

Twilight Mirage 43: The Center of the Storm

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JANINE: Previously on Twilight Mlrage.

[MUSIC - "The Notion" begins]

AUSTIN: So. Y'all were sent to Gift-3 by Cascara, by Seneschal's Brace, to reconnect the two sides of the Tides of Harmony. Then you tried to go— you made a plan to get into the Stitch. You led them there. Signet, you negotiated with Cat's Cradle and came to a position that was like, she's gonna go back to Advent and say, "There's an offer on the table to do this in a collaborative sense, working with the Concrete Town Particulars, with Advent, with the Volunteers of Seiche." Instead of it just being an Advent thing. But also there would be kind of a truce sign so that no one's fighting over it. You left that meeting and Graft 3 the rancher was like, "Did you just invite a bunch of foxes into a henhouse? Because I don't trust any of these people, basically."

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kanna): I am Kitcha Kanna, Chief Expeditionary of the Advent Tech Main. We have received your request. We have begun working on its execution. We have begun working with the Volunteers of Seiche and with the headquarters of the Concrete Town Particulars. They are amenable.

DRE (as Even): Have you all started discussing ... terms of use?

AUSTIN (as Kitcha Kanna): [swiftly] Yes! We have come to an agreement with each other. But there is a missing piece. In order for this arrangement to come into being, you will need to ... assure for us that a major threat does not come to pass. Deep within the Crash Yards there is a storm and a field of ... energized materials. Within that storm, our recordings indicate that there are Axiomatic signals. We do not know their number or strength. As the storm field moves through the Crash Yards, it could impact the Stitch. We need you to infiltrate and capture or destroy these Axioms.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Alright, so we're not letting them get their hands on this Axiom, right?

DRE (as Even): NOPE!

JANINE (as Signet): No, absolutely not.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Okay, good. Just making sure.

[MUSIC - "The Notion" ends]

AUSTIN: So. Mission. You have to pick a method of attack here. Or, not attack. A plan. Either Assault, Deception, Infiltration, Mystic, Social, or Transport. Once you pick a plan, you then have to give a detail. Which, it depends on which type of plan it is.

SYLVIA: Do you guys have anything you're leaning towards? 'Cause I would say Infiltration could work.

DRE: I was leaning towards Assault.

SYLVIA: Yeah, those were the two that jumped out at me. Janine, do you have any ... strong opinion?

JANINE: [sighs] Um, I could see a case for Transport also— well, I guess I don't know what Transport means. But there's certainly like, an exterior wall situation that's maybe as helpful to us as what is beyond it.

SYLVIA: Yeaah, so the exterior wall—

JANINE: Which I guess is more Infiltration, maybe?

AUSTIN: I think there's some overlap between these, for sure. I'll just go over these again, based on how the book breaks them down. Assault is do violence to the target, and the detail you have to provide is the point of attack. So like, where you're attacking it. Deception is lure, trick, or manipulate, in which case you have to detail the method of deception. Infiltration is trespass unseen, at which point you need to give us the point of infiltration. Mystic is engage in mystic way or ur-power, in this case think like, Divine power, Axiomatic power, any of the stuff that your new scanner would pick up. Engage with that stuff, and then you have to detail which arcane power that is. Maybe that's a thing where Belgard could get involved. A Mystic thing would definitely include a Belgard or any other Divine. Ah, Social which is negotiate, bargain, or persuade with a social connection. Which I don't know is gonna work here? Transport, which is carry people or cargo through danger. And the detail there is the route and the means. This is on 148 of the doc if you want to look there.

I definitely think that there's overlap between ... probably Assault, Infiltration, and Transportation given that you know about how the wall can get weak sometimes? It's a matter of like, knowing— how you want to utilize that. (SYLVIA: Yeah.) I will say that Transport is different because Transport is specifically about carrying cargo or people through something. (JANINE: Mmm.) And not just like, "We go in there." I think Infiltration is probably the version of that you're looking for. Because it's about getting through without the wall closing in on you, or whatever. Y'know? (SYLVIA: Yeah.) Before the wall can be up. But totally up to y'all.

DRE: Uhhh, I think Assault or Infiltration are the two that stick out.

SYLVIA: I guess the question between those two is like, Assault to me is us going in very loudly. And then Infiltration is us trying to start this quietly. And then theoretically getting louder at some point? (JANINE: Yeah.) And I do like the idea of Infiltration because it adds the whole like, element of timing to this whole thing. (AUSTIN: Uh huh.) But I don't know, that's just my take here.

JANINE: Assault seems like a weird fit to me, because this thing is specifically a thing that throws walls up.

[overlap]

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: So it seems like one of those things where, to get to the point where we could do the Assault well, or smartly without spending time trying to burn through all these defenses (AUSTIN: Mhm) it involves Infiltration anyway. Like Sylvia¹ was saying.

DRE: Let me pitch an idea I have to you all. And I think this could either work as Assault or Infiltration. Basically, like we take our ship and we position it like, in orbit or just higher up enough— like basically over where this thing is? And we use our individual vehicles to basically like, atmo-drop directly down on top of this thing. And so, I think if it's Assault, it's that we go in so fast that it doesn't get a chance to react. Or if we do in Infiltration, we do it in way that we like, we don't turn on the engines or anything until we're at a low enough place that we can like, basically get through undetected?

AUSTIN: I think either one of those is Infiltration. I think it's good, I'm fine with that. (DRE: Okay.) But I think if the notion is like— I mean, I guess unless it's like, "come in guns blazing." Or not guns. That's the thing, is like "come in swinging" is Assault. I guess. But if the thing is you want to get in past the walls or deeper into the series of walls— that is definitely Infiltration. Or like, the notion of "we're gonna come in from a weird angle," that is definitely Infiltration.

JANINE: You know what it is? It's like, Assault is the thing we would do if we'd only gotten half of the information we got.

AUSTIN: Totally. 100%, that is lit—

JANINE: Like, if we didn't realize that there was an actual core to this thing. (AUSTIN: Yes) If we thought the walls were part of it. (AUSTIN: Yes, 100%) I think that's difference.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That is, on my side— just to pull back the curtain a little bit— I come up with a very obvious line of assault, a very obvious plan. And then part of the legwork system is that, as

¹ The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.

you get more detail, extra plans start to make more sense. There's like, always one obvious vector for a plan. And there there's also some additional, not-so-obvious vectors. So. That's— and also remember you can invite, er invent other stuff here. Like, this can definitely be a thing where it's like “Oh, I wanna do a flashback where we build ... some other bullshit.” But I think that the plan you just said is actually pretty fucking cool, so. So do you want to do that? Do you want to do Infiltration?

[overlapping]

DRE: Yeah. I'm up for that.

SYLVIA: I'm down.

AUSTIN: Okay. So. After the plan and detail are in place— so, are we doing this low-orbit drop with the ... I'm calling them Anglers, is what I'm calling them? Which are the mechs that you have. The modular dive suits that go out and fish, basically? But now they've all been modified to be your personal mechs, basically?

[pause]

[overlapping]

SYLVIA: I nodded.

AUSTIN: Is that the details?

SYLVIA: This is a podcast! Yes, it is.

AUSTIN: Alright, good. [DRE laughs]

SYLVIA: Oh my god.

JANINE: Here's a thing I hadn't considered. Is it weird that I'm not using the Mariposa? What happened to the Mariposa?

AUSTIN: Didn't you give it to ... didn't Karin Kim use that during— oh no, she used her own thing. Right?

JANINE: I think I put it up for Sho or Morning's Observation to use. I didn't think it was a permanent— did they fuck it up? I don't know.

AUSTIN: I think they just kept it, probably. It's anime, you hand off your thing.

JANINE: [laughing] It's so rude!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: They just kept—

AUSTIN: I think it's way cooler to use the mechs that are built into this ship that you have, than—

JANINE: Yes. I agree. I just for a minute thought of this from a fan perspective, "So Signet has two mechs? And also a robot wife?"

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think maybe the actual person to give it to is Blooming maybe? Er, not Blooming, sorry. Blueberri. Blueberri Jin maybe has it? As your ally?

JANINE: Ah yeah! Oh, that's sweet, I like that.

AUSTIN: See? That's better.

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah yeah. Got there.

00:10:15

AUSTIN: Okay. So. [reading] After the plan and detail are in place, each character chooses their load. This indicates how much stuff they're carrying on the operation. They don't have to select the individual items, just the maximum amounts they'll have access to during the action. So light, normal, or heavy.

DRE: I'm leaning towards heavy, I think.

AUSTIN: You goin' hard here?

DRE: Yeah. I mean, Even's not like, "Well, I have to bring a light load because I have to blend in with civilians."

AUSTIN: Right. Totally.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. It does say you're slower. [reading] You'll look like a scoundrel on a mission ready for trouble. But I don't think it's heavy enough to be a thing that I'm going to ding you for here. Especially if y'all are in the Anglers. I'm not gonna screw y'all over in that way here.

SYLVIA: I guess I'll go heavy too.

AUSTIN: Alright. Heavy, heavy. Signet?

JANINE: It makes sense to go heavy. We're in fuckin' mech suits.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you're in mech suits.

SYLVIA: There's no way to not be heavy.

JANINE: Even if we didn't pack a lunch, we would still look pretty heavy. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Yes. That's true. That's true. That's accurate. Alright, I think it is time to do the engagement roll. Also you have two gambits. I'm carrying over the one that you earned last time, and you haven't spent any yet. Gambits are an extra currency you can use to get +1 on the roll. Um. I think you can also use it to get— you can use gambits for two different things, can't you?

DRE: Uh, let's see. [reading] You can add a gambit to your Crew when you roll a six or a critical on a risky action.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. That's how to get them back. You get +1 dice on an action roll. Maybe you can't use them to resist. No, it doesn't look like it. So yeah, +1 die on an action roll. Worth remembering, for sure.

Alright. Engagement time. [reading] Once the players choose a plan and provide the detail, the GM cuts to the action, describing the scene as the crew engages their first obstacle. How is this established? The way the GM describes the starting situation seriously impacts how simple (or not) the operation turns out to be. Rather than expecting the GM to simply quote get it right each time, we use a dice roll instead. This is the engagement roll.

[still reading] The engagement roll is a fortune roll, starting with 1d for sheer luck. Modify the dice pool for major advantages/disadvantages that apply. Is this operation particularly bold or daring? Take +1d. Is this operation overly complex or contingent on many factors? Take -1d. I think this is actually— I was gonna not give you a +1d if it was just gonna be, "We're gonna sneak through the wall when it's weak." But I think "low-orbit drop in our mech suits" is bold and daring, and so I'm gonna give you a +1 there. So that's two.

[reading] Does the plan/detail expose a vulnerability of the target or hit them where they're weakest? Take +1d. Yup, totally. So that's 3d. Is the target strongest against this approach, or do they particular defenses or special preparations? Take -1. I don't think so, because you're avoiding that. Assault would definitely get you a -1 here.

[reading] Can any of your friends or contacts provide aid or insights to this operation? It doesn't sound like it? I don't think anybody has anything there. Y'all didn't like, ask around about that stuff? Um. I don't think anybody has anything special here. I don't think anybody has, "Oh yeah, it's weak to fire"— y'know?

[reading] Are any enemies or rivals interfering? No, so neither +1 nor -1 there. Are there any other elements? No, y'all are basically equal tier. So I think it's just 3d. Who wants to roll this three dice.

DRE: Janine, you have not rolled yet today.

JANINE: Yeah. There's been a reason for that. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh buddy.

JANINE: I can do it if you want, but—

DRE: I believe in you. I believe in the heart of the cards.

AUSTIN: You have to believe in the heart of the cards. You have to. Does anyone want to spend—

JANINE: So what's math the here?

AUSTIN: It is three dice. Again, this is a fortune roll, it is an engagement roll that's gonna set what your position is, based on what the thing is. You could also ... I believe you could gambit. I don't think you could push yourself here. I don't actually know if you could gambit, 'cause it is just a fortune roll.

JANINE: Yeah, that makes sense.

AUSTIN: So yeah, I think it's just the 3d.

JANINE: Alright ...

AUSTIN: Heart of the cards. That's a two. She rolled three twos.

JANINE: [yelling] Three twos! [DRE chuckles]

SYLVIA: So here's the thing.

JANINE: You did this! [DRE laughs harder]

SYLVIA: This game is played with dice.

JANINE: You chose this!

SYLVIA: We were like, “oh yeah, cards!” But this is ...

AUSTIN: Right. Heart of the dice, not heart of the cards. That’s true.

DRE: I made the dice mad. You know what? It is my fault. I’ll own this, Janine. I’ll take this.

AUSTIN: [laughing] God. Alright. So let’s get an image of what this looks like. So you’re in the ship, everyone is in the ship. You go to the launch pods, er launch pads for your mechs. Which again are like, eight to ten feet tall. I’ve been thinking of them as the size of the exosuits or whatever they’re called in Anthem lately. But blockier. Or more like, more modular. Less like war machines and more like what an astronaut would use to do like, a space walk? A little more thin ... like, a little less bulky than that. But not by much. But big. Tall.

And I think by default they’ve all— sorry, I’ve added them to your sheets. If you click on character mode real quick in your sheets, it should take you to ship mode. Um. And that will give your basic, “Here’s your designation, here are what your stats are, your comms.” I just literally copied over the ship stats. I think that’s what they basically have. It’s like, they’re for this ship, they are built with the same priorities as this ship. They have good comms, they have one engine, one weapons, and one hold. They have the same weapons as the ship, which are like grappling hooks? They’re like, big grappling hooks and nets. And like, very much about trapping things and capturing things. Not about doing heavy damage. I should uncheck brig, because they don’t have a brig.

JANINE: I was just gonna ask about that. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Go ahead and uncheck brig. And they all also have a special ability that we talked about through DMs earlier. And those can just come up in play, I think. But yeah. They are repurposed modular fishing mechs.

Y’all walk past Tender’s sleeping pod, because that’s in there. And you all launch. What does it look like? I guess you’re doing the thing that Even mentioned, right? Which is going into low orbit and falling with engines off? But what to the mechs look like actually? What individual touch does each of yours have?

SYLVIA: With mine, we took what I had left of the Overture. I wanted to incorporate that? And the way I described it to you was that I wanted it to look like I killed my mech in Monster Hunter and made armour out of it. (AUSTIN: Mhm, mhm.) In some ways. Where it’s got like, glass panelling here and there, where it makes sense to. (AUSTIN: Yeah.) It’s got the same sort of antler head. It’s a little less like, horrific looking now? It’s got more like stag-like antlers and stuff.

AUSTIN: Oh cool, cool. Ooo and does it still have the big kind of glass heart that the Saints did? That you can still see through? Basically.

SYLVIA: Yes.

AUSTIN: So people looking at the mech still see you directly in the middle of it. (SYLVIA: Yes.) Which is unique and cool. Awesome. I will say that your mech abilities are basically about letting you fight well in it? Using a skill that you normally don't use. And having one extra point of HP inside of it basically.

Signet, how about you? How's this look? What happens here?

JANINE: Okay. So. So I think Signet's mech ... Functionally, an important part of it is that I think Belgard donated a plate to it. (AUSTIN: Ooo cool, cool.) I think that's how it gets stability? It's a single plate, but given Belgard's size relative to this thing, that plate is probably now several plates. (AUSTIN: Right.) In sort of like a mini version of the thing Belgard does with armour.

AUSTIN: Riiight. With like, the floating armour plates that can kind of move around and block shots and block attacks—

JANINE: Yeah. And there's an energy component to that, but there's also like, a physical exoskeleton-y component to it. So they probably aren't floating around all the time. They're probably fitted pretty close to the body. When I originally described them with Belgard, it was like a belt around— not a belt, but like floating belt around shoulders and hips. (AUSTIN: Right) And I kinda moved away from that. It's stuff that at first glance doesn't look like big shields.

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: But you can—

JANINE: I think this mech is—

JANINE: Sorry, what?

AUSTIN: Go 'head. Go 'head.

JANINE: I was just gonna say, I think this mech is also— I wanna say gold and black. There's a very specific kind of butterfly called ... the scientific classification is Mechanitis polynmia?

AUSTIN: [guardedly] Ookay. What would I call it?

JANINE: Which sounds fake.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it sounds like you just made a mech butterfly.

JANINE: It sounds like I made a mech butterfly using like, a Roman goddess name (AUSTIN: Uh huh) for the muse of religious hymns. It's a little bit too on the nose, Janine, really. (AUSTIN: Uh huh.) But it's a butterfly that has a gold and black cocoon. (AUSTIN: Ooo!) It looks fake. It

looks like— the internet calls it disturbed tigerwing (AUSTIN: It does say that) which again, is kind of on the nose. (AUSTIN, laughing: Uh huh.) Or the orange-spotted tiger clearwing. Um. Vinegar fox! [AUSTIN laughs] So I imagine it's like this, but a little more person-shaped. I really like the design of Drossel in Fireball Charming? (AUSTIN: Mhm.) Who is a robot with amazingly thick thighs? And there's a lot of good poses— there's a lot of good pictures of that character model like, jumping down from stuff. I imagine that's a pretty heavy ... it's not an influence. I don't think Signet sat down and watched Fireball Charming, the Japanese Disney show from a million years ago.

AUSTIN: Yeah, forever ago. Oh my god, these cocoons are dope!

JANINE: They're soooo good!

AUSTIN: These cocoons are increeedible.

JANINE: They're soo good.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna put these in chat, because these are so good.

JANINE: They're amazing. I've been waiting to use them for something for a really long time.

AUSTIN: Yeaah. I love it. Cool. Um. That leaves Even. Also, I put down names here. I called yours Angler Overture, Echo. And right now I have Angler Exuvia down for you, Signet. But you can call it—

JANINE: I think that works. Because I already described the Exuvia as like, a black and gold kind of bug thing.

AUSTIN: So you think it's literally in the mech at this point? Or you could attach it to the mech to use the shields and stuff? Or—

JANINE: I think that's probably— like, the thing facilitates the connection to ... like, it's not connected to Belgard. But it is making use of some of Belgard's shit. (AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.) And I imagine the Exuvia, in the climate of the Mirage as it is right now, the Exuvia is what facilitates that. It's like a component.

AUSTIN: It's almost like one of these limited self-projectors, except for Belgard. It's a little tiny bit of what makes Belgard so special. In a weird way.

JANINE: Mhm. That's what it originally was. It's like, a bug-shaped USB drive with some information.

AUSTIN: Right. And so Even, tell me about your Angler.

DRE: So I think with Even's Angler, he has taken the opposite approach that he did with the Amp Runner? This looks a lot more— you could look at this and like, "Okay, this is a pretty decent machine." It's not like an old junky piece of crap, like the Amp Runner was. I know one of the main characteristics is, instead of regular legs it's got di-gi-ti-grade is that how you pronounce it?

AUSTIN: The cool reverse ones, is that what that is?

DRE: Yeah. Like Even's legs are.

AUSTIN: Right! Right. Awesome.

JANINE: The joint goes in the rear instead of forward.

DRE: Yeah! It's like ... ah shit. Who's the Mass Effect aliens that have to wear the suits all the time?

SYLVIA: The Turians?

AUSTIN: Quarians.

DRE: Yeah, they have legs like that.

AUSTIN: Oh wow, do they? I didn't know that.

DRE: Mhm, they do.

AUSTIN: Ah fuck, I just typed Qu—

JANINE: Didn't you romance Tali?

DRE: Yeah, what the fuck, Austin.

AUSTIN: Sorry. [DRE laughs]

JANINE: You didn't pay attention to her legs at all? Jeez.

AUSTIN: Naw. They have them, but they don't have them in the way that I im— actually, like every one of these species kind of does this. (DRE: Yeah.) That's really weird.

JANINE: So the Quarian ones are weird because they do have the forward-facing knee, but it's immediately followed by a rear-facing one? It's kind of ... like a dog leg, I guess?

AUSTIN: I guess so. I'm postin' these. [laughs] Postin' these legs in chat. [DRE laughs]

JANINE: I guess the things is, that happens because with animals, they're actually standing on their toes. And that backward part of the leg is kind of like a foot.

AUSTIN: A foot. Oh weird.

JANINE: They all do have— what the fuck?

AUSTIN: That's what I'm sayin'. This is what I'm sayin'.

JANINE: They all have these same weird legs.

AUSTIN: Why are humans so fucked up? Humans are the ones with the problem.

DRE: That's what I'm sayin'! Um. I think it also somewhat resembles his old armour suit, so there's like some extra plating and stuff like that.

AUSTIN: Cool. Cool cool cool.

DRE: So it's like, the opposite of Echo's. This is a completely sealed-up suit.

AUSTIN: Right. And your wings are not poking through? Your wings are contained inside? You like, fold them up and put them away?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. Awesome. And we'll get to your special thing, 'cause it's dope and I don't wanna spoil it right now. [JANINE giggles]

Let's see. What goes wrong? With a two, you are at [reading] bad result, you're in a desperate position when the action starts. So I think what happens is, you're coming in from above. And you do this low-orbit drop, but like, the second you— you're like, coming down through the clouds of this storm. And the plan I think is a totally good plan. You did find what would have been a weakness for this thing. What you didn't anticipate was that it isn't the only thing on the lookout.

As you get closer and closer to the clouds, you see that there are shapes moving around that have the weird coral structure. Like, kind of shining in the light of the Mirage at you. You get like, a glint of this kind of crystalline coral. And you realize that the Axiom has actually infected or taken over these other mechs and ships and like, pieces of scrap. And is using them as additional guard on its above front. On top of the clouds that it know it can't see over. And there

aren't that many of them. You zoom past them, but it's enough warning for it to reconfigure itself and grow this almost dome-like structure. It tightens up, y'know? It tightens up closer. Because it only has a certain amount of matter to work with, I guess. But it creates a dome around it, this interesting interlocking dome of coral. And then you hit the— you come down, your engines turn on, you all are able to fly. But you're in a desperate position because from above these other mechs are zooming back down at you. These things— one of them only has one arm, one of them shoots at you and immediately its arm blows up. It shoots at you while holding this gun that it isn't allowed to shoot anymore inside the Quire system? I think the round misses you, and it kind of goes spiralling off out of control.

I'm gonna put a clock down because you are on the outside. If this had gone very well, you would be advanced on this clock already. But instead, [laughs] you have four— a simple clock here that I'm just gonna drag to the bottom. I'm gonna clear up some of this space down here. I took a picture already, so that means I can get rid of all this bullshit.

JANINE: It's a personal pan pizza sized clock.

AUSTIN: It is a personal pan— I would love a personal pan pizza right now, are you fuuuucking kidding me? (DRE: Yeah yeah)

JANINE: I could go for a small probably.

AUSTIN: I might get one.

JANINE: I'm not gonna kid myself. A personal's not [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: The thing is ... oops, didn't mean to delete that fucking whole thing. The thing is—

JANINE: Personal pan pizza's for children.

AUSTIN: I can be a child sometimes. [JANINE laughs] I like—

DRE:: Why you such a baaaaby, Austin? [JANINE giggles]

AUSTIN: I like pizza. A lot. And I just want to have a little one sometimes as a lil' present to myself. [JANINE laughs] Gimme a good lil' pizza. [DRE stifles his laughter] Alright, there we go. I have made this clock. I am going to make sure everyone can see, and I'm gonna call this ...

JANINE: Oh, so it is Superbowl Sunday. No one's getting a pizza unless they put an order in this morning. [laughs]

AUSTIN: I'm thinking about making an order soon. I'm very nervous about the fucking Superbowl, y'all. (DRE: Awww.) It's not fun. It's not good.

Alright. There is this— this is not even the outer wall. This is the storm and guards. So you come through the clouds, and it's a torrential downpour with lightning every fucking twelve seconds. And it's going into the ground, and the ground is made of literally boiling glass that occasionally coalesces and cools off where it's not being hit by lightning, and creates little glass islands and shit. And you actually can't even see the— you can see where the coral is, but it's moving so you keep losing sight of it. It's kind of disorienting. Your scanners have the general direction of where to go. But like, you have to get your senses, you have to get back on your feet and either get past or destroy these infected mechs that are like, flying around as its outside guards.

So who's taking charge, who goes first? Like, who does the camera move to?

00:29:21

DRE: I would propose ... maybe we do a group action? Like, Even gets on the radio and says,

DRE (as Even): Stay on course, stay with the plan. Like, let's just leave these robots in the dust.

DRE: And basically takes off and starts plotting a course through all the debris, all these guards and everything.

AUSTIN: Mhm. I should note again that there's a ton of debris around. There are crashed ships here, there are old buildings that are poking up through the field. There are other islands that are not made of glass? But are now turned into— almost bowl-shaped, filled with the water of the rain. There's like, all sorts of— it's a weird, it's also foggy. It's miserable in here! [laughs]

So yeah, I like that. So what's that— is that a Helm, is what it sound like you're doing?

DRE: Um, yeah?

AUSTIN: If everybody is on board with that?

SYLVIA: Sure.

DRE: When I do that as a group action, I do get— one of my moves is Commander. (AUSTIN: Ooo!) So whenever I lead a group action, we gain +1 scale. And since this is a group action in combat, we count multiple sixes from different rolls as a critical.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's awesome! That's so good. Alright, so I'll note— I just want to go over our teamwork options one time? Because I think they're important and good to know. One is that you can assist people, which is take take one stress to give a player 1d. [reading] You may also suffer consequences from the roll. Only one person may assist a roll. Lead a group, which is

what you're doing. [reading again] Lead a group action: roll for each character who participates in the group action. The best single roll counts as the action result, which applies to every character who rolled. Whoever leads the group takes stress for every one to three, including their own. Protect means [reading] you face danger for a teammate, step into consequences in their place. You may roll resist as normal if you wish. Set up, which sets up another character with your action. So you do a roll to just set them up to just set them up? And if you achieve it, any team members who follow will get +1 effect or an improved position. So you'll get out of that bad, desperate position and into a better one. But I think ... lead the group sounds good here. Are people on board with that?

SYLVIA: Yeah, sure.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. Everybody roll Helm, it sounds like.

DRE: This is ... desperate standard?

AUSTIN: Yeah, desperate standard. Ah, unless you have a move— what's your move again? Can you say it again?

DRE: So I have one move that definitely applies to this and maybe another. Commander is [reading] whenever you lead a group action, you gain +1 scale. (AUSTIN: Oh sick!) So that one's like, you go from a small group to a medium group. And then if you lead a group action in combat, [reading] you may also count multiple sixes from different rolls as a critical success.

AUSTIN: Okay. Are you like, ena— are you fighting through these things, or are you just jetting?

DRE: I think I just wanna jet. Like you said, these things are falling apart. They aren't presenting a serious threat right now. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) It seems like the worse threat is like, there's a bunch of crap in our way and the storm is really bad.

AUSTIN: Okay. Signet and Echo, are y'all taking shots at these things? Or are you just moving?

SYLVIA: I think we're just moving? Or, I'm just moving.

JANINE: I have an idea for if something goes bad, but I don't know if it's the time ...

[overlapping]

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: I think Plan A is still, “just try to get away from them.”

AUSTIN: Totally. So what I’m gonna say is that I don’t think that +1 scale helps here. Because you’re not fighting them, you’re just trying to get past them, right? But what I will say works is because you’re trying to get past them, you do have potency here. Because you have another move called Pilot that says you have potency on all speed-related rolls. So I’m gonna say that in this case, that means you have a higher effect. So you’re gonna go desperate great instead.

DRE: Aaah!

AUSTIN: Sylvia says [reading] wait, would this move turn me into a medium gang.

SYLVIA: The move that Dre has. [DRE cackles]

AUSTIN: If you were fighting, I think it would.

[overlapping]

SYLVIA: Ohhh man.

DRE: Fuck! Should we just like, fight instead?

AUSTIN: No, no no no. What I’m saying is, the whole group would be— right now you’re a small group. With Dre’s move you become a big group— sorry, you become a medium group. Which I guess means?

JANINE: Individually you’re small groups.

AUSTIN: But then Echo is—

DRE: Echo’s a small gang already.

AUSTIN: Echo has a move that already makes them a small gang. [DRE is suppressing laughter]

[overlapping]

JANINE: Ohhh right.

SYLVIA: Do we become a big gang?

AUSTIN: That’s what I’m saying.

AUSTIN: So I think the group becomes a big gang, is what I think that would do.

DRE: [under his breath] Jesus. [laughs]

JANINE: Weird, honestly.

AUSTIN: Or I could ignore all of that, but I'm tryin' to have fun here. I'm tryin' to be a fan of the characters.

SYLVIA: Dre, did you just power game Scum & Villainy? Secretly?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think you did a little bit. I think y'all found an OP combo real quick. (SYLVIA: Yeah.) I mean, you still have to roll the dice. That's the thing. So for this case, you're all gonna roll Helm. It's gonna be desperate great, in terms of effect. Because you're doing speed stuff and Dre has Pilot, which is you have potency on speed-related rolls. You're just trying to get past them. So that potency— it stays in desperate but raises your effect level up.

SYLVIA: What are the ways to get bonus dice again?

AUSTIN: That's a good thing, I'm gonna pause in this so that we can— you can spend two stress for one (SYLVIA: Okay), for one bonus die. Or you can spend a gambit. Or you can ask for a devil's bargain. (SYLVIA: Mmm.) But I think that's it.

SYLVIA: Is it cool if I spend a gambit here? 'Cause I have zero in ...

DRE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Yes, 'cause otherwise you would have to roll two dice and take the lowest one.

SYLVIA: Exactly, that's why I'm ... yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah, I'll change that, I'll reduce that. So that's a five.

SYLVIA: Ooo! Nice!

AUSTIN: That's a one. [DRE laughs] That's alright, Even got a five, you're gonna take the five.

DRE: And I take two stress?

AUSTIN: You take two stress because both Signet and Sylvia rolled under four.

SYLVIA: Because it's desperate, do we get experience or no? Am I remembering?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, you do! You totally do, you totally mark experience on this.

DRE: That's for Prowess, right?

AUSTIN: Yes, Prowess. The little lines next to Prowess, mark one there.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Thanks, Even!

DRE (as Even): Gotcha fam! [AUSTIN laughs]

DRE: I have three stress left. BTdubs. [laughs]

AUSTIN: That went quick! Remember when you were like, “I got no stress at all.” Do you remember that? When you were like, “This is cool, I’m good.”

DRE: I had two going into this.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I’ve got three already. From last time.

AUSTIN: Good to know. Alright. Four to five on a desperate with great effect. [reading] You do it, but there’s serious consequence. You suffer severe harm, a serious complication occurs. So I think— lemme look at your sheet real quick, Dre. I know exactly what happens here, which is that you’re able to lead them pretty well. I think there’s less effect than there should be. You’re able to zip past those guards, but because they’re able to follow you ... Basically, Barricade the Axiom is able to keep an eye on where you’re going. And while you still manage to advance this clock by two, so you’re halfway through this opening clock— oops, I moved the thing by mistake. While you’re able to advance it by two, they are able to like, signal back exactly where you’re coming from. And so it’s gonna start its own clock! Its own separate clock, which it is going to advance twice also. (DRE: Hell yeah!) And this clock is about it reacting to you? If this clock fills up, the next stage of this is going to be harder. This is Barricade’s preparation. It’s kind of like, re-barricading itself, basically. So you can see that it’s reconfiguring itself to be in a better position for your assault now.

Alright. So that’s it. I guess, again— you could resist that, if you’d like to roll to resist that. (DRE: No.) But also that’s a pretty big risk when you only have three stress left.

00:37:45

DRE: I mean, I do get to add an extra 1d when I resist the consequences of Piloting.

AUSTIN: That’s true.

DRE: But no. [laughs]

AUSTIN: So y’all are still being pursued by these mechs. The rain is coming down hard. The lightning strikes between the three of you. We see like, your boosters in the dark of the rain. We see like, the coral becoming wave-like. It looks like a giant tidal wave made of coral in the distance as it continues to build up a sort of fortress wall. What do you do?

JANINE: I have a thing to do, but I don't know if it's like ... I don't know if at this point it's worth trying to like, fuck up the things that are following us. Or if we're kind of at a point where it's like, "Nope, this is the way it is now."

AUSTIN: No, that would totally be fine. The current thing that you're on is storm and guards. Which means you have to pass through the worst of the storm and deal with these guards. Or deal with these guards to get close enough to deal with the next thing, which is the barricade wall.

So yeah, fucking up the guards— this is a weird thing about this system, right? Which is ... you kinda build challenges for the team to deal with, and you can deal with them in a bunch of different ways. Like, none of you are hackers, but theoretically if you had a hacker here. If Mako was here from Counter/Weight? He could hack those mechs, and that would advance this clock and get you in. Or if Tender would here, she could make some sort of weird anti-storm bubble around you or something, I don't fucking know, and that would advance this clock. [JANINE chuckles] Do you know what I mean? Or if someone had a blah blah blah blah blah. You get it.

So yeah. I think dealing with them would totally work. What do you want to do?

JANINE: The thing that I want to do is, I want to use the shields sort of like ... not as a projectile weapon, because the way that I imagine this ... [laughs] I'm trying to imagine how to describe this. Imagine these like, sort of separate plates. And they're not being thrown. They're almost being dropped, I guess? (AUSTIN: Okay.) They are being left in Signet's wake pretty abruptly. The idea is to leave obstacles that these things smash into because they don't have a lot of warning. And then the plate swings back and takes its place in line. (AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that.) So it's a cycling of weird plate armour.

AUSTIN: They're not like landmines. But they're sort of like. Like caltrops.

JANINE: It's like dropping ... caltrops are like ... I can't remember what it is, but there's some game where you're dropping shit off the back of a truck because someone's following you. (AUSTIN: Right, I got you.) It's a mechanic that gets used a lot. (AUSTIN: Yes.) There's one in particular, I can't remember the name of it.

AUSTIN: That's alright. I totally get you. I think that is ... what do you imagine it is? I have to remember that you are the one who decides what stat you want to use for this.

JANINE: Uh ... I think I actually want to use I'm a Doctor, Not a ...

AUSTIN: Hell yeah! Tell me what— that makes perfect sense. Tell me what that ability does.

JANINE: [reading] You can push yourself to roll your Doctor rating— ‘cause I’ve been rolling real shitty! [resumes reading] while performing a different action. Say which patient, research, or posting you learned how to do this trick from. (AUSTIN: Uh huh.) And I think ... this is also really silly, I think the way that Signet learned to do this. Again, ‘cause she’s a doctor in an unconventional sense.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. Totally.

JANINE: I think this idea actually originates from when she was in Contrition’s Figure (AUSTIN: Ohh, okay.) Not when we saw her there, but when she was there before. I believe that it’s a case where she wasn’t isolated doing her own thing. She was milling with everyone else, you know the way that community works. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) And I think there was a synthetic person who was really good at table games. Like, I’m thinking of ping pong basically. (AUSTIN: Totally.) I’m thinking of— they played ping pong in a particular way. You would probably call it cheating ‘cause like, “Okay, you have six arms and somehow twelve paddles, and you’re able to put up defenses constantly in a way that no one can really counter.” (AUSTIN: Mhm.) But it was one of those things that people put up with it because it was kinda fun. It was neat! It was different than playing this game with anyone else. Like, that was such a unique experience that it was worth it, knowing you were gonna lose anyways.

AUSTIN: Right. Just ‘cause it’s such a unique thing. Cool. I like it. Does anyone want to help with this? One stress to give Signet one extra die.

SYLVIA: Uh, sure.

AUSTIN: What’s that look like?

SYLVIA: I’m not sure how, though.

AUSTIN: I mean, in this case it’s just, “How is Echo helping fighting these guards?”

SYLVIA: I think it could be one of those things where I’m playing defense here. (AUSTIN: Okay.) Because at least in fiction— maybe not mechanically— I have those armoured bits in the Overture.

AUSTIN: Oh that’s mechanically too. I gave you an extra point of Hull to represent that, basically?

SYLVIA: Okay. I was thinking basically acting like the tank in this situation. For lack of a better word.

AUSTIN: Ohhh. You know what’s a dope idea? Check this out. Check this shit out. Ready? You go in the very back. Signet’s in front of you. Signet drops the plate in front of you, and then you

boost over it. That way the mechs pursuing you don't have time to react? (JANINE: It's super good.) And the plates get slammed into them. Do you know what I mean?

SYLVIA: Oh, that's sick as hell.

AUSTIN: Alright, cool. Take one stress. Signet, you get a bonus die on this. So that means you'll be rolling 3d6.

JANINE: What's our ...?

AUSTIN: This is risky standard. This is risky standard. You succeeded on that desperate roll, you got your feet back under you. You can also push yourself or use a gambit. Up to you.

JANINE: I want to believe this will just be okay. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Me too. I also do. I'm gonna paint the picture of these mechs real quick. I think they're the same as the Votoms mechs, except silver? You can look up those Votoms mechs. They're like, heavily plated with like, big round leg circles. They look sort of like a Zaku or something like that. Big rounded heads with three or four different camera-things on them? Except that they're silver and instead of having round heads, they have thin almost pyramid heads? Pyramid-shaped heads with three camera on them. And like, big antennae going straight up, instead of coming off at an angle. And most of them are just like, torn up. Definitely one of them has that coral in place of one of its arms. One of them has a huge piece of Q-glass already speared through it.

Alright. So. Go ahead and give me that 3d6 risky standard. Please god, let Signet roll well. That's a five! That's a success.

JANINE: Okay. That's the first successful roll that I've had since we switched to Scum & Villainy.

AUSTIN: It's true, that is your first success. It's unbelievable. So on a five on risky standard, you do it but there's a consequence. [reading] You suffer harm, a complication occurs, you have reduced effect, or you end up in a desperate position. You know what I actually think happens here? You spend just a little bit too much time on this. You manage to take them out. Which means that they won't be part of this next encounter, they won't be part of this next thing. But one of them proves very successful in dodging it. Like, you take out the first one, you take out the second one. And then the third one catches on? And as soon as Echo goes up, it dives down and misses the plate and zips back in front of all of you. And y'all have to slow down just long enough for Barricade to get its prep in. So it gets leveled up once. I want to be clear, it could have leveled up three times, so once is not the end of the world here.

But then— Echo or Signet, how do you destroy this last mech? That almost got the upper hand on you. What's it look like?

00:47:05

[pause]

JANINE: Hang on. So if Echo goes up and this thing goes down, are they like, together?

SYLVIA: Can I like, stomp this thing?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. Absolutely. 100%. What's it look like?

SYLVIA: It's just the entire weight of this Angler being brought down onto this thing. (AUSTIN: Sick.) With both my feet.

AUSTIN: Awesome. Good. And it just smashes all over the place. And there are ... god damn it, Janine! Janine just wrote "Big Steppy."

SYLVIA: It's a Big Steppy.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Eh. We're gonna move on. [laughs] Uh, yes. [reads] It's a robot, and it got feet. Thank you. Thank you, Dre. So yeah. You manage to get rid of all the guards. And you've gotten into past the worst part of the storm. The worst storm swell? Storm surge? Whatever it is. You're past it, and it's just the rain now. And you can see very clearly this coral wall that has gotten denser. Like, more and more lattice have formed until there's this big tidal wave form. And there are like, little figures running along the top of this tidal wave as if it's a rampart on a castle wall. It takes you a second to realize they're not people, and they're not robots. They are little waves of coral flowing across the top of this thing? And they are collecting Q-glass through its structure and are getting ready to like, throw it at you, basically. Like, almost like spears. Q-glass spears being tossed at you.

For Even and Echo, you can see that the projectiles start to look a little bit like— the things that they're building, the things they're collecting? Look like the shards the Independence used to shoot. Back in the day.

DRE: Cool, good, great.

AUSTIN: So what do y'all do now? There's a new six-step clock on the ground. On the floor. On the roll20 page. Called Barricade Wall. That is your next objective. How do y'all get through it? Or over it, or past it. Whatever.

DRE: Yeah. So it's this barrier wall, and there's like, not-coral people on top of it that are about to throw this glass down on us.

AUSTIN: Yeah. If you look at it from the side, what I want I want to do is like— it's a dome-shaped wall. Er, I guess it prepared itself, so it stopped being a full dome. It's half a dome, on the side that y'all were not— you guys are coming in from this angle. You're coming in from left to right on this horizontal map I'm drawing? So there's the ground, right? You're flying in on it from left to right. There's this forward-facing dome, but there's also now this huge tidal wave wall coming upwards at you. So it's almost like a V shape or something where you know that its heart or whatever it is, is behind the dome. And it's now built this extra tidal wave of coral, and there are little figures running around the top of it who are prepping throw stuff at you. So this six-segment clock is both the tidal wave and the dome wall. It's the whole thing. You'll be inside after you get through the six-point clock.

DRE: So did you say they're getting this glass that kinda rolling along like a wave up to these?

AUSTIN: It's like literally coming up through the ground. And being almost like blood, d'you know what I mean? Almost— less like blood. More like an esophagus or something. It's being swallowed up from the ground. You can see the coral musculature as it takes gulps, basically, of the glass from the ground and moves it up towards the top where it's gonna throw it at you.

DRE: Gross.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's super gross.

JANINE: Is this thickness to scale?

AUSTIN: Nnno. This is me fucking around with roll20 very quickly.

DRE: [groans] Okay, I want to jet up to the top of this wall and then immediately thrust down. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) And then, if this thing is like, swallowing up, then I want to kick back down against that.

AUSTIN: To break the thing that's— the places where it's swallowing up glass, basically.

DRE: I just want to push it back down.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see. So you're like, piercing through the coral lattice and literally pushing down the glass and coral that's moving it up?

DRE: Yeah.

[overlapping]

DRE: Yes Sylvia, more steppy. [giggles]

AUSTIN: Yes Sylvia, more steppy.

SYLVIA: Thank you. Just wanted to make sure.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. That also sounds like Helm to me? Is that what you're imagining you're using?

DRE: Yeah, I think so.

AUSTIN: Alright, cool. Do you think any of your ship stuff, your Angler stuff matters here?

DRE: Let's see ...

AUSTIN: I don't think so. None of that actually comes into play here.

DRE: Yeah. Are we keeping the grapplers as the weapons as these things?

AUSTIN: Yeah, like I said, it's stuff that you fish with. (DRE: Okay.) It's hooks and nets and big grappling tow lines. And stuff like that.

SYLVIA: Really quick— I'm assuming we can also use the equipment we bring though, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, but I don't know that it's sized for— like, your mech is bigger than you. So I think that the Elegy, is that the name of your sword, is too small for this mech? (SYLVIA: Yeah, that's fine.) But if I remember, Sylvia, Echo has some extra gun slots. Er, weapon slots. Because we decided you don't have the ... rocket launcher or whatever that shit is.

SYLVIA: It's either the sniper rifle or the detonation launcher, yeah.

AUSTIN: Right. So maybe one of those two-slot items is a giant mech-sized weapon? Like a ten-foot tall mech-sized weapon?

SYLVIA: Ohhhh. Oh no.

DRE: I mean, at some point Echo has to pick that up with their bare fucking hands and wreck some things ... [SYLVIA laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah. 100%. 'Cause it's big, but it isn't so big you couldn't do it, right? (SYLVIA: Ohhhh man) [JANINE laughs] 'Cause these are not twenty-foot tall mechs, these are—

SYLVIA: [moaning] Oh no! Now I'm gonna be thinkin' about this the whole time! [JANINE and DRE laugh]

AUSTIN: Uh huh! Well, remember this is a fine two-slot item. (SYLVIA sighing: Yeah.) We can change it from— did you watch Iron-blooded Orphans at all?

SYLVIA: I did! I watched the whole first season but not the second.

AUSTIN: Okay. So throughout that series, the Barbatos goes from huge fucking club to sword to spear-club thing. So think about that being the size of the weapon. Er, not the size 'cause the Barbatos is definitely bigger than what these are, by a lot. (SYLVIA: Yeah.) But that Gundam like, did a bunch of different big fuck-off weapons.

SYLVIA: [reverentially] Ahhhh.

DRE: And its two weird tonfa mace things.

AUSTIN: It did have those! I forgot about that.

DRE: Barbatos is the best.

AUSTIN: It's so good. My favorite is definitely when Mikazuki is like "I don't know how swords work, get rid of this sword" and gets a big piece of like, metal and concrete. (DRE: Yes! He hates that sword!) Yeah.

DRE: [laughing] "This thing feels weird, just give me a piece of like, the dirt that I pick up instead. 'Cause I can just hit somebody on the head with it, you know how that goes." [AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: Yup. Totally. Totally.

DRE: Is this ... what am I—

AUSTIN: This is risky standard again, I think. Or ... mmm. I'm gonna say this is risky limited, because this is stopping its ability to counter you. Which is fictionally very important, but it's not breaking the wall. Do you know what I mean? (DRE: Sure.) So I'm gonna say this is by default limited. You could make a case for— you could roll really well and end up getting better effect. I don't think this is speedy? (DRE: Okay.) What I'll say is, in the mode you're in now, in the current configuration of your Angler, it is not a speedy thing. [DRE laughs]

DRE: That's fair. Alright, I'll go ahead and just do risky limited.

AUSTIN: Go for it. And no stress, none of that stuff?

DRE: Ah, six!

AUSTIN: Oh my god, that's a six. Add a fucking gambit. Y'all back up to two. I got it, boop. Two gambit points. Hell yeah. That feels good. It feels so good to have that second gambit point and

be like, “Whew!”

DRE: A little buffer.

AUSTIN: A little buffer. Alright. So ... sorry, I was looking my wave form instead of looking at my notes. Which is a mistake, I need those notes. So [reading] on a six from risky standard, you did it. Add a gambit as above. Unfortunately you didn't get increased effect. If you'd gotten two sixes you would have gotten increased effect, which would have lifted it out of limited. But limited's fine. You still mark down one on this thing. And I think you break that current vein of glass. And like, it pushed back down. You can tell that the Angler's feet don't love it, but you come at it at the right angle so that it doesn't pierce your feet. But you gotta be careful with this stuff, is a point I'm gonna say right now. Don't try to stop it with your torso, for instance. [DRE laughs]

And you definitely slow its ability to fire off shots here. Who's next, who goes next?

00:56:28

SYLVIA: Still trying to think of a cool weapon. [DRE laughs] Sorry.

AUSTIN: No, it's totally fine. Signet, do you have something here? As Echo browses the fucking weapons shop and Even steps on things, what's Signet do?

JANINE: I don't want to go back to the weird shield use so quickly, but I gave myself a shield robot. So that's the thing I have to do.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's the thing you do.

JANINE: [laughs] I think maybe ... Even's attacking from like, the top? (AUSTIN: Yes.) Okay. I think the thing that Signet does then—I think she kind of goes horizontal and gets one of the shield chunks at a slope? Right in front of her? (AUSTIN: Okay.) And I imagine there's probably like, maybe this is a thing that needs to be held in place? Essentially I want to ...

AUSTIN: Are you plowing? Are you, like—

JANINE: Yeah, that's the thing. I wanna go midway down this weird wave, basically. Actually ... would it be better to try and scrape the shit off the top? I could also do that.

AUSTIN: That roll is gonna be the same roll. Both of those things will be risky standard. So whichever one you think is cooler or affects the fiction in a way that is, y'know, more useful or more interesting.

JANINE: Yeah. I think the scraping makes more sense because we don't need to go through the wave, do you? We could just go over it and then worry about the dome. (AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.)

I think then that changes the direction that the shield piece is being held. Now it's more of a plow thing basically, to kind of ... shovel the shit off the top of the wave, if that makes sense?

(AUSTIN: Totally.) Like, kind of scrape everyone—

AUSTIN: Off the top, basically? Yeah yeah yeah, totally. I think that's good. You basically are making sure that when you get to the dome, nothing is shooting at you from behind. Nothing is gonna attack you from the back. (JANINE: Yeah.) Yeah, totally good. Is that Helm again here? (JANINE: Umm.) Unless you're pushing to use I'm a Doctor Not a ...?

JANINE: I can't really think of—

AUSTIN: Naw, that would be—

JANINE: I don't think that would be an interesting story. Like, "I once knew a person who shoveled good." That's way less interesting than like, a talented ping pong robot.

AUSTIN: Definitely. You could push again just to get another +1. You could ask for a devil's bargain. Or you could get help again. You could assist, Echo. Up to y'all. Just trying to help because you're at that one Helm, which is such a risk. Or you could spend a gambit. You have two gambits again.

JANINE: [reluctantly] Yeaah. I kinda want to just take one of those gambits, which feels selfish but also I've been rolling sooo badly.

AUSTIN: No, that's— that is the point of those gambits.

JANINE: So badly!

SYLVIA: I used one just a minute ago. Go for it.

DRE: Yeah, totally.

AUSTIN: So that's 2d6 risky standard. Unless someone else is helping. Hey, there you go. That's a five. (JANINE: Alright.) [reading] You do it, but there's a consequence. You suffer harm, a complication occurs, you have reduced effect, you end up in a desperate position.

So I think ... I'm just gonna look at your ship really quick, er your mech really quick. So here's what is going to happen. You are doing this like, huge scraping off the top of this like, wave-shaped fortress wall. These things are being broken apart, these little mini waves that are also sort of people-shaped kind of? There's definitely almost an Iconoclast vibe here? And when you see them moving around, Signet you specifically are like— there is an echo of an Iconoclast here. They're not Iconoclasts, but they move the way Iconoclasts do. Almost like they're mocking people. As you clear them off, you see at the far end there's a group of them that are

reshaping the glass they did have away from being ... what do you call them? Big throwing javelins and into a single giant pointed battering ram. They are prepping to drive it downward into Even from behind. You can see a hole is opening in the top of this wall. They are going to literally drop it on top of Even from above. And that is what's going to happen.

Now, you can either do a move to stop that from happening, or you could resist to prevent it. Totally up to you if you want to do a thing here. They're gonna drop it on Even, who is in a weak position basically.

JANINE: Uhhh, yeah that's fucked up. [DRE laughs] Okay. Okay. I definitely want to do something to stop that. (AUSTIN: Uh huh.) So they are— can you draw where they are on the weird little map?

AUSTIN: Totally. They're at the X basically.

JANINE: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: I'll do a map from the other angle here.

JANINE: So wait, how are they dropping something on Even?

AUSTIN: One second, I'm just gonna draw ... imagine that this is the wave-wall thing? Even is this circle, who's pushed down and broken this little vein of glass? They are this X above Even, and they are prepared to drop just this big fucking—

JANINE: Oh, I was looking at the wrong X. Okay. There are two Xs.

AUSTIN: Yeah, they are at this top X. Sorry. This is the Axiom heart or whatever. The scanners inside the dome are at the top of the wave about to drop that. And you are scraping right to left on this map. Kinda like, going down the top of this wall.

So it depends on what you want to do. What I will say is you could use Face Danger? Protect, which is Face Danger for a teammate, [reading] step in to suffer consequences in their place. You may roll to resist as normal, if you wish. And as a reminder, you do have +1d for that because of Bodyguard. (JANINE: Oh right.) It's a Muscle move, but your mech has it built in. You also have those shields, which will prevent physical damage. Basically, the shields that you have are very good. I think the Q-glass still has a chance to penetrate them, depending on how the resistance goes. I guess— the fact that it's made of Q-glass would mean that you would have to roll to resist the consequences? Otherwise, this is the sort of thing that could pierce those shields. Because we've talked about Q-glass being so powerful before. Being pierced through those shields would damage one of your systems.

We haven't really fucked with ships and mechs and stuff before? But you have like, two points in Comms, one point in Engines, one point in Weapons, and one point in Hull. And the way that you have damage done on mechs and on ships, one or more of the components takes harm. [reading] When a ship takes damage, it works similarly to how a character would take harm. On the ship sheet, each system has two trackers. The top one is to indicate quality, and you mark the bottom one to indicate damage. Since quality itself doesn't reduce blah blah blah blah ... [continues reading] Each level of harm damages one quality in a system. Lesser harm is one damage, regular harm is two damage, and severe harm is three damage. Harm to the ship cannot be resisted. Shields and special armour may apply as appropriate.

So you do have shields. And I think the shield blocks one damage from this thing, and it would normally do three. Which would just really fuck everybody up. By default ... I'm just gonna work out the way this works in my head. I think it would be two. It would be normal damage 'cause it's like, fighting a big mech not just fighting a person or whatever. So what you could do is just say, "Okay, I am protecting Even" which means you take that damage. Your shields would block off one of that damage, and then one of your systems would be damaged. Either Comms, Engines, Weapons, or Hull. Or you could say, "I'm protecting Even, and I'm resisting the damage." In which case we would roll dice for you to take stress but not get damaged.

Does that make sense? You're either going to get stress or damage, is really what it comes down to. And it's up to you to decide which one.

JANINE: Is the one that would give me stress also the move that like, I clear a stress? With Bodyguard.

AUSTIN: Yes! When you take harm, clear one stress. So actually, no. If you just get hit here from Protecting, you would clear one stress. So if you don't roll to resist that damage, you would clear one stress.

JANINE: But it says I have to resist, inherent in that move.

AUSTIN: No, it says [reads] when you Protect a teammate, resist with 1d. Read it this way, when you Protect a crew mate, you have the option to resist. When you resist, get +1d. When you take harm from Protecting a crew mate, clear one stress. Whether or not you are taking harm before or after resisting.

1:06:33

JANINE: Ohhh, okay. So I think the thing that I want Signet to do is, she's going along horizontally along this thing, scraping these things off. When she sees— like basically, she would slam into this thing if she kept going anyway. (AUSTIN: Totally.) And that's not the perfect way to deal with it. So she's moving smoothly along the top, and I think she then goes around that crest point until she's underneath? And she sort of turns. She starts off with her shield

scraping from the top, and by the end she's scraping from the underside? (AUSTIN: Gotcha.) But I think her goal there is to ... I guess because it's just sitting there, the thing she would want to do is use her shield to like, punch that glass thing. (AUSTIN: Mhm, gotcha.) To basically— it would be nice if we could use it, honestly. But. To sort of get it.

AUSTIN: I'm trying to figure out who decides which system gets hurt. Is it me or is it you? That's my question. [reading] Ship takes damage blah blah blah, yup.

JANINE: I think I'd also like to resist?

AUSTIN: If you resist, you won't take damage and you won't heal that stress.

JANINE: But I won't take a stress anyways.

AUSTIN: Resisting does mean taking stress. So when you resist, you reduce or avoid the consequences and take 6 stress minus your highest die result. And so you would be—

JANINE: Oh, six stress!

AUSTIN: Minus your highest die result. You roll to resist. So like— lemme just switch over to your character sheet.

JANINE: Okay. I didn't realize it was six stress. I thought it was just one.

AUSTIN: No. That's why before we recorded, I was saying that it's always better to spend stress ahead of time than afterwards. So if you resisted using Prowess, you'd be rolling two dice. Now, you might roll a six on that two dice. And get no stress!

JANINE: No, I wouldn't.

AUSTIN: But if you rolled a one on both of those, you'd be getting five stress. Which would be so bad!

JANINE: Which is the max of what I can have at the moment.

AUSTIN: Exactly, exactly. So taking that one damage is definitely a little bit more ... (JANINE: Yeah.) I know this is really talky and really crunchy in a weird way? But yeah.

So I think this is, your shields are going to block one of those damage. One more will get through. So it's a question of what gets hit here? I think it's either your shields, and they're knocked out for the rest of this thing. Or you have to tell me how you put something else in the way. Like, what takes the brunt of this thing?

JANINE: Yeah. It's weird because I imagine the shields as ... well, I guess they all came from one shield and are broken up into separate things. So I guess it makes sense. Theoretically, if one is damaged in a certain way, it's like a string of Christmas lights.

AUSTIN: Right. Or it could be like, it pierces the system that controls it. Which is your Hull. You know what I mean? And then we get the—

JANINE: But then that's a Hull thing.

AUSTIN: That is a Hull thing, that's the thing. So if we mark the point of Hull broken, you're gonna lost access to the shields. If we mark the point of Engine broken, the engine that lets you get up into orbit will be broken. If we break a point of Weapons, you lose access to the grapplers. Like, that's how that system works.

JANINE: Okay, alright.

AUSTIN: Which I think means you could lose a point of Comms. Which would lower yours Comms to one, but you would keep your long-range scanners 'cause you have two points in Comms.

JANINE: Why is Shields a separate category? It doesn't have that tick under it.

AUSTIN: 'Cause that's just shows you have that shield there. Basically. And it is consumable in that way. If you're using it in this way. So maybe that would make the most sense, is you lose one for the shield and then the other one is Hull. Right? (JANINE: Yeah.) Yeah, I think that works. It's up to you. Again, you could also take it in Comms if like, your antennas get snapped off or something. I don't know what that looks like.

JANINE: That doesn't make as much sense, though. In the context of the situation. Like, "Oh, you punch a glass fucking spear and then your antenna breaks." Hrm.

AUSTIN: So yeah, I think you charge into it in this way, you use the shield to like, toss it away from them. You could totally catch it or have it now, if you want. For sure. But like, you take the brunt of this damage. And it doesn't break the shield— what happens, do they go to a default resting place when the system is damaged maybe?

JANINE: I think so. I mean, Belgard is a whole thing built around efficient recovery and self-recovery. But also recovery does take time. Like, that was how Belgard got disabled. Whereas if Belgard's systems auto-regenerated, that would never have happened. So it's one of those things where that regeneration has to become a priority for a bit. (AUSTIN: Right.) Which you can't do in the moment.

AUSTIN: Alight. So that works. I think maybe they re-attach to her or something, but like, they are then—

JANINE: Dormant.

AUSTIN: Dormant. Exactly, exactly. And like, they're not charged, which means they don't have the energy going through them which is why they're not protective. The other thing here is, the next time you get hit, it could possibly get through the hull of the Angler. And hit you directly and do real damage to you. But for now, clear one stress because you took damage while Protecting somebody. (JANINE: Hooray!) Now you're not at lethal anymore with stress, so to speak.

And also ... did I move the wall? No, I didn't. You get two line on this wall. You only have three more to advance, and you'll get inside the wall. It's a half-filled pizza pie right now.

Echo, what are you up to?

SYLVIA: I figured out what the cool weapon is. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh good, I'm glad you're done shopping. Tell me about your cool weapon.

SYLVIA: So, in the chat Dre suggested a cool axe. Which I like, except I thought, "what if it was a hammer instead?"

AUSTIN: Ooo hell yeah! Tell me about this hammer!

SYLVIA: I think it's person-sized.

AUSTIN: Also, does it have a name?

SYLVIA: Not yet. I'm thinkin' maybe Arpeggio? (AUSTIN: Ooo!) Keep with the musical theme? (AUSTIN: Uh huh.) But I'm thinking that if this was for a normal person, this would be big for a two-handed hammer. Like, this is a big war hammer. (AUSTIN: Gotcha.) But on the Overture, it's still a two-hander but it's not— it's like a sledgehammer for that. Y'know?

So Austin, we established that I recovered the shield from the original Overture, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, but it's just an arm shield. It's not like a—

SYLVIA: I was thinking maybe I could repurpose that.

AUSTIN: Oh interesting! As like, part of the hammer?

SYLVIA: Where like, the head of the hammer is made from parts of that shield.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I love that. That's great. Yeah.

SYLVIA: That's gonna be my fine weapon for this. (AUSTIN: Awesome.) I think I'm just gonna try and bust down this wall.

AUSTIN: The first one or the second one?

SYLVIA: The first one. I assume.

AUSTIN: Totally up to you. Again, both of them are gonna just advance this clock. I just wanna get that picture in your head.

SYLVIA: I think I'll go with that first one.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. So that to me sounds like Scrap? (SYLVIA: Yeah.) Or actually, it sounds like Helm because you're in a mech and everything you do in a mech is Helm. Except you brought over the Overture cockpit, and the special thing that you have— sorry, I'm just gonna like at the ship really quick, the Angler.

SYLVIA: Yeah, no worries.

AUSTIN: Is that your Overture cockpit has a special ability that lets you use your Scrap rating for combat in this mech, basically. Whereas normally you'd have to use ... sorry, I'm actually gonna write, "Use Scrap rating for combat in this mech as if it were Helm." Which means at the same positioning and effect that Helm would give you.

SYLVIA: Sure. I also took your cue from mentioning Iron-blooded Orphans and renamed the Overture a little bit to the Overture Bravura for this version?

AUSTIN: Good. Perfect.

SYLVIA: Alright. So I'm gonna smash this fuckin' wall with my big cool glass hammer.

AUSTIN: Awesome. Fucking do it.

SYLVIA: Ahhh, what's my position and effect here?

AUSTIN: I think this is controlled great.

SYLVIA: Controlled great? Alright, I'm good with that.

AUSTIN: I think this is you're just gonna try to smash through these fucking walls and get everybody inside, right? (SYLVIA: Yeah.) I say controlled because Signet just dealt with all of the weird wave people on top and took their weapon from them. [SYLVIA chuckles] And the hammer is made of this cool glass. Is anyone helping Echo? Right now you have 2d6.

SYLVIA: That's great effect, right?

AUSTIN: Right, but see if anybody wants to spend one stress to give you an extra die.

DRE: I can't think of a way to—

JANINE: I'll do it. I can. I totally can.

AUSTIN: Awesome. You have this big cool spike with you, right? Fuck it.

JANINE: Yeah, you know what works really well? (AUSTIN: YO!) You know what you just realized at the same time? Hammer and chisel!

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yes! (Dre: OOOHH!) [SYLVIA laughs]

JANINE: You set the chisel, ya hammer it.

AUSTIN: Yes! Oh my god, do it.

JANINE: I'll take a stress for that any day!

[overlapping]

SYLVIA: This fucking rules.

AUSTIN: Hell yeah!

AUSTIN: 3d6, lemme see this shit.

SYLVIA: I got a six!

AUSTIN: That's a six, hell yeah. Sadly you don't get an extra gambit from that 'cause it's not a risky roll. But you do get a six on a controlled great effect. Tell me what this looks like. You filled this wall, this is yours. You've won this moment. What does this look like, y'all?

SYLVIA: Oh man. What position are the two walls again? There's like, one wall in front of the other?

AUSTIN: Yeah. They come to a point, right? You can see here that it's a big wave coming— half of a dome on one side, all made of this latticed coral. And like, a fake tidal wave made of this coral. And yeah, they do come together at a key point, I would say.

SYLVIA: Can I like, smash this through both of them?

1:17:33

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. 100%. Yes. So Signet, do you just set it up and hold it in place? Do you like, drive it in a little bit and then Echo follows up? What's the—

JANINE: I mean, if the coral is kind of lattice-y, then I imagine there would be a way to just kind of wedge and be like, "Go at it!"

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

JANINE: Get the point in there and then have fun.

AUSTIN: And then you like, boost away and then we get Echo following up.

JANINE: You don't want to get your fingers caught in that, that's the thing. [laughs]

AUSTIN: No, you do not! Absolutely. Awesome. So yeah, it just shatters. In fact, you hit it with such force, the entire lattice structure shatters. And then dust comes flying down. And we just also now see Even just like, floating with all the dust flying around? Er, dropping around you. The dust obscures your vision for a moment, and everything goes quiet. And you realize that you're now at the certain of this Axiom and also at the center of the storm.

And there is a weird moment— you know what, maybe Signet didn't know this. Exuvia knows it, and Exuvia feels it because of the connection with Belgard. I think maybe you feel it, Signet. There's something very familiar here. Do you remember the island where Cthonic, Belgard, and Volition spoke? From the holiday special. It was a weird island that was on top of a skyscraper.

JANINE: Oh right! Yeah.

AUSTIN: At first, for just a blink of a second, you think you're there again. Or you see it, there's like this flash that like, in the anime it cuts from this Mediterranean tropical island to the one that was on the Dragon episode of our holiday arc. And it flashes there for a second, and the wind blows through some trees. And it flashes back to the real one, the one you're looking at now. And it is like, much bigger than the one that the audience saw in Volition. It's like, a Mediterranean town but with some tropical like, trees. A dock. A little— like, a stone wall. It's kind of like a Southern European seaside village, right? Winding roads inside of a village. Multistoried houses. Lots of elevation rises and drops. There is ... it looks like fields, and you

can see animals running around the fiends, and there's a shepherd there in the field. There is a big fountain at the center of this village. There are— you can kind of see figures moving throughout the whole village. And you can hear the sound of music. As you get closer and closer to this thing, the sound of three instruments being played. There's a guitar, an accordion, and a little bit of flute mixed in together that your sensors are all picking up. And your Axiomatic scanner is going wild here.

So I'm guessing you're approaching this stuff, this village?

JANINE: Yyyes?

AUSTIN: Or do you just hover from a distance?

JANINE: We can hover closer. That's probably what Signet does.

AUSTIN: Fair. Fair. So you see at the center where there is this big fountain, there is a giant weird creature with four arms and three legs. It is made of glowing blue water that is constantly flowing to nowhere. It looks like running water, like you ran a tap very slowly, or you slowly poured a pitcher of water out. But it's not splashing out anything. It has this very light, gentle blue glow. And inside of it, your enhanced vision from your Anglers spot like, little geometric objects moving around? At first you're like, "Are those fish?" But they're not. Some of them do move like fish, but other ones move like submarines. And every now and then like, a little square will just pop up to the surface and move around like a ship, and then dive back down into the body. And you see the fountain is moving. It's rocking back and forth. It's a musical fountain. Like, that's what's making the flute sound? And it's like, shooting water up into the air. And there are two people that are much smaller than the Axiom, and they are like, playing along with it.

Yes, Janine, it's Chaos. It's basically Chaos. [JANINE chuckles] I didn't realize— does Chaos have things inside of it? What is happening with this Chaos?

SYLVIA: So when Chaos absorbs the Chaos emeralds, it changes its form.

AUSTIN: Ohhhhhh. Right right right. It does not have the Chaos emeralds, I want to be clear.

[overlapping]

JANINE: Thank god!

SYLVIA: Yeah, we'd be fucked!

AUSTIN: Yeah, that would be bad news.

JANINE: [laughing] Sorry, I just saw someone's really good Chaos cosplay. I need to link this!
[DRE and SYLVIA laugh] It's so good.

AUSTIN: I need to see this.

JANINE: Hold on, I'm gonna link it in Twilight Mirage just 'cause I want to upset people.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. [pause] Oh that's very— that's a lot.

SYLVIA: Where'd you get this picture of me!

JANINE: I like that the lower part is just sweat pants. Anyway.

SYLVIA: Well, that's comfort though.

AUSTIN: That's just comfort. That's true. That's just comfort really. Here's the other thing your scanners give you. This is a different Axiom. The first Axiom energy is still somewhere. You're getting the Geiger counter clicking, the Axiom Barricade is still here somewhere. It is not visible in the same way anymore. Its coral-like structure seems to be gone. This is a different Axiom. Again, I don't know if your like, scanner identifies it, or attempts to. I haven't worked out yet who names these things. I know that this is Polyphony. The Axiom Polyphony is the one playing music with them in the street. But Barricade is now not in sight anymore.

So your final clock is a 4-clock thing, which is about finding and doing whatever you're going to do with Barricade. We're not in free play, because Barricade is your mission. But unless y'all start shit, nothing here is gonna attack you outright.

JANINE: I'm starting to have some real complicated feelings about Axioms.

AUSTIN: Yeah, fair. They just do the thing they do ... So yeah. We're just getting this music as y'all ... head into town? Or hover outside? I would love to know what y'all think in character about this. Or what you say in character about this.

SYLVIA: Oh, I'm just 100% confused.

AUSTIN: Does Echo voice that confusion or are they quiet?

SYLVIA: No, I think they're keeping it quiet. There's like, part of them that's too proud to say that.

DRE: Even will say it for you.

SYLVIA: Like, "I've dealt with an Axiom before! I can handle these things! Right?"

DRE: Has Even dealt with an Axiom before?

JANINE: There was an Axiom on ... remember, the marble thing was an Axiom, right?

AUSTIN: Yes. Exuberance. Exuberance. Er, no. Ebullience. Who was like, way bad. Go ahead.

DRE: No, I think Even is just, "Well, this is weird. The cops are here for my—" [AUSTIN laughs]

JANINE: This is. This is like, a weird moment. This is a weird moment. (AUSTIN: Uh huh.) This is not the kind of Axiom that Signet has seen personally. Like, she's only ever met Bounty as Bounty. I don't know met. As like, only became aware of. As like, "We have this new Divine now and it keeps everyone fed, it's good actually."

AUSTIN: She probably saw it when it was Bountiful, when it was in the— she definitely saw it. After dealing with— because remember how the timeline worked out. You dealt with Volition and Independence before everything got back. (JANINE: Mm, okay.) You were probably even involved in that encounter, we just didn't see it on camera. You know what I mean? You were probably escorting ships and defending them with Belgard past Bountiful. So you probably did see it, at least. But between that and Ebullience, you've seen Axioms that are scary. And also to be clear, there have been other reports. People have encountered Axioms over the last year. (JANINE: Yeah, yeah.) And they're fucking scary.

JANINE: Also the relation to Iconoclast is gonna make her like, "uhhh" about anything. (AUSTIN: Yes, totally.) But at the same time, they just dropped into this really nice village. (AUSTIN: Yeah.) This is maybe the nicest place they're seen on this whole planet, at this point? I don't know? It seems very nice.

AUSTIN: Um, I think there's different types of nice. I think this is a very Signet type of nice, is what I'll say. (JANINE: Yes.) There's definitely like, a lot of Thyrsus here. But I think— Gig Kep-hart has a great fuckin' time in Big Garage, where there's scrap stuff and people are workin' on projects and blah blah blah. So.

DRE: I mean, I think we just kinda go in.

JANINE: Yeah. I think it makes sense that like, Signet is the visibly least on her guard already. Like, she probably isn't even flying anymore. Maybe she like, lands and is standing.

1:27:50

AUSTIN: Yeah. Are you still in the suit, though? The Angler?

JANINE: Hmm, I think probably yes. Until she sees like, if there's a person ... who's like, "Hey! Buy my bread!" then—

AUSTIN: [laughs] No one says “Hey, buy my bread.”

JANINE: “Try my bread!”

AUSTIN: No one says “Try my bread.” But you do see near the fountain, the creature, the Axiom. Polyphony stops playing with the water-fountain flute and like, does a little wave? And one person puts down the accordion and the other person puts down the guitar, and they like, come over to you? One of them is a woman in her mid-twenties. She has on ... I guess none of you dealt with the Rogue Wave at all. She has on what is very clearly a sailor’s uniform? With a lieutenant— you don’t know their rank system probably, but she clearly has some sort of officer bars on this outfit. I think it’s probably a pair of pants with like, an officer’s jacket. It’s a little heavy for the sake of weathering storms. She is the one who put down the guit— er, no she put down the accordion.

And then there is a ... who’s the one who plays the guitar, do a search for guitar. Here we go. The other person, they use they/them. They have like, bleach blonde hair. They have on an OD green army jacket with a striped tank top and cargo pants on? And then the Volunteers of Seiche— they don’t have on the armband, but you recognize, Echo, that they look like all of the people who were hanging around the Volunteers of Seiche HQ house, basically? And they are like, fairly thin. Not like malnourished or anything, they just have a very thin build. They kind of come over to y’all. And they wave and say,

AUSTIN (as Guitar Player): Hey, we’re cool! Everybody’s cool here! You can step out of the war machine things!

SYLVIA: I want to take my helmet off. (AUSTIN: Okay.) At the very least.

AUSTIN: So they see you immediately. They go like,

AUSTIN (as Guitar Player): Holy shit! You’re Echo Reverie! Hey Fenta, this is like, a big hero! I know their brother!

SYLVIA: [sucks in a breath] Every time someone says the word “hero,” Echo gets physically uncomfortable. [AUSTIN and JANINE laugh]

AUSTIN (as Guitar Player): Wel-welcom t-to town.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yeah. We ... weren’t expecting ... this.

SYLVIA: And Echo like, puts the hammer away. Which I think it just putting it on their back.

SYLVIA (as Echo): I kinda have to keep this on if I want to be able to carry all my stuff.

AUSTIN (as Guitar Player): [eagerly] We can get you rooms and stuff! Polyphony—

AUSTIN: They look back for Polyphony, but Polyphony is already gone. But they seem to know...

AUSTIN (as Volunteer): We'll have rooms available for you immediately. Just come with me. Do you need food?

AUSTIN: I just want to say that as soon as you're here, the second you touch ground, you're home. There is an overwhelming sense of safety and security. But more than that, there is the sense that you fit in very nicely. So that response you had, Signet? Landing here feels like turning Belgard back on. It feels like, "Okay, I know where my place is in this." And you can't necessarily find it immediately, but you know that your presence here has brought the lives of the people here—has made it better for them. There's this immediate sense of like, being in it together and working together with them. And being like, "Yeah, of course! Of course! Of course!"

So I'm not like, I don't want to take that autonomy away from you. But that is the feeling of being here. That is part of the thing that makes it special.

SYLVIA (as Echo): I'm okay to follow these guys if you guys are.

JANINE: I feel like Signet already is...

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: [chuckles] Just goes with it?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

JANINE: She's good to go.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Mhm. There's no reason to—like, they haven't taken our equipment away from us. In my mind there's no reason to be worried here. Because we can still defend ourselves. And they seem to be really peaceful. They don't seem to be interested in killing us right now. I don't know.

DRE (as Even): Maybe we should just ask them where Barrier is. (AUSTIN: Barricade.) Barricade, sorry.

JANINE: Barry.

SYLVIA: Barry Cade.

AUSTIN: Un huh. Do you ask?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: They go,

AUSTIN (as Guitar Player): Is that the ... I don't know any Barricade. I know Polyphony. I know Elia and Lumen.

AUSTIN: Oh no, this is Lumen speaking. They're not saying, "I know me."

AUSTIN (as Lumen): I know Fenta, and I know Tannoy Kajj, and I know Agrapha. But that's it. I don't really know too many people in town. I don't know anybody named Barricade.

DRE (as Even): How did you get here?

AUSTIN: They look down for a second and blush.

AUSTIN (as Lumen): I was a scout. I was really hot-headed and pretty convinced that I could find some pretty cool shit in the storm. And I did, but not what I thought I would find ... Sorry, I shouldn't— I'm Lumen, Lumen Lux. I'm from Seiche. I guess I'm from here now, from this town. This is home.

DRE: So you haven't left since you got here.

AUSTIN (as Lumen): I mean, I don't have a ship anymore. My ship broke on the way in, and I thought I was dead. Polyphony found me in the glass. Like, in the glass. And pulled me out. And that's when I met much everybody else. Tannoy kind of just got here, so I don't know him super well. But everybody else has been super nice.

AUSTIN: I think this conversation is happening as they lead you through the streets.

JANINE: Why do I know the name Tinnoy ...

AUSTIN: Tannoy Kajj is a famous smuggler and explorer who recently (JANINE: Ohhh)— three weeks ago in game time or whatever, a little bit before the beginning of this month— made his name famous for crossing the Umbra on Moonlock. Maybe he tried to cross the storm here on Gift-3 and failed. Is a fair thing to assume.

In fact, maybe as you approach— I think you see his ship, which is all fucked up. He has this dope, like, "What if the Millenium Falcon was a deep V?" Instead of just that little bit at the top, it goes really deep down. Or like, "What if Pacman was really long?" You know what I mean? And the name of Tannoy Kajj's ship is The Other Hand. You can see that half of it is on the ground.

Imagine ... I'll just draw it really quick. It's like a big round shape. Oh, this is terrible, I'm gonna undo this before anybody can see it. Here we go. It's like a circle ... and back up, and down ... oh that's way too deep of a V. I can't draw, is the thing that I just learned. There we go. Like that, basically? See what I mean, like a long Pacman? And then this whole section here, more than half of it, is broken on the ground. A little bit more than half of it is just on the fucking ground.

In fact, I think at this point you can see him. He's a black dude with a big purple pompadour and huge sideburns. He is my Monsterhearts character, if you've seen that anywhere. [SYLVIA laughs] He's working, his hands are all greasy and shit. He's outside the town's gates, near—there's a big field outside the town's gates, and there's a shed out in the field. And some animals are grazing. You can see someone out there with them. But Kajj is currently working on the vessel.

So they kind of give you the run-down. The five people that they know here are: Tannoy Kajj, who is this explorer/smuggler, themselves Lumen Lux, Fenta Feign who is the Rogue Wave Lieutenant who was playing the accordion, and Elia Tet. They say,

AUSTIN (as Lumen): I can't wait for you to meet the Admiral! She knows so much!

AUSTIN: And that is Admiral Elia Tet, who is also from the Rogue Wave. And who— I think Lumen says, like

AUSTIN (as Lumen): She was here before Polyphony. She's the first one who found this island, so she knows pretty much everything that's ever happened here.

AUSTIN: And like, leads you into a little hotel. And this is where it gets a little weird. You get checked into the hotel. Someone asks you what sort of view you'd like, someone asks you if you have any more bags. You don't remember those people at all. You can't recall their faces or names. They are very nice. No one gives you a side eye! But you would be hard-pressed to remember who the person at reception was. Also, I think for you to act on that would require a roll. That doesn't seem weird to you. This is how Polyphony works. You would need to resist or roll and Attune to act on that.

JANINE: I actually ... [sighs] This is. Mmm ... [laughs] I don't know that I want to act on it. But I feel like that's the kind of thing Signet should be able to ... notice? (AUSTIN: Mhm.) Like, her whole thing is knowing people.

1:39:20

AUSTIN: You should roll an Attune. It would be an Attune or a Study to actually pick this up. Like, I agree with you. But I think that is represented by the fact that you have points in Attune.

JANINE: No no, I'm not saying I shouldn't roll. I'm saying, I feel like I should roll even though I don't think Signet would be like, "Yo, everyone's forgettable, what's happening."

AUSTIN: Oh, I gotcha. Would do something with that knowing that knowledge. Totally, totally. Go ahead and roll.

JANINE: I feel like it's a thing she should just notice.

AUSTIN: I would go ahead and roll. That's an Attune. I don't think that's an action role, I think it's just a gather information roll. So ahead and roll risky standard. It doesn't really matter. The effect will be determined by what the roll is.

JANINE: Let's just see if she notices, then.

AUSTIN: Alright, no. (JANINE: Cool.) That's a limited effect. So you do get to ask a question, I just give you a limited amount of answer.

JANINE: I feel a lot of these are things that the answer would already kind of be there if you notice something is weird and also you just met something called Polyphony (AUSTIN: Mhm) who is like, a fountain musician.

AUSTIN: I think maybe she notices ... It might not even be that she notices it outright. I think the audience gets it pretty quickly. Like, I want to be clear that part doesn't look normal for the audience. I don't know if it's like, people are always in shadow. Or if it's like ... the anime Mononoke? Not Princess Mononoke, not Mononoke Hime. Mononoke the horror-supernatural anime, which is super good. Have y'all ever seen that?

SYLVIA: I don't think I have.

AUSTIN: It's real heavy, it goes some fucking places. Oh, you know what else does this, is Tokyo Mirage Sessions. (JANINE: Oh yeah.) Of background characters being just like, they all look nothing. In Tokyo Mirage Sessions they're just brightly colored silhouettes? In Mononoke each episode or each arc does background characters differently, in various ways to make them anonymous.

So I think it's like that for this. Like, "Okay, every character here who's in the background is ..." You know what? I think they all just look a little bit ... I don't want them all to be Polyphony, I don't want them all to just be running water because that's so obvious. But maybe it is. They're all just running water people. Who are wearing clothes and going about their day and walking through the streets. But who like, aren't harmful, aren't fucking with anybody. They're not following anybody around or anything. They're not speaking, but you have interactions that seem like you're speaking—we do see you in backgrounds of shots speaking with them. But we don't actually ever see a shot of you speaking with one of the them.

So that's what you pick up on. I think you are able to know that Polyphony is at the very least involved with those people? If it isn't just actually them completely. And they just kind of fade into the background.

I think that Lumen takes you up some stairs to the second floor of this hotel. Which is made up of a couple of different buildings on an incline. So it's like, one building and then there's another building that's a little bit higher on the incline. So you're walking down this hallway, and every twenty feet or something, you have to walk down a few stair into the second floor of the lower building? And they're like,

AUSTIN (as Lumen): Okay, so this is where Fenta stays. And across there, this is my room across the hall. And then down the stairs one more level, that's where Tannoy has been staying. So I guess you'll be down there. We have a couple more rooms down there to give you are that free. And at the very end is Elia.

AUSTIN: And they like, lead you all the way down this hallway. And they walk and say,

AUSTIN (as Lumen): Agrapha likes to live out in the shed. I guess he really likes the animals and likes to be close to them.

AUSTIN: Agrapha, again, is the full name of Graph 1, 2, and 3. Who you know. So presumably this is the first version, who didn't die? And just lives out here in this weird village.

And Lumen leads you into this super lush hotel suite. It's all like, red velvet and browns and bronzes. And really nice curtains. And it's lit by old electric lamps, so there's a nice soft glow in here. There are Rogue Wave— not sea chanties, but like, folk songs playing over a little radio. Like, a little musical box basically. You know what it is? It's that really dope song from Sea of Thieves, the really melancholy one. Janine, you know the one I'm talking about? (JANINE: Yeah.) It's totally that playing. I'll link it to y'all, I'll find it and link for the rest of y'all.

And there is a woman in full admiralty/pirate gear like, with a dark coat with shoulder pads that have fringe on it. I think she has red fringe. Breast with the weird double button, with the thread going between them. She has on solid dark brown pants. She's kind of short— not short. We have a bad idea of what short is. She's like, 5'4" or 5'5". She is black but ... not light-skinned, but medium brown with freckles. She has big cheeks, she's a big woman. She has grey hair, wireframe glasses on. She has a cup of coffee on the table in front of her and a bottle of bourbon next to that. And is playing a chess game against one of these people that Polyphony has made.

The person that Polyphony has made is like— again, they're not just water people. They are water people that are in clothing? So this person is dressed like a 1980s punk. Like late 70s

punk. Very much found fashion. Like, a leather jacket with studs that have been put into it. And is currently playing chess against Admiral Elia Tet. E L I A T E T

And she says, "One second," and then she stands up and says,

AUSTIN (as Elia): Welcome to the town. Was not expecting more visitors. Take a seat, take a seat. Do you want drinks? Do you want ... to put your stuff away?

AUSTIN: Are you all still in your big mech suits, by the way? Or have you left those somewhere.

JANINE: How would those fit in here?

AUSTIN: I don't think they would fit. You'd have to really be hunched over, right?

JANINE: So four people in mechs on all fours crawl into this lady's hotel room [DRE giggles] and then she steppy (AUSTIN: Uh huh.) And then ... end scene. (AUSTIN: Uh huh.) Naw. I don't— Signet probably left her suit outside.

AUSTIN: Okay. Even, Echo?

DRE: Oh man. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) I think Even would like to be in his suit. But as soon as we start going into a hotel, it's like, [dejectedly]"Okay." [DRE laughs] And he gets out.

1:47:26

AUSTIN: I think maybe she goes to fix you drinks if you want them. And then we kind of just zoom out the window of this hotel. And over the top of this town. And we can see lightning and thunder striking in the distance. And we can see Agrapha Alive, corralling the herd of animals outside. We see Tannoy Cage working on his ship.

[MUSIC - "The Notion" begins]

AUSTIN: And we see the woman who was playing the accordion before is running a package from one side of town to another one. I think actually Lumen is the one who goes to serve everybody drinks. When Elia goes to stand up from her chess game, Lumen's like, "I got it" and they go over to the bar.

And we just kind of zoom out of town slowly. We see in the middle of this fucking storm, in the middle of these Q-glass fields, and the lightning striking. We zoom out more, and we see where the Compound is, where the Stitch is. And the storm is kind of close to it. But not that close, not impending doom or anything. And we see the rest of Gift-3. It's kind of like this high shot of the storm, with the town clear in the middle.

[MUSIC - "The Notion" ends]