I have this... I have this, this... I have this paperwork I need you to sign. It's, it's a... it uses the word Divine a lot, and I don't want you to read too much into that, but also, read a little bit into that as we've already gotten over... because this could absolutely break Divine in some big ways for you...

AUSTIN (as Timea): [breathes pointedly] It's fine.

JANINE (as Sabil): I really want you to be equipped with that knowledge. It's... I don't... I haven't done this on anyone else. I know what it's done to me. I don't know what's it gonna do to you.

AUSTIN (as Timea): Asper, thank you so much! I don't know if it's just because Sabil thinks I'm a kid, but I don't think... I don't think she would've gone forward with this without you.

JANINE (as Sabil): Don't thank them now. Thank them in a few months.

AUSTIN: Um. Alright. I think Timea leaves. I'm curious if Asper and Sabil have any final words. Timea's like...

AUSTIN (as Timea): I'm gonna go get ready. I'm gonna let people know that I'm gonna be unavailable for a little while.

AUSTIN: And then... and then she does like... she lowers down the weird hover elevator out of your office. [Dre chuckles softly.]

[Pause]

DRE (as Asper): Thank you.

JANINE: I think Sabil just has like a really... not a full-on disapproving look, but very much like a... like a "Well, you're the person who deals with when sad shit happens, so..." [Dre laughs.]

AUSTIN: Yep!

JANINE: "This is more your problem than mine anyway if it goes bad."

DRE: Yeah, fair.

AUSTIN: Alright. I'm gonna get you a new card. Your new card is WHAT WE BRING IN which is a really interesting one. Alright.

DRE: I think I also want to discard one of mine and do a Variation...

AUSTIN: Sure. Which one do you wanna discard?

DRE: Um... I'm gonna get rid of FILLER WORD.

AUSTIN: Okay. Take card, and that means drawing you another card, and that card is... TABOO, also an Action card. Both WHAT WE BRING IN and TABOO are Action cards which affect previous... I guess TABOO affects a previous one, and I don't remember what WHAT WE BRING IN does... Oh, that's really interesting. It's really interesting. I'll read it when we round back to you. Um, Sabil.

DRE: Oh, do I need to... I think I still need to make my Variation.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah. Sorry, what was your Variation? My bad.

DRE: Um... Oh, I can't drag these cards.

AUSTIN: I got it; tell me where to put it.

DRE: I wanna do a Variation on... I guess vawtiv and vawtesh.

AUSTIN: Sure.

DRE: And it's rum-vawt.

AUSTIN: Ooh! Which means?..

DRE: There's an increased understanding that there aren't just like two binary states, it's not you're vawtiv or you're vawtesh...

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: It's that they're states that you can exist in at the same time, or you could be, you know... It's not like you go through vawtiv, and then you're vawtesh forever.

AUSTIN: Right. Right. So, there are moments of... Like, we're all rumvawt. Whether or not we are in the moment...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, does that sort of change the way vawtiv and vawtesh are used culturally to where like... It *did* feel like vawtiv was a thing that you marked someone with. Like, "Ugh, they're so vawtiv!"

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Versus like vawtesh is like, "Oh, you... you've given of yourself to the whole. You've taken it all, and you understand your place in it." Whereas now the default is like, "Eh, some days you're a little vawtiv; some days you're a little vawtesh."

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: "We're all always in a constant state of flux." I love that. So good. I also like "rum-" as a weird like side-connect to Verb and to the humming, you know?

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: Even if that's not in-universe where it comes from, there's a sort of like rumble to it, you know? 'Cause "rum" and "rumble".

[00:41:38 - Turn 3]

AUSTIN: Ummm, Sabil.

TITLE OF COMMAND. "One of you is gaining prominence in the Isolation. This is a title used by those who recognize your authority." "A call that had to be made" is the prompt.

CREATE A WORD (Action) which is as before except the prompt is "A change in status".

And WIDENING which is another Action card that says "Something becomes a much bigger part of life. This word infiltrates our speech in a way we had not anticipated." And it's an Action which means something different happens. "Make a Connection: Pick a previously defined word. Explain how its meaning has become more generic. Skip the Build a Word phase." Their example is... trying to zoom in... Oh, right, sure. "The word "assassin" originated as a reference to a religious sect. It now refers to anyone who does the deed, regardless of affiliation." And the prompt is "What we wear with pride."

JANINE: Okay. I think I'm gonna go with TITLE OF COMMAND.

AUSTIN: Okay. Where are we puttin' it?

JANINE: We are putting it with... I think we're putting it with Chorus Bond.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Because I think this is also a scene with Timea.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: But I think the, like, title...

AUSTIN: Right. 'Cause we're making a word. That's how this game works. Yeah, I forgot.

JANINE: Yeah, it's- Yeah. Well, I'm *picking* a word more than, you know... But um.

AUSTIN: Right-right-right, yeah.

JANINE: I think the title that gets made is Loess.

AUSTIN: Ooh! Spell that. I guess you'll type it in a second.

JANINE: So, loess, L-O-E-S-S, I think is a word for like clay...

AUSTIN: Ooh.

JANINE: It's like a, yeah, I think it's... I'm 90% sure it's clay... Um...

AUSTIN: Wait, spell it again. L-O-E-S-S? [typing]

JANINE: Typin' it in. Loess. I wanna put an "e" on the end because it sounds more like a profession.

AUSTIN: "E". Okay.

JANINE: Like a Loesse. You know, like a Loesse [She laughs].

AUSTIN: Oh, right. Like a Loesse.

JANINE: So yeah. I think this title comes about sort of like... You know, using the idea of clay, it's... It sort of takes the idea of a Dust-Eater, but it is like more of an art. It is a sculpting thing...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: This has become... the thing that Timea underwent is now a procedure that only Sabil does.

AUSTIN: So, you are Loesse now.

JANINE: Sabil is The Loesse.

AUSTIN: Is The Loesse, okay.

JANINE: That is her title of command, of like among the Dust-Eaters, she is the Loesse. I think... "A call that had to be made"... So, I think after Timea's procedure the follow-up appointment is called, but instead of being at Sabil's office, it is at basically a... I mean what might pass for a Dust-Eater college? [Austin laughs] Or like... You know, it's like a sort of...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I'm thinking of like the sort of 18th or 19th century surgical theaters, of just like, there's a bunch of people, a bunch of deer people in, like [laughs] student robes or whatever. You know, they are in robes.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And it's like, Timea is like brought to the front, and Sabil is also at the front, and there's just kind of like an evaluation—if this worked, then we have to start doing this more.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Alright. So. Is it like... so we're there and... Are we testing to see if it worked? Or is it the call? Is the call like—Hey, did this work?

JANINE: I think the call is mostly like—they want, one, to know if it improves abilities or if it is still just what it is.

AUSTIN: So, is this like... Are we in front of some sort of- are we in front of a class? Are we in front of a panel?

JANINE: Basically, yeah. [overlapping] These are all professionals already.

AUSTIN: Okay. I think Timea... Right. I think Timea looks very sheepish, if that's a thing...

JANINE: Ba-da-dum.

AUSTIN: [laughing a bit] Like a deer in headlights.

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: And she's like

AUSTIN (as Timea): Thanks for having me and for... to the Loesse for letting me... choosing me for the procedure. I was already Bonded, obviously, with the Chorus, but given that there weren't a lot, I just thought it would be a good idea. And I'm happy to give to the fleet. Um. Anyway, what do you want me to do? What should I... Loesse, what should I do?

JANINE: I'm tryin' to think of what the best like... demonstration... [AUSTIN: Uh-huh.] would be... Okay, I think the thing that happens is Sabil like is standing by the door as Timea's talking, and then someone runs to the door and like, hands her a stack of paper or whatever...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Deer-paper, I don't know. And then she distributes it among the sort of people, you know, sitting and watching in the sort of crowd...

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: And this is basically some like extremely, extremely fresh intel [Austin hums] from like, sort of remote fringes of the Fleet's reach, or the, you know, whatever we wanna say...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: That is basically something that like would normally be out of Timea's range in this particular moment being where she... situated where she is.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: And I think that Sabil clears her throat and then... maybe like, says some coordinates? Just like gives Timea a string of coordinates.

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

JANINE: And then looks at her very expectantly.

AUSTIN (as Timea): I... [pause] ...It's four ships. It's two transport vessels, food stuff... water... explosives... Thirteen onboard. [Sighs.]

AUSTIN: And she like straightens up, you know, like... It took a lot, but then... Straightens up.

AUSTIN (as Timea): I couldn't have done that before. There's no way.

AUSTIN: I don't know that we need more than that.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. So. Going into Age 3. Really blowing through it now. [laughs shortly] Oh wait, that's not true. Wait, we have to... You have to get a new card. Gotta get you an Age 3 card. DISUSE. Man, these are sad.

JANINE: Oh...

AUSTIN: Damn. Alright. So.

[00:48:57 - Age Transition]

AUSTIN: "Read the Transition prompt for the upcoming Age." Oh boy. "What was foreshadowed has come to pass. The end of the Isolation is near. There is no escaping it."

"A young girl was murdered in one of the hill villages shortly before we passed through. What terrible sacrifices will we make to soothe the furious, placate the hateful, and mollify the unjust? What will we do when the sacrifices aren't enough?"

So, what happened? Is it one of ours who dies? Is it one of theirs? I'm guessing it was one of theirs. Is it something to do with the intel that we just got? Or this entire new type of intel?

JANINE: I wonder if it'd be... We... It could be that intel, like, if it's a thing that we act to avoid in such a way that it's like really conspicuous to others, and then that ship ends up being a big threat to them. Basically it's like, "Why the fuck didn't you tell us?" Like, "why didn't you do anything?"

AUSTIN: Right. If you could see...

JANINE: ...”Why did you just fucking sidestep it and let us get the hit?”

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that a lot, yeah, yeah. Like, in other words, there’s like a... It could be a natural disaster type thing more even then... Or it could be a third party, right?

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: It could be one of the other groups in this area, right? One of the other villages that we used to work with, like... We just don’t show up that day, and when they go to that village, like, there’s an attack or there’s resistance or something. And when they ask us why we did not go... the answer is like, “We could sense it coming. And we left them to... let them die because who the fuck... We’re not gonna warn you!”

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And they make it clear. You know. If you’re going to have that power... if you wanna keep your antlers, you will tell us the bad things that are coming. And “What will we do when the sacrifices aren’t enough?” We will see, I guess.

So, one of these changes. So, I guess like the big thing to say here is like... With the —Who was it also? Who died? Was it a leader? Was it... the Candidate, the Excerpt, the Prince, the whatever of that Divine? Do we get like an echo of... there’s a moment in COUNTER/Weight in which a Candidate is attempted... there’s an attempted assassination on I think the Candidate of Grace pretty early on... Dre, you might remember more than me... Do we get that? Does a Candidate get killed? Or the pilot? That seems like a big enough thing for them to care, you know?

DRE: Yeah. Yeah.

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Alright. So, I think that’s what happens. So, what the change in the Aspect here? Is it further Bond stuff? Is it like... something with our own dead? Do they... Do they cut off our ability to... Like is this the moment where they’re like, “We’re figuring out how you do this,” and they make us forget our dead? Or try to? And then we react some way around it? [Dre hums] Or is it a reaction to be like, “We have to get out of here.” We need to move past the Strand in some way? Or change it in some way? We have to leave our old territory behind? Because there’s the other thing that could happen here, right? Which is like... ‘Cause we don’t get scenes for these big changes, right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But like... The thing is that everyone knows about it. So, maybe it’s something like... with the death of that pilot, they are going to come in force. They are going to stomp

out anyone who resists them. And so, we are now in this position where it's like... alright, then we have to get out of here.

JANINE: And at that point the Strand really *does* become a tether. Like it...

DRE: Yeah.

JANINE: It's a thing that is just holding you in place.

AUSTIN: Holding us here, yeah. And also, as a reminder, one of my things is the undiscovered potential in one of these, in the Strand, for me. And so, I can imagine it being like... I can make the Strand... Or I can open the Strand up. We can go anywhere we want to, if we can get people on board. So, maybe it's like... something with that. Either like, we need to move beyond... we need to change the Strand or move beyond it. And that way it's still kind of up for grabs. Do you know what I mean? Unless someone has another one, a different one.

JANINE: We suggested that the Strand was kind of like spores that have travelled that, you know, had something that we nutritionally need or something... or that like, something that—

AUSTIN: Yeah, we did.

JANINE: And you would think... I mean, maybe the reason we followed it is because it's hard to artificially, like, incubate it?

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JANINE: But if you crack that, then...

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: What you end up looking for is instead of looking for those spores, you're looking for places that are hospitable to those spores, to spread them yourself.

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah. I like that a lot. So, it's like... We need to learn how to control the...

JANINE: Or at least like... isolate them into like, stasis, so that we could then put them places.

AUSTIN: Right. [typing] Okay. Boom. And then we all can discard another card and draw it back up, I think, right? That was the other thing that we all are supposed to do at the end of this, and I always forget to during the Age Transition... I think so...

JANINE: Yeah. Yes.

AUSTIN: Yeah. "Discard a card and draw one if you want." Yeah. Let's see. "Surprise for some." Um. [Pause] I think I know what I'm doing, so it doesn't matter for me. So, I'm not gonna discard a card and redraw.

JANINE: I think I'm gonna discard... Hmmm. I wanna discard WIDENING, I think.

AUSTIN: Okay. Boop. You got PERCEPTIONS. Dre?

DRE: Hm?

AUSTIN: Are you gonna discard any of these?

DRE: Uh... No, I think I'm okay.

[00:55:38 - Age 3]

[00:55:38 - Turn 1]

AUSTIN: Okay. So. I know what I'm doing. I'm going to use EPONYM, and I'm gonna put it on these "Isolate the spores of the Strand..." and blah-blah-blah. So.

An EPONYM is "A piece of language based on someone's name. Sometimes the story behind a word is standing right in front of us." "Make a Connection: Pick a player character and a concept. Explain why their name is attached to that concept. Build a Word: Make a word for the concept rooted in their name." And my prompt is "Finding yourself in an unexpected place."

Um. I... So, I think we get like... This isn't a movie in a way that a lot of our games are; this doesn't have that same visual storytelling to the same degree. But I think we do get the montage of more and more people going to the Loesse, and specifically Timea getting more and more... getting her antlers more and more inscribed and inlaid, and eventually, you know... until she has this just like... It's beautiful, right? Like combination of precious metals and cuts and designs and maybe jewelry? I imagine like, by the end, things are hanging from it. She also looks older now—I imagine this is probably a few years in, at this point—and... I think...

So, she figures out how to spread them where we need... I think it's a scene with just her. She cracks the Strand. And gets it to where with the right focus and the right Chorus Bond, you can draw it a little bit more... You can kind of like ID... Instead of it being like, "Ah, go somewhere in these twelve planets," right? Instead of this breadth, you get the length. It's as it she learns how to focus it from this big, wide, curling, branching thing into a straight line. And she like pulls it all together, and she can find and can like transport with herself, with her ship and with the spores, if the spores exist, and... And I think that the word ends up being her last name because instead of being these bright colors, like the Strand normally is, all of

the color gets pulled out of it, and for those who are on the Bond, there's a degree of like... it's dusty. It's ashy.

And so, her last name is Asche, and I think it's just called... the Strand, this type of focused, long-distance Strand, that gets you the fuck out of there—and here is the other thing: a whole fleet can't do this. This is, I think, part of the way that this disintegrates, right? Is like... you can ID a planet far away and can start sending the spores you need there, but you have to do it with the Ash. And the Ash does not provide for the entire fleet. The people might survive, but the fleet and the culture of the fleet will not over a long enough time. And so, it's called the Ash. And it's... you know, I think at first they spell it like her last name, A-S-C-H-E, but by the end, it's just Ash.

And my prompt is "Finding yourself in an unexpected place." And I think it's the first time she does it. And she lands on some like beach world somewhere, you know? It's like a coastal forest, and using the Bond, she's able to connect with people back home and like, send an image. And you know, you can see the moss beginning to grow on a tree, and it works. But she's far, far, far, a long way from home and is maybe not even sure she'll make it back. And that is Ash. I don't think there's much... So, I think like, the dialogue is like... in this case is like, the papers call it, start calling it Ash. People start calling it Ash, but I don't know that she... You know, maybe she can sense it in the Bond, but like, I don't know that we need her using it in a sentence in the same way, right?

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: I guess maybe if either one of you wanted to use it, that would be fine, but I think we've kind of done it here, and it's getting late. So, I've no problem moving on.

[01:00:30 - Turn 2]

AUSTIN: Um. Asper?

DRE: I'm gonna use this TABOO card.

AUSTIN: Okay. Where is that goin'?

DRE: It's going on "brightsky".

AUSTIN: Ooh. TABOO says "What was previously a common word is now only uttered in hushed tones or euphemism. Make a Connection: Play on a previously defined word. Explain why this word is now taboo. Skip the Build a Word phase. In the conversation, explore the taboo." "What was once common" is the prompt, and that may have outsiders who can be people from the Divine Principality or elsewhere.

DRE: And I don't know if this is particularly like... a dialogue scene.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: But I think, you know, in the wake of that Candidate dying, a lot of Hypha like... it's like the equivalent of people being like, "Uh, you know, keep your chin up" They keep saying like, you know, "Look for the brightsky," but then as they come into contact with more and more outsiders they keep hearing them saying this "brightsky" in the connection to—

AUSTIN: Right! The death of the pilot

DRE: —the death of the pilot, and so, it comes to have a very very bad connotation.

AUSTIN: Yeah. There's probably... there's definitely a point where like some shitty Principality guy is like looking, was like literally observing you as you do your work, Asper, and is just like, "I don't want any of that 'brightsky' business".

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know, like that style of like, "You don't even know what the fuck that means..."

DRE: Yeah. And there's probably some Principality folks who are like, "Well, they keep calling *that* night the brightsky, so they must've been really excited that—"

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right. Right, and it was brightsky for them because they avoided... being caught up in it, and yet...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm here for it. Sabil, you wanna take us home?

[01:02:32 - Turn 3]

JANINE: Yeah. Um. Hmmm. Dre kinda did the thing I was going to do... [laughs].

DRE: Oh.

JANINE: It had to happen. It did.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: But I think your card worked for it better than mine would have, so... Or at least came to a more satisfying place... Um. Although I think... So, I think I'm gonna do PERCEPTIONS because it kind of piggybacks a little with what you established in terms of

like... the fact that the outsiders are noticing our language, and is having an impact on how that language changes. I'm gonna play that on Divine.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Because much like I imagine they have some opinions when they hear people say brightsky, [quietly] when they don't really understand it, they definitely have opinions when they see...

AUSTIN: We say...

JANINE: ...a Hypha like step in shit and be like, "Oh Divine!"

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah!

DRE: Yeah.

JANINE: [laughing] That probably doesn't really go over great.

AUSTIN: [laughing] No! PERCEPTIONS says "Using this word carries a weight. When we say it, people form an image, and it changes what they think of us. Make a Connection: Play on a previously defined word. Explain how using this word changes others' perception of the speaker. "In the conversation, explore the perceptions around this word." Yeah. "Shaping our own future." Yeah, that's... So. Tie it to that prompt at least. I know we're kind of rushing here as it's very late, I think we are all tired and [Dre chuckles] probably hungry.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But... Give me at least a scenario here, where shaping your our own future with the perceptions of Divine changing here in some way.

JANINE: I think this is... So, this is sort of happening as the Hypha are looking for ways to pull away.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And to extract themselves. So, I think the way that this ties in is just that like... Divine has been really, really pervasive.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: It did really, really root itself in the language. It was just a thing that everyone said. And you... making it a sort of thing where if you say it in front of them, in front of outsiders... it can completely like... trade is done for the day. Like, that kind of thing. It's just like, they will just fucking send you home, basically. Like, they don't want anything to do with you at that point.

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: That is probably like a... like a catalyst thing of like, you either stay and you really embrace your code-switching...

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Or you just make that choice to be like—This is it. Like...

AUSTIN: Right. Cool.

JANINE: So, I think this becomes the big break of just like leaving those last few worlds that were a part of the original Strand.

AUSTIN: Right. If you wanna use that language, leave, but also in leaving, given the way the Ash works, you're gonna end up outside of culture. You're not gonna end up... It's gonna degrade eventually anyway. Um. Alright. So. That is the end of Age 3. I think that's... Let's see. So. Boom.

[01:06:12 - Aftermath]

AUSTIN: "The last moments of the aftermath."

"It is the end of the Hypha. Our horses are gone—sold, killed, lost. Our wagons burned, broken, abandoned. Unable to live among outsiders, those who survive slip away into the hills, perhaps to find new lands. What indelible signs of the old ways and old glories do they leave behind?"

So. That is us entering now the aftermath here. It seems that what we know know for sure like... The Hypha have been scattered... and you know, you look at the map, you can guess they've gone some of these directions... But small, small communities, not the old way of life. Living by the Strand is gone for sure, right? So, all the language begins to disappear, at least from mass use... I'm curious, is there anything left of what we once had? Like, in a thousand years after this? Five hundred years? Ten thousand years? What is there to remind people of who the Hypha were? Which is especially tough given... the way we are a nomadic people, right?

JANINE: I think eventually it would get to the point where especially if you're scattering these groups... You're not... especially the smaller groups, are not gonna have the means to properly process all of the dead.

AUSTIN: Oh, definitely.

JANINE: So, eventually you're going to get scattered remains. And those remains are gonna be like... You know, if you get the skull of someone who's Chorus Bound...

AUSTIN: God... Right.

JANINE: The... you know, because the exterior antlers are so thin and brittle, that's just gonna fall away, and you're just going to have these skulls that have these really ornate-looking metallic antlers on them.

AUSTIN: Which... I wonder if those also become things that are displayed or traded or analysed, right?

DRE: Oh yeah!

AUSTIN: Like a 100%, right?

JANINE: Uh-huh.

DRE: There's a whole weird cottage bullshit industry about like boosting your Stratus powers by hunting these things down.

AUSTIN: Yup. Totally.

JANINE: Ground-up Hypha antler.

AUSTIN: Yeah. 100%. Which gets confused in the end, right? Because oh, originally it's these, but it's like no-no-no, any Hypha antler will do. Which is bullshit, right?

JANINE: Yeah. Oh yeah. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Cool. Good. That's a great legacy to have. Um. So. "At the end of Age 3, deal out one Legacy Card to each player." Also, here's one. I think a lot of the ships just stay, right? Like, because you had to make these trips in smaller ships, a lot of the big old vessels, like the old Hypha giant city-ships, do just stay behind, and they leave in small groups on tiny quick-moving ships. And so, a lot of these planets just have these old arc-ships almost, right? That like... everything you would need to live a life is in those ships.

JANINE: [gasping laughs] I, I'm sorry, I'm just imagining... I'm imagining these ships like... essentially like grounded, like landed.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yep.

JANINE: Like on a planet with gravity, and like their systems shut off, and then people trying, like people finding one and being like, "How the fuck do I get in here?"

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah. Yeah.

JANINE: "Why didn't they have any ladders?"

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: "How am I supposed to get up this twelve-foot thing into that hole?"

AUSTIN: And the answer is ladders. The answer is they build ladders, right? They go through the entire place and like turn it into something else, or unfold it until it's not a ship anymore at all. It's a city, and they like rip out all the stuff. And it's great; the Divine Principality fucking loves it because they can just go in and... take that technology and all that shit. Um.

[01:09:58 - Legacy]

AUSTIN: "At the end of Age 3, deal out one Legacy Card to each player. After completing the Transition into the Legacy by reading the next step in the Pathway chosen, end the game by having each player do the following:

Give a narrated epilogue based on one of the Legacy Card's prompts. Take this moment to wrap up your character's story or reflect on the legacy of the Isolation. Players may go in any order.

Rather than leaving the story of the Isolation frozen, the Legacy provides a moment to reflect on the world as the Isolation leaves it. The Legacy is your time to define the place of the Isolation in history and to wrap up the stories of the individuals in it along with their languages.

Describe what happens during The Legacy rather than having a conversation. It may be immediately after the last conversation in Age 3, from generations in the future, a flashback, or anything in between. These narrations do not need to be in chronological order."

So. Let me get you all a card. Show this deck. Shuffle this deck..

JANINE: Alucard?

AUSTIN: Yep. Gonna get everyone an Alucard. Janine... Dre... I've not read all of these yet... And me. Go ahead and read these to yourself and then choose one to do an epilogue about.

[Dre sneezes, Austin laughs.]

DRE: Jesus.

AUSTIN: One of mine is extremely good, given...

DRE: Let me look at yours.

AUSTIN: Oh wow, yours are also extremely good! How the fuck did we draw these?!

DRE: Oh wow. Yeah. Uh-huh! Yeah.

AUSTIN: Janine, yours is fine, but like...

JANINE: Yeah, it's not as good. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Well, ours are both ... Who wants to go first? [laughs]

[Pause]

AUSTIN: I will. Which is... I'm choosing "Out of the ash, a seedling sprouts." I think many, many, many years in the future, the descendants of the Hypha who took this original Ashen route... One, literally eventually this new group of people, they're not called the Hypha anymore, they're called the Ash or the Ashen. And they create a new different nomadic culture. I don't know the specificity of it, right? I don't think that they're chasing the culture in the same way... or the spores in the same way, I don't think that they're like looking for the Strand, they don't have any of that language, right?

But there is... they don't forget, maybe it's because of the proximity to Timea... [laughing] I was like, "Tiara? What's my character's name?"—to Timea Asche, but the Ashen are... One, I want them to literally wear ash on their skin. Like, I want them to have like ashen marks.

And two, I think that they become a sort of travelling nomadic group that... you know, maybe they do the work, they do some of the work that the Hypha originally did for others in service, which is like communications and message, courier service and stuff... But I think they might actually try to carry forward some of what... the Loesse did, which is like... sort of spiritual and Stratus-related techniques. But they're just so much more primitive in terms of technological level and understanding than what the Loesse had, you know?

JANINE: You're stealing my thing, completely! [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, I'm sorry!

[Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: You can do your thing then, you do it. I was trying to pay you homage. What is your thing?

JANINE: I was gonna pick "A hard decision made in secret." Because the whole Binding process and the Loesse techniques and stuff rely so much on apprenticeship and relied on more dense cohabitation in order to make that stuff work—

AUSTIN: Oh, sure.

JANINE: —in terms of instruction, like, you know, having like surgical theaters and stuff. If you're scattering things even more, then it becomes much harder to have apprenticeship. It becomes more important to condense that instruction into materials that people can use on their own, which also means like grossly, grossly, grossly simplifying the process...

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: And probably finding like the bare minimum of what does anything in order to be like, "Here is, look, here is the absolute basic... like beginners guide" Like, you know? Because the more complicated you get, the more you really need that hands-on instruction. So, I think...

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: The hard decision made in secret is just that like... She is maybe asked to develop a kind of system that people can self-teach this method, and it's like "Well, that's never gonna fucking happen," but...

AUSTIN: [laughing] But.

JANINE: [laughs] But she's like, "Well, I can at least, at the very least, get these basic elements. I can commit these basic instructional tenets that people can use."

AUSTIN: I like that a lot. Cool.

JANINE: Maybe the difference is also that just now it is actually inlay. Now it isn't the entirety... inside of the antler; it is just like a... filigree that's inlaid in the bone.

AUSTIN: Totally. Awesome. Asper?

DRE: Um... I'm kind of picking between two of these still...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Fair.

DRE: And I think "A ritual for the dead" is just like too... [laughs] is too good.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's kind of perfect, right?

DRE: And at first, I was almost thinking of like a.... of Asper starting to change the ritual for the dead to stop this kind of like grave-robbing future we've talked about. But I don't know if it fits them in my image for them.

[Jack de Quidt's "[HOURGLASS. SUNRISE. CRYSTALLINE.](#)" begins playing]

DRE I mean if they... one of the way they connect to their Aspects is having the courage to be vulnerable...

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Then I think, until like the end, they continue² saying like, "There is a reason we always carried our dead with us..."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: "There is a reason why we did this even if it was... As it became more and more painful for us, not just emotionally, but like, physically dangerous."

AUSTIN: Like that's the one thing we never stopped doing. That's never changed. We never did forget our dead.

DRE: Yeah.

² Misspoken as "she".