

PARTIZAN 09 - DESERT SQUIRE - VANTAGE

Transcriber: Lu

AUSTIN: Clementine Kesh, it is the morning after Cymbidium's wake, and your face is lit by the sun as a servant pulls open the curtains in your bedroom. Before you can even protest, a tray is placed on your lap, and the steam that rises from it carries the smell of a posh and hearty morning breakfast to your nose. As you gain your bearings and look down, you can see that the tray also holds a silver platter, on which a pair of envelopes rest, both embellished with metallic trim and sealed with your mother's official emblem. Each envelope also features a trio of very simple ideograms, symbols that convey complex meaning despite their plainness. On the first envelope, there's a fist, the reverse side of a coin, and a shipwreck, which you would wager means that it carries a mission about retrieving some sort of secret information about the destruction of Past. The other, which features icons of an iron gate, the flame of a candle and the simple curve of a hill, is certainly about protecting some vulnerable people on their way somewhere. But, and maybe this speaks to a deficiency of knowledge, you aren't really sure who exactly on Partizan qualifies as 'vulnerable people'. Which envelope do you take?

JACK: I think Clem leans forward and takes the second envelope.

[SONG "BRIDEWELL. CANDLEFLAME. BARROW" STARTS PLAYING]

AUSTIN: As you pick it up, the servant takes away the platter with the other letter, and, when you open the letter that you chose, first the seal, and then the metallic trim, begin to burn very slowly- almost like a fuse. And as it does, the sizzling of the fire, coalesces into bright, clear sound. It's as if it's a record that's destroying itself as it plays. And the sound it makes is the sound of your mother's voice .

AUSTIN (as Crysanth): Do you know the Church of the Resin Heart, Clementine? They also go by The Friends of Gur Sevraq, or The Disciples of Logos, but- whatever you call them, they're a small and devout sect, which traces its lineage back to the founders of Progressive Asterism. And they say that this month marks the 1000th year since the Prophet Logos Kantel first arrived on Partizan and brought life to this world. As part of their millennial celebration, the church's leader, the often mentioned Sevraq, will lead pilgrimage across the Prophet's Path, from its barren western wastes, to its tropical eastern coast, where they will take a ship to the isles of Logos for the final ritual. We have good intelligence that this pilgrimage is being targeted by a house of Stel Orion. The Disciples have recently added a pair of Hollows to their armory and will provide additional ground security, but two machines and a few rifles cannot protect a caravan of hundreds from a determined Stel. However minority the progressives are in Stel Kesh, their freedom to pursue their beliefs is paramount to the accord of divinity, and this particular congregation's historical significance grants it serious import, all to say nothing of Gur Sevraq's particular value. They say he does miracles, you know? You will secure their safety, and you will do it without being identified- we cannot send you as open escort, your presence, if discovered and tied to Kesh, will further Apostolosian's hostilities in the region. But if you can protect the pilgrimage until it reaches the sea, you will be doing the Principality a great service. And if you find that you cannot protect it, you must do this at least: extract Gur Sevraq from the fray and bring them

to a secure location here, in Cruciat. If you have further questions, try to answer them yourself. If, and only if you cannot, I'll be in the North Gallery.

AUSTIN: And just like that, the rest of the envelope goes up in smoke. Like flashpaper.

[SONG "BRIDEWELL. CANDLEFLAME. BARROW." STOPS PLAYING]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and good interaction between good friends, I'm your host Austin Walker. Today we are continuing our game of Beam Saber by Austin Ramsay, a hack of Blades in the Dark by John Harper. Again, I wanna do a quick shoutout, because I think by the time this is live the Kickstarter for Beam Saber will be up, which is exciting- and the way you can get to that is tinyurl.com/beamsaberkickstarter, so go check that out. As always, my principles, my goals, are to ensure everyone at the table is safe, to fill the world with detail, to convey the world honestly and to play to find out what happens. I'm joined today by Keith J Carberry.

KEITH: Hey, my name is Keith J Carberry, you can find me on twitter @KeithJCarberry and you can find the let's plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton.

AUSTIN: Art Martinez-Tebbel.

ART: Hey, you can find me on twitter @atebbel

AUSTIN: Sylvia Clare.

SYLVIA: Hi, you can find me on twitter @captaintrash, or listen to my other podcast Emojidrome on your podcast app of choice.

AUSTIN: And Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi, you can find me on twitter @notquitereal or buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com

AUSTIN: Okay! So, the last two things that- okay. Y'all had a party, there was a party? [Sylvia chuckles] for a dead guy?

KEITH: It went great.

AUSTIN: It went great.

KEITH: It's called a funeral. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh right. That's what it is, it's called a funeral.

KEITH: It wasn't a separate thing where there was a funeral and there was a party in honor of the-

AUSTIN: Well- no, that is actually true. That's actually the case, 100%

KEITH: [overlapping] Wasn't it the reception to the funeral?

AUSTIN: No, this was like a week of funerals, and this was one of the funerals.

SYLVIA: [overlapping] It was wake-y.

AUSTIN: It was more wakey than funer- there was a state funeral, there was like a super private family thing- y'know-

KEITH: But there wasn't a banner that said 'in celebration of life'. It was like-

AUSTIN: I don't know, was there?

KEITH: I don't- it seemed like one in a series of funeral... receptions.

AUSTIN: It was funeralesque. Yeah, sure. Yes, it was a reception, it was a prom. [Keith laughs] Um... and y'all had fun there, and at the end of that a couple things- one, Sovereign Immunity, you and Millie got kicked out, returned to your cells, and I believe- I'm trying to remember exactly how this works- you ended up overindulging, right?

ART: That is correct, yes.

AUSTIN: And then did you roll and entanglement or something? Or did you- I remember you getting a- one of the consequences of that was, you're going to take an additional objective, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah...

ART: Yeah, but I rolled an entanglement and it blanked, didn't it? I got like a...

AUSTIN: Maybe, that sounds right. But- I think the thing was like, hey, you're gonna get a- you get a card on the next day that was like "Hey, I'm gonna call on you". For people listening will have just heard that, the thing that it will be tied to is a mission taken by Clementine Kesh, which- you had two options, you had one that seemed to be about going into Peak Ridge, the Nideo area, to recover some information maybe about the fall of the Divine Past- but instead you took this other mission that is about escorting the Disciples of Logos, aka the Friends of Gur Sevraq, aka the Church of the Resin Heart [laughs] as they traverse the Prophet's Path- which, if you're looking at the screen... I think you're on the right map, you are- is this big, long area that runs kind of west-east on the western half of the map. Um... and I think we're kinda gonna jump into it, to some degree. Are there any questions about what happened last time, or like, getting us all on the same page before we talk a little bit about what your objectives are and stuff like that? [pause] Alright. So, as was explained in the intro to this episode, your job is basically going to be- and Clem, this is kind of in your hands in terms of what you do from the moment that you accept this mission- you need to ensure that the disciples of Gur Sevraq make it from the west end of the Prophet's Path to the kind of east's coast of that side of the continent? There's a little [laughs] I only realized this today, but there's a little uh... isthmus that looks like a hand with a pointed finger? You see what I'm talking about?

KEITH: Yeah, "you!!"

AUSTIN: Yeah, "hey you!". That's where the town- it's kind of a small port town of Auspice is? And that is where you're guiding them to- or that is where they're going, you're not guiding them- you've not been contracted for this mission, 'cause an important note here is, you can't be found out to be members of Stel Kesh, because if you do Apostolos will think "oh yeah, it's true, Stel Kesh moved into the Prophet's Path" [laughs] Which is not good. Um... what else.

Keith. It also kind of looks like it's- it had just flicked that other island [Sylvia chuckles]

AUSTIN: It does, like "hey, got out of here!"

KEITH: Like- yeah, yeah. Or like "go over"- putting it in place by flicking it, maybe.

ART: "Don't you come back over here, island"

AUSTIN: Exactly.

KEITH: "We're an isthmus now"

AUSTIN: Um... [laughs] Sylvia in the chat says booger island...

KEITH: Booger island.

SYLVIA: [amused] It's booger island, flick it away!

AUSTIN: [amused] It's booger island... um, the... there are rules of engagement here, those are what I just said, which is: you're not allowed to be discovered, you're not allowed to be identified as members of Stel Kesh- which means like, if you want to go about this a way in which you are maybe visible, but you are not identified as members of Stel Kesh, that's one way of doing it, how you would do that is up to you. The other rules of engagement are to not do any harm to the members of this pilgrimage. There is an exception to that though, um... because there is- the exception is, unless in the service of securing Gur Sevraq in a circumstance under which they would be- this life would come under threat, basically. So like- I guess the clear thing- your main objective is to make sure that they make it. You have a secondary objective which is securing Gur Sevraq in the case of an attack that you feel is putting his life at risk. Again, Gur Sevraq is also he/him, they/them, which is why I'm using both here, just to be 100% clear.

AUSTIN: Um... so, don't be identified as Stel Kesh, don't harm any members of the Prophet's Path- or, sorry, the pilgrims, of the Disciples of Logos Kantel, unless that means you have to do it to secure Gur Sevraq from- y'know, a potential fatal injury or something like that. And I'll note, Sovereign Immunity, your secondary mission- your personal mission that the curtain has given you is to secure Gur Sevraq regardless of circumstance. So, a little added drama here.

JACK: A sweetener!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, a little sweetener.

KEITH: More like a sourer, now we're at odds, huh?

AUSTIN: A little bit! I mean- y'know, we'll see how it plays out.

KEITH: Let's add a little pepper to that sauce, huh?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

ART: I mean, we're *generally* in the- um, earlier you added some sort of arrow that had distances on it? Is that accurate?

AUSTIN: [hesitant] Eh. Close enough.

ART: It's a long way.

AUSTIN: It's a long way! This is like, not a day travel- this is a pilgrimage, this is a multi day thing, it's being done mostly by people traveling the way they normally travel, whether that is by walking around, or if they're- y'know, in a wheelchair, or if they're in some sort of other mobility system- like, that is what this is, the entire thing is to try to recreate to the best of your ability what Logos Kantel, the ancient Prophet that brought life to this- supposedly, allegedly, brought life to this planet- to repeat their steps, to kind of go through their motion, travel the same path that they traveled. I just wanna be clear, it's not like- you are allowed to do this if you cannot walk or if you have wheels or anything else, this is not the Disciples of Logos being like, super ableist. But there are- I guess it's actually worth saying, you actually- they actually have to take that into account, so hey, they have to bring certain tools to travel that area that is not necessarily cultivated, or paved or anything, right? A lot of the Prophet's Path is desert, there's lots of dunes, there's some canyons- you're walking through some- you're moving through some pretty hostile terrain? And on the far western side you can kinda look at the map and straight up see- there are moon craters and hsit here, because this was the place where Logos Kantel first fell and it's before they started to touch the world and bring life to it. So- y'know, there are bits here that are almost straight up moon crater more than desert. And eventually it becomes kind of a coastal region, kind of more tropical.

AUSTIN: So yeah, it's a long trip, this is probably like, being on dispatch for... y'know, how long would it take us to- Art, you're in California, how long would it take you to walk like... how long is California? How tall is it?

ART: Um... real long.

KEITH: Like 2000 miles? Is that a crazy guess?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] "Distance from...."

ART: [overlapping] That sounds alright- no, no, that's- the whole country is 3000 miles wide, it's not that- hold on, "California...."

KEITH: 800 miles.

AUSTIN: So it's less than that, but it's- I'm trying to get an estimate here. Um... what about from... the map that we're looking at- which again, I haven't like, completely tested this- is saying 671 miles, somewhere in there.

ART: I mean- I think people walk at something like three miles an hour? And you could probably walk...

AUSTIN: Yeah, but you can't walk 24 hours a day, so.

ART: No, and your speed is probably gonna go down if you spend all day walking.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, definitely.

SYLVIA: Also, if you're a group it's gonna be...

AUSTIN: Yes, totally. This is a weeks-long trip. This is like- I kinda wanna imagine this as being like- you're kinda on deployment here in a real way, y'know? Which we haven't seen you do before?

JACK: [cheerful] It's good that we all get on so well.

AUSTIN: [amused] Yeah, it's great, it's so good. Given that, actually, we should take a quick second before we get into rolling dice and planing stuff- can we go over your character beliefs, because those may have changed since y'all cut loose last time. Clementine, let's start with you.

JACK: I have a new belief with Sovereign Immunity after we spent time together at the party? My new belief with Sovereign Immunity is- well, I have two. My first one is "when Sovereign Immunity loyalty to my family was tested, he failed. He is not to be trusted" and then, directly below that, my new belief is "Sovereign Immunity wants me to succeed so that he can get out of prison".

AUSTIN: Hm. Okay.

JACK: Um, I've also taken a new move?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: I leveled up, and I have a new move called Rally. Um, which I think we debated taking when we were building Clem?

AUSTIN: [laughs] Probably.

JACK: And I think now is the time to take it, [reading] spend two stress to do a- Clem, very stress-free- spend two stress to do one of the following, to compel additional directions you may spend one stress per direction: direct an unaffiliated crowd to perform an action, have an unaffiliated crowd commit violence, prevent an unaffiliated crowd from causing damage.

AUSTIN: Great. Love to be a cop. [laughs] Can you go over your beliefs about Millie and Leap also.

JACK: [overlapping] Yes! Um... my belief with Millie is "Millie may prove an effective bodyguard" and my belief with Leap is "Leap is a loose cannon, I will make him a useful

one". And then I have one belief with Gucci Gantine, which is "Gucci Garantine is hiding something".

AUSTIN: God. So good. Um, do you remember if Gucci affected- like, gave you a- hurt you in the last game? [laughs] when...

KEITH: [overlapping] Physically hurt? Physical damage?

JACK: [overlapping] They had a bit of a rough start, didn't they? No, I think it would be mental, we had a bit of a ruckus where-

AUSTIN: No, I don't mean physically- what I mean is, um- did her arrival cause you a consequence?

JACK: Yeah, it got real dicey, didn't it? And -

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm gonna mark this clock one time, because-

JACK: You might have marked it already?

AUSTIN: No, 'cause it comes in with one, it didn't- I don't think it comes in with zero, so. I'm advancing that clock from the last game.

JACK: We just started!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JACK: No one has done anything yet and you just advanced a clock! [laughs]

AUSTIN: Well, I'm saying I should've advanced it last time, when I think I forgot.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: And I think between the- both of those encounters, we should have added two at this point.

JACK: [amused] Yeah, that's fair.

AUSTIN: You don't need to add a new belief, rivals only take one per whole clock.

KEITH: So this is a clock that is now advancing because...

AUSTIN: This is not the sort of clock you think it is. This is not a 'and then a bad thing happens' clock.

KEITH: No, no. oh, is this not the clock where, um...

JACK: [overlapping] This is because like, Clem showed up with a paramilitary unit to a funeral?

AUSTIN: Tes. Yes.

JACK: And... attempted to explain why that was the case, but kind of whiffed it.

AUSTIN: And kind of made a huge mess, yeah, exactly.

JACK: And I think we described Gucci leaving that party and just being like- or was it the case that she was going to-?

AUSTIN: She did not leave that party, I think she was there all the way through. I think you just kinda separated from her at a certain point.

JACK: I have this- I'm happy to take this clock, but I have this weird memory that like, you threatened us with Gucci digging into something? And we pushed back on it.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yes, did you resist- did you resist that consequence?

JACK: [overlapping] I think we might have, yeah.

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah.

AUSTIN: I won't advance it then.

KEITH: It was- yeah, if we make this choice, then Gucci is gonna go and look into some files. And we didn't do that.

AUSTIN: The- I'm just gonna read why I'm doing this, and what is at stake, and why this isn't the clock you think it is. [reading] The rival connection clock can increase two ways: the rival inflicts a consequence on the pilot or the pilot adds one tick to the rival's challenge clock. Each of these can add a tick once per mission and downtime. When the connection clock fills, the pilot takes one XP and asks a question about their belief with the rival, which the GM must answer truthfully. They then reset the connection clock to one and write a new belief about their rival. If the pilot struggles because of the belief with their rival, they can mark XP at the end of the session. So this- this is the opposite clock, this is the-

KEITH: Is there a second clock then, for Gucci? That was the one-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yes, the other clock- this is why I'm saying, this is- the second clock for Gucci is an ongoing one that is "Hey, Gucci is investigating who y'all are"? Whereas the belief clock for Gucci is just "is Clem figuring out that Gucci is up to some shit". Um, but you-

KEITH: [overlapping] So one is about Clem figuring it out and one is about Gucci figuring it out.

AUSTIN: Correct, and I did not tick that other clock, which has zero ticks in it right now.

JACK: 'Cause I was wearing the good hat.

KEITH: [overlapping] Maybe- maybe you should have-

AUSTIN: [amused] Yeah. Uh-huh [Keith laughs] Oh yeah, maybe I should, hm. It's a shame everyone pushed back against when I was gonna give you that, well- we're gonna move on, Sovereign Immunity, what are your beliefs?

ART: For Clementine I have "Clementine's affections are my ticket off this lousy rock"- I'll do Million last, 'cause that's the new one- for Exter I have "I love a scoundrel, I hate complications" and for Millie I have "I am a scalpel, I'm not sure I'm in need of a hammer" and my new one is "Million is a delight, I simply must show her to the whole universe" [Sylvia cackles]

AUSTIN: Wow, that's a great- that's incredible.

SYLVIA: [amused] Oh my god...

AUSTIN: Give me a... did you take a new move too or are you still waiting?

ART: I did, I took the new move... Not to Be Trifled With, [reading] when you push yourself, in addition to the normal benefits you can do one of the following: perform a feat of physical force that verges on the superhuman, engage a small gang on equal footing in close combat.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Great, I'm glad we have our small gang, I'm happy about this.

JACK: Gotta have one.

AUSTIN: Gotta have one...

ART: I think it's in the rules.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! Yeah, it's true. Uh... Leap, gimme your beliefs.

KEITH: Alright, I have with Sovereign Immunity "Sovereign Immunity is playing at a bigger game than anyone else here" with Clementine I have "Clementine's job is to keep us around and I don't think she can do her job" and with Million I have "i bet there's something expensive around here, and I bet Million would help me steal it" and "Million can draw attention, and drawing attention is useful".

AUSTIN: That's- you're not wrong. You're not wrong.

KEITH: Technically I can't know if I'm not wrong until I get another belief. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, you're right actually, good catch. You might be wrong, I guess we'll have to figure it out by filling up that belief clock. Um- Millie, go ahead.

SYLVIA: Alright, so, my connection with Sovereign Immunity is "A history with Kesh, and he's pals with the warden? I definitely can't trust this guy" with Leap it's "Leap was a pirate, maybe I could join his crew" and then with Clementine I've got "Clementine has no business being here, she's going to get me killed" and now "Clementine is better suited to ballrooms than battlefields".

AUSTIN: Ooh, owned. Alright, so- Clem, how do you wanna go about this? Do you wanna do some research, do you have any questions?

JACK: Is it worth talking about the way in which our escort has been upgraded as well, at this point? 'Cause I feel like the- we took a- where's-?

AUSTIN: It's 'Rapid Evening', not factions Rapid Evening, just Rapid Evening. A few tabs over from Million.

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah, do we have it, uh... oh yes, we do. We took 'secret routes' as a forward operating base upgrade, which gives us +1d to the engagement operating roll for transport plans? And says "You might have access to long forgotten underground subways, little known mountain passes, or some other route of your choosing" and we kind of all thought that that was very evocative?

AUSTIN: It is.

JACK: And liked the idea of having it early- is that the- I think it was Sylvia and Keith with a big- making the case for secret routes.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I- I specifically sent a picture of a cool tunnel to be like, hey, secret routes.

AUSTIN: [overlapping, amused] That is that, yeah.

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah! And it's good to have it early in the season, so we can start describing-

SYLVIA: Yeah

KEITH: My push was for infirmaries.

AUSTIN: [laughing] And we'll see which one ends up- yeah!

JACK: [overlapping] Nah, we don't need a hospital. [Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: We'll- we'll see how it goes.

ART: Keith was like "let's be cowards" and we were like "cool tunnels!"

AUSTIN: [laughs] You're also holding onto one of your upgrades, 'cause I think y'all want Hardened, which gives you all an additional scar box? Which will be useful, y'know.

JACK: But we need to save up for that.

AUSTIN: But that costs three upgrade points, and you only have two- you get two every time you kinda level up, so. You're saving up for it.

KEITH: I'm glad that we've re-introduced the infirmary vs, uh- choice- see, if it pans out or if we die and need a hospital that we don't have. [Jack chuckles]

SYLVIA: Hell yeah!

AUSTIN: If you get sick and hurt inside of your secret tunnels, unable to escape. Alright- so, Clem.

JACK: So.

AUSTIN: Yeah. You received this mission from your mom. Well, you received this mission from a note that made noise from your mom.

JACK: Yes. Um, okay, and our options are- we can reach out to contact, or we can research the...

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can do Gather Information rolls, you can reach out for contacts- in general what I'm gonna say is... the way I'm gonna work this is basically like, each of you can do a thing before you roll your engagement? So kind of four legwork style things you can do, at which point I'm gonna start ticking a clock that will be about when you get there, and that clock- a tick will mean like, they're further on in their journey, and that will affect things like your engagement roll and the situation on the ground. But if you wanted to try your luck and maybe keep investigating stuff in the museum of Kesh or whatever, that's a thing you can do.

JACK: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, specific things that are worth repeating just for- like, clarity and stuff? You know that the Disciples of Logos Kantel have a pair of troop units, in terms of their defenses, and some infantry weapons and stuff? They have some security guards, there is clearly a head of security there, and they recently obtained two troop units. We, the players, know that they got those units from Saber? They- saber stole two troop units from Apostolos in their first mission, and then during downtime sold them to the Disciples of Logos Kantel/the Church of the Resin Heart, so that's where they got those troop units- those are literally Apostolosian troop units, which is fun. Um... we know they have that. It's a long walk, it's a long trip, and that is a difficult amount of time to like, defend? I guess you probably know it's a couple hundred people making this trip, so it's- y'know, a pretty substantial size, substantial group. And they're kinda traveling in a caravan or convoy kind of situation. Um... like, y'know, not with vehicles, outside of vehicles that contain things like food and drink. It's people from every Stel who have wound up joining this church, and people who were never part of a Stel 'cause this church is from the isles of Logos, which is an independent, autonomous region on this planet. I'm thinking if there's anything else that I've already given you. You know that your mother, [laughs] Clem, is in the north gallery, which is one of the many museums in Cruciat- which has this whole museum district called museum row.

JACK: But she was not thrilled about the possibility of me coming and talking to her.

AUSTIN: No, she told you explicitly-

JACK: She was like "If you have any questions I'm sure you can figure out the answers"
[laughs]

AUSTIN: Answer them yourself, and only if you cannot, come see me in North Gallery. Um... so yeah, those are the things that we have.

JACK: Okay. Yeah-

AUSTIN: Oh, one more important thing is, the intelligence that Stel Kesh has is that Stel Orion is threatening- Stel Orion- a house of Stel Orion is supposedly going to attack them.

JACK: Okay. Yeah, I think I could roll together information. I think- that's the- am I allowed to do any activities that might reduce stress at this point, or is that all downtime?

AUSTIN: It's all downtime- you could-

JACK: Really!

AUSTIN: You could- you could flashback, you could spend a bunch of resources basically to flashback and do another Cut Loose basically.

JACK: [overlapping] No no no, it's fine. I bid my bet. Um...

AUSTIN: I just wanna be 100% clear, that is a thing you're allowed to do at this point, 'cause I don't want you to feel like I'm pressuring you into a decision you wouldn't have otherwise done, if that makes sense. Like... you are 100% allowed to spend a personnel point to get an extra cut lose action before you do-

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: But it's- that's all.

JACK: Yeah. I mean, in that case- I'm happy for the time being to just go like...

JACK (as Clementine): Thank you for coming. It means a lot that we can be here together again.

JACK: And then I'm gonna brief you per what Austin has just told us.

JACK (as Clementine): Prior to our deployment, which I anticipate will take some time, perhaps a number of weeks, I give you leave to... take any research or preparation that you may need in order to better ensure Kesh's standing during this mission. Does anybody have any questions?

AUSTIN: A.O. Rook raises a hand.

JACK (as Clementine): A.O.

AUSTIN (as A.O.): Uh... the prison does not have a good library.

JACK (as Clementine): No, it does not.

AUSTIN (as A.O.): You give us *leave*? You mean like we can leave?

JACK (as Clementine): No, I will not give you leave, you will receive an escort to the Winter Palace's private library and access to our archivists.

AUSTIN (as A.O.): [sigh] Alright.

KEITH (as Leap): Can we get leave?

JACK (as Clementine): No.

JACK: Uh-

AUSTIN: [laughs] Good question.

JACK (as Clementine): Mr. Leap?

KEITH (as Leap): Yeah?

JACK (as Clementine): If following this deployment I consider your progress to be suitably impressive, I may reconsider your demand.

SYLVIA (as Millie): Oh my god, she's so benevolent, you guys.

[Austin and Keith cackle]

SYLVIA (as Millie): She made it seem like we had a choice in being here first too? So nice.

AUSTIN: A bunch of- a bunch of A.O. 's crew- 'cause like, A.O. is the voice of a bunch of toughs? So a bunch of the toughs all laugh at Millie. God...

JACK (as Clementine): That's enough, thank you all for coming.

AUSTIN (as a tough): [amused] She said benevolent [laughs]

[Sylvia cackles]

AUSTIN: God. Alright. Perfect. Um... so what do y'all get up to?

KEITH: That was such like, substitute teacher shit.

AUSTIN: [laughing, Keith cackles] It was- [overlapping, unintelligible] God, brutal.

ART: If you wanna do any work, you can go to the library. [Austin and Jack laugh]

KEITH: We all start coughing loudly.

JACK: "What's your name?" "It's, uh, Ken" "That's not your name" "It is, yes it is" [Austin laughs] "that's his name! There's a photo of you here next to him!"

SYLVIA: Uh... I think I have an idea for what I wanna find out, just to get information stuff- I'm more interested in sort of the environment around the Prophet's Path? Millie- she's a sniper, and we use physical bullets in Partizan, so that affects how all of this works.

AUSTIN: Totally, 100%

SYLVIA: Last time they did a mission they went in- she thinks the Rapid Evening went in really unprepared! 'Cause- [amused] she also didn't give a shit that time. [Austin laughs] Um... so she wants to make sure she's doing her own prep.

KEITH: Wait, do you give a shit this time?

SYLVIA: I give a shit about not dying? 'Cause last time we almost got killed [laughs]

KEITH: Okay. Well, one of us almost got killed.

ART: Y'all, Millie is such a diva.

[Austin laughs]

SYLVIA: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Alright! Give me- it sounds like you're doing- what are you doing, like a study roll?

SYLVIA: Probably? Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah, when you study you meticulously examine details for better understanding, you might use technical manuals to find a weak point, you might determine a statement's truth by scrutinizing the speaker, you can read a charged situation, but survey might be better. I think it's study, survey would be like, if you were there surveying or something?

SYLVIA: Yeah. So this is just 1d6?

AUSTIN: Yeah, 1 d6, you can- for gather information will just give you different degrees of information basically, so. No risky standard type here.

SYLVIA: Okay. I'll just type it.

AUSTIN: And I don't think you have anything that would give you a bonus to this or an extra die.

SYLVIA: I don't think so-i can check, but I rolled a three, so.

AUSTIN: Yeah... that's a three, so that's limited information. Um... what I'll give you is, on a 1-3, the- I mean, there's some good information here, for you as a sniper is that... in general, the place where this group will be traveling is kind of a vast plain that is situated between kind of like, rocky outcroppings and low mountains and hills? So there will be plenty of places for you to set up shop as a sniper and kind of tail them? Or that's really useful. It also means that [laughs] you might have to contend with other people also using hills and mountains as cover. And then you get a lot of information- not information, you get a lot of like... high fulltutent Kesh... if geological scholarship could be cowardly, it would be. [Sylvia laughs] They talk a lot about how the kind of western barrens of the Prophet's Path resemble a moon more than a planet, and that strange things are seen there in this uncivilized, savage region- it's a lot of that bullshit? Like, that is- partially one ends up coding not just the moon part, but the people who live across the Prophet's Path? 'Cause, to be clear, people do live in this area too. It's not a dense environment or whatever, right? But there's shepards who have flocks out here in the steps.

KEITH: Flocks of what?

AUSTIN: Probably some sort of goat, I think? You know? Um... stuff like that. And there are some small villages here and there throughout the Prophet's Path- Obelle was on the eastern part of it near the water, but even here there are people who live here. And it's a lot of like, using the geological and environmental description to like, overflow onto the people in this shitty, kinda enlightenment era garbage way? [laughs] The ways in which you think of western european philosophers and scientists talking about the dark continent of Africa type shit? Which I'm sure Millie does not love!

SYLVIA: Yeah. Um... alright, thank you.

AUSTIN: Anyone else doing stuff here?

KEITH: Yeah, I wonder if there's... so this is like a big event.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so- something I didn't just say is, it's the 1000th year where- it's the millennial celebration of when Logos Kantel first came to the planet, to the moon. Which is why everyone is like "Yo, we should celebrate! We should try to travel down the path that Logos did!"

KEITH: And- y'know, I bet there's a lot of very dedicated people going to this thing, I also bet there's like, some- dedicated or not- I bet there's some rich people there?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: I bet there's something that I can figure out I can steal there.

AUSTIN: Oh- sorry, you mean in the Prophet's Path area?

KEITH: Yea- no, no, during the, um, pilgrimage.

AUSTIN: I think- hmmm. I don't even wanna make you roll for this, but no, right?

KEITH: No? Okay.

AUSTIN: This is an independent church that is not part of any of the major Stels, that is... that does not have that sort of backing, and is a tier, let's see...

KEITH: There's not like. A politician or a businessman who's performatively doing the path that will have like a big caravan of, uh-

AUSTIN: The answer is- I mean-

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah. Okay, that's fine, there doesn't have to be.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Give me a roll, y'know- actually, here's what we should do is, instead of giving me- just give me 3 d6 straight up, 'cause this isn't a study thing, this is a fortune roll. And a six is yes, and a four or five will be yes with consequences. Or, not consequences, complications. A one to three will be no.

KEITH: Six.

AUSTIN: Six! Alright, sure, totally. There is, um... let's say... a shitty Stel Nideo politician here. Let me see if I have someone on deck that could fill in here. Um... I think it's probably someone from the other- from the church of received Asterism? Instead of the church or progressive Asterism? Just as like a very quick reminder, there are two churches of Asterism, which are the two main faiths in this setting- or in the empire specifically, in the Principality: received Asterism has been there since the jump, received Asterism is kind of what Aram Nideo, the kind of great-grandfather of the Principality, came up with, that sees the state as kind of the natural embodiment of all that is good? And that the Divines reflect good stuff from the state, so if you have a Divine like Courage or Valor, that reflects the kind of idea of valor that the state has inside of it. Many many many years later, after a Prophet- after a robotic Prophet named Logos Kantel came to this planet of Partizan and began to do miracles, the second- and also issued this kind of unclear mantra, this vague mantra of 'progression'? Um... and started building a movement all around themselves? The very manipulative people of Stel Nideo decided to incorporate and- kind of segregate but incorporate this new school of thought into a new version of Asterism that became a second state religion called progressive Asterism, that sees each Divine as being reflective of something else? Maybe valor reflects the truth of valor itself, and that the state and the people should try to live up to the truth of valor incarnate, or of god's valor- many progressive asterisks believe in a monotheistic god of which the Divines reflect, y'know, that god's aspect or characteristics.

AUSTIN: The truth of whether or not Logos Kantel was actually tied to that belief is not clear, and importantly, the church of progressive Asterism isn't really a singular church so much as an association of different sects and churches and cults- y'know, there's a billion subversions of like- you can almost think it as like ancient greek cults to the gods, right? Like, in this city, we worship Athena [laughs] that's just what we do. And yes, Athena is part of a larger Pantheon, but we're not wasting our time doing all of the other feasts, we mostly fuck with the ones that are in line with what we're doing. And so that's the way that that's organized.

AUSTIN: The Church of the Resin Heart, aka the Disciples of Logos Kantel, aka the Friends of Gur Sevraq aren't really in line directly with- like, they're a progressive asterist group, but they're not like "Oh yes, we are the cult of Order", right? They are... they think that they follow in the footsteps of Logos Kantel, specifically, they think that they're the true inheritors of that original Prophet. And so....

KEITH: How does that differentiate them, specifically?

AUSTIN: Because Logos Kantel has been kind of minimized?

KEITH: Intentionally minimized.

AUSTIN: Intentionally by the, uh- Divine Principality. Because they were a clear threat to the authority of the Principality. Um- an so, instead, it's like- no no no no, keep the vines focused. Sure, we can give up some of our authority to Divines, because basically Divines are just us, but the second that we say there could be this other force out there, they lose some of that. And so this specific church belongs to the isles of Logos, which is an independent region- they're not tied up in the imperialism of the Principality, and specifically

Gur Sevraq- I mean, I think this is the stuff that- now you can give me an information roll, because what- I'll give you more on whos the person who is there, and then also-

KEITH: Okay. I was gonna do it- I was gonna do an information roll anyway to be like, is this person potentially even part of this thing?

AUSTIN: Right. Now give me that information roll, give me a study check probably? Unless you're doing something else to get this information, but that seems tough. I'm looking at what you have here, study is probably it, and unfortunately you have a 0 in study.

KEITH: I do have a 0 in study...

AUSTIN: You could talk- you could ask around with consort.

KEITH: I could, I could, um.... Yeah, I'll do consort, I guess I could try and get- maybe my escort knows something, my library escort? The librarian?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Oh, you know who would? You have a contact who totally would.

KEITH: Oh yeah?

AUSTIN: Alise, Alise Breka, the novelist who writes about- writes kind of romance pulp action books about hollow pilots and hallow pilots. Um... who is in the background- we haven't had this scene yet, but has been interviewing you about your life as a pirate as research for her next book.

KEITH: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: She would totally know.

KEITH: Okay, alright, I'll use, uh... consort for this.

AUSTIN: Yeah, give me 1d6.

KEITH: [groans] I wanna do good on this one... six!

AUSTIN: That's six, look at that! So is this in the middle of an interview where she's like, now tell me about the time where you- y'know, robbed the floating bank of whatever, and then you're like "well, actually, quick question" [laughs]

KEITH: Yeah. Hold on, Q.

AUSTIN: What do you do, what do you ask?

KEITH: Did I get this, uh- did I get this guy's name?

AUSTIN: It's a woman, this is Alise Breka.

KEITH: Oh sorry- no, not Alise Breka, the politician.

AUSTIN: Oh, the politician's name! I see. No, because I didn't write one down, let me see. Uh... Pavel. What role would he be, he would be a... he is actually a- oh! Actually, I know exactly- that's not true, I know exactly who it is, it's not Pavel. It's Aleel Verdiccate.

KEITH: Aleel Verdiccate, like the DNA thing?

AUSTIN: Is that a DNA thing? Sure.

KEITH: Alele? I think so. I think that's the-

AUSTIN: I thought you meant Verdiccate.

KEITH: Oh, no. Aleles are like what tells you- a combination of them is what tells you if you're going to get a recessive gene or not, I think?

AUSTIN: I suspect that this is spelled differently, but maybe not. It's just A-L-E-E-L and then Verdiccate V-E-R-D-I-C-A-T-E. And Aleel Verdiccate is the Song of Partizan, which is like- not the Pope, but the highest ranking religious official in the church of received Asterism on this planet. Or this moon.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: So, big deal.

KEITH: Of- and with received there's only the one church?

AUSTIN: Yes yes yes.

KEITH: Okay, so, big deal.

AUSTIN: And Aleel- she reports right up to the Cycle? And the Cycle is the head of the church, who is not here.

KEITH: [amused] What a sorry thing to call someone.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

KEITH: The Cycle... um- okay, so Aleel Verdiccate is gonna be there.

AUSTIN: Yes. I have to add her quickly to the character list in front of me. Alright. And you know that she's going to be there at least for part of this journey.

KEITH: Okay. And I'm in an interview with Alise.

AUSTIN: With Alise, yeah. Sorry for having two 'al' sound characters in the same sequence.

KEITH: That's fine.

KEITH (as Leap): Aleel, Alise. Aleel, Alise. That reminds me...

AUSTIN (as Alise): Yeah? What's that remind you of?

KEITH (as Leap): I was thinking of Aleel, Alise, Aleel, Alise.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Aleel- it's Alise, it's just Alise.

KEITH (as Leap): I know, but I was thinking- in my head I was thinking, Aleel, Alise. [Sylvia cackles] And I was like, I wonder if Alise knows Aleel. Verdiccate.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Do I know- do I know the *Song* of Partizan? Um... not personally, but- y'know, it's hard not to know a Song.

KEITH (as Leap): Huh. What do you know- [mumbles] what do you know of kn- have you heard of...?

AUSTIN (as Alise): Y'know, she's... she tends to the church for Stel Nideo- why are you whispering? What is-

KEITH (as Leap): Oh, nothing.

KEITH: Do we have like- is there like a doctor-patient confidentiality for books?

AUSTIN: [amused] Do you ask- is this you asking live?

KEITH: Yes. Yeah. Well, yeah, I'm asking Alise.

AUSTIN: She goes-

AUSTIN (as Alise): Um- yes. Um- hm.

KEITH: Can I tell if that's true?

AUSTIN (as Alise): Not legally. But I've always found that I need to develop a degree of trust with subjects. You know that I draw from real inspiration in real, um... events for my stories, but I'm not here to- I'm not a reporter. I write fiction, fundamentally.

KEITH (as Leap): Right.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Because fiction is in some ways, in the Principality, more true than real events.

KEITH (as Leap): Right. I totally get that.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Great!

KEITH (as Leap): I totally get that, and... Aleel, Alise. I'm just stuck on this. I think- [Austin overlaps] no, you go.

AUSTIN (as Alise): No, you go!

KEITH (as Leap): Okay. I just feel like I can't get this Aleel Alise thing out of my head unless I know everything you know about Aleel Verdiccate.

AUSTIN (as Alise): [overlapping] I'm not- I don't know- Aleel Verdicate is a... [sigh, Sylvia cackles in the background] Aleel Verdicate is someone who you have to take very seriously.

KEITH (as Leap): Okay. Now- Aleel is someone who you have to take, blank. I'm totally-

AUSTIN (as Alise): Seriously.

KEITH (as Leap): Seriously.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Take- don't-! Don't take!

KEITH (as Leap): Don't take...

AUSTIN (as Alise): [amused] Don't take Aleel! Don't take Aleel!!

KEITH (as Leap): [amused] No, no, not take Aleel. If I were to take something though, what would I take?

AUSTIN (as Alise): [overlapping] Why does this matter, you're-! What would you take?

KEITH (as Leap): Yes. Aleel is someone who you have to take... her what.

AUSTIN (as Alise): [sigh] Okay. This is getting a little much. [quietly] What you're saying- if I were telling a story-

KEITH (as Leap): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Alise): About a dashing, renegade pirate-

KEITH (as Leap): Thank you.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Who, by a chance, passed- crossed paths with the Song of Partizan-

KEITH (as Leap): This is like 100% so far accurate.

AUSTIN (as Alise): In terms of an hypothetical, you mean.

KEITH (as Leap): In terms of an hypothetical, yes.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Yes. Well, if I was doing that, I would think that the pirate- well, first the pirate would think "What if I kidnap the Song of Partizan, certainly she's worth a lot of money.

KEITH (as Leap): Cold. Colder.

AUSTIN (as Alise): But! But the Song of Partizan is worth so much that doing that would be a death sentence, right? So, the dashing, daring, brilliant pirate in my fiction would not do that, because of their own brilliance. Um, but-

KEITH (as Leap): Also, where would he put her.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Right, especially if you're stuck in prison.

KEITH (as Leap): Right.

AUSTIN (as Alise): But he isn't, in this story, 'cause that would be a very boring story. Um... he would take... her jewelry. Not for the reason you think.

KEITH (as Leap): Why would i- I would think the jewelry is expensive-

AUSTIN (as Alise): [overlapping] It's a rumor- it's a rumor! It's a rumor, I couldn't know.

KEITH (as Leap): Okay. Rumors are good.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Rumors are good, you like rumors.

KEITH (as Leap): Yeah. Well, people pay for rumors, whether they're true or not. I mean, if someone was to steal something because there was a rumor about them, the rumor wouldn't even have to be true-

AUSTIN (as Alise): [overlapping] Do you know about the Divine Vernacular?

KEITH (as Leap): There's so many- can I be honest? I cannot keep track of them [Sylvia laughs]

AUSTIN (as Alise): One of the ways-

KEITH (as Leap): [overlapping] It's true- I feel like I'm always hearing the same set over and over again-

AUSTIN (as Alise): [overlapping] New Divines, I know, I know. It's difficult. Imagine how I feel, I have to invent new ones for the books!

KEITH (as Leap): You invent new ones?

AUSTIN (as Alise): For the books. If I do real ones, sacrilege.

KEITH (as Leap): I just feel like they all already exist.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Let me tell you about Vernacular. Do you know how Apostolos has like, military might. And Kesh has ancient coffers filled with money, and information, and columnar has all this technology, and Orion has built stuff... Nideo, you would think, would have faltered here on Partizan by now, given all of that. What do they have? They have the church, a church isn't nothing- no one likes to punch a priest. Well, some people. Vernacular is the sort of Divine it's hard to put a face on, because it's more like a network?

AUSTIN: I don't know that she'd know the word network, I don't know that she would know the word network in that way.

AUSTIN (as Alise): It's more like a... it's more like a web. It's more like a framework, like a structure, like a foundation- you ever see a house with no walls and no ceilings? You only see the wood, the framework.

KEITH (as Leap): Oh, like before- like, while it's being built.

AUSTIN (as Alise): While it's being built.

KEITH (as Leap): Not a house that's just a floor.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Not a house that's just a floor, that's not a house. Vernacular let's the people in Nideo- at least the approved ones- speak with each other, no matter where they are on Partizan. Which means that if you were a diplomat here in Cruciat, and you wanted to get word back to peak city, you could do it much quicker than a Kesh diplomat in Peak City could get word back here to Cruciat.

KEITH (as Leap): If you had- hold on. If you had a way to communicate instantly with all the other diplomats for Nideo, it would make all the other Stel's diplomats look more like dipshit-plomats. [Art and Sylvia cackle]

AUSTIN (as Alise): [quietly] Dipshit- okay...

AUSTIN: Writes it down [Keith laughs] Like, shrug, hm. [amused] You know the kombucha- [laughs] video, the kombucha girl? [Keith and Sylvia laugh]

AUSTIN (as Alise): Yes, I guess- I guess it would! Um... well. All of that communication needs to be accessible to the people who are high ranking in Stel Nideo. And so, the rings of the Song of Partizan are not just jewelry. They are... they are ears, into every conversation that every diplomat, that every spy, that every priest of Nideo is having. So, if I were to write about the dashing, daring, brilliant, dare I say handsome pirate, who encounters by chance the Song of Partizan, I would say that he... would take those rings. Not because they're valuable, but because they would open the door to an entire new world of opportunities. Even just *one* ring would be enough, really. In fact, the less the better, because- you wouldn't want them all gone, you wouldn't want every piece replaced, because then maybe they would change the way that vernacular worked. But if you could get one ring, even if you heard one in ten conversations. Maybe it would give you enough. [pause] Not you! Not you, the hypothetical, would get one.

KEITH (as Leap): [overlapping] Right. One. I got- it's out, I got it out of my head.

AUSTIN (as Alise): Oh, wow. Well. [sigh] I think that's about all the time I have, anyway. Um... weird meaning. I hope your week goes well.

KEITH (as Leap): Thanks! I got cafeteria access.

AUSTIN (as Alise): You didn't have cafeteria access?

KEITH (as Leap): No.

AUSTIN (as Alise): I- okay. Leap... good luck, with everything.

KEITH (as Leap): Thanks.

AUSTIN: And she leaves. A new side objective, it sounds like. [laughing] Rob the Pope.

SYLVIA: YEAH!!! [Keith cackles]

AUSTIN: [amused] Who else has something to do?

ART: After that everything feels a little frivolous. Um... [Keith laughs]

JACK: I would quite like to see if I could, um... get some information about what Orion might be planning?

AUSTIN: Good call, how would you go about that?

JACK: I would like to visit the Blossom.

AUSTIN: Okay. I don't think that you can visit the Blossom, the Blossom is pretty far away.

JACK: Oh, the Blossom is not in town? Is not delivering- oh, damn.

AUSTIN: Um... you know, there's a chance, give me a- what's your relationship, you're positive on the Blossom, right?

JACK: I am tantalized by the Blossom, because i-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] You're tantalized by the Blossom- give me a... what does the- wht is their faction, what is his faction? His faction is... speaking of Stel Nideo [laughs]

JACK: He's Stel Nideo, right?

AUSTIN: He is Stel Nideo. Who was not supposed to be involved in this in any-

JACK: [overlapping] Nut delivers all over.

AUSTIN: Give me 4d6 , because they're a tier four faction, and that's a fun way to arrive at a fortune die.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Six is you can do this, four or five is you can do this, but by letter, one to three is you won't hear back in time. That is a five. So you can do this, you can communicate with the Blossom via courier. You won't be able to actually directly speak to him, but you can send messages, and that means we can have a very limited back and forth here.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But you still are going to need to give me a consort probably, right?

JACK: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: As a gather information.

JACK: Um... I'll write the letter, which is just like "my dear Blossom: at this time of year, as always, my mind turns to the caskets of tripel punch [Austin laughs] that you have brought to the-" it is called tripel punch, right?

AUSTIN: It is. No, it's called tripel- is it a punch? That's very funny.

JACK: [amused] I think you wrote down tripel punch!

AUSTIN: That's very good.

JACK: [overlapping] One big-

KEITH: [overlapping] Oh, I thought tripel like the style.

AUSTIN: It is.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like the style of alcohol.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's- that sounds like some shit I wouldve written. [Sylvia laughs]

KEITH: I think that's with an E-L. Or does it just say triple?

AUSTIN: It is- I don't know, I don't see it here.

JACK: [overlapping] Tripel punch. It's in a comment, like, here.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] I could've sworn- I remember- I also remember, but it's not on our-

JACK: [overlapping] Austin, you're seeing it!

KEITH: [overlapping] One beer, tripel punch, I see it.

AUSTIN: Oh, there it is. Okay, good.

KEITH: One beer, tripel punch, yeah.

JACK: Etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, many enjoyable days, etcetera, served at the wake for the death of the- etcetera etcetera etcetera.

AUSTIN: I- real quick I wanna slow down and explain who the Blossom is for people who don't remember this from 7, 8 episodes ago. The Blossom belongs to a group called the Lambic House, the Lambic House makes a beer and they sell it all around Partizan. They make a tripel, a tripel punch-

KEITH: They don't make a Lambic.

AUSTIN: They don't make a Lambic- I think they probably also make a Lambic.

KEITH: You said one beer!

JACK: One beer.

AUSTIN: Where do I say that?? I don't see that on my screen.

KEITH: One beer called tripel punch.

AUSTIN: Oh, well.

JACK: It's- it's- [laughs]

KEITH: At 1:55, you said that.

AUSTIN: At 1:55?

KEITH: Sorry, if you click on beer in the Blossom, it says it. One beer.

AUSTIN: Ohhh, I see it. That's probably a joke, that's probably a joke- that's probably a goof that I'm making.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: *Anyway.* Anyway, [Jack laughs] The point is, they're beer makers, in the way that trappist monks are? And they're the same group- the lambic house is part of the shepherd's crook that Sovereign Immunity is also from. But the Blossom is both a monk inside of that group that delivers that beer, but also often is delivering little messages of, um... what I've written here is "a short populist whisper". Kind of a troublemaker, y'know? Cares about communities, does not necessarily have a developed ideology so much as "Uh, what if the world was a little different", y'know? [Jack laughs] Anyway.

JACK: Um... yes. "Times like these our thoughts turn into celebration, etcetera, the progression of the Prophet's Path, etcetera. A small bird has told me that Stel Orion plans to move against the Prophet- tragedy, great injustice, etcetera etcetera, have you heard any such thing on your travels in Orion territory/the Prophet's Path, ever yours Clementine Kesh, the Winter Palace, Cruciat"!

AUSTIN: [laughing] Give me a 1d6 after that- that's what you have, right? That's your... yeah.

JACK: Yeah- by the way, if you were [laughs] if you were to know what that signature looks like, look at how Queen Elizabeth I signed her letters? Um... "Elizabeth 1 signature". Yes.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's incredible.

JACK: That is- [laughs] that's Clem signing.

SYLVIA: Looks like a heavy metal album [laughs]

AUSTIN: It- yeah. Uh-huh!

JACK: It rules. She's basically doing a lot of... a lot of lines cascading into other lines?

AUSTIN: Yeah! Uh-huh, yeah. Okay.

JACK: 1d6... [laughs]

AUSTIN: That is a three! So not very good, not very much information here. Um... I think you get a simple letter back. Which says, uh... I need to confirm a thing really quick. [pause] "

AUSTIN (as the Blossom): Did you know that they call Gur Sevraq-

AUSTIN: This is not the voice of the Blossom, the Blossom is deep. The Blossom is a very very big man. The Blossom is, um...

KEITH: Massive, as described on the sheet.

AUSTIN: What did i- like massive, shrew and boisterous? Or what's the-

KEITH: Serene.

AUSTIN: Serene? Oh, interesting, okay. God, what is the character. Uh... I've been imagining him as... let me find a picture of this dude 'cause he's great. He's a minor character- [laughs I'm imagining him as a minor character from a Gundam Show [Keith laughs] called Iron-Blooded Orphans, which- Sylvia, have you seen that show?

SYLVIA: I've seen the first season.

AUSTIN: Okay, then you will know who I'm thinking of. Mekanai? Mekanai Togonosuke? I'm just gonna pop this dude's face... actually, his whole body, his whole body is important honestly. Um... lets just drop this right here...

SYLVIA: Oh, that guy!

KEITH: [overlapping] Oh wow.

AUSTIN: He's gigantic, he has a beard that like, wraps up around itself in weird ways at the bottom, he's just like a walking mountain of a man. He's fantastic. And so the Blossom responds back to you and says-

AUSTIN (as the Blossom): Had you heard that Gur Sevraq calls himself a miracle worker? Did you know that the word miracle is not about doing something, it's about seeing something. The word mirror and the word miracle are not too different. If someone were to steal a miracle worker, kidnap one, take one away, it might simply be so that they too can see the wonder.

JACK: Just like, close on Clementine's face, her eyes moving like the woman doing maths.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yeah! Like "Okay, there must be something else here, there must be- okay, what else am I looking for here". Um, I think- you deal in codes, maybe you look for a code here but- there isn't a code here.

JACK: [overlapping, unintelligible]

KEITH: [overlapping] This sounds like the- [unintelligible] that Gur Sevraq should be kidnaped [Austin and Jack laugh]

JACK: Yeah!

AUSTIN: I think the thing that he's trying to get across here is... "hey, if someone can do miracles they must know some shit". That's it.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... but does not know- I think this roll is less your- you failing- this is less Clementine failing so much as reflecting the limits of what your relationship- the limits of what your contact knows.

JACK: It's also just like- Clem wrote a very light letter?

AUSTIN: [amused] Yes.

JACK: And received a very light- like, y'know. It wasn't "I'm about to deploy to try to protect these people".

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right. Could've found out more information.

JACK: It was like "Hey, did you know-" [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. Totally. Um... alright. Our own member of the shepherd's crook. Sovereign Immunity, what are you doing? Did you already do something, am I missing-? Am I wrong?

ART: No, I haven't done anything. Um... and y'know? I really feel like we've accomplished a lot.

AUSTIN: Yeah [Sylvia laughs]. You don't need to do anything! You could save your time.

ART: No, no, no.

AUSTIN: Okay, great.

ART: I was being dramatic, thank you.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: You know what I can do to help this mission?

AUSTIN: What can you do? [laughs]

ART: I need to secure my weapon.

AUSTIN: Ahh! Finally! What does this look like?

ART: Um... so, during the Farmer's Rebellion, the Farmer's stand-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: We were using a lot of agriculture equipment, a lot of industrial farming mechs, and the weapon that would become associated with this was the scythe from a threshing mech- that would originally be used by the mech and later just by Sovereign Immunity on his lonesome.

AUSTIN: [amused] Ah, okay. This is perform a feat of physical force that verges on the superhuman.

ART: Yeah. I mean, i- I wanna really use that sparingly?

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: You know, it's- I don't want to be playing a character who has super strength, it's not the interesting thing I wanna do, but I have to be able to carry this giant thing.

AUSTIN: Right. Well, you have- 'a heavy weapon' is a thing that you can declare inside of your... it's probably more of a heavy weapon than an unusual weapon, right?

ART: Right- and it's probably one and a half times his total height.

AUSTIN: Okay, that's big.

KEITH: That is really big.

ART: It's big.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Okay. Great.

ART: And this was, of course, not something you're allowed to have in a prison.

AUSTIN: No!

JACK: No.

ART: Is a giant threshing weapon, um... that's one and a half times your size. Probably of any size, honestly.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, they probably don't- that's not really- [amused] they're like, oh, that gun fits right in the palm of your hands, you can go ahead in!

ART: Yeah, it's not like "Well, it's just a derringer".

AUSTIN: [laughs] Good, right.

ART: And i- I need it for this, I need it for protection, for everyone's protection.

AUSTIN: Do you have to call in any favors for this, is it just- has it finally arrived? What's the color this for me a little.

ART: It really depends on how we wanna talk about it fictionally. Like, there's the way that yes, it was somewhere, and it's being shipped here, and it's finally arrived and this was the plan all the time. And there's also the possibility that it's also been in Clementine's closet.
[Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: That's very funny too. Which is better? Um... the thing is, I think we can do either of them and still get the moment, right? Which is you unclasping the locks on it, and looking down at it. Which is really the blood pumping through this sequence, in my mind.

ART: Yeah, yeah. It's got a little orange light, like the briefcase of Pulp Fiction

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah. I thought you meant like, the briefcase had like a light- like a LED? That was like "Alright, it's clear" [Art laughs] Like the Ghostbusters trap, you know what I mean? Alright, you can use this now!

ART: I think it's both.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay. It goes like "beep beep!"

ART: [overlapping] It has a lightbulb and a great LED setup.

AUSTIN: Alright, yeah, you can declare that. That's a thing you're allowed to do. As always, in between missions you undeclare your personal items anyway, so. You certainly have the space to have this heavy weapon on you for this mission. I will let you do that and do something else, if there's something else you want to do.

ART: I'm really out of it- I don't have an idea, I think we really did...

AUSTIN: Okay, you really did do the damn thing. Okay. anyone else wanna do something before you figure out engagement here?

KEITH: I'm good, I'm doing my- you know, I'm thinking about the Pope.

SYLVIA: [laughs] As you do.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I've added-

JACK: [overlapping] How much personnel do we have?

AUSTIN: We have one floating point, which we need to decide what it is before we engage with this mission. You have one last quiet moment--

JACK: [overlapping] An easy way to do that would be to decide it as personnel and immediately spend it to cut loose two days ago [laughs]

AUSTIN: [amused] Yes, that is a thing you could do. That is a thing I would let you do here, given that you are at how many stress? You're at 4. Sovereign Immunity is at 0, 'cause Sovereign Immunity overindulged. Leap is at 3, Millie is at 0.

SYLVIA: 'Cause I also overindulged.

AUSTIN: [amused] Oh, you also overindulged, right, yes. I remember now. How could I ever forget... [Sylvia laughs]

JACK: Would folks object to me using this point?

ART: Talk me through what you're gonna do if you overindulge.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Oh, damn, that's a great point. Um...

ART: I don't have a specific objection, I'm just- I'm asking for a tactics discussion.

AUSTIN: Your options- again, if you overindulge here, are: attract trouble, which is roll one additional entanglement. Brag, take -2 trust with your patron faction [Jack laughs]. AWOL, your pilot vanishes for a few weeks, play a different pilot until this one returns from their 'vacation'. Um... Or impropriety, reset your connection with the pilot that joined you as 0, as you make an ass yourself. If your connection is already a 0 take the level 1 harm 'alone'.

JACK: Damn, okay. I mean, the thing that would be interesting there is attract trouble. Just draw more hawks to the feast. Um... Or brag. There's a risk of overindulging because I'm at that wurd point where I have just enough to make it worthwhile to think of reducing? But I also don't have so many that overindulgence-

AUSTIN: You would need, what? You would have to roll a 5 or a 6 to overindulge.

JACK: Yeah, which is-

ART: Which will happen a 33% of the time, right, that's.... [Jack and Austin laugh]

JACK: Hm...

ART: I think you should do it, but I did- we should do this with our eyes open.

JACK: Yeah. Okay- alright, yeah, I agree.

AUSTIN: Who are you cutting loose with?

JACK: I wanna cut loose with Gucci!

AUSTIN: Oh. I don't know that you can do this!

JACK: Oh, why?

AUSTIN: Because cutting loose is about the squad. It's not about NPCs.

JACK: [overlapping] Oh, damn, I have to cut loose with the squad, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Cut loose highlights in the squad, it's about- it's the thing of any military fiction- not any, but a lot of military, ensemble based fiction is about the relationships of the key players. Otherwise what you end up having is a bunch of scenes between PCs and NPCs, and part of the reason cut loose is so powerful is that it puts PCs together and let's me shut the fuck up for 15 minutes. Not that everytime you speak for 15 minutes.

JACK: [overlapping] Do you know where Leap is, at the end of the party?

KEITH: I was still at the party, until the end.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you were still there the whole time.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah, do we get a flashback to you and Leap? As the party is wrapping up?

KEITH: I thought Clem got kicked out.

JACK: No, i- the, um... Million and-

KEITH: [overlapping] Oh, it was just Million and-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Million and Sovereign. Sovereign Immunity, sorry, I know it's a full thing. [Jack laughs]

KEITH: *Sov Immuns!* [Sylvia laughs]

AUSTIN: S.I.! Sports Illustrated.

ART: Still being published, inexplicable. [Austin cackles] Continuously, all the way to Partizan.

AUSTIN: Who's buying it? I don't know!

ART: It seems dead now, but- [Keith and Jack laugh] it's paper, it's in paper every week-

KEITH: I actually don't know what's in Sports Illustrated, so if this doesn't make sense then that's my fault, but, um... what is baseball, we don't even know what baseball-

AUSTIN: We don't know!

JACK: [laughing] We forgot 3.5 thousand years ago!

SYLVIA: Well, the Mets still exist, Memphis Longhand.

AUSTIN: Oh- true. You know what, yeah, fair.

JACK: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: As long as there is the mets, there will be Sports Illustrated [laughs]

SYLVIA: Yeah! It's just Mets Illustrated now.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah .

[Keith and Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: Okay, so tell me about-

ART: I wouldn't- I love the Mets, and I wouldn't read a single issue of Mets Illustrated for anything. [Sylvia cackles]

SYLVIA: I think that's the response of every Mets fan I know.

KEITH: What if it were just the roster fanart. That's illustrated.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: You don't see any baseball fanart I think is part of it.

KEITH: Yeah, it's because it's supremely unpopular [laughs]

AUSTIN: Owned. Okay, let's get this- whatever this cut loose here is. I like- we've not seen a lot of Clem and Leap, so I would love to see it.

ART: Turns up there's a Mets game at this party, and, uh-

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay.

ART: Uh, I'm not in this scene-

AUSTIN: You're not in this scene [laughs]

KEITH: I'd like baseball fan- I think people should like baseball more.

AUSTIN: We need to do this scene, we have to do it.

KEITH: Okay.

JACK (as Clementine): Mr. Leap.

KEITH (as Leap): Yeah.

JACK (as Clementine): Still hanging around?

KEITH (as Leap): Sure- I mean, I go back into a cell after this.

JACK: People are like, tidying up.

KEITH (as Leap): [louder] I go back into a cell after this!

JACK (as Clementine): Okay, okay- [Austin and Keith cackle] Have you stolen anything yet?

KEITH (as Leap): No!

AUSTIN: [laughing] Oh my *god!*

KEITH (as Leap): No.

JACK (as Clementine): Would you like to?

KEITH (as Leap): Oh, yes. I didn't know what was an option.

JACK (as Clementine): Well, uh- it's important to spend time with one's squad, and I understand that you enjoy taking things- and this palace is just full of them.

KEITH (as Leap): It is full of things, yeah.

JACK (as Clementine): So what are you thinking? A painting, or- I'm sure I could make some sort of dispensation for you to hang it in the wall of- [louder] he's gonna get a painting! In his cell! Um... or like a rug or something, some silverware...

KEITH (as Leap): Hm...

JACK (as Clementine): We have a room full of rings. [Austin laughs]

KEITH (as Leap): I bet- a *room*- wait, sorry, I'm- [Austin cackles] the thing you said was so crazy that I didn't even consider it. You have a whole *room* full of rings? [Sylvia cackles]

JACK (as Clementine): Well, in the jewelry section.

JACK: section? I was gonna say wing!

KEITH (as Leap): Wing. You have a jewelry wing and there's a ring room that's full of rings.

AUSTIN: [laughing] This makes the conversation Leap had two days later with Alise Breka, where she's like [laughs] "You gotta steal the pope's rings" [Sylvia cackles] even *funnier* to me.

KEITH: Why is everyone trying to get me to steal a ring?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Just imagine that sequence but Leap is wearing *ten fancy rings!* [everyone cackles] In his human hands, and Alise Breka, like *The Usual Suspects*, looking around the room like "what would you steal?"

KEITH: I am holding it out like "Is there anything that you could think of that I could steal?"

JACK: Anything at all! [Keith cackles]

KEITH: [laughing] just like "well, for some reason a ring pops to mind" [everyone cackles]

AUSTIN: I couldn't tell you why!

JACK: The metal moving against the metal-

KEITH: [laughing] It's- it's- [everyone keeps laughing] it's like "Hey, you could steal these rings, it's not for the reason you might think, which is wearing them on your skin and bone fingers"

AUSTIN: [laughing] He leans forward and the rings are resting *right* under his face! Oh, it's perfect...

JACK (as Clementine): Well, where else would we keep them?

KEITH (as Leap): I guess individual jewelry boxes in the rooms of whoever owns them.

JACK (as Clementine): Well, there are individual jewelry boxes, but they're organized by color, or gemstone, or something- I can take you there if you want.

KEITH (as Leap): Let's take a look. [Austin laughs] It sounds- can I be-

JACK: [overlapping] It's like, walking quickly down the corridors-

KEITH (as Leap): [overlapping] Really, it sounds *very* easy to steal. It almost sounds unfun to steal it, so easy to steal.

JACK (as Clementine): Well, I'm sure there's some more interesting rings we could find.

KEITH (as Leap): [sigh] Let's look at the room. Let's look at the room at least.

JACK: Smash cut, room full of rings in jewelry boxes!

AUSTIN: [laughing] Uh-huh! They're in boxes, they're hanging from the ceiling, they're on mannequins-

KEITH: They're spilling out of the boxes!

JACK: It's like the gem room in, um... What's that museum in New York that had the incredible gem room?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] I don't remember, the gem room is-

JACK: -That was renovated, and Ali and I got really unhappy about.

ART: It's the Museum of Natural History, right?

JACK: yeah yeah yeah, the Museum of Natural History used to have this incredible gem room in the basement [laughs]. Um...

ART: I posted a picture of, uh... Leap at the interview in the- [Keith cackles]

JACK: [laughing] yes! This is the picture of Green Lantern wearing many many rings. [Austin cackles]

AUSTIN: It's more than one per finger! [Sylvia laughs]

KEITH: [laughing] There's like 15 rings on 8 fingers

JACK: [overlapping, amused] There are 12- 13 visible rings.

AUSTIN: Was the- this is issue 49, Emerald Twilight 2, just for the record. It's great.

KEITH (as Leap): Do any of these do anything?

JACK (as Clementine): Sorry?

KEITH (as Leap): Do any of the rings- do they do anything?

JACK (as Clementine): What do you mean 'do anything', they're rings, you wear them, they look good.

KEITH (as Leap): I have it on good authority that some rings-

JACK: No, wait, that's not supposed to-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, amused] Leap does not know- no no no, no, you don't have that yet, that hasn't happened, for two days-

KEITH: [overlapping] Hold on-

AUSTIN: Oh, okay.

KEITH: I'm sure I've heard of *another* ring-

AUSTIN: A magic ring, yeah, uh-huh.

KEITH: Yeah, decoder ring...

ART: [amused] Any green lantern rings in here?

KEITH: A ring that has like, an audiobook in it?

JACK (as Clementine): There are rumors, of course, but, uh... I'm sure nothing that I can verify.

KEITH (as Leap): Do you have an audiobook ring?

JACK (as Clementine): No...? Uh- no. my mother's been known to carry rings that can contain a poison, or a tool of some kind. It's just rumors, I don't-

KEITH (as Leap): [overlapping] Hm... cool, what kind of tool?

JACK (as Clementine): Uh- a death tool, I don't, I don't know- [Art and Keith laugh] look, do you wanna take a ring?

KEITH (as Leap): Yeah yeah yeah, let's take a ring. I'll take a box of rings.

JACK (as Clementine): A box??

KEITH (as Leap): Okay, fine, a couple rings [Austin cackles]

JACK (as Clementine): [whispers] Excellent.

KEITH (as Leap): Excellent? What do you get out of this?

JACK (as Clementine): Well, it's exciting, isn't it? [Sylvia laughs]

KEITH (as Leap): Okay

AUSTIN: You should give me a roll, give me this- give me this fucking stress roll. 1d6.

JACK: Is this, uh...

AUSTIN: Is this 1d6? Is that what it is? It's whatever you have with the person, I think. Um...

ART: This feels like it should be an overindulgence- [overlapping, unintelligible]

JACK: [overlapping] It does, doesn't it? It's just waiting to happen.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Uh-huh- the dice equal to the number of ticks you have in the connection clock with the pilot joining you, heal equal to the highest die and add another tick to the clock. So 1d6... how could this n- [chuckles, Keith and Jack cackle]

SYLVIA: [laughing] It's so-

KEITH: Leap was right, it's so boring it's almost not fun.

JACK: [laughing] It's cheating.

AUSTIN: Clem rolled a 1...

JACK: I rolled a 1... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Go ahead and delete that one, you now have three stress instead of four. Incredible. I- we were so afraid of the overindulgence that we didn't think of the underindulgence, we couldn't even imagine it.

KEITH (as Leap): I- [Jack laughs] you literally don't think this is fun.

JACK (as Clementine): Well, it's, uh...

JACK: Clem just fiddling with a ring on her finger [Austin laughs]

KEITH (as Leap): You have- I bet you have your own room of rings somewhere, probably.

JACK (as Clementine): [takes a breath] Yes- well, I've had a lovely evening, it's been so nice to spend time with you. Uh- do you wanna take another one? Hell, take a box, I was rude when you said "a box" and I said "a box?" [Austin giggles]

KEITH (as Leap): Yeah, it would be- I don't know, it might be weird to steal 1/400th of the amount of rings in this room.

JACK (as Clementine): Right, right, yes. Exactly. Um... and I'll make sure that- don't worry about security or something, I'll get, um... mark, mark! Will you take mr. Leap back to his cell? And this- these rings? They're a gift.

KEITH (as Leap): Huh.

AUSTIN: [amused] You were gonna go steal some rings and they're a *gift*. [Keith cackles] Unbelievable.

JACK: I reduce one stress...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

KEITH: [laughing] Literally gave me the rings. You won't get in trouble because you're allowed to do this. [cackles]

ART: [overlapping] I gained more stress-

AUSTIN: Alright, great, love it.

KEITH: It's funny because it is also sort of like sitting in the chair, a thing that probably you're also kind of allowed to do?

AUSTIN: Right. God... alright. Well, I'm glad we did that. I'm glad now we have Clem at three stress, and we have Leap at three stress and Millie and Sovereign Immunity-

KEITH: [overlapping] How much money did I get? What do I get- I have a box of rings.

AUSTIN: You write down that you have this box of rings.

KEITH: [amused] Okay... anyway, thanks- thanks, Jack. This is a great- I mean, fictionally, it was a miss-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] It's something! It's not nothing!

KEITH: Well- sorry, as a stress reliever it was a miss, but now I have a box of rings

JACK: You have many rings. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Uh-huh [Keith cackles]. It's so fucking funny.

KEITH: And I'm gonna steal another ring!

AUSTIN: God, just the open box on your window as Alise Breka is scanning the room- just perfect, alright, we need to- [Keith laughs] Alright

KEITH: Oh my god...

AUSTIN: [amused] Do you wear any? Do you incorporate these into your looks?

KEITH: Um...

AUSTIN: Like, do you wear one- do you pick one per day, the way that you would, like, accessorise? Do you accessorize with rings- you have these hands, we know you have these hands.

KEITH: You know what I do? Y'know how like, if you have a- I guess a ring, but it's usually a bigger ring, and you can get it around.... I think that I use it as like, um... almost a cufflink but for my hoodie drawstrings, I just put it up-

AUSTIN: [amused] Amazing.

KEITH: - and that's how I wear it, yeah.

AUSTIN: I like it, that's good. That's a good look. Um... okay, so. Barring anyone else having a thing they wanna do here, which- I don't think we have- it would mean I start to tick some clocks, we have the time for that.

KEITH: Does anybody have any problem with me putting in my, uh... items here, '80 expensive rings'? Is that- [laughs]

JACK: I think it's- I think it's 20.

KEITH: [amused] You think it's- I think you could fit *way* more.

AUSTIN: It's a fancy box.

JACK: But it's a- they're displayed on like a-

AUSTIN: Like on velvet.

JACK: I don't know what- yeah.

KEITH: I'll say 30 expensive rings- Leap takes the box with the- the heaviest box. [Jack chuckles]

AUSTIN: 30, 30 is acceptable.

JACK: 30 rings!

AUSTIN: *Now* it's a friends at the table season. Um... god. Alright.

KEITH: This is the opposite of the robots.

AUSTIN: It is, it is. Alright.

Keith. I have finally, four seasons later, paid for the robots. [Austin and Keith cackle, Sylvia laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay, so... what's your plan? How are you gonna do this?

Jak: So we're rolling transport, right?

AUSTIN: I'm guessing.

SYLVIA: Yeah...

KEITH: I guess, yeah.

AUSTIN: But more broadly, what's this look like? Like, yes- I don't want to get into the nitty gritty, but like, are you going there undercover? Are you going there- are you just gonna stick to the mountains and be like guardian angel duty? What- what is your plan for doing this? Are you gonna introduce yourselves? There's a wild variety of ways that this could work.

KEITH: Can we incorporate- I'm trying to think of ways that we could incorporate 'secret routes'. Fictionally, not just as a +1d.

JACK: We could try and- we could introduce ourselves undercover, and then try to reroute them. Not a major enough reroute to be like we are taking apart the pilgrimage, but essentially be like- 'cause we can claim that they are under threat without revealing who we are. Um... in theory. Right?

Sylvia; Yeah, I think we could. Maybe one of the tunnels that we know about lines up with the route in a way?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

SYLVIA: Um... and so instead of us being like, "step off of your pilgrimage" to do this, we can just be like "Oh, no, you can still do it, but now you're underground" [laughs]

JACK: "We know a special pass-"

SYLVIA: Yeah.

KEITH: I don't wanna get- caue we have the pictures of those tunnels, which is great, but secret routes doesn't just mean tunnels.

AUSTIN: True.

SYLVIA: Fair.

KEITH: We could have- we could just change the map that people are using to navigate and do it along another route, it does say, uh... little known mountain pass or other route of your choosing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, y'all can come up with whatever you'd like here.

SYLVIA: That's true.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It could be a combination of many of these things even, it probably would be, right? Um... the thing that I'm gonna say here is, if you're going to do the thing where you tell them this? Uh, and are like "Hey, I need you to do blah,blah, blah", I actually think that's a social roll, but I'll still give you the +1 from secret routes. Because that's a key plan of what the plan is, but the- you would be negotiating with them and persuading them, "Hey, follow us, a bunch of strangers with robots, down these dark tunnels" [laughs]

KEITH: "Who are you?"

AUSTIN: Right, exactly.

KEITH: "We're not going".

AUSTIN: Right. [Jack chuckles]

ART: Is the same thing- like, is it still the pilgrimage?

AUSTIN: This is the- this is what the roll would have to figure out, right? Because I think that it's right to question if that's the case. I think that there would be some people on this pilgrimage who'd go like "This is not the path".

JACK: This is not the route.

KEITH: Okay, I have an idea. Here's me with an idea.

JACK: okay.

KEITH: We are historians who for the 1000th year are introducing what we think is the accurate path that, um... Logos Kantel took, and so for the 1000th year we're going to do the original path, the one that they used to walk.

AUSTIN: So deception is luring, tricking and manipulating the target, [laughs] the detail is the method of deception.

JACK: I don't- I don't know if I would feel super comfortable being like... "Your faith, we've made up a new version of it" [laughs] We would essentially be showing up with a- a fake thing we've made up about that faith, right?

AUSTIN: When you say we, do you mean Jack de Quidt, or do you mean Clementine Kesh?

JACK: Oh- feeling uncomfortable with that? Jack de Quidt, I don't think Clem- [laughs] I don't think Clem is like-

KEITH: For me this is like- I mean, it's debatable, for me this is not morally different than making them do it- because you said they're in danger when that's not really true, I'd rather not reveal ourselves.

JACK: [overlapping] But it's- at least we're not being deceptive. Yeah.

AUSTIN: I want to encourage you to make the move that you think is the most narratively interesting and honest about who the characters you're playing are, and- go ahead.

KEITH: [overlapping] There's- there's another thing where- they don't have to go through the secret route, we just watch them from the rou- we're on the route.

AUSTIN: That is another way you can do it, yeah.

KEITH: yeah.

AUSTIN: In which case I think that's a transport, it's just like- you're basically doing security without them knowing it, right? And like, waiting for shit to pop off, waiting in the wings- again, that's the guardian angel version of this, right? Where you're off to the side, and when things pop off you're there.

KEITH: And maybe we have shifts of, you know, two people on point with the caravan, two people on the route at a distance or whatever. So that we're not just like, the four of us-

JACK: [overlapping] So we just clip the difference, we do say- we go to them in disguise.

KEITH: Just walk. Like, if you show up- what, thousands of people do this route? It's like-

AUSTIN: It's like 200 people.

KEITH: Okay, 200 people do the route, 2 extra people show up, it's just like "oh, hey, 2 more people".

AUSTIN: Oh, so you're saying to like, go there and- just on foot.

ART: Yeah, I think we should embed two people with them, have two people watching.

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah. And then have another two-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] And then have other people in the mountains in mechs.

JACK: Like, on overwatch?

AUSTIN: Yeah, on overwatch.

KEITH: And we can- we do it in shifts, maybe. So that we get-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] And then A.O. and the toughs are doing- are they also embedded? Or are they-

JACK: Or are they scouting ahead to make sure that our vanguard and rearguard are clear?

AUSTIN: I'll say they can do that, i- what I will notice is that is not the type of cohort that they are? But they can totally try to do it. [Jack chuckles] Uh- there are different types of cohorts, and they are toughs, which are not the same thing as- whatever, scouts or- skulks would be thieves, scouts, infiltration, or... rovers, which are drivers, astronauts, urban spelunkers, etcetera. But they can do that sort of work, still.

KEITH: I also feel like we don't want a bunch of toughs [laughing] embedded either. Sounds like a bad-

AUSTIN: You know, things can go bad. Things can go bad anyway you cut it. Um... but yeah, I can imagine a world in which you have two in, two in the mountains and then A.O. and the toughs with like, all of your gear nearby? You know, making sure all the rest of your equipment is within reach, basically.

KEITH: So, to be fully clear, the doing it in shifts was specifically so everyone can get scenes on both sides?

JACK: Oh, yeah.

KEITH: But we could also, as sorts of a devil's advocate, we could have a thing where we all are just watching from afar and do whatever we want amongst ourselves. And it's not a problem until something goes wrong. Um... I'm not like, fully opposed to that.

AUSTIN: The thing to note here is- you'll be making an engagement roll, which means that things could go wrong immediately if you fuck up that engagement roll. So to some degree this is just about setting the circumstance, because whatever plan we have in mind, it's going to fall apart? They're gonna be different than what we think, you know? Like, that controlled success will give you some- if you succeed enough to get a control that's like, pretty good, and maybe there's some breathing room here. A bad roll here could be like, it has popped off, we're jumping to the point of engagement, not just the point of embedding, you know?

JACK: I think splitting the team in two, and overwatch unit and an embedded unit with A.O. as like a... on call if either group needs particular assistance?

AUSTIN: Yeah, sounds good. Okay. so, engagement.... Let's pull that roll up... at this point, we know it's a cargo roll- carrying cargo and people through danger, the detail is the route and the means- which it sounds like we have. Um... the- you need to figure out your loadout, which is light load, medium or heavy? Light load means a pilot is quicker and less conspicuous, able to blend in with civilians, providing increased effect when applicable? Medium will make you look well equipped for a difficult task, and heavy slows you down and makes it clear that you're a member of an armed group. [Jack chuckles] So, what is your various loads?

ART: Well, as I anticipate being in the embed unit, and want to be blending in, I'm gonna go light.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: I'm gonna note that two of my three load are already taken by this giant weapon!

AUSTIN: [amused] Okay. You don't need to declare that yet, you could unclear it until you wanted to use it.

ART: Hm. I'm gonna keep the exes exed, and we'll get to it when we get to it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay, sounds good.

ART: If I haven't used it in fiction I guess I'll uncheck it.

AUSTIN: Uncheck it, but we know. *We* know. I get what you're doing. [laughs] Clem, Leap, Million?

SYLVIA: Um... I think in sort of the opposite direction, because I'm probably not going to be in the embedded unit, I'm gonna go- I wanna keep some mobility, so I'm gonna go with medium here.

AUSTIN: Okay, sounds good. Leap, Clem?

Leap: Um, I'm also gonna go medium.

AUSTIN: Are you embedding or are you staying back?

KEITH: I kind of... don't care.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: I don't have a preference, so I guess Jack, if you have a preference, then-

JACK: In that case I would like to take light and go embedded with the caravan.

KEITH: Okay, me and Millie will-

ART: [overlapping] Uh- just a quick note, uh- Clementine Kesh seems very famous for an embed. [Austin chuckles] I'm not gonna tell you not, of course, but...

JACK: Um... okay.

KEITH: She has groucho glasses.

JACK: Oh! No, no- it's exciting, 'cause it's the opportunity to wear a disguise.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

SYLVIA: [amused] God...

KEITH: Groucho glasses.

AUSTIN: What is your disguise?

JACK: It is a...

AUSTIN: Oh, you do have- this is a thing you have in your sheet.

JACK: Oh, I absolutely do! I have a fine cover identity.

AUSTIN: Yeah, which is not like, a different face, but it is "paperwork, plain day to day info and false connections. Suitable for passing as a different person", so...

JACK: Yeah, definitely. Um... god- Austin, have you encountered the, um... stuff in Final Fantasy yet about royals in disguise?

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: Okay. There's just stuff with like, Nanamo trying to learn about like, the people.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay.

JACK: And I think Clem definitely-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] You're doing a Jasmine in the streets of Agrabah.

JACK: Oh yeah, totally. Yeah. So I think that a hood, and, uh... [laughing] big glasses? I think it's really weird in the- like, the overall effect is someone who is close enough to the espionage machine of Kesh to understand the value and nature of a good disguise? But is also close enough to the machine of celebrity and paparazzi to understand the value of a big hat and dark glasses? [Austin and Sylvia laugh] And so it's trying to split the difference

between these two conflicting... Like, "I know a bit about disguises, and I know a bit about paparazzi, so I'm kind of combining them"?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: So I'm gonna mark that off and mark light.

AUSTIN: Cool.

JACK: And I'm also gonna look in my names file for a fake name!

AUSTIN: Perfect. I'll note that fine cover identity does not actually take up any load.

JACK: 'Cause it's italicized.

AUSTIN: Cause it's italicized, so you have three left. Okay-

KEITH: Youtube search history, how to disguise. [Jack and Austin laugh]

AUSTIN: Alright, engagement roll. Start with one, everyone starts with one die. Is the mission bold? Take +1d. Is the mission socially complex? Take -1d. Do you think this is a bold mission? I think this feels pretty controlled, all said.

JACK: Yeah... it could be bolder.

AUSTIN: It could be bolder. This is not a particularly bold plan.

JACK: If it was explicitly like- kidnap Gur Sevraq, explicitly? That would be bold.

AUSTIN: Yes. And it is only- it is only for one person.

KEITH: [overlapping] Is my mission bold, for I'm stealing the pope's-?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, but that's a submission, that's not part of your engagement. I think you intend to do something pretty bold. Does the mission exploit the target's vulnerabilities? Take +1d. Is the mission tactic ineffective against the target- the target here is one of the houses of Stel Orion, you don't know which one, unfortunately- I don't think it especially does, but neither is it ineffective. Um... does the squad receive external support for the mission? Take +1d. Is anyone interfering with the mission other than the target? I'm giving you a +1d here, for external support that you don't know about. Um... so that's two. Are there any other factors that affect the mission? Take +1d for any that benefits the squad and -1 if it hinders them. That might include differences in squad tiers, specialized equipment or unusual terrain- well, you get +1 immediately from the gear that you have- not the gear, the upgrade, the specialized routes- what was it called, what's the actual name?

KEITH: Secret routes.

AUSTIN: Secret routes. However, you are up against a, I believe- let me check the tier- between the tier and the, uh... the geography that you didn't necessarily learn enough about, let's see here... you're a lower tier than your target, and you did not get enough info, I think

those two cancel each other out, so you're at two dice for this engagement. Who wants to roll this?

KEITH: How many dice?

AUSTIN: Two. 2d6, you really want a high one.

SYLVIA: I'll do it.

JACK: [overlapping] Ta- oh, go on Sylvi.

SYLVIA: Thank you.

AUSTIN: That is a six! You're in a controlled position.

JACK: Yes!

AUSTIN: So, what's this look like? Let's see. When do you embed? You embed maybe in the far western edge of the path. You get there pretty early. You know, I think it's a combination of lots of people just kind of out and about Milling around, getting ready. Uh, you're probably there that early, right? You don't sleep in once the path is started, once the pilgrimage has started. That probably is a little too late. Or do you wait?

ART: No, that sounds right, that you have to embed before it gets going.

AUSTIN: Okay. So you get the kind of vibe of the place, and, uh... I think what you make out pretty quickly is- you can kind of break things down into three- into two groups, but there's a third subgroup. The two main groups are the leadership, right? Who is Gur Sevraq and then kind of his- the rest of the folks who lead the church, who are in other organizational roles? There's a chief of security, there's a quartermaster, there's folks who seem to report to those people- [laughs] I guess I'll describe these important characters a little bit. Gur Sevraq is a humanoid synthetic, specifically- I've been imagining him almost as a robot with a spider head? Do y'all remember the Lacuna RPG cover Art?

JACK: Vaguely.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna post this- just as a note, as a reminder, there will be a spider here- I'm trying to find a good image, why can't I find-

KEITH: It's full of spiders.

AUSTIN: That game was full of spiders. Um...

KEITH: I've got it.

AUSTIN: You've got it?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Can you post it?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's a cartoonish spider in a hat.

KEITH: I did something-

AUSTIN: I got it, I got it, boom. So imagine this spider- six eyes, kind of like a- this is the one, there's one that I think is grosser and it's not that one- yeah it's *not* that one that I think is grosser. It's this much- very friendly looking, big mandibles, six eyes that almost look like two arrows pointed inwards in like a... what is that actual character on your keyboard called? You know what I'm talking about, the greater and lesser signs, but made of three dots? And Gur Sevraq is like that, but what if that was an EXO from Destiny. What if it was- imagine a really complex looking spider robot person, in terms of what his head looks like. And then, while that is his head, he also has on, um... long cloaks and robes all layered, over and over again? Lots of natural colors, but then kind of slashes of- so, you know, tans and khakis and browns and some very light, pale sand colors, and then a splash of teal, a splash of orange here and there, either as individual cloth, or as like- an entire ribbon that has been sewn into one of the layers of the robe. And as they move around, different layers show and move, and there's almost something hypnotising about this quality that they have. The other thing is, they also have a low turban on that is a similarly colored thing, that covers the very top of their head, and also probably has a ribbon of orange around it. Um... Gur Sevraq's chief of security you also meet? They are a former Kesh soldier, which is maybe something- maybe you recognize this immediately, [laughs] Clem? This is someone- I don't think you recognize them, as like "oh, that is this person I know" but you recognize the way they hold themselves, and maybe even their uniform? They probably still have their uniform, and they have removed the Kesh stuff- the Kesh badges or whatever- but it's still a military uniform, right? And it's kind of run down a little. Their name is Avar, A-V-A-R. I'm imagining them played by Asia Kate Dillon, with the shaved head, that whole look. And like, seems to be- projects an air of confidence and...not cynicism, but Gur Sevraq is a religious leader with their head on the clouds a little bit? And Avar is the one who wants to make sure that they don't get shot. There's also a quartermaster, who you see talking to Avar a lot, who has brown skin and kind of fluffy blond hair, kinda very very bouncy curls, who is the Quartermaster? And her name is... Ryrira, and that is the kind of three leadership people in the group. Then there's a bunch of people who are just the pilgrims, right? And if you wanna meet people in there we can kinda do that on the fly, but in general these are people who are coming from the isles of Logos directly, with a few other people from around the- Partizan's path. In general it's families, it's a lot of families, it's a lot of people with- you know, we get a lot of multigenerational families here, we get a lot of grandparents, parents, children. Um... you get a lot of people- you get a number of people here who are sick, who are unwell, who are doing this out of this deep love and faith and obligation, and are battling that part of it- not a lot, a lot makes it sound like it's 30%, but no. [laughs] Like, there are people here who are not necessarily at peak performance. And then you also get this third tiny group that is the Song of Partizan, Aleel, Aleel Verdicat, [amused] who is trying to blend in in a very similar way to the way Clem is? Except, unlike Clem, she is surrounded at all times by at least 5 guards, who are just big security officers, who are not necessarily as undercover as they think they are.

KEITH: Who is with the guards?

AUSTIN: Aleel Verdiccate, the Song-

KEITH: Yeah, that's what I thought you'd said.

AUSTIN: So that is the third subgroup, and she and her group kind of sleep off by the side- y'know, they don't mingle as much, though there is a moment- I think there is a moment early on, actually, where you see that she exchanges words with Gur Sevraq privately. And Gur Sevraq gives a big speech at the top of the pilgrimage, as you all are setting up. And... is flanked by their bodyguard and closest allies, the closest friends of Gur Sevraq I guess. And then just kind of starts this sermon that kind of kicks off this entire trip. He says-

AUSTIN (as Gur Sevraq): Pilgrims, honored guests, visitors and tourists too. You are all my friends, though you may not know it yet. On this journey we welcome song, and elect, and citizen, and those who the Principality would call adrift too. Those who, despite lacking status, are nevertheless tracked. Their presence, so sharply scrutinized, that it is as if it were coveted instead of spurned.

And why ought it not be coveted? After all, 1001 years ago, the Prophet Logos Kantel was adrift too, floating through the darkness above us, borne gently by the Divine towards this place to what we now call Partizan. And when Kantel first landed, this moon too was adrift. Why would the Principality recognize a world which lacked even what humble life this path now offers. This was a moon barren, with vast craters where a sea now flows, rivers of liquid fires where now cities rest. Absence, broken only by those perils which need neither atmosphere nor sociality to live.

And when Kantel landed, they brought something new to the Principality. Opportunity. A world unwritten, and a message to those who would try to inscribe it. Progression. And though the church bears the name of this doctrine, for the centuries that followed its founding scholars and priests debated what might be meant when Logos Kantel said progression. Such debate is well intentioned blunder at best, and malicious deception otherwise. Because there can be no doubt as to the Prophet's meaning.

With God's vision, Logos Kantel saw the truth of the world, saw the walls built, saw conversations interrupted, saw separation under the guise of unity. Conquest in the name of universal salvation. And at the root of it all was this.

The Principality demands that all that exists must relate to it, just as all that is standing must relate to the ground. All things made under divinity are food. Our music, our love, our faith, our very idea of self. We're required to be made in the image of the Principality. We were then, and are now, like children, hands clasped, kneeling before our parents, hoping that we will be given leave to run through the fields. And they tell us, we may. But only if we run in uniform and sing the anthem as we do.

Progression. What comes next? I tell you here, gathered today, that this is still our Divine doctrine. The message sent to Logos Kantel, I know it well. It is our duty, given to us by God, to imagine, and pray for, and build a world where we may run free through the fields. This is why we travel the path, because with each day that we move east, we insist that the world that they see is not the world as it is, and that we will soon, all of us, travel the stars the way

we were meant to. Free. Unburdened. Liberated from the chains of status and birth and Stel. True divinity is granted only to those who progress beyond the ground. True divinity is *only* for those adrift.

AUSTIN: And I think everything is kind of quiet for a moment, and then there are some claps- I definitely think that, uh... Leap, you definitely see a look on the face of Aleel Verdicate, the Song. I think Clem, you- "Okay, what?" [laughs] Uh- I don't know that you've ever heard someone say something so directly?

JACK: Like "We will go to space and meet god"

AUSTIN: Yeah, and also... "The Principality is not a place of freedom" is not the sort of thing that you hear out loud, or *think*, you know, that often.

JACK: I think that Clem hears it and thinks "Yes it is".

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right, yeah, uh-huh. Um... and then this begins, people start traveling. You know, you're getting people, um... singing songs, 'cause it's still early on in this process, you get people snacking on food, and children running around. And from the hills and mountains, I think the folks who are watching on don't see anything to be worried about quite yet. With a controlled roll you also get a little bit more info on what the environment looks like here, and the thing that you didn't know but then learned very quickly, Millie, is- this far west on the Prophet's Path, sometimes *gravity* doesn't work. Sometimes there's no air-

SYLVIA: Oh!

AUSTIN: Sometimes it's just a moon, and it kinda calls into focus the idea that Logos Kantel did miracles here, because you would- suddenly the air would disappear, as if it's a pocket of a different world. And your mech will get way lighter [laughs] because gravity will be different. Laws are not being followed here the way they're supposed to be. Physical laws. So that's part of it. You also, uh-

KEITH: [overlapping] Way to finish your miracle, Logos.

AUSTIN: Yeah, well, that's a good question! What happened, why is part of the world like this, is definitely an important question. Okay, so... you talked about there being like, shift changes, and integration, reintegration, deintegration stuff, but I'm curious in general how do these first few days go for you? What is it like to do this sort of work for each of you? Kind of a picture of what you're doing but also where you're at emotionally at, let's say day three of this. Let's say day 4.

KEITH: [overlapping] I've a pretty quick answer, is, um... I'm actually scouting Aleel, mostly.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Lots of shots of you looking through a scope at her, basically.

KEITH: Yeah, and I think that I've probably even left and gotten pretty close to get a better- to get a couple different angles on the caravan, and I'm sure that I've picked out the guards-

AUSTIN: Definitely, they're not very- no, no.

KEITH: Yeah. And, um... just basically like, looking and trying to be like “What is the best way to do this?”

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: One of the best ways is by not being in the group with Clem, I think [laughs]

AUSTIN: Totally. Leap, Sovereign Immunity, Clem? [Sylvia laughs] Sorry, Millie, not Leap.

SYLVIA: Uh, just to wrap up our side of things real quick, I think for Millie this is actually pretty... it kinda comes easy for her, this is a lot of what she did back when she was with Apostolos?

AUSTIN: Yeah! Yeah, totally.

SYLVIA: So, like... I think there's a lot of routine there that she finds comfortable, but if- if you asked her, she would tell you she's miserable and bored out of her skull. [laughs] She's prob- she's lying a little bit about that, but she's just like, trying to be above all of it.

KEITH: [overlapping] Bored and comfortable.

SYLVIA: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Yeah. Clem and Sovereign.

ART: Um, I think Sovereign is pretty comfortable in a religious procurement, I think the blending in is like... easy-ish. And instead he spends a lot of time trying to make sure Clem doesn't fuck it up [Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Clem likes talking to people.

AUSTIN: [amused] Uh-huh

JACK: Just likes-

KEITH: [overlapping, amused] The feeling is mutual, I'm sure.

JACK: [laughs] Just likes, uh- doesn't much like the walking, but is- at the same time is definitely aware that they've been sent here to protect these people, and so is like... I think bored, but also just like “I'm enjoying being outside of Cruciat, I am cold, or too warm, depending on how the weather is that day-”

Austin: It's both, yeah.

JACK: -I think tries to spend time- I think recognizes and resents Sovereign Immunity's watching over her shoulder? But at the same time is like “Well, we're a team here- Sovereign, I'm talking to these people now, and I understand you're happy to stand over there and sip tea and watch what's going on, but I'm busy talking to this family” or something.

AUSTIN: [chuckles] Totally. Alright, so, I am going to introduce a new clock that is their progress across the- their progress with no problems from the start to the end of the path here. Or at least the part of the path that you are meant to be taking care of. And... boom, here we go. That needs to fill to get them all the way there. That thing- [laughing] things can go bad on the way there? But to start out with I think this kind of calls for- this stuff is about to kick up, and- Millie, maybe we start with you and a survey roll here, just to kinda start with- there is... it's the fourth day, it's the afternoon, the sun is hot. You started to get a few readings, a few blips on your sensors? But you're not quite sure what they are yet.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Actually, I'll say, given those blips, what do you do?

SYLVIA: Um... I think yeah, I think actually I'm going to start using- in my gear I have this range finder/laser painted binoculars as an item?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: And so I think it's pretty standard trying to see if I can see anything in that direction before I check and use my scan- yes.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Your actual scan, right. So yeah, you're up on the top of your mech with these special binoculars out. Alright, mark those, and then give me a survey. This is controlled standard.

SYLVIA: I've a one in that...

AUSTIN: Are you gonna push yourself, are you gonna ask for help?

SYLVIA: No, I'm gonna- I'm gonna wait till I push myself, unless someone wants to help, but- I'm gonna wait. And I got a six, so.

AUSTIN: And you got a six, look at you.

SYLVIA: I'm vindicated in my-

KEITH: [overlapping] Lotta sixes today!

AUSTIN: That is true, a lot of sixes today.

ART: What a thing to say so early in the-

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah- we rolled, what, four sixes already?

ART: I don't know why you're still doing it! [Sylvia cackles]

KEITH: I mean, is this- so, we've rolled so many that it can't end.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [laughing] You're right, it won't end, you're right. Um. so I actually think that this first roll I'm gonna give you- I'm gonna advance the clock of them walking by two? And the first bit of this is just like... hey, you managed to see up ahead that there are some like, sandstorms out in the distance? And you're able to radio down some information to Clem and Sovereign Immunity, who can kind of spread the word- I'm abstracting here a little bit to give you this part of the success, which is like, hey, don't walk into the sandstorm, there's a sandstorm further ahead that they can't see? But that sandstorm is like... the thing I think you notice on a six is- and maybe it takes you a second to put this together- that sandstorm shouldn't have been there? All sandstorms seem like they kick up out of nowhere, but that's not how the weather actually works, y'know? There are actually forces here? And I think a little later that day- I'm gonna let this six ride, basically- maybe an hour later, you see that it's blowing the wrong direction. It's as if it's changed direction? And now they're still walking towards it. What do you do?

SYLVIA: Um... I think first I wanna radio in and let the people down on the ground know about this? I'm assuming Leap know because he's like, physically here with me, and I can nudge him and be like "Hey look at that weird sand" [laughs] But I think I'm gonna tell them-

SYLVIA (as Millie): Hey, there's something going on with that storm down there, it looks like it's being directed in some way? Or at the very least is not moving in a way that we're able to predict.

JACK (as Clementine): Thank you.

KEITH: Wait- was that to me? [Austin laughs]

SYLVIA: Probably

KEITH (as Leap): Hm..... So we go around it?

SYLVIA (as Millie): I mean- it's the ground people who decide that

KEITH (as Leap): Okay. What do we do? [Austin laughs]

SYLVIA (as Millie): I don't know man, I think we just look at stuff until they need me to shoot somebody

KEITH (as Leap): Okay. I guess I'm gonna keep an eye on everyone down there.

SYLVIA (as Millie): Yeah... can I borrow some of your snacks?

AUSTIN: Borrow??

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [laughs] I'll get it back to you.

KEITH (as Leap): Yeah, you can 'borrow' some of my snacks.

SYLVIA: Bad wording, it's fine!

KEITH (as Leap): I have trail mix and I have trail mix extra raisins.

SYLVIA (as Millie): Standard trail mix, thank you very much.

AUSTIN: As the two of you are... What's the word I'm looking for? Not bickering, not bartering, bantering about snacks- about trail mix, clam and Sovereign Immunity, what are you doing?

JACK (as Clementine): Sovereign, a word please?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Hm

JACK (as Clementine): I just received word from Ver'million. That sandstorm in the distance... it appears to be unnatural?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Okay.

ART: Um... it's a group call.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

ART: It's not important

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Okay- I don't know how we move a pilgrimage.

JACK (as Clementine): Have you spent any time speaking to the leadership?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): No, I'm worried they'd recognize me.

JACK (as Clementine): Well, perhaps i- I could go and introduce myself.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Then they'd recognize you.

JACK (as Clementine): I have some experience-

KEITH: Great team picks [cackles]

JACK (as Clementine): I have some experience, I'm my mother's daughter in some respects. Um... I would welcome your council and your presence.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Okay, let's do it.

AUSTIN: Who do you go to?

JACK: [overlapping] Do you have-

AUSTIN: Oh, go ahead, finish your thought.

JACK (as Clementine): Do you have some kind of mask or hood?

KEITH: Cap.

JACK (as Clementine): Or cap?

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Um... no, but I've never met any of these people.

JACK (as Clementine): Why are you worried they would recognize you?

[Austin laughs]

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Um... infamy?

[Keith cackles, Austin and Jack laugh]

JACK (as Clementine): Yes- of course. Follow closely behind, and try not to make too much noise.

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): Of course. If I need to tell you anything I'll whisper in your ear.

JACK (as Clementine): Excellent.

JACK: I'm gonna-

ART: The coms, I'll use the coms

AUSTIN: There you go- everyone has those throw mics, right? That are- that allow short range conversation. You're between that short range- though I do think that- you're at the very edge of the short range, if the perennial wave was maybe a little denser here, if the tide was a little higher so to speak, that might cut out? Because of the ranges we're talking about.

KEITH: So right now it sounds like Art's discord always is?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, yeah, 100%. Like that. I think we get a good transicional shot here of two things? Kinda details that I wanna emphasise, that are things happening in the background. One is, you hear the sound of planes overhead, or vehicles way overhead. You don't necessarily- if this was the HBO original show, [laughs] there would be a sound here that the audience- the devoted audience member who'd go back to the first episode and listen would've also heard it in the first episode coming from the sky where past was descending. This is the sound of an Apostolosian air unit- like, flight unit? That you don't know the details of, but that is what it is. And I think you can look up here, it's blue skies, you can see Girandole, the planet, up in the sky too, and you can see six fighter jet mech type things way up in the sky. We're talking about like, sub orbital, but that's still pretty high up? That is doing recognizance flights. Because of your secret routes I'm not making you roll to stay hidden, you know the spots that are able to hide from surveillance. But that is a group that is involved here, and that is paying attention to this happening. The second thing is, as we see you walk through the crowds and like, make your way towards the front of the pilgrimage, of the convoy, you do start to notice- or maybe you don't notice, but the camera certainly notices that some of the synthetic folks, the columnar based people? Definitely- not a lot of them, but here and there, we're seeing, um... we're seeing a sort of sickness in the columnar population that's ehre. There's some sort of- people have joint pain, they're finding that the travel is hitting them a little bit harder than they expected? Some folk are having just like, failure? Just like things aren't working the way they're supposed to, right? And it's different,

it's not- there's not necessarily- just getting the equivalent of walking through the camp and people are coughing, except it's like "One of my- my eye cameras won't turn on". So there's something happening here, and you're not sure what.

AUSTIN: And then finally you make your way to the front of the convoy. There are two Hollows, two big mechs that are in this convoy- one's at the very back, one's at the very front, they're both troop units that were stolen from Apostolos and then sold to this group. Um... and one of them is at the very front, marching ahead of everybody. And behind that is Gur Sevraq and his security detail, at the rear of which is Avar, Avar is the head of security and is the person you would need to get past to talk to Gur Sevraq? Or you could talk to Avar directly I guess, also. Um... Avar- again, I described would be played by Asia Kate Dillon, with the shaved head, but right now they're actually wearing this sort of like- almost like a standalone hood? Just the hood of a hoodie, do you know what I mean? [laughs] Like, what if you could buy just the hood of a hoodie and put that on. And they're wearing one of those-

KEITH: I think you can buy that.

AUSTIN: You can buy that, that's why this character has one, 'cause I saw one the other day and was like "Avar would have one of those" and now they do! And I think that they see you approach. Um, so they kind of slow down their walk so that you can walk next to them and talk, but the movement is constant here, right? The whole thing is about continuing this movement. So they kind of turn to you and say-

AUSTIN (as Avar): How's it going?

JACK (as Clementine): Good, thank you.

AUSTIN (as Avar): Yeah? Good.

JACK (as Clementine): Yes, uh- I was just wondering whether or not your scouts had, uh... received any information about the sandstorm.

JACK: And just gestures ahead out towards this thing rolling in the distance.

AUSTIN (as Avar): If our scouts had- there's sandstorms all the time, bud.

JACK (as Clementine): Yes- this one seems to be behaving, um... strangely.

AUSTIN (as Avar): This one?

AUSTIN: [amused] They're like, squinting at you?

JACK (as Clementine): I'm a meteorologist. [Sylvia and Keith cackle]

KEITH: Which, at this point in this galaxy, probably is like... a made up thing

AUSTIN: There are meteorologists, but the- but it is like... okay?

KEITH: It's like a hobbyist thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I-

KEITH: I just imagine, with this technology, what do you mean a *meteorologist*?

AUSTIN: [laughs] You know, I think it could go both ways, I think there's probably planets on which they don't have a super Divine who can predict the weather, right?

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah, that's- yeah.

AUSTIN: This is exactly the sort of group that might have a meteorologist on board I guess?

KEITH: That's fair, yeah.

AUSTIN: Because they're not, you know- um... you're a meteorologist.

JACK: They're planning on walking for like-!

AUSTIN: Weeks. Um...

AUSTIN (as Avar): You're a meteorologist! I- okay, wait.

AUSTIN: And reaches down- actually does not reach, just calls out and says-

AUSTIN (as Avar): Hey! Hey, has anyone heard anything about a... a sandstorm? Yeah, yeah, we are ready for- it's accounted for. We changed course a few hours ago, we're still on the path- y'know, close enough, but-

ART (as Sovereign Immunity): [whispering] Tell them about the- tell them that it moves.

JACK (as Clementine): I don't know whether or not the sandstorm would agree with you there. Um... it seems to have changed course to match us. If my calculations are correct.

AUSTIN: Give me a roll, this is a roll.

JACK: [amused] To see if my calculations are correct.

AUSTIN: This is controlled? This is controlled standard if you're swaying, because you'd be persuading with guile, wit or charm, you might negotiate a ceasefire's terms, you might convince a guard that you do in fact belong in the restricted area. You could roll command or consort instead, but I do think the fact that you are deceiving, fundamentally-

JACK: [overlapping] Command would be like "I need you to move the-"

AUSTIN: [overlapping] You force immediate obedience, you might lead a fire team in combat, blah, blah, blah. You know, you can roll any of-

JACK: [overlapping] I don't know that it's consort.

AUSTIN: It could be consort, I just- it would give you less effect here, because I think the thing there is you would immediately be seen through. They would- Avar would be like "Well, you're lying about who you are, but I'm listening to you anyway", you know? [laughs] and

because of the fact that you'd be lying it would lower the effect. So, if you sway it's controlled standard, if you consort it's controlled limited. Up to you though.

JACK: Okay. Um, I think I'm gonna roll consort in that case, and I think I know what the frame there is. But I'll-

AUSTIN: Give me that roll first. So 1d6, are you pushing yourself? Sovereign Immunity, are you helping?

ART: Yeah, I'll help.

AUSTIN: Okay. You...

ART: How much stress is it?

AUSTIN: It's only one still for you because you only have one belief with Clem, you have one belief on that clock still.

KEITH: Um, do- does Sovereign Immunity know why he's gonna try to kidnap Gur Sevraq except for that he was told to?

AUSTIN: Nope! He was told to by the Curtain.

ART: Wait. Secure means kidnap?

AUSTIN: Kidnap means secure, yeah. [Sylvia cackles]

JACK: What did you think it meant??

AUSTIN: Yes. Doesn't mean secure the *life* of. Kidnap means secure. What did you think it meant?

ART: You know, secure.

JACK: How is your mission different from our mission then? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Your mission is secure-

JACK: [overlapping] No, I mean, if secure just meant look after him. [Keith laughs]

ART: I thought it was- I thought it was an invitation to greater violence.

AUSTIN: Wait, you thought *kill*??

ART: No, I thought I could be more direct in the... okay. Alright.

KEITH: Okay. I'm glad- 'cause that's the thing-

ART: [overlapping] I'm glad we clarified that now! [Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah!

KEITH: Yeah, 'cause that's the thing, you were about to help with the roll, and I was like "Maybe Art would want the sandstorm thing to work". I don't know.

ART: I'm not gonna *kidnap* him while- we're so far! [Jack and Sylvia laugh]

KEITH: I don't know!

ART: I'm gonna ping where I think we should- I should kidnap someone. [Austin and Keith laugh]

KEITH: I didn't say kidnap during the sandstorm, but obviously there's something fishy-

ART: [overlapping] All the way there- [unintelligible]

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah! I'm just saying there's obviously something fishy with the sandstorm-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] You're like, here-

KEITH: And so you should allow- maybe you wanted to allow the fishy sandstorm ploy to work, whatever it was, to be better set up for a kidnapping later. I thought maybe that was the thing.

ART: Nah, I don't think that's right, but, uh...

AUSTIN: So yeah, are you helping? Yes, it sounded like yeah.

ART: Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Are you giving +1d, are you giving greater effect, are you giving, uh... better positioning?

ART: Probably +1d.

AUSTIN: Okay, so 2d6, controlled limited.

JACK: 2d6, controlled limited.

AUSTIN: And you are not pushing yourself, right?

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: Okay then, 2d6. Ooh! Love to see a 2 and a 3! That's-

JACK: [amused] Keith, what was that you were saying?

AUSTIN: [laughs] Um- on a 1-3 the pilot falters, they can press on by sizing a risky opportunity or withdraw and try a different approach and action. I think this is just pretty straight up, Avar like, stops and let's some people walk past them- y'know, the convoy doesn't stop when they stop- but they stop with you, and they cross their arms and they go-

[SONG "TANAGER. PERFECT. TOUCHPAPER." STARTS PLAYING]

AUSTIN (as Avar): You're not a meteorologist.

AUSTIN: And at which point you can either choose a different path-

ART: [whispering] Don't say you're Clementine Kesh, don't say you're Clementine Kesh

AUSTIN: [laughs] You can either choose a different path- this either becomes risky, right?
Oh, you were not swaying anyway, you were doing consort-

KEITH: That was consort, yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh, it's even worse then. [laughs] Then they go-

AUSTIN (as Avar): You're not a meteorologist, that's obvious-

AUSTIN: We do that whole bit, and then they go-

AUSTIN (as Avar): Why should I trust anything from someone who would start with a lie?

[SONG "TANAGER. PERFECT. TOUCHPAPER." STOPS PLAYING]