

Live at the Table 51 - November 2021

The Road to PALISADE: Last Shooting

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AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterisation, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host Austin Walker. Joining me today, Andrew Lee Swan.

DRE: Hey, you can find me over on twitter [@swandre3000](#).

AUSTIN: And Sylvia Claire.

SYLVI: Hi! You can find me on twitter [@sylvibullet](#), and you can listen to my other show Emojidrome wherever you get your podcasts. Hopefully. We're having some trouble with the RSS feed right now.

AUSTIN: I hope it gets fixed soon.

SYLVI: It'll... it'll be fixed at some point

AUSTIN: I hope. I'm crossing my fingers big time. Big time crossing.

[SYLVI chuckles]

AUSTIN: Uhm... Today we're going to be playing [Last Shooting](#) by Grant, who you might also know as General Ironicus, from the excellent let's play duo Chip & Ironicus. And a

bunch of other things like the Sex Archie podcast, and Six Feats Under. Uhm, and then, uhm, it's worth saying Last Shooting is a... adaptation or hack of [Final Bid](#) by Vel Mini, who I believe also edited Last Shooting. It's an excellent game, I'm very excited to give it a play.

[01:02] Road to PALISADE outline

AUSTIN: And it also, it also begins our... the true secret project [chuckles] of the Road to PALISADE. Uhm...

SYLVI: Oh god.

AUSTIN: Which, which is that our Road to PALISADE games. There will be some additions, like HOUNDS was and Stealing the Throne in order to feel things out. But I've been saying now for months priva— you know, semi-privately, right, to some people who asked if we were gonna do a Road and what would be on the road and even once we started — that the list of games, or the those of the stories we're telling are already out there, you just need to know what to look for.

[SYLVI chortles]

AUSTIN: Sylvi, do you wanna say what our topic is for today? Do you remember?

SYLVI [laughs]: Do I have to?

AUSTIN: Do you want me to do it instead? Is it better when I do?

SYLVI: Go ahead. I don't have it in front of me, you know. Also is like, oh man, it was some bit. But I'm also glad we're doing it.

AUSTIN: We're fucking here now.

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: So, last year there was an article, you may recall, about the season of PARTIZAN... uhm...

[SYLVI chortles]

AUSTIN: ...[on Crunchyroll](#), that said that it was the best mecha anime of 2020. And one of the questions that the... journalist who asked us, the writer who asked us, Adam Wescott... asked: what is the side story we all wished we could tell inside of this? This universe. If we could tell any side story, what would it be. And Sylvi what you said was...

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: Let's see... "Alise Breka presents: Among Sharks. The story of a Nidean captain escaping from an Apostolosia— an Apostalos base with the help of the very young—" the very soldier, not the very young soldier. "The very soldier who shot him down."

SYLVI: Maybe, I don't know.

AUSTIN: I guess we'll see.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so, there everybody gave really fun answers for that, and we're gonna try to play as many of those as we can figure out how to do.

[DRE & SYLVI laugh]

AUSTIN: I have games set up for each of them already.

SYLVI: Oh, just for...

AUSTIN: We already know that we're gonna do some other stuff. Go ahead, yeah. Uhum.

SYLVI: Just for archival sake, I wanna just shout out to the chat right now, who's just typing variations of "let's fucking go" and "oh my god".

AUSTIN: Aha. Yeah.

SYLVI: Uhm...

AUSTIN: Yeah. So.

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: So. This. The thing that's interesting about this that this game is very much not explicitly about an Apostolosian soldier being shot down and— being broken out of a prison by the— Sorry. "A Nidean captain escaping from an Apostolosian base with the help of the soldier who shot him down." But it would be very easy to fit that into our story at some point, either literally onscreen, or as a pre— as a, as a sort of setup, or as the end of where we go. We'll see where it makes sense to fit it in.

[04:30] Game system overview

AUSTIN: I'm just here to facilitate. Dre and Sylvi, y'all'll be playing as our two pilots. Uhm, uhm, have each of you had the time to give this game at least a little bit of a read? A little, a little browse? You've—?

SYLVI: I did, a little, a while ago, but I'm a little bit fuzzy now.

DRE: A cursory glance.

AUSTIN: Okay. It should be okay. This is a GMless low-prep game. No-prep game. I've done a little bit of prep in the sense of I've thought about when and where this might be happening.

[AUSTIN arranges materials in Roll20]

AUSTIN: Let's move this over to gameplay screen real quick. Ahh, boom. Here we go. Uhm. And I'll give you the super high level here. There's a real set structure to Last Shooting. You begin with an [reads from the rulebook] "Opening. Which is a series of questions that help you learn what the... war is about, who your Pilots are, and why they're fighting it. [coughs] The next section is the main action of Last Shooting: a series of three scenes, each will start with the prompt to set the scene. Then move on to an *auction* phase, and then you'll re—roleplay your scene." My very brief summary of what the auction phase is: as you look your— you're looking at these sheets in front of you. It's Pilot's Credentials up top, so your Name, your Callsign, your Age, etc. Ahh, and then there are Mechanical Resources and Personal Resources listed. Except they're all blank! You don't know what your Signature Weapon is, or what your Reputation, or your Social Stratum is. Ahh, you don't know what your Mobility System on your mech is, or who your Loved One is. Or are. And so... the way this game ends up working is: as you're framing these Scenes, you're filling in what these details are. And kind of putting them up for bid. And more or less we— you kind of say as I fill these blanks in... *One*, you know, who is putting up more, and then *two* — even more subjectively — who is putting up something that maybe is worth more to them, or maybe that's more interesting. And that person ends up winning the scene, getting to fully narrate the outcome. That's the kind of very brief version of this, that we'll get into it more deeply. [reads from the rulebook] "Once the third Scene's played out you move on to the Ending Phase and the game is complete." I would say this is a short game, but I know who we are [chuckles]

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: And we could be here all night. Uhm, so...

SYLVI [joking]: I guess it's character creation and... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. This is— One of the night— one of the cool things about this game is that there isn't *really* deep character creation. There is character creation *through play*.

[SYLVI & DRE uhm in agreement]

AUSTIN: Every turn is an opportunity to fill who this character is. And in a real way we should play in a way that thinks about these characters as, you know, kind of empty, empty pages until we fill them in. We shouldn't get caught up saying to yourself: "Oh, hey I would really love it if my character... you know, was super high class." And like, you just play like that until you bid it. Once you bid it, it's real. And at that point, you know, you can rely on it. Um, or, you can Destroy it. As the need is. Uhm... I just want to shout out really quick: the

cover art for Last Shooting is by Si Sweetman, who has done some postcards for us, who has been a fan artist in the community for a long time. It's incredibly sick. Ah, and I do want to clarify for people who're like "why is it called Last Shooting? That sounds weird." It's a Gundam thing. It's a—

DRE: [softly] Uhum.

AUSTIN: Last shooting is a famous sequence at the very end of *Mobile Suit Gundam*... the fandom has colloquially called it last shooting for a long time. I believe that's what it's called in Japanese. I don't want to spoil it, but it's... it's a sick moment. It's a sick moment that has...

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: ...that — like many things — has been kind of decontextualized and recontextualized in ways that erases its particular color and meaning, and then just kind of makes it "it's cool when the Gundam shoots up in the air." [Chuckles.]

SYLVI [half-chuckling]: That is— that is pretty cool!

AUSTIN: It is pretty cool! Don't get me wrong! But it's like what if a particular thing happened and then the way it got remembered was just like the moment in *Bad Boys* where [half-chuckling] Martin Lawrence and Will Smith their big guns up in the air...?

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean?

DRE: I mean...

AUSTIN: It's not wrong! It's not wrong! It is cool!

[DRE laughs quietly]

AUSTIN: Anyway. Uhm. Alright... I think we should get into it, and I'll start clarifying stuff about the setting, ahh, that we know as we maybe get deeper into it. Uhm... I'm trying to see if there's anything else at the beginning of the book that I should read. Uhm... I guess I'll say here. I'll read this What This Book Does section, 'cause, I think, again, it's kind of useful. [reads from rulebook] This "is a role-playing game where two people play out the story of two mech Pilots leading up to, and including, their final duel in a space war. You will play out three scenes by wagering items on your Datafile in order to determine the outcome. The first two scenes will define your Pilots, their machines, and the war around them. The final scene will destroy many of the things you defined as one Pilot defeats the other. You may be able to use this game to tell different stories that follow the same theme and structure, but the rules assume you are playing a pair of people in control of large mechanical bodies, built for warfare, clashing against a background of stars." Uhm. Again, there's a lot of good stuff here from Grant about, you know: [reads from rulebook] "The most important thing a player can

bring is honesty and engagement.” I’m not too worried about that with y’all. This trio of people! We go back to COUNTER/Weight faction game.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: We’ve been doin’ honesty and engagement where we know there is no clear winner, we’re playing to tell a fun story and not necessarily to beat the other player.

SYLVI: Playing here as I’m playing to win.

AUSTIN: [joking] Aah. Okay. Here we fucking go.

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: [half-chuckling] I’m always playing to win, Austin.

AUSTIN: [half-chuckling] Well, what are you winning? Are you winning people’s hearts? Is that what’s you’re winning?

SYLVI: Yeah. Yes!

AUSTIN: Well, that’s allowed. That...

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: I’ll allow it. [beat] Alright. [reads from the rulebook] “The Opening is your chance to set the groundwork for your session of Last Shooting. This is your time to consider tone, style, and all the things that set one Mecha story apart from another. If you’re playing this game, you probably have some favorite Mecha series or moments, and have spent some time thinking about why they appeal to you. You should have a conversation with the person you’re playing with about their opinions and preferences, too. By following the steps of the Opening, you’ll decide what drives your Pilot, and what the war is about. Each step in play will further fill in the details, so it’s important to get the ‘big picture’ sketched in first. The Opening ends after you write your Pilot’s Credentials on your Datafile.” Let’s jump ahead to that and... I’ll guess I’ll start by asking you, Sylvi... I think it’s really interesting, that you had the opportunity to just say “oh, I want— I wanna tell a story about... a Nidean captain escaping...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...with the help of the Apostolosian who shot him down; but instead you said that’d be an Alise Breka story.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Is it— Do you think this is the thing we’re doing today, is it— did this really happen, or is this a fictionalized account of a real thing, or is it completely fabricated.

SYLVI: So, I've been thinking about this. I... When I said it, I was just like it would be funny if Alise Breka was like...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...what if she was CLAMP, basically, simplified?

AUSTIN [with escalating enthusiasm]: U-hum, uhum, uhum!

SYLVI: Uuhm... But I... It's like a manga thing. If you don't know, google it.

AUSTIN: Yeah. [chuckles]

SYLVI: I don't know. But, uhm... While we were like, scheduled this recording I was sort of thinking back on it. And I think, I think it is a sort of like a... she does like a high—heightened version of—

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVI: ...like an actual event of the war. Uhm. That's what like... you know. I don't know what Alise Breka's writing style is like, but I imagine it to be kind of trashy, but like in a good way?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I always— you remember, the people who don't remember: Alise Breka was romance— action-romance novelist, a war romance writer, who became key to Millenium Break's... propaganda efforts on Partizan. In the last season. And here's a moment again for me to say, and I've said this already in past Road to PARTIZAN¹ games, but we will be spoiling PARTIZAN here. We may even be spoiling parts of COUNTER/Weight and Twilight Mirage. We'll do our best to give heads-up for those latter ones, but PARTIZAN is completely... you know, free game for us at this point. Because we just need to talk about what the state of the world is. We're existing in a time jump post-PARTIZAN, pre-PALISADE. Uhm, ah, and so: yeah, I think that, that trashy is probably not too far off.

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: Like fun trashy, you know?

SYLVI: Yeah, like— very like... I don't know if pulp is the right term for it. But like— She's like a genre writer who's not like...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: You know, she doesn't — puts out a lot of shit. She's the Steven King of—

[AUSTIN laughs]

¹ He means past Road to PALISADE games – ed.

SYLVI: She's Steven King and CLAMP! At the same time!

AUSTIN: At the same time, wow! Queen!

SYLVI: Yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: So to me... And Dre, let me know— Dre and Sylvi both let me know: does this sound to me, like we're gonna be playing in a kind of melodramatic space compared to maybe where PARTIZAN was? Which was extremely grounded? Not that there wasn't melodrama in PARTIZAN, but...

[DRE chuckles]

SYLVI: Also, I was gonna ask, if you guys are interested in doing what— which version of you're interested in, basically.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

SYLVI: Which is what you're asking.

AUSTIN: That is what I'm asking.

SYLVI: Ahh. Uhm, because like, I'm kinda like— I'm interested in both. I'm interested in like, the idea of having this thing... like, historical event that becomes extrapolated...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...into something else in the world. And like, seeing... I don't know if it's more interesting to have it onscreen or never have it onscreen. You know what I mean?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think whatever this is is prob— I want it to be real, so that we have stakes. Of some sort.

SYLVI: Yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN: Uhhm. Dre, do you have feelings about this stuff?

DRE: Hmmm... See, this is the thing. I realize I keep nodding when listening to y'all...

AUSTIN: Ah, yeah.

[SYLVI laughs]

DRE: Oh, right, yeah. We don't use webcams.

AUSTIN: We don't, we don't.

DRE: Uuhm... Yeah, I mean I def— I... [sighs] I think there can be a good fun middle ground between melodrama and like it being real in stakes. Especially if we're playing with the idea of this being like... something that really happened but then has been turned into like, an adaptation.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. I like the idea that maybe that the... basic facts of what happens here — who wins, who loses, the sides of the conflict — uhm, uhm the general outcomes are true. But, you know, is there more smirking and maybe flirting happening here?

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: Is there more... chewing the scenery? Are the action sequences more bombastic than in real life? You know what I mean?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think that makes sense to me. I think that go ham when it comes to that stuff. But we— You know, it's one of those where it's like "I saw this main character in this show blow up forty-two suits in — you know — five minutes last episode. How is it that this episode they're all complaining about limited rations? The world just doesn't ma— Like why is material— why all material things are concerned suddenly, when last week they were like a god?" You know? More *Gundam Wing* than, than, you know...

SYLVI [emphatically]: Yes!

AUSTIN: Than Mobile Suit Gundam? Uhm, I think that...

SYLVI: [half-chuckling] Oh you've got it boss, no problem!

AUSTIN: Okay, cool cool, cool!

[DRE snickers]

AUSTIN: Alright. [reads from rulebook] "Each player begins the game with a blank Datafile. Then, you must each answer the following questions: What is this war about, and what is your motive for this war? [corrects himself] — in this war? Together, choose one of a— one pair of opposed goals, or pick one randomly, or make up your own. These are the stated goals of the faction in your war. They may not be entirely honest in your story, but they are how they publicly describe their motivations. You can take a moment to talk about the specifics within these broad strokes, or you may prefer to leave your options open and see what happens in the course of the game." And there are some options here. There are kind of six options here. [paraphrases the options in the rulebook] You know. Independence vs. Stability. A quote-unquote "necessary invasion" vs. the defense of our homeland. Past— Reawakening past glory vs. defending the bounty of the present. Propell— Propelling humanity into the future vs. preserving tradition. Building a place for the dispossessed vs To maintain the rule of law. And the war has caused a rift in our faction. Now we fight amongst ourselves.

[15:07] Character creation & recap of the state of The Divine Principality

AUSTIN: It's probably worth just restating where we are. I know Dre, you were in that previous Road to, uhm, PALISADE game. You were in the...

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: ...the Stealing the Throne game. But Sylvi, I don't know how much you remember where we left things off. And for the listener, also, I'd probably worth a little bit of recap.

SYLVI: [sighs] Yeah. No, a recap would be good.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVI: I have like, vague notions of like... Like I know where things left off for Millennium Break, and like, what Clementine's new faction — whose name I'm blanking on right now, but...

AUSTIN: The... The Witch in Glass

SYLVI: The Witch in Glass. Right.

AUSTIN: I don't know if we ever had a true name for— I guess the name of the ship that used to be Past was The Reflecting Pool. But.

SYLVI: Okay

AUSTIN: But it never really. Her faction never really gained a full name. Uhm. But there was like, you know, loose ties between them and Millenium Break. And then there was the big war between The Pact of Necessary Venture and The Curtain, AKA The Curtain of Divinity. Uhm, the long and short and part of the reason why you're able to do Apsotolos vs. Nideo here is that by and large Nideo and Kesh are on the side of The Curtain; by and large Columnar and Apostolos are on the side of The Pact; Orion is off fighting itself across all this huge amount of territory that is the blue, the huge blue arm that wraps around much of the map. [Here](#). Uhm... um, we... can place this anywhere inside of this conflict, and what I will say is: the end of this game will not be the end of the entire war. And so in my mind I'm kind of thinking of it as like: here's a little campaign. Here's a little...

SYLVI: [quietly] Yeah.

AUSTIN: A major front between Apostolos and Nideo. Uhm. And I kinda have a pitch but it's— I'm not not a 100%— I have a couple pitches and I wanna know what y'all think. So if you look at the map, if you zero in on where The Twilight Mirage is, right? Uhm, which is, there's a little ribbon that says The Twilight Mirage. I'll ping it on the map. It's in the heart of Nideo space, kind of equidistant between the Golden Branch and Partizan. Right? Partizan

is over on the kind of west end of the, kinda central, almost the eye of the universe here, uhm, where all of the different arms of the galaxy... collide. And then, over on the eastern side of it we have Apostolos, Kesh, Nideo, Columnar, and the Golden Branch colliding on the other side. And so... The Mirage is in this kind of southern bottom— kind of the bottom of the eye of the universe, in the middle. And the thing that I was thinking is — and I guess I should set this up again for you, Sylvi; and we've talked about it privately — but the setting for this next season is going to be Palisade, which is a planet kind of right on the shore of The Twilight Mirage. Kind of fading in and out of, of the Mirage's reach. You know. The... kind of the mists of the Mirage cover it up then reveal it. And for some reason — as we've established it in the past couple of games — The Principality has kinda lost where it is until very recently. And so here's what I pitch: what if... what if what's happened here is that there's almost a race to get to Palisade. Or: there is a sort of— Nideo is moving troops there; or start— wants to try to get there; is trying to zero in on exactly where it is; is trying to move enough forces to like, conquer it. And we've not seen Palisade from the ground quite yet, but I will tell you there are people there who've been living lives since The Principality left it. U... But before they could... Apostolos did what Apostolos does, which is launches stuff — uhm, I'll just draw with, with a marker here — across the dark of space. Right?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: From their arm into the arm of Nideo, and builds like a little blockade. Not because they have any love lost. you know, not because they have any love for Palisade. Or for The Twilight Mirage. But because they know that would be a significant... you know, thing for their enemy to get. And I could imagine this war, this little front happening, kind of: hey does Nideo get there before... does The Curtain get there before The Pact does? Uhm, does that small— does that pitch work? Before I give my second pitch. Which might be too much.

SYLVI [sighs] Yeah, I'm fine with that.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Yeah, I think that works.

SYLVI: That's...

DRE: I mean, I can almost see it as like... maybe we're playing parts of the, like the expeditionary— like the initial pushes of these forces.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right. Yes. I think that makes perfect sense, yeah.

SYLVI: Uhum.

AUSTIN: The... the second thing is... I kinda think the stakes of this game could be about... what the— There's a couple of ways to do it. It could be straight up: is it The Curtain or The Pact on Palisade. In my mind until this game I had been thinking: it's just The Curtain, 'cause it's in Nideo space. But it could totally be that— that The Pact beats them there, and we

have to deal with The Pact in this coming season as the primary Authority that the Cause is fighting against. In Armour Astir there's an Authority and there's a Cause, and the players are on the side of the Cause, and the Authority is kind of unified... Well! A splintering empire at certain points, but it begins fairly unified. In my mind that's either The Curtain or... is The Pact. It's not both. And so I can imagine the end of this game being whoever wins it, whichever side does win, is the force that goes on to land on Palisade and begin to try and conquer it. The other half of the— could be that... we just say it's The Curtain, and the outcome here is about how, how close is The Pact to all of this. Does The Pact earn themselves a backdoor in? Do they find themselves a... do they, you know, leave some sort of deep cell on Palisade? Do they have... do they set up some transp— back route transport there? Or do they, do they break Nideo's line in half here? And like, you know, start to take over part of the Nidean arm? Like, there are all sorts of ways that could go. And this is not a game about big territorial control, it's about two pilots, but I'd love to have some idea about what the kind of stakes of the war, of our little war are. Um... How big do we wanna go in that set of terms I kinda just laid out?

SYLVI: Uhm... I like the idea of this being an extra— like we can use this as an extrapolation like who gets a foothold...

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVI: ...on Palisade. If Dre's feeling that, too.

DRE: Uhum!

SYLVI: I think it makes sense for the conflict, like...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ... that we're setting up. And it gives us an easy in for future games to like have stuff go in an interesting...

AUSTIN: I mean, the person... the person who I am, [half-chuckling] is the person who loves the idea that like: the enemy of the next season of Friends at the Table will be decided tonight!

SYLVI: Sure!

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: Because think of like, how big a season... How big the difference will be if the Authority is The Curtain, and all their shit, all their spy shit, and their back dealing, and like monarchism. Right? As a summary for, like people who maybe don't remember, The Curtain is this kind of deep traditionalist faction inside of... The Principality. They are the group that is like "we know better better than you, you go about your lives, you listen to our propaganda, you deal with your, small lives, and we continue to rule as philosopher kings." That's both Kesh and Nideo, to a real stake. Or a real point. The Pact is this sort of corrupt liberalism, right? This is the sort of like: "oh no-no-no, we're reformists, we're here to bring

the... democracy to the stars, we think everybody should have their own sovereign rights, but also sign these documents that let our allies, you know, station their troops there. Sign these documents to get the food aid you need, and if you sign these documents then our allies in Orion corporations can come build, you know, oil wells here.” Right? That is The Pact in a real way. Utilizing the power of, kind of reformist... dialogue and rhetoric, in order to enact soft power. And that’s just a completely different game. Right? Like, one of those games is against people who wear crowns, and one of them is against people who have ink pens, right? And who wield that power in a different way. And I think that’s really fun. The idea that we’re gonna decide that tonight. So let’s... let’s swing big.

SYLVI: Oh, geez...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Aha!

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: Uhm, so...

SYLVI: Uhm, yeah. Just to clarify for people who’re listening, that’d mean the Nidean pilot would be for The Curtain...

AUSTIN: For The Curtain, yes.

SYLVI: ...and the Apostolos pilot would be for The Pact.

AUSTIN: You got it, exactly.

SYLVI: Cool.

AUSTIN: Yes. Uhm. So, I guess here’s a question: who’s playing who? Who’s playing which side of this war?

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: Let’s move us back over to this.

DRE: Can you give me the elevator pitch for... ah, uhm... The Curtain again?

AUSTIN: Yeah. The Curtain, and Nideo specifically— So Nideo is...

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: ... as a quick reminder, their kinda watchword was “the present.” I don’t know if you remember this, but each of the major Stels had a sort of touchstone word. For Nideo it was *present*. For Apostolos it was *motion*. Um... Nideo was all about control of the narrative, and ideology. Right? They are your church, they are your newsstream, they are your education system. They, they make the now in a real way.

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: So they do that with a combination of, uhm... The do that with a combination of... public authority; appealing to universal truths — so-called universal truths — about morality; through controlling the— with their allies in Kesh, who are, tied to *past*. Then the “the past.” Controlling the way history is presented and taught. And controlling kind of the mythology around what The Principality is, and what it has been. Right? Versus The Pact, which — you know, stels Columnar, which is *future*, and Apostolos, which is *motion* — which are much more interested about what we could be.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: That's the way, that's the kind of myth that they control. Because of their connection to kind of the history of things Nideo and Kesh are fundamentally, you know... There's a sort of an elitist humanism there. Right? That is like “the humans are capable of incredible things. Divines can be seen as tools for us in a real way.” Uhm, but it's... certain humans have better access— certain people have access to... the sorts of schooling that makes them better for leadership. Right? Certain— it's not maybe— maybe it's not the blood is more powerful, but... people who come from strong bloodlines have a deep family unit that they can call on for resources. And that means that our leaders happened to have, you know, generations-old... you know, heritage tied to pow— other people to power. These are... especially for Kesh, very house-driven. This is where you get like, House Brightline and House Whitestar. Nideo is less that. Nideo really leans in on the church. Nideo really leans into like... the person behind the throne. The person who talks about like, what it means to be a good person. And so you don't even have to be in the negotiation room if from birth you've been teaching someone what a good person is. They're going to make the decision you told them to make thirty years ago. You know? That doesn't necessarily give you like, a clear... You know, I don't expect that means you're a master of propaganda, right? But if you're from that system... Nidean pilots we have seen onscreen have been true believers, right? They're the people who like ride in on a wave of flame and violin strings. They're the people who like, truly believe they are here making the world a better place. Uhm, ah, there's a real noblesse oblige with them. And so that is the sort of— that's the sort of Nidean pilots we've seen before. Also kind of sneering elitists. But like, that's...

[SYLVI snickers]

AUSTIN: That is what it is, you know? [chuckles]

SYLVI: Ooooh...

AUSTIN: [deadpan] And Apostolos... they're the one... they're the fish— the fish ones. The fish people.

[SYLVI laughs]

DRE: Yeah-yeah-yeah-yeah.

AUSTIN: [jokingly] Yeah. Those we know... No. Apostolos...

[SYLVI continues laughing]

AUSTIN: Apostolos obviously has a great deal of... I mean, *is* this incredible contradictions of feelings. We're like on one hand a thing we love about Apostolos is their deep interest in self-determination; in identity, exploring one's own identity... Remember that Apostolisian characters in our setting — at this point in history at least — uhm, effectively choose a... a sort of... not an idol, but someone that they deeply look up to, and who they want to emulate, and take that person's name as part of their name, and it becomes a sort of pronoun for them. Which means, we're gonna have to invent... [chuckling] We need to invent a person for whoever the Apostolisian character is for them to want to emulate! And, at the same time, despite all of that fun self-determination stuff, and you know, very clear and interesting identity stuff — also they are the super-military-folks. They are like the people who like, even when you are in civilian wear, you're in military chic. You... you know, these are the people who link each other videos of M1 Garand rifles going “ding,” when you reload them, because it sounds cool. That's what the culture is like on Apostolos.

SYLVI: [mumbles almost inaudibly] God.

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: Umm... [chuckles] And part of that is that they have been at war for a long time. They have been fighting— They have been leading the fight in The Golden Branch against the Branched who — as a reminder — are like, interestingly posthuman people. This what I guess— It's what I'd say. Uhhh... So either of those stand out for either of you? I know, Sylvi, you've played an Apostolosian... a sort of exiled Apostolisian last season.

SYLVI: Yeah. I... [sighs] I am kind of drawn to being the shitty noble here.

AUSTIN: You?

SYLVI: I know, right?

DRE: Never!

SYLVI: Wild!

[DRE & AUSTIN chuckle]

SYLVI: But if Dre's got an idea for that I'm happy to listen to that.

DRE: [disagrees] Um-um! Listen. I'm all about us leaning into our strengths, and...

SYLVI: Alright. [chuckles]

AUSTIN: Incredible. Incredible.

SYLVI: Just gonna get the Dilandau theme playing in my background real quick. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Great. Perfect. [half-chuckling] Perfect! Ideal, actually! Uhm...

SYLVI: Yup!

AUSTIN: Okay... One second. I'm movin' a billion things around on my screen right now. Alright. So... [reads from rulebook] "What is your motive in this war? Why do you keep getting in the robot? Choose one for yourself, or pick one randomly, or make up your own. Write down the motive along with your answer to its question on your Datafile." Who wants to be here on the left side of it, and who wants to be over here? Who's... who chooses which? Whiches? [chuckles]

DRE: Hm...

SYLVI: Uhm. I'm already scrolled over to the right side of the screen.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Alright, boom.

SYLVI: Cool.

AUSTIN: So this'll be your Motive. You see under, at the bottom of your Pilot's Credentials — like, ID card. Their suggestions are... or Grant's suggestions are [reads from rulebook] "Career: what makes a good soldier? Compulsion: what would you be doing instead of fighting this war, if you had ever been given the choice? Conquest: how will humanity benefit under your leadership? Constructed: how did they make you into a living war machine? Glory: what rewards await a hero of your stature? Idealism: what moral imperative do you fight for? Mercenary: what outfit paid your checks before this gig? Redemption: what makes this fight different from the last one? Vengeance: what did you lose, and who will you kill for it? Zealotry: how do you take your faction's ideology even farther?" Anything jump out?

SYLVI: And we're writing on the sheet is what the answers to these questions?

AUSTIN: You... What you're writing is both which one of you chose and...

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: ...and what the answer is to that question. Yeah.

[Pause]

SYLVI: Refresh my memory a little bit on how Nidean stuff works! Do they have like... I was thinking of like, doing a thing where this guy's tryna become like an heir to his house, basically.

AUSTIN: Hm. U-hm.

SYLVI: By doing this. 'Cause he's like the third, or like fourth son of like some family.

AUSTIN: We in general have seen Nidean stuff less about... The Kesh stuff tends to be more about houses.

SYLVI: That's what I was thinking.

AUSTIN: Uhm. But Ni— There's also, you know. You can pull from— Nideo has a really strong, uhm, religious... structure. I don't know if you remember this but there's like all the people in Nideo have... Not all the people. All the people in the... Asterism, the... Received Asterism...? Huuh, it's been a minute since I've talked about...

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: ...the two different types of Asterisms we have.

[SYLVI chuckles]

AUSTIN: Yeah. Received. Received is... Nidean. It's not as simple as that. It's Received vs. Progressive Asterism. Progressive *tended* to be... I wanna say... Columnar and Apostolos, a little bit less... a little bit less traditionalist, etc. But... was also, if I remember right, and Dre, you might remember some of this, just as well as me, since a lot of your character stuff was tied...

DRE: [unsure] Hmmmm...?

AUSTIN: Progressive Asterism was sort of a... way to bring in the... ah, the followers of Logos Kan'tel, the prophet, like a thousand years before.

DRE: Yeah, that sounds right.

AUSTIN: It was just kind of like... you know... Not appropriating, but... kind of assimilating some of the things that, or... Not even the things that Logos Kan'tel said or did, but some of those *impulses* — I guess is what I would say. But... but! The thing that I'm saying here, Sylvi, is: you might be from a family that has strong political ties to the church. The way that you think about like Renaissance families, right?

SYLVI: Okay

AUSTIN: Think about like the Borgia: being a family of merchants, but also deeply tied to [chuckles] the catholic church. And using that as power. So I think that you could still totally think about yourself as being from a house that you're trying to redeem. Something like that, you know?

SYLVI: Okay. Yeah. I was go— While we were talking I think the... I kinda switched from trying to win an inheritance to thinking about like, trying to... sort of restore standing to a once more respected house.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that makes sense to me.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool.

SYLVI: I still need a name for it. But we'll get there.

AUSTIN: You'll get there! You'll get there. Is...? I wonder if... Could I pitch you a connection to a past thing...

SYLVI: Yeah, go ahead.

AUSTIN: ...and make the universe smaller in a way that it annoys me about other universes but it's fun to do for our own universe?

SYLVI: Yeah-yeah-yeah, for sure! Totally.

AUSTIN: We know that there was a big... uhm, *drop* in Nidean stature when Art's character last season, The Farmer, led a rebellion called The Farmer's Rebellion... in Nidean space. Maybe it wasn't in Nidean space. Maybe it was in... God, I have to... I have triple check transcripts and stuff.

SYLVI: [commiserating] Ehh...

AUSTIN: But! Uhm... the, hm...

[Pause]

AUSTIN: Is it possible the house you were from sided with The Farmer, Sovereign Immunity, *that* Sovereign Immunity in that conflict? And has slowly been— Or someone from your house did that, you know?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And maybe you've been repairing your... your family has been reappearing its own... reputation ever since?

SYLVI: Yeah, I like it. A lot.

AUSTIN: Alright. Yeah, there were other houses! Ashlin notes there Orion house that descended from scientists who betrayed The Divine Collaborate. That's House Bittenbach. Um, so you're right. There are other houses. That's a good point. Um, I just don't think i wrote any for [chuckles] Nideo last season. So yeah, I think you totally have a house.

SYLVI: Cool. Just figuring out how to, how to write down the...

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, no worries.

SYLVI: The way I wanna word this on the sheet.

[silence]

AUSTIN: Oh, I totally did! House Leson! Yep. Dakota, Dakota's right. I saw it on my own list as soon as I saw it. Yeah, of course. Lunar Leson.

[silence]

AUSTIN: I did not get enough Lunar Leson— or enough House Leson last season. [Pause.] And Lunar Leson I wanna say was from one of the Road [to PARTIZAN – ed.] games from last year. Let's see if that's true. [Pause.] Yeah that was from our be— our Beam Saber. [Pause.] Yes! Mourningbride and Courage's house. Right. Yeah.

SYLVI: Formatting text on Roll20 is really the... the hardest part of our job, I think.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, it's not fun. [Pause.] That's very annoying.

SYLVI: I think I got it in an okay spot, um.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Do you wanna read the... Yeah, that looks fine.

SYLVI: Yeah, so my... uh, I chose "Glory: what rewards await a hero of your stature?" And I just wrote: "the blunders of my house will be forgotten." Um... We'll get into it as we go...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...but I think this person has opinions on... The Farmer, and siding with them.

AUSTIN: Yeah, sounds good! Especially now that we're in a world where that same person turned out to be Millennium Break... like yea— now...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...especially, a Millennium Break martyr, you know?

SYLVI: Yeah, and a couple— I think like... what? That'd be a couple generations removed probably at the time of the Road to game, right?

AUSTIN: Well, so yeah... The Farmer's betrayal happened... some amount of time... I guess we actually have a direct d— I definitely have a timeline somewhere on my computer.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because it was when Dahlia was born, but young. Right?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So a couple of decades ago...

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: ...by the time this is happening. So a generation ago more or less.

SYLVI: So this would be like... I'm not thinking it's like my character's parents... but like, the parents' sibling...

AUSTIN: Parents' sibling makes sense. An uncle, an aunt. Yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Some sort of... yeah. Relation there.

SYLVI: Wanted to know if I was working with like, great-uncle or uncle... Which one.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. Yes, yeah. Twentyfour years ago.

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Because it was in 1400, and then— But now it'd be another few years after that. We haven't determined exactly how long the gap is between the end of PARTIZAN and the beginning of PALISADE, but I have played with some amount of time between 1–5 years. Right? I think given everything that needs to happen I think that somewhere in that space makes sense. Um, and so it's easy for you to be like...

SYLVI: Yep.

AUSTIN: That happened... right before I was born, or something like— You know.

SYLVI: Yeah, I...

AUSTIN: We don't know how old you are, so.

SYLVI: I was gonna write that down now.

[AUSTIN chuckles]

SYLVI: I just figured, he said 24 years ago, I was like, fine, I'm 24. This like... this was before they were born.

[DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVI: And just gonna get me the cushion there.

AUSTIN: There you go.

SYLVI: And this takes place even further after that.

AUSTIN: Love that. [Pause.] Dre, you feeling any direction on this?

DRE: [uncertain] Yeeahh...

AUSTIN: Any questions?

DRE: Uhm... I'm typing stuff in Notepad, because I'm terrified of start typing in Roll20 first.

AUSTIN: Yeah, no worries.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Roll20 is just a nightmare with text right now.

DRE: Yeah. I know. Um... So with Apostolos being a part of... The Pact...?

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: My initial leaning is like, towards the idealism Motive.

AUSTIN: Sure.

DRE: Um, and, and, it being this idea that this person is a true believer in that like... "We've gotta get to Palisade *first*, to make sure that we can protect Palisade from negative outside influence."

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yes!

[SYLVI snickers very quietly]

AUSTIN: Noone's asked for that yet, by the way, from Palisade...

DRE: Of course not!

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: But this is 100% what everybody in The Pact is saying, right?

DRE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: It's so funny...

DRE: Well, the didn't ask for it, because— I mean, they don't know how bad it could get.

AUSTIN: Oh, right. Yeah-yeah-yeah-yeah. [half-chuckling] Of course, of course.

DRE: You know.

AUSTIN: Of course. Yes! God. Nightmare. [Pause] I love that. I think that's great. So you think that's Idealism?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And that's... I think you've hit'em: "What moral imperative do you fight for?" That's it, right? You're fighting for the people who don't even know that they need to ask for your help.

DRE: Uhum!

[Pause]

AUSTIN: Christ. [Pause] I'll just read this next bit while y'all're doing it: "Finally, come up with the basics for your pilots, the factions, and their mechs. These are the Pilot's Credentials, located on your Datafile above your resources. Pilots may choose to start the game on the same side, but they will be fighting against one another once—" Oh. Hm. [corrects himself] "they will be fighting against one another from the start. Also, nothing about your mech but this bare outline is set in stone until you begin using your bids to Define it. For now, the name is just something used to refer to that beast of possibility. Write the name of your pilot, their age, their emblem and/or callsign, their faction name, their mech name, and the size of their mech's production run on your Datafile. [chuckles] With these questions answered and your Credentials cleared, the Opening is complete. Move on to the first Scene."

SYLVI: Production line is like how common the model that my mech is, or...?

AUSTIN: Yea— That's exactly what it sounds like. Yeh, is this like a— is this a unique thing or grunt suit? You know what I mean?

SYLVI: Yeah.

[Pause]

AUSTIN: Ashlin says "This sounds like someone the Red Roc would would get along with." R-O-C. Yes. Um, ah, Xiphion. Zig'ell Barbos, who was the... extremely... kind of like Kircheis-esque true believer who showed up briefly at the end of the last... one of the last arcs, the prison arc in PARTIZAN. Who had the big... different... Valour. Valour was his Divine. I believe. And... was once Cas'alear's lieutenant, but now on the other side of that conflict. Um... yes.

DRE: Have we had— do we have anything set as far as usual naming conventions for Apostolosian... mechs?

AUSTIN: Oh, for mechs? For mechs... The answer is yes. The answer is of course we do.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: It's just been a year and a half since I've thought about them, you know? Um... One second, let me just... Let me look at this document that I have open already. [chuckles] I do have this incredible note: um... [reads note, with rising enthusiasm] "transforming mechs; mechs that fly; mechs that swim; mechs that burrow; mechs that move; violent machines of speed and power and brilliance." That's...

SYLVI: I love "mechs that *move*." That's my favorite part, yeah.

[AUSTIN and DRE agrees]

AUSTIN: They *MOVE*!

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean?

SYLVI: It is like I— Absolutely know what you mean! I'm like yes! Of course!

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yes, they were in fact Greek virtues, Dakota.

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Dakota in that chat. They were Greek virtues. So like, we had um... I mean some of them... they were actually just broader Greek philosophical *concepts*, they weren't all virtues. Like the Demiurge not— is not a... it's not a thing to aspire to, necessarily. Right?

SYLVI: Right!

AUSTIN: But the... let me see if I have any of my names listed here. I really wish I had a better entire vibe... Yes, yes, yes. Yeah. Arite was one of them. We had the... I'm now looking at my list of ancient Greek philosophical concepts. [chuckles] I think we had— we had the Kathēkon. The Kathēkon was one of their like, major units that we saw a lot of... That's what I can do. If I search my own documents on Kathēkon I will definitely end up finding a bigger list. Here. Yes, the Zenith-A Kathēkons. We've got the obscure— no that's a Columnar one. That's a Columnar one.

DRE: Hmm.

AUSTIN: Zenith-K... Or wait... A, right? Yes. Remembering now that we have a whole system of diff— two different major mech manufacturers that have different naming schemas. Because that's the thing— I think only the Zenith ones had that. And if... like, Apostolos would still use the occasional Troop unit for instance. But the... major Columnar mecha factory or mecha— you know, company was the ones who were using things like, yes, like Katalepsis — there's another one. Yeah. [Pause] Absolutely.

DRE: Googling how to pronounce something.

AUSTIN: Okay.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Always a good— I do it all the time. Sometimes it shows up on Live at the Tables because I can't make it so you can't hear me while I'm doing it.

SYLVI: [laughs] Listen. That's just helping people learn how to pronounce things, too!

AUSTIN: You're right.

DRE: [reassuringly] Uhum!

SYLVI: We're an educational show.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

[Pause]

DRE: Okay. That's— Okay. I'm gonna propose a mech name of Panta Rhei.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah sure. Wait! What, why, where am I using this already? Oh...

DRE: O-oh...

AUSTIN: Oh, Dre? No.

DRE: Oh-oh!

AUSTIN: [warily] No-no-no, no-no-no. I'm— [Reconsiders it] Hmm! You could— No. You should totally use it! But when people see me reference it in a thing *hopefully* later this year... It's not, it's not a day job thing— this is an unrelated thing. Ah. You should use. This is this is of course Heraclitus's famous statement... Do you wanna explain it?

DRE: Um... I mean... I— I— I— I found it on Wikipedia...

AUSTIN: Aah, I see!

DRE: I just know it's Greek for Everything Flows.

AUSTIN: Everything flows. Heraclitus, an incredible, interesting Pre-Socratic philosopher, who was the person who famously said: no one can put their foot in the same river twice, because everything moves. And so... I have a fun side — Just to clarify why I freaked out there, Dre — I have a fun side project that I've been working on.

DRE: Uhum!

AUSTIN: Where there are some gameplay examples in which a character has a mech called Panta Rhei...

DRE: [surprised] Oh!

AUSTIN: ... and in which there's like a key moment where he changes the name from the Panta Rhei to... a different— a different variation of that, that required me... that [chuckles] that required me learning the different versions of the word. It becomes the Meden Rhei, which is Nothing Flows. And I had to go...

DRE: Oh.

AUSTIN: I had to read a paper from the 1970s about the various different ways you can say the word “nothing” in Greek. So. One day. One day that project's gonna be public. Very excited for it, it's just not right there yet. [Pause] But I love it. It's a good one. [Pause] Do you have a name here, also?

DRE: Yeah. Cor'rina Corrine.

AUSTIN: Incredible. Is the first— so the first thing we should do with that name, as a reminder here for the way Apostolosian names work is the — or again Apostolosians named in this period of history — is that they all choose an eidolon and adapt part of that eidolon's name as their root name. In my read I would say— I would think the Cor, the C-O-R is the is the root name...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...tied to some other... past hero of Apostolos. And so... I would— I would love to know what was up with whoever that other Cor person was. Imma just add in the apostrophe to mark it. [as Cor'rina Corrine] So we can see it there. Aah.

DRE: Um, well, Cor is just a person from an upcoming Xenoblade game who just goes [intensely, in a low and raspy voice] Cooooor!

[SILVY laughs]

DRE: ...every time something exciting happens.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That actually— that makes sense. That could happen.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: I've played those games.

DRE [laughs, then mumbles while thinking] Hm. Hm-hm-hm-hm-h-h-hm...

AUSTIN: As an example or as a, you know, maybe a reminder: we know that for instance... I mentioned... Xiphion before, who was also known as Zig'ell. So that "zig" comes from somebody else. I said I don't have that written down here. Or, for instance we, of course uh had Sylvi's character last year... And what was the name... Vervain was the name of your eidolon? Right?

SILVY: Yes. Vervain was the uh eidolon and Ver'Million...

AUSTIN: Ver'Million

SYLVI: ...as everyone remembers.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Ver-apostrophe-Million.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Millie. Um... We don't necessarily need to fill in *all* of the gaps on who this person is...

DRE: [mumbling] Yeah, you know...

AUSTIN: But if you want to have a... a little bit of something there that would be great.

DRE [while thinking]: Hm-hm-hm-hm.

SYLVI: I'm still trying to land on a house name.

AUSTIN: Hmm... You have a mech name?

SYLVI: I do, yeah. It's the Firmament Mk. III.

AUSTIN: [astonished] Ooooooh, okay. You've written down "rare (unique?)" for its production run, huh?

SYLVI: I think it's like— We can get into it. I think it's like a family thing.

AUSTIN: [in agreement] U-hum.

DRE: [sighs] I don't know if this works. The thing that comes to mind though is like... Corridors? As in like pathways?

AUSTIN: [intrigued] Ooooooh. Interesting. Is... this person's name is— was Corridor?

DRE: [Brief pause.] Yeeah.

AUSTIN: I like that. That's...

DRE: If that fits within a...

AUSTIN: That's a Friends-at-theTable-ass name.

DRE: Well, yeah and if that fits within the Apostolosian...

AUSTIN: The thing is, we know that there are Apostolosians who didn't use this naming convention, right? Like Vervain did not— Vervain predates this naming convention. Cassander predates [chuckles] this naming convention. There are fifty thousand years of Apostolosian history, right? Um. So what made Cor— what made Corridor so interesting? Or so... You know? Eidolon-worthy?

DRE: Hmm. [brief pause as he considers his answer] I think they were someone— So if we're saying Apostolos is like a— they're a more future-looking... stel, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. They are a... I would say Columnar is *the* future-looking one.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: But you think of Apostolos as the *fuel* for that future, do you know what I mean?

DRE: [agreeing] Uhum.

AUSTIN: They're unified at this moment, in a real way. So.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yes, I would give you that.

DRE: Yeah. Um... Maybe they were a, like... a like, political pathfinder?

AUSTIN: [intrigued] Hmmm.

DRE: Like, they were like— they were interested in looking— what are all the ways that we could like—

AUSTIN: Interesting.

DRE: Reach an endpoint. But what is like the truest one or the best one.

AUSTIN: That's fun. I like that quite a bit. A famed peacemaker... among a clan of warriors, you know? Not to say that that doesn't mean that they were also not tied into war and conflict, but...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...as is often the way.

[Silence. SYLVI clicks her tongue and half-whistles while thinking.]

AUSTIN: Where your house— what are your house-theme thoughts, Sylvi?

SYLVI: I'm— So I have a first name that's like, I'm really going for it here.

AUSTIN: Aha.

SYLVI: Um. But I'm trying to find the last name that works for it. I was gonna name them Misericorde, which is a type of knife.

AUSTIN: The— I—

SYLVI: Miseri for short.

AUSTIN: That is a— that is another thing that you might find in that project that I've been working on. Later this year.

SYLVI: Oh, damn.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: And also the name of my Elden Ring character. I picked the confessor and named—

SYLVI: Really?!

AUSTIN: And named them Corde. With the e at the end.

SYLVI: [stunned] Oh my GOD!

AUSTIN: Aha!

SYLVI: Yeah, I wasn't looking up like knight shit earlier...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: And it's like a thing used to kill wounded knights.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Shout outs to [XEECEE](#) also, who is currently working on a vn called [Misericord](#) about...

SYLVI: I know I heard it somewhere...

AUSTIN: ...about... um... mystery nuns... [chuckles] is all I'll say.

SYLVI: Hell yeah.

AUSTIN: Aha!

SYLVI: So yeah, I was trying to find something that worked with that...

AUSTIN: Yeah. I love it.

SYLVI: Yeah. I just need to— I still— Yeah anyway. I'm gonna write down the first name for now.

AUSTIN: People who don't know: a misericorde is... is the sort of knife that you slip between the plates of armor to do your deathstroke after you've like knocked someone down or knocked them out in combat.

[silence]

AUSTIN: Also both of you yell at me after we're done to send you important pages of this thing I've been working on

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: Yeah, please do!

AUSTIN: It's very fun

SYLVI: Is this... this isn't... the thing that you showed...

AUSTIN: Yes, it is. Um.

SYLVI: ...me before?

AUSTIN: It is. It is that.

SYLVI: It is? Okay.

AUSTIN: Yea-yea-yeah. Aha.

SYLVI: Please do! Please do!

AUSTIN: Aha. [Pause] It's fun to tease things.

SYLVI: Yeah

AUSTIN: You know? It simply is.

[DRE giggles]

SYLVI: It's nice being in on it! [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: Um... I'm tryin— [sighs] I'm really struggling with the house name here. I'm gonna figure out other stuff and then come back

AUSTIN: That's a good idea, yeah.

SYLVI: Pick out a Callsign and other shit...

AUSTIN: Yep! How are you feeling on call sign, Dre?

DRE: That's what I'm— that's what I'm trying t— that's what I'm trying to think of right now. Um... I found this callsign generator but the first one it gave me was Eeyore—

[SYLVI laughs]

DRE: And I don't know if that's the vibe we're going for. So...

AUSTIN: That's very funny, but no...

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Probably not. Probably not.

[DRE sigh-groans. Silence.]

DRE: Um... I might go with Cider.

AUSTIN: [excited] Ooooh, I love that!

DRE: Keep the c theme going.

[silence]

AUSTIN: I thought you meant c as an ocean for a second.

SYLVI: Yeah, me too.

DRE: Oh, well...

[AUSTIN giggles]

DRE: No, no. But I guess— Yeah! [laughs]

[silence]

DRE: Thank you for Callsign "Hallway," Ashlin.

AUSTIN: That's very funny. That's very funny.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Um... You said they/them earlier for Cor'rina?

DRE: U-hum.

AUSTIN: I'm guessing that... that's what you— that's intentional?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So nonbinary, but then also it's worth noting that again we do... we do try to use the... I guess— Again: it's up to the individual *person* obviously but in Apostolos...

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: ...the cultural norm is for personal pronouns to be tied to that idolon. That root name.

DRE: Gotcha. So cor/cor's, etc. It does sound like I'm talking about Coors Light, but it's fine. Don't worry about it.

SYLVI: Damn we're talking about Coors and cider...

AUSTIN: Talk about Coors— Is that? Damn! Coors' making cider now?

DRE: Yeah

[SYLVI laughs]

DRE: Yeah, their mech turns blue like, the color of the Rockies—

AUSTIN: [laughs] When it's cold!

DRE: When it's cold. Yeah, aha. [mumbles] Christ.

AUSTIN: Alright, write that down as a mechanical resource...

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: That's a Sensor, I think... [half-chuckling] That's Unique Customization or Appearance.

DRE: Uhum.

[silence]

SYLVI: My text went off the sheet for a second... I have a Callsign, it's Scion. Like...

AUSTIN: Aah! Sure Yeah, I see. Scion.

SYLVI: I don't think it was like one that... they picked. I think it's like...

AUSTIN: Umm...

SYLVI: ...the thing people call them.

AUSTIN: Yeah. "Oh, hey scion!"

SYLVI: Yea-yeah-yeah.

AUSTIN: A little... a little bit of a poke or prod.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like "the family's..." You know? [a small epiphany] Oh! I have a pitch!

SYLVI: [encouragingly] Yeah.

AUSTIN: What if you don't have a last name?

SYLVI: Sure.

AUSTIN: What if they took it from you?

SYLVI: And that's what I'm trying to get...?

AUSTIN: That's what you're trying to get back. Yeah.

SYLVI: Okay, then I'm gonna change my motive to "My family's name will be restored."

AUSTIN: Yea-yea-yeah. I like that. That's fun.

SYLVI: Yeah. I dig that a lot. Thank you for turning my inability to name something into a cool character.

AUSTIN: All we ever do here is...

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: ...take the realities of the table and turn them into meaning. You know?

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: So... Okay. Can we— Let's see. Let me go back to the beginning here. That was the Opening. The scenes! There are three sce— I guess we should say real quick. Let's go

through these one more time. What are the, uh... what are our... full Credentials starting with Dre.

DRE: Yes... My Name is Cor'rina Corrine. Their Callsign is Cider. They are 21 years old. They are from Apostolos. Their Mech is the Panta Rhei, which is a prototype of a soon-to-be mass production unit.

AUSTIN: Love that.

DRE: Since we were talking about *Gundam Wing*, I'm thinking like... the first time you see a Tauros in Gundam.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Love it, great. And your Motive?

DRE: My Motive is "Idealism: we have to get to Palisade first, so we can protect it from negative outside influence."

AUSTIN: Oh. We're so idealistic. [chuckles]

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: Sylvi?

SYLVI: My character's Name is Misericorde. Miseri for short. Their Callsign is Scion. Age 24. For Gender I just wrote he/they, which are their pronouns. But...

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVI: [half-chuckling] What is gender?

AUSTIN: [half-chuckling] What is gender?

SYLVI: Faction: Nideo. I was gonna put like, their house name, but since they don't have a name I'm not gonna put that there either.

AUSTIN: Yeah sure.

SYLVVI: Their Mech is the Firmament Mk.III, which is an inherited mech... or at least an inherited design. I don't know...

AUSTIN: I think—

SYLVI: I think the three implies that this has been iterated on.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that makes sense to me. Yeah.

SYLVI: And my Motive is: "What rewards await a hero of your stature? My family's name will be restored." So.

AUSTIN: I love it. All right.

[58:05] Scene One

AUSTIN: [reads from rulebook] “There are three scenes in a game of Last Shooting. Each will start with some questions that set up what is at stake in the battle to come. These questions are posed to the individual pilots, but should be answered openly, out loud. This game doesn’t work well with secrets. Each scene also has its own guidelines on how to run the Auction. After the Auction is complete, you will roleplay the scene according to the bids placed, as described in the rest of this chapter.” Um... I’m gonna read the section on the Auction... this kinda intro Auction section, before I get into the deep stuff. Just so we can have it in mind. [reads from rulebook] “The structure of Last Shooting is fairly rigid. Most of what makes each showdown unique comes *after* the scene is set, but *before* it is played out. That step is the Auction. Building from the prompts provided, the players set the scene, then the Auction begins. It proceeds in three steps: 1: Both players Buy In. 2: Players decide whether or not to Raise during the Ante. 3: Once all bids are settled, it’s time to Call It. Determine who wins the scene, and how the scene actually plays out. After playing the scene, the Winning Bidder gets to Claim a Reward for their trouble. Um... Let me go down and hop down to the actual... the actual Play The Scene rules here. Alright... I guess I would go— Yeah, okay. So we have that. We have our Credentials. [reads from rulebook] “Scene One: You are a pair of pilots in a space war. History will say the course of the war was shaped by your duel, but from where you’re sitting today that probably seems ridiculous. Answer the background questions for your pilot, then set the scene together, then follow the special instructions for the Scene One Auction. The Background Questions are: How long have you been a pilot? Have the two of you met on the battlefield before? And how do you feel about your faction? Who knows it?” This is all on page... 17.

SYLVI: 17. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: “How long have you been a pilot?” Is that a question in terms of how long have you been piloting mechs or how long have you been in the military?

AUSTIN: Either one.

SYLVI: ‘Cause those are two different answers.

AUSTIN: Give me both! Give me both.

SYLVI: I’ve been piloting mechs for 10 years. I’ve been in the military for 8.

AUSTIN: Okay. Wow, so you started as a 14 year old just pilotin’ stuff...

SYLVI: I joined the military... Actually, I think piloting longer than that. I think piloting since they were a kid. Like they've been brought up to do this

AUSTIN: In the way that like, some nobles are brought up riding horses or...

SYLVI: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: ...you know, shooting competitively or something like that.

SYLVI: They had a sibling who was brought up for diplomacy. Like, stuff like that.

AUSTIN: Right!

SYLVI: They were the one who was taught how to fight.

AUSTIN: Right. Gotcha. Um... Dre? Cor'rina?

DRE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Cor'rina or Cor'rine? [weighing whether to pronounce the first "o" more like in "purse" or "horse"]

DRE: Cor'rine. [more like "horse"]

AUSTIN: Yeah. Okay.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: How long have you been a pilot? You're 21 now, so...

DRE: Uh... I guess a few years

AUSTIN: Okay. Were you in the military for a year before— I don't know what the draft age is in Apostolos, but Apostolos 100% has a draft.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: Probably 18, right? For ease... Noting that our years are all fucked up, also. [chuckles]

DRE: Right. Yea-yea-yeah.

AUSTIN: But since your age a majority, presumably.

DRE: And when you say draft it's like a— it's like just a cultural compulsory service...

AUSTIN: 100%

DRE: When you're 18, everybody—

AUSTIN: Yup.

DRE: ...has to do their x amount of years. Yeah.

AUSTIN: 100%. 100%. Yeah... That makes sense. Um... Where did I put this document I just had open. There it is. Alright. The second question was: "How did— Have the two of you met on the battlefield before?" Is this pre or post your rescuing each other? Or one of you rescuing the other from a prison?

SYLVI: [intrigued] Ooooh!

[pause]

DRE: [intrigued] Oooh! That is a good ques...

SYLVI: I think after would be interesting... Because then it's like "oh you let this person out and now you know you..."

AUSTIN: Now you have to fucking deal with them? Yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah. Um...

DRE: Yeah after is interesting.

AUSTIN: So what— Tell me about what that experience was like, then? Was that from like an initial clash between your two forces?

SYLVI [with mild uncertainty] Yeah, I think like... [sighs] I'm trying to think of like... positionally. Like I think it would be like, on the way to this... maybe it happened, or like... A few years prior— I guess you've only been in the military for a...

AUSTIN: A couple of years.

SYLVI: ...a couple of years. Maybe you were a rookie when this happened.

DRE: Yeah, that makes sense.

AUSTIN: That would also make sense and give us a really strong— It has that— Therefore been two years since this war broke out, right?

SYLVI: Yea. Uhum.

AUSTIN: So maybe it was one of the earliest... Maybe it wasn't even clear how much this was turning into a real war at that point. You know?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Between The Pact and The Curtain. Because, that's such a big— Again, there have been territorial squabbles between houses and stuff before. Part of the way The Principality is built, part of what Asterism is supposed to always be about is the whole thing can stand internal squabbles, because everyone is fundamentally still loyal to the Princept at the top. And that just isn't true anymore. Each of you has your own different princept to believe in... / that your faction's maybe manipulating on the side of The Curtain. And so... and so there is like uh... It's buyable that you were still a rookie, Cor'rina. That there was like... You might not have even understood the scope of the war. You know?

DRE: Hm.

SYLVI: Especially if it just broken out.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly. Pre... all of the propaganda about the other side; everything else. What what happened? How did you get into that initial— How did you get caught then? Um... Miseri got caught. Yeah?

SYLVI: Yea-yea-yeah. I got caught. I think that there was a, like... I think I got outnumbered.

AUSTIN: Hm!

Like, I think it was a thing where I bit off more than I could chew... after like, my unit took some hits. And... I just got like surrounded, basically. And they... Like, kind of figuring out that like my character had like a family history. Despite the lack of the— like sort of shamed state of their house.

AUSTIN: Um.

SYLVI: I think they could be a, like... decent prisoner. I mean they were also like, captaining a unit; I imagine that there comes for... like, with intelligence, with that they were hoping to get out of them.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: And I think that's also what happened to the Firmament Mk.II. Um... is that it got blown up. Or like destr— Or like rendered unusable in that encounter.

AUSTIN: Love it.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I guess so Cor'rine why did you— why did you free Miseri?

DRE: [sighs] You know, it just felt like the right thing to do. Like you said, this was before the war started... I don't know. What would— How would— Would Miseri like, have a... Do you have a sense, Sylvi, if he's like a... is he like a charmer? Would he be threatening? Like... What would be the way that he would kind of like...

[SYLVI sighs]

DRE: ...convince Cor'rina?

SYLVI: I think... he's the type who would try and earn sympathy through what's happened to his family.

DRE: Yeah totally.

SYLVI: Really...

DRE: That's kind of what I was thinking, too.

SYLVI: "I— Oh I've been doing this for so long..."

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: "...and I can't believe I made this mistake; I'm good as dead anyway" blah blah blah.

AUSTIN: Love it.

SYLVI: Hell yeah.

AUSTIN: Incredible.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: All right. So then, finally: how do you feel about your faction? Who knows it?

SYLVI: Um... There is a mix of resentment and duty that I feel towards Nideo.

AUSTIN: Hm!

SYLVI: There's— I feel more allegiance to my family than I feel to like, the house that I serve.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVI: Um. But I also know that if I can... like, bring— like, restore my family's name. If I can do that...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...then I can... live a life that I couldn't... elsewhere. In his head, at least. Like. This is like... the way to achieve everything he wants.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And so there's that double bind of like: on one hand the thing— the long-term goal you want is this way; but on the other hand the only reason it's a goal at all is because of how you were treated by— your family was treated by...

SYLVI: Yeah

AUSTIN: ...by this thing they're part of. Cor'rina?

SYLVI: Absolutely. Yeah.

AUSTIN: I guess we know.

DRE: Oh.

AUSTIN: Idealism.

DRE: Yeah. Well, and I think like if... they weren't already that, they *were* after like, they helped Miseri escape and then realized that like “oh man I was just... I was just duped by this...”

AUSTIN: Right!

DRE: “...by this outsider! You know? And this is... this is what Apostolos is here to fight against. And to stand against.”

AUSTIN: Uhum. “And this is what these motherfuckers do to you.” You know?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I mean that's—

DRE: Yeah I think that's probably why they probably only had to do — I don't know, let's say — two years of service and they stuck around.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's worth adding again, or reminding maybe: one of the core things that caused the schism among... the initial kind of cold war schism between the various factions of The Principality was that... Dahlia announced, basically that the... kind of forces of Kesh and Nideo had... kind of *lied* about the history of Apostolos, and had secretly installed their own Apokine, years ago. Like a puppet Apokine. Dre, you might remember? That was part of our Microscope game?

DRE: [enthusiastically] Yeah! Yea-yea-yeah!

AUSTIN: Like a year and a half ago? Two years ago? Um... And so... There is already a sense of “those motherfuckers in The Curtain are duplicitous!” And then that— *Or those people in Kesh and Nideo* are duplicitous! And then they announce that there had secretly been a group called The— I mean. Again: it was revealed that The Curtain had existed all this time. That there had been a secret society behind the— you know, working behind the

scenes. As if— You know. It's a classic, like: the NSA is “revealed” not to just be a friendly government agency, but actually the super sp— *another* super spy agency. Another intelligence organization that doesn't give a fuck about your personal... you know, privacy? “Revealed” I put in scare quotes there, because like: if you know you know. If you were already— You should have already been skeptical.

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: Um, but!

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: But you know, when that stuff happened that was kind of an eye-opener for people. And so I think for you it makes a lot of sense— For other people in Apostolos, maybe. Not for you. But for Apostolos writ large... there was that sense of like: “see what did we fucking tell you?” Like “all those people— all of those Nidean priests out there — smiling and saying good words about how you have to be loyal to this and that — secretly backstabbers. You know, secretly those are the people who... You know, the same people— They'll put a radio in your room, so you can listen to music. But what they won't tell you is that radio has a microphone in it so they can listen to you to every word you say. You know?” So I think that that lines up really well with you being duped. It really confirms the sort of cultural caricature of what it means to— what a Nidean is. [half-chuckling] Even though all this person had to do to dupe you is tell you the truth about their situation! [bursts out laughing]

SYLVI: Yeah. It's like... I left!

AUSTIN: Uhum!

SYLVI: [half-giggling] But like I don't know if I was being *that* dishonest at the time.

AUSTIN: It doesn't sound like it. And yet. Alright. Um... I should like, bookmark these pages. Okay. That is our Background Questions. Now we set the scene. [reads from rulebook] “Scene One establishes the first significant encounter between your two Pilots.” I guess we've already established them as characters. But as pilots, this will be your first encounter. [continues reading] “Feel free to use one of these suggestions to set the scene for your first encounter, or come up with one of your own: A sudden evacuation. An ambushed colony— [half-chuckles] or convoy. Encountering a scouting party.” What's the circumstance here?

SYLVI: Well, so, we kind of talked about it trying to be a race towards Palisade, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

SYLVI: So... Would we want it to be an encounter sort of... in space? Or do we want to try and have it be like on a...?

AUSTIN: I think it could be in space. It could be on a nearby... planet or asteroid belt or something. We set up a— There's a debris field nearby...

SYLVI: You know, asteroid belt popped in my head.

AUSTIN: Is that in HOUNDS? Do I have— Did I put that map up here anywhere? I don't think I did. Let's see if I have it. [half-giggling] Let me see if I have this terrible map I drew. One second.

[SYLVI & DRE laugh]

AUSTIN: [mumbles] Are you fuckin'...? [normal volume] I think— I feel like I just saw it and now I can't find it. So. Um. So the long and short is: not too far from where Palisade is, and where the... edge of... The Mirage is. There is a place called the Scarnok Debris Field, which we saw in the first game of this Road... where a Divine briefly turned it into... their own little kingdom! [laughs] But there is— I guess the thing to say there is: last we saw there was a Millennium Based Break in that debris field. But I guess it doesn't have to be at this point. It could have been another year. Millennium Break definitely would have moved out of that place after... what happened in that game. You know? So... We could do that. I kind of like the idea of it being in a big kind of debris field, an asteroid belt.

SYLVI: Yeah I think that gives us a lot of fun stuff to play with.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: Do we want to decide on who would be the aggressor in a situation here?

AUSTIN: [mumbling] I should...

SYLVI: Or is that something that we should save for the... like, actual gameplay phase?

AUSTIN: Uh... I think we're allowed to set that up right now.

SYLVI: Okay, cool.

AUSTIN: I think.

SYLVI: I... was wondering if like... [half-chuckling] I also feel like I'm jumping ahead of people a lot. So please let me know—

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: ...if people have ideas before I start. We kind of talked about how like... was it The Curtain that we felt like was moving in earlier then...

AUSTIN: The Curtain— Yeah. So what we saw was The Curtain... What we saw in previous episodes was... Again, this is a full recap here: in the first game of this Road it was a Curtain Divine that — it was specifically someone who was guarding The Princept — who saw Palisade in the distance and like recognized: "Oh shit, there it is! We've been kind of looking

for it as a road into The Mirage!” As a reminder, you can't just fly into The Mirage. The time dilation will fuck you up. And...

SYLVI: Hm.

AUSTIN: And The Curtain remembers that they left this place called Palisade for some reason, you know, 5 000 years ago. Or 4 500 years ago or something. They don't know why that happened, necessarily. Or maybe The Curtain does, but the people who are being sent out to find this thing are not being told that. And... they don't know how to find that. They don't know how to find it. This Divine saw... this Divine says... Um this Divine is Fealty — the Divine Fealty played by Art very well, people should go listen to that game if you haven't yet, it's fantastic — says they can't have this. And Fealty, along with their pilot flee— their *elect* flee. In the sec— They end up... I'm spoiling it for you, because, again it happened already in the Road... [chuckles]

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: ...they end up getting to, in the final scene breaking away from a chase. Breaking through a kind of blockade and fleeing towards Palisade in the distance. Keeping the exact coordinates safe. In the second game, which Dre, you were in, we learned that The Curtain were using a special... Divine that could be brought to the center of the galaxy and kind of get a snapshot — this is the Divine Discernment — and they used that to kind of zero in on where Palisade is. It's a very dangerous thing to do to bring anything towards where Perennial is in the center of the galaxy, but they did it. And then Millennium Break sent a crew in to steal Discernment. And so Millennium Break now knows where... Palisade is. But The Curtain, therefore, also knows where it is. Because they took that picture, right? They found it first. And so that's how they're able to start moving in on it. Presumably, at that point what you have is The Curtain, either through espionage or maybe just through like, “well we're just gonna follow them in. We're just gonna follow them to Palisade at this point. If they're going that direction we know that they are gonna get there.” And they probably have the coordinates on all their ships at this point they're probably all like, just moving logistically in that direction. So, the short answer is: yes, The Curtain is moving first. Probably. You know?

SYLVI: Okay. Do we wanna have like the— you guys like, the Nideans stumbling across The Curtain? Or would it make more sense...

AUSTIN: Or the...

SYLVI: ...that we've got a bit more of a foothold that we like... found out that there were an Apostolos force coming in?

DRE: [with tentative objection] Ah...

SYLVI: But...

AUSTIN: Maybe that makes more sense. Yeah Nideo is Curtain. Apostolos is Pact.

SYLVI: Okay, cool.

AUSTIN: So it could be the sense— It could be the thing of like the Aposto— the Nideans have already set up a sort of temporary... a foothold from which they wanted to go conquer another different foothold, right? And... Apostolos comes in to try to push them out of that, out of the debris field? Or is apostolos just pushing through it? I'm gonna get this map onscreen—

SYLVI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: ...of this... very terrible... low quality... I put this together in MS Paint map...

SYLVI: Can't wait!

AUSTIN: Here. One second. Let me drop it in MS Paint, where it belongs...

SYLVI: I'm... I do have a little bit of a suggestion for like, what's in the debris field. Like letting Nideo sort of like...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...locate this stuff. It's that they're sort of using it as cover for this ship that they're using as like, a base of operations.

AUSTIN: Oh god it's huge.

DRE: Oh, that *is* big!

AUSTIN: Yikes. Ah yikes. Let's bring it lower. But you can kind of see that this is like that one part of the galactic arm, you know what I mean? It's like... It's if I zoom in real tight it's like this spot right here where the...

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: ...the green arm hits the red arm, right? And so the Scarnok Debris Fields are like south of Palisade, right? But in the middle of the Nideo space. Yeah, I think that makes sense. That's what I'm saying. Anyway. Continue your idea.

SYLVI: I was just gonna say... I was trying to think of like, where... like, where would they keep soldiers and where would they station people if they're not necessarily on planet.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: Anywhere. And like, I think using a debris field to like, mask the movements of this battleship that they have, or this like mech carrier...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...whatever you wanna classify it as... feels like a move that's like one of these factions would make.

AUSTIN: Totally. It totally does. So, do you think then that is that like, Apostolos crosses this arm, gets in, like puts in a hidden, you know, troop transports — or like a sort of forward operating base — in this debris field to hide it? And Nideo stumbles onto it on like a regular patrol?

SYLVI: Oh no. I was thinking that... this is how Nideans noticed that Apostolicians were coming into this space. But I—

AUSTIN: Aah! I see!

SYLVI: ...But I can also see that. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Ye-ye-yeah. That Nideo basically has this as like a...

SYLVI: A forward base.

AUSTIN: A forward base. They have a forward base. Apostolos moves into it, thinking that they'll do the same thing: set up shop there.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And they— that makes sense. I like that a lot. Yeah. Yeah.

DRE: And I think it would make sense for Apostolos to come out in the debris field because that's maybe where they think they could also...

AUSTIN: 100%. Yeah, I love it. Alright. So. That's the situation. So this is sort of like it's... this is sort of like two different, you know... groups bumping into each other and not necessarily being ready for war. They both think that they're going...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know. Stealth mode. And instead: "uh oh!" You know? D. W. O'Boyle says "what about the artist ship that's there?" I imagine that at this point that character has left the Scarnok Debris Fields with all the supplies... that they inherited from that situation. Right?

SYLVI: It's been years, right? Like. We've talked about...

AUSTIN: It has been. It has now been another year since... I believe that that happened very close after the end of PARTIZAN. And we've now established that this is like a little bit deeper into the war. So, yeah. I would imagine...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...Sierra's gone from there at this point. Alright. [reads from rulebook] "Scene One Auction: Each player may Raise a maximum of two times. Nobody may place a bid to Destroy (except in the case of the tiebreaker rule)." What do I mean by "Each player may Raise a maximum of two times"? [chuckles] So.

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: Here we go. Um... "Your Resources" Again: [citing aforementioned rules] "Both players Buy In. Players decide whether or not to Raise. Once all bids are settled, it's time to Call It." [reads from rulebook] "Your Resources: Your bids will come from the Resources listed on your Datafile." You see here, your Datafile has Mechanical Resources and Personal Resources. Talked about these before. Mechanical Resources is the stuff in your mech, like the Tactical Specialty or Mobility System. Personal Resources, stuff like Rank; Support Crew; Mentor; Reputation; How Hot You Are; etc. A Distinct Look is actually what it says.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Um...

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: The items on it: [reads from rulebook] "When you begin, the Datafile will look empty. The items on it will be Defined, and later Destroyed, when they are bid. Something cannot be placed as a bid without either Defining it or Destroying it. Note that the Biddable Resources on your Datafile are everything below the word "Resources." The spaces in the "Pilot's Credentials" section describe your Pilot and their machine, but have no purpose in the Auction. For instance, if a player bids their Signature Weapon in the first scene, they may Define it as 'a high yield bazooka fed by a revolver drum.' Later, if they choose to bid it again, they know it will be destroyed. Whether it is left as an exploding trap, or melted by their opponent, or meets some other fate depends on how the scene plays out. To bid a Resource that is already Defined is to guarantee it will be Destroyed. No exceptions. It may be difficult to bid something without immediately thinking about how it will enter the scene. That's normal. Over the course of the Auction the two of you have a chance to refine those ideas, and when playing out the Scene you'll put them to their best use. The process of playing scenes in the Auction system can be kind of like the steps of making an illustration. Your bids are like putting in a rough sketch, Calling It is like laying your inks, and roleplaying the scene is creating the final piece. Just be open to improvisation and surprising one another, and yourself, along the way. Buy In: The first step in the Auction is to Buy In. Both players must place a bid. To Buy In, pick one of the undefined items on your Datafile and write in what it is, Defining it. When placing any bid, you must also announce what it is to the other player. Once you make a bid, you cannot take it back. [chortles] A player may only bid something on their Datafile. There is more information and advice on placing bids on pages 11 to 13. Your Datafile has a lot of..." [corrects himself] "has a list of things that might be special about your Pilot or your Mech. Over the course of your bids some of those will be Defined, and some of those, in turn, will be Destroyed. Every bid you place will come from the Datafile, and will require a change to the Datafile." So what are your opening bids here? What is the something that the— kind of the camera is going to find and linger on? As this this opening battle to this new front of the war is... displayed?

DRE: Um... I think my first bid would be that my Rank.

AUSTIN: Um!

DRE: Cor'rina is now a "petty officer first class."

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: Which is different from the last time that they met Miseri.

AUSTIN: That's fun. Yes. You want to add that then to your Personal Resources. Your Rank.

[pause]

AUSTIN: How are you feeling, Miseri?

SYLVI: Yeah... I'm debating between a couple things here. I think I'm going to Define my Reputation.

AUSTIN: Um!

SYLVI: Um... And I think that my Reputation is "feared." I think I've built sort of a reputation for— Oh, that's in Social Stratum. Hold on. I'm writing in the wrong spot.

[AUSTIN giggles]

SYLVI: Not quite like a war hero but more like... "oh if you have— if this guy gets stationed with you, he's going to kill a lot of things"

AUSTIN: [intrigued] Hmm!

SYLVI: Just like... Fights with a fervor...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...that a lot of people don't... quite expect.

AUSTIN: Okay. I love that. So yeah, put that under a Reputation! That makes sense to me.

SYLVI: Yeah, um.

[pause]

AUSTIN: So that is the Buy In. And what did I say before? I said... this scene is allowed to have two further bids? Is that right? Let me double-check it. [cites rules] "Each player may Raise a maximum of two times." Alright. [reads from rulebook] "The Ante: After both players have placed their initial bids, it is time for the Ante. Now that you know your opponent's initial

bid, you can attempt to bid *more* to try and win the auction, which will define more about your Pilot along the way. Placing this new bid is called a Raise, and each time you Raise, it is added on top of your previous bid. Raises are made the same way as the initial bid: either by Defining a new resource, or Destroying a Defined one. Each scene will tell you how many times you can Raise.” You can each Raise twice and you're not allowed to destroy anything, unless there is a tie. At which point we do a tiebreaker and a tiebreaker *can* involve destroying a Resource. [continues reading] “A player may only Raise something on their Datafile. If betting comes to a standstill, or both players have made their maximum number of Raises for the scene, it's time to Call It. Move on to the next phase.” So who's next? Who wants to raise here?

SYLVI: I think I have something if... But Dre, if you have something...

DRE: U-un. Go ahead.

SYLVI: Okay. I'm going to raise my mech's Unique Appearance.

AUSTIN: Ooooh! Okay what is it?

SYLVI: Which is... So, I've been trying to like, figure out the exact words for this. It's very... I think like, the key colors on it are like, black and silver... Like *mostly* silver, I think. It's sort of... glints a bit when people see it. Like... the armor shines a bit.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: But like— it is something that used to be a... I think the original Firmament looked much more like a traditional knight and then this has been slowly made into more of a war machine.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: And become a little more... grim looking.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: So, like... I think that it used to have hands and I think now those hands have been replaced with weapons. Which I will define at a later date.

AUSTIN: Love it. Yeah. A lot of the Nideo stuff — if I remember right — has the sense of like— or it did at least. It could be interesting if this is a shift in some ways. But the Nideo stuff often had this sort of angelic quality, that was about like the height of—

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...like *Past*... the height of human perfection. And almost to a grotesque... angelic... thing. And so I'm curious is that still there—

SYLVI: This is a—

AUSTIN: ...or has that been overridden by the militarism?

SYLVI: I think this is a bastardization of that. I think that...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...this might not be necessarily something that reflects the... this might be what makes it unique.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: Is that it is this sort of like... it is the grotesque version of these ideals. It looks like there was one... Like—

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: The original thing I'm picturing is very much like a... very traditional... shiny mech with— like *Escaflowne*, almost...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...with the cape...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...and like a shield and shit. It's very like. When I say knight, I mean like very archetypical...

AUSTIN: Yeah

SYLVI: ...knight.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: And then this is like two generations removed, where... it's gone from that to this thing that is less trying to be a... angel of war and more just a literal angel of death-type thing.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: Um...

AUSTIN: Cool.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cor?

DRE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Do you have a Raise back? You're gonna counter that?

DRE: Yeah. I'm gonna Raise with my... Squadmates.

AUSTIN: Hm!

DRE: I think that cor is close with... I think like, their squad is comprised of like, individual like, smaller groups. So if the squad is like, I don't know, 21 mechs? Then they're each broken up into like teams of three.

AUSTIN: Sure.

DRE: And I think cor has built a strong rapport with... In my mind this is very like 0083...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: ...where it's like Kou and Keith and Burning. So I think there's cor; there's another like younger person that's around cor's age; and then there's like, their kind of like, gruff but loving mentor.

AUSTIN: Love it. So is cor the— I guess we'll find out. I shouldn't ask any questions that help define it beyond that.

DRE: Yeah. I don't know if cor is the...

AUSTIN: Is the Keith or the Kou.

DRE: ...is the Kou or the Keith.

AUSTIN: [chuckles] Oh yeah, aha!

DRE: Yeah! [giggles]

AUSTIN: 100%. Alright. That's a good one.

DRE: I don't know which way they are...

AUSTIN: Yea...

DRE: ...unfortunately horny. We'll find out.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Oh 0083, you sure *are* a fucking show!

DRE: Yep! [laughs]

AUSTIN: I guess back over then to you, Miseri.

SYLVI: I'm still writing out my Unique Appearance, one second...

AUSTIN: That's fair. That's fair. That's fair.

[silence]

SYLVI: Okay... Let me see here... I'm kind of trying to trade on like... the reputation of this character for this first round.

AUSTIN: You've written: "A knight whose human-like features have been corrupted into a visage of death." Which...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...is sick.

SYLVI: You know, I'm playing a From Soft game right now.

AUSTIN: Yea-yea-yeah. I get you.

DRE: Ye-yeah. Sure.

AUSTIN: I get it.

SYLVI: Um...

DRE: You got like six arms, or...

AUSTIN: Damn! Not yet!

SYLVI: No. I don't know how many yet, but not six.

AUSTIN: [half-chuckles] Yeah, okay.

SYLVI: Uuumm... [pause] Maybe I should do Distinct Look here... Yeah. Yeah. I'm gonna Define my character's Distinct Look.

AUSTIN: [knowingly] Aaah!

SYLVI: Um... you know, people were asking what did the characters look like...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: Here we go!

AUSTIN: Here we go.

SYLVI: I think like, very long hair... Like... kind of covers their face when they're not piloting. I don't know if they ever really like— In the like [searches for words] I called Alise Breka CLAMP, right?

AUSTIN: Yep!

SYLVI: So like...

AUSTIN: Yep.

SYLVI: ...there's definitely the like... teen Sephiroth vibe going on here.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: Even though he's in his early 20s. I don't know why I said *teen* Sephiroth, but that's the vibe.

AUSTIN: Aha.

SYLVI: Not really— Actually, no. Sephiroth doesn't have the right type of hair. I'm kinda thinking of hair that falls in their face a lot. Covered in scars from like, just years of training for this.

DRE: [approving] Hmm!

AUSTIN: Yeah

DRE: What's the— shit. Who's the guy from *King of Fighters* I'm thinking of? Iori?

SYLVI: Oh, maybe!

AUSTIN: Iori...

SYLVI: I've been thinking of like, a character from... No. Iori's the redhead, no?

AUSTIN: No Iori's the redhead. Yeah. You're thinking of... from... *Garou: Mark of the Wolves*... What is the name of this character? I'll see you in a second. I haven't played this game in a very long time. [pause] Fuck. [pause] Who were you thinking of, Sylvi?

SYLVI: Oh! I had like, a character from like, *Daemon X Machina* in my head.

AUSTIN: Oh, sure! [excited] I think this— this is the crew that you could make *Daemon X Machina* references on!

SYLVI: That's true! What's his name? Is his name Savior? Is that the guy?

AUSTIN: Yeah that's right. Aha. I think.

SYLVI: Yeah. Leader of the Five Hells, Savior.

AUSTIN: Aha.

SYLVI: Kind of that type of hair vibe. Where it's like falling in his face all the time because he needs to look adequately broody.

AUSTIN: Yeah uhum.

DRE: Uhum-hum.

AUSTIN: God...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That game is better than it had any right to be. Even though it's also rough around the edges

SYLVI: It kicks ass.

AUSTIN: But it kicks ass. I really loved it. It's on pc now and it's like...

SYLVI: Yeah

AUSTIN: Pretty good.

SYLVI: It was free on Epic Games a while back, I think.

AUSTIN: Yeah I love it.

SYLVI: So... Anyway...

AUSTIN: Hair and face scarred up...

SYLVI: Scarred up.

AUSTIN: Has seen shit. Yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah just sort of like a... There's a bad aura.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: There's like— the vibes are off.

AUSTIN: But are they off in the right way?

SYLVI: They're off in the *best* way, Austin. Come on.

[DRE snickers]

AUSTIN: Yeah I already know what the fuck it is. I already know what the fuck it is! Alright. Back over then to Cor'rine.

DRE: Hmm... So is there a point in which we have to stop or...

AUSTIN: Yes.

DRE: ...we just keep goin...?

AUSTIN: You've two bids—

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: For this first scene everyone gets two bids and you're not allowed to destroy anything — unless it's the tiebreaker.

DRE: Okay. Okay.

AUSTIN: Which I'll explain momentarily.

DRE: Gotcha. Um... so since I've Defined two of mine, does that mean those are my two bids, or...?

AUSTIN: No, there's a— everyone gets the intro and then you get two Raises after that.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So you have one more Raise, basically.

DRE: Okay. Gotcha, gotcha, gotcha. Um... [pause] Okay. I'm gonna go with my Catchphrase.

AUSTIN: Aha! [chuckles]

DRE: And... their Catchphrase is "For our home and the homes of all!"

AUSTIN: [chortles] Great. Fantastic. I can imagine this so *well* in my brain. Fantastic sequence here. Alright, so everyone's Bought In, everyone's Anted up. [reads from rulebook] "If betting comes to a standstill, or both players have made their maximum number of Raises for the scene, it's time to Call It. Move on to the next phase. Call It: When all bids are final, it is time to Call It and see who wins. First, both players announce their Final Bid. That means saying out loud everything they bet in total, and what it Defines and/or Destroys." So let's start there: what has everybody bid in total? It's not a lot to think of here but it's worth... going through it.

SYLVI: So...

DRE: Right.

SYLVI: I have bid the Appearance of my mech... Should I read through this...?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Go ahead and read through them.

SYLVI: "A knight whose human-like features have been corrupted into a visage of death."

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: My Reputation: "Feared. Known for his ferocity beyond that of his peers." And then Distinct Look: "Long hair which falls in his face covered in scars and intense gaze."

AUSTIN: Hm! Great. Cor'rine?

DRE: Yeah... I've bid my Rank, which is "Petty officer first class." My Squadmates in "Onyx Squadron" and my Catchphrase: "For our home and the homes of all!"

AUSTIN: Fantastic. Alright. So! Uh... Sorry I was trying to make this fit on this thing and that was a mistake, obviously. [disappointed] Roll 20. I love you but also... There we go. [reads from rulebook] "Then, both players decide which bid is the most meaningful. What makes a bid meaningful is highly subjective based on the scene, who is involved, and what is at stake. Generally, a bid is more meaningful the more it relates to the current conflict, to each player's stakes in the scene, and to what sets your Pilots apart, both from each other and their peers. If there is a tie, take a moment's pause to think. If you still believe, in good faith, that the Final Bids are equal, you can make a tiebreaker. The first player to cross off something on their Datafile that they Defined during this Auction and Destroy it is the winner. Coming out on top when it's that close requires sacrifice, and you can never use that resource again." So, which of these two bids do you think is more meaningful?

[pause]

SYLVI: I am like, trying to think of in both the framing of like, a show that we're making...

[AUSTIN & DRE "hmm" in agreement]

SYLVI: ...as well as just like, mechanics of the game.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally.

SYLVI: And I kind of... am like picturing... following Dre's group a bit more...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...and then like glimpses of my character, as like, an oncoming force thing...?

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVI: But I don't know if that necessarily plays into who wins this... but...

AUSTIN: That's a good thing. That's a good way to think about it, though. Right? Because I think that speaks to...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...the bit here of... you know, who isn't— Let me read the things again. [cites rules] “more meaningful the more it *relates* to the current conflict, to each player's *stakes* in the scene, what sets your Pilots *apart*” right? And it's like... The idea of what would the camera focus on more here, I think, is a good metric — in terms of... thinking about this. Dre, what were you going to say?

DRE: Do we know...? I don't remember if... Alise is like, aligned with any particular faction?

AUSTIN: Alise is aligned— Currently Alise is aligned with Millennium Break, right?

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which makes this whole thing a very interesting exercise.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: Right?

DRE: Yea-yea-yeah. Okay.

AUSTIN: That... she is writing a story about... The two, you know, opposing forces means to me like, there's a lot of space to play with. There.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: Maybe she leans one way or the other, but really, I suspect that there is a degree of like, undercutting both in a certain way? You know?

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: But also we know she's a trashy romance writer in the best possible way. And a trashy—

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: ...and I kind of like pictured her writing pirate books and just *genre work* in general.

SYLVI: Yeah

DRE: Sure. Yea-yea-yeah

AUSTIN: Yeah. Again: people falling in love in the trenches; people falling in love while raiding tombs; people— you know? People killing each other and then whispering that they love each other as the other dies. You know? Classic stuff.

SYLVI: I mean... She was writing about Exeter Leap, we know...

AUSTIN: Right. Yes.

SYLVI: ...she's up to whatever.

AUSTIN: Exactly! So Dre, how do you feel about these two bids?

DRE: [sighs] I really do— I think it comes down to tone. Because I think like... if Cor'rina wins it's very much at like, you know "I'm not the... insecure like, untrained soldier that you once knew!" And I think if Miseri wins, it comes to— it's more of the like... "yeah you thought, but like, you've never fought."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: "You've never actually been out here before."

AUSTIN: Yeah I mean I think it's really interesting to me that Cor'rina, all your stuff is about other people, and your relation to other people.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: It's your Rank; it's your relation to your squadron; and it's this idealism summed up in your Catchphrase. Whereas... for Miseri, it is: how hot you are; it is the fact that people are afraid of you...

[DRE & SYLVI laugh]

SYLVI: Yep!

AUSTIN: ...and it is your weapon; it is your— it is your mech...

SYLVI: Yep.

AUSTIN: ...your Hollow— your Hallow. Which we don't have a picture of that at all for Cor'rina.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: And so there's a degree that's like: is this the show— or is this a story in which the "teamwork makes the dream work" or is it one where it's like "no the person who has the gun

wins the fight. Like. Duh! It's the person who brings the gun to the fight — they're gonna win."

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so the camera is focusing on that stuff— [hurries in excitement] I recently, in A More Civilized Age episode talked about how one of the truths of Star Wars is that villains have big, powerful technology and heroes have like guts, friendship, and the Force and the connection to all living things — and that the latter will always beat out the new technological device. Like that is the most important true thing about Star Wars as a... That's gravity in Star Wars, right? That is just a true... like, force of the universe? You know? Natural law of the universe? And in a sense we're setting that here — which is like what wins the first fight in a conflict?

DRE: [quietly] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Is it the person who brings the gun or the person who brings their friends?

DRE: I think it's the person that brings the gun.

AUSTIN: You do.

DRE: Yea.

AUSTIN: And Sylvi, you feel like it's the person who...?

SYLVI: [excited] I was going to say the other way around!

AUSTIN: Aha.

DRE: Really?

SYLVI: Yeah, well like... [pauses, considers] I think we can get to the pla— like we can... Yeah I don't know. My gut instinct was to go with the... scrappy underdogs who are going to be...

AUSTIN: Hm.

SYLVI: ...going into this. But now I'm like...

AUSTIN: Do they win first—

SYLVI: ...well yeah but do we want to fuck with that tone?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

SYLVI: Maybe that would be fun.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

[pause]

SYLVI: Okay.

DER: Yeah, I mean if the scrappy underdog loses first, they just become more scrappier.

AUSTIN: Right!

SYLVI: That's fair. That's true.

AUSTIN: I— Yeah. And neither of you wants to break a tie here by crossing something off and Destroying it, right? We're still— you don't feel like that's...

SYLVI: I thought it said we can't destroy it.

AUSTIN: You can't— You can't choose to *bid* to destroy something, but in a tiebreaker you could.

DRE: Ooooh...

AUSTIN: But it actually doesn't even sound like we're in a tie it sounds like, we're... if we're in a tie we're in a reverse tie! [laughs]

DRE & SYLVI [overlapping]: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...which is very funny.

DRE: We're passing each other in the hallway and we keep walking in front of the other—

AUSTIN: Aha.

DRE: ...and saying “excuse me” over and over.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yes!

SYLVI: In the... in the rough streets of Bluff City. When Jack and Janine both thought they were the supporting sister.

AUSTIN: Yes 100%

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: God!

SYLVI: Okay, let's go with— [half-chuckling] I'll fucking win that. Fuck it.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay

DRE: Listen. You're here to play to win, I'm...

AUSTIN: [giddily] Play to win! That's right! That's what you said!

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright.

SYLVI: I did say this.

AUSTIN: [reads from rulebook] “Play The Scene: The player who placed the Winning Bid gets to decide how the scene plays out, how it ends, and who walks away with the prize. You get to decide what happened to who, including where and why and how they did it. You have near-total power over the course of this scene. This is a big responsibility, but you are not all-powerful either. You have some limitations on what goes down, and those limitations are the *bids*. When you win the Auction, it's your job to work each of those bids into the scene. Each bid — from both players — must be used. Each bid must be present. And it must be present *exactly* as it was Defined. Destroyed bids must be *irrevocably* Destroyed. No take-backs. If a player bids their Unique Customization and Defines it as “unmatched speed,” the scene should show them outrunning everyone on either side. If a player bids their Signature Maneuver, the pilot performs it in the scene, whether it's the character's first or 50th time. If the other player disagrees with your decision, they can talk it out with you, and you should listen to them seriously. It's important to respect the fiction as previously established, and the other player. Respecting the bids is a great way to do that. But at the end— or the end of the scene, you decide exactly how it all plays out.” So Sylvi, how's this work? How do you— Paint me the picture of the sequence!

SYLVI: I think that— So I think the first thing is that... Miseri is like the first Nidean ship or... pilot to...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...like, disembark the ship. Um. I think like the order hasn't necessarily even been issued yet.

AUSTIN: Right!

SYLVI: They're just like “I'll go deal with this”

AUSTIN: Uuh.

SYLVI: Uhm... And... I'm wondering— I'm looking at the “Cause Harm” and “Seize Resources” thing right now...

AUSTIN: Yeah, that comes next. That—

SYLVI: Are they next?

AUSTIN: Let's talk about how the scene goes. Yea-yea-yeah.

SYLVI: Okay, cool.

AUSTIN: Once we're done the scene... I mean... Do you want to incorporate some of that into what you're describing?

SYLVI: I'm just kinda going to.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVI: I was like, looking at like, what we had bid and stuff. And I was just wondering if like, that would be the time to take out a member of the other squad?

AUSTIN: Sure. So let me read Claim Your Rewards then.

SYLVI: Ya.

AUSTIN: [reads from rulebook] "Once every bid is accounted for" Which is to say: we should see these things in the scene what you're talking about before you Claim Your Reward.

SYLVI: Okay, cool.

AUSTIN: [continues reading] "...the winner gets one last bonus before ending the scene: They get to Cause Harm or Seize Resources, depending on what they want most, right here, right now. These are the only way to enter something onto a Datafile of your own creation, not already printed there for you. Causing Harm lets you place a Destroyed Bid onto your opponent's Datafile, and Seizing Resources lets you place a Defined Bid onto either player's Datafile."

SYLVI: Okay!

AUSTIN: [continues reading] "Seize Resources: You gain something useful from this scene, which you can bid later. Write whatever it is on your Datafile, and it counts as a Defined Bid. This is your only chance to go 'off-menu' and customize your story beyond the blanks and open-ended prompts that normally limit you."

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: I'm just gonna keep reading all this right now.

SYLVI: Ye-ye-ye-yeah! No, for sure! I'm just thinking, sorry.

AUSTIN: No worries, no worries. [continues reading] "You can always seize something material, like a base or your own squadron, but you can also seize more ephemeral things, like ' _____ owes me a favor,' or heroic gumption, or a sense of purpose. You may choose to

Seize Resources on behalf of the *other* player. Instead of taking a resource for yourself, write it on their Datafile. Whatever it is, remember to write it down! There's no point in claiming a resource for later if you forget to use it. Cause Harm: When you harm someone, they must immediately place a Destroyed Bid that matches what you are doing to them. You tell us what you want to do to them, but they decide what to bid to meet your demand. For example, if you ruin the other Pilot's reputation, then they need to place a bid that matches that. They can bid a demotion and spend the rest of the game with the brass yanking them around. They can bid their unique machine and finish the war in a mass-produced grunt suit. Or they can bid a nasty rumor that spreads through the fleet. But they get to place that bid, not you. Like all bids, it must be recorded. And since it goes onto the Datafile already "Destroyed," it cannot be used in future Auctions. The player receiving Harm may destroy something they've already Defined, or Define something new to Destroy as part of taking harm. Just like Seizing Resources, this bid can be made freely, and is not locked into the Datafile's blank spaces. So. That—

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: ...those are your big options there.

SYLVI: That does clarify things a little bit more.

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVI: I wasn't sure what the...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...the Resources thing was kind of... tripping me up a bit.

AUSTIN: No worries.

SYLVI: Okay so I think I'll just go with how this is playing out, then. I think that like... we don't see any like, visible weaponry on the mech quite yet—

AUSTIN: Hm! Uhum!

SYLVI: ...when it's like... it's sort of disembarked from the ship, and sort of like, quietly moving through this... to this asteroid belt, or this debris field. I think it's got like, the typical like... it's got some boosters on its back...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: And then like on the feet, I think, as well. And... Dre what's like... Do you guys have have a type of formation you move in? Do you guys like...? Is there anything going on or are you guys just sort of doing recon? Right now?

DRE: I think initial recon. So I think it is like. You know, there's groups of three that are that are spread out throughout the field — like, all kind of poking around and... covering their own like, sectors and stuff.

SYLVI: Okay.

DRE: Especially if we're going with the idea that like they— they think that by coming in here that we're getting the initiative.

SYLVI: And there's three of you, total? Or more than that? I'm just—

DRE: There's three in my squad. Yeah.

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: It sounded like there was like a bigger squad of like 21 that was broken into seven squads of three or something like that, right?

DRE: Yeah, yeah.

SYLVI: Okay. Um... I'm wondering if I should come across your squad first or... Actually this kind of works into the Reputation thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

SYLVI: I think what happens is that... Do you guys have like a radar or like something that keeps you in like, aware of where other squadrons are located?

DRE: Yeah. Sure.

SYLVI: I think some lights blink out on that. Like... a squad just goes completely silent. Um... And I think... it's like not too far from where your crew is. And then when... [searches for words] Have we gotten everything? Can I go into Seize Resources phase?

AUSTIN: No. We don't have... we don't have Cor'rina's Catchphrase...

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: We don't have your long hair which falls in your face — covered in scars and intense gaze —

SYLVI: That's true! That's true!

DRE: Uhum. Uhum.

AUSTIN: So we need both of those, and we don't technically have “petty officer first class” for Cor'rina, but I think that kind of rolls in with some of the squadron stuff. Right?

SYLVI: Okay. Um...

AUSTIN: I think an interesting thing here is... I think that Grant's in the chat, so correct me if I'm wrong! But like, you're within your right to suggest that Cor'rina do things or say things.

SYLVI: Oh! Okay! Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right? Like this is not— I believe that that's true... and obviously Dre, you should feel comfortable pushing back, if something feels wrong...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...or suggesting your own, you know, variations. And we play it they way we normally play scenes—

DRE: Yeah. But that was my reading of the rules as well.

AUSTIN: Yes, same. Yeah. But like it's almost like you're stepping into the director's chair when you win a bid. You know?

[a brief pause]

SYLVI: Okay. Well, damn.

[AUSTIN giggles]

SYLVI: [tentatively] I think that you guys probably have to go check it out then! Maybe it's not quite as close. Maybe I'm not like, immediately there. Um... I don't know if this would call... if opening a line of communication would lead to the Distinct Look being used here...? Um...

AUSTIN: The Distinct Look can just be something we see, right?

SYLVI: Yeah. Probably just like...

AUSTIN: But... if you want to open up some sort of... I don't know that we've had camera stuff yet, but it's a new world with the Kalmeria Particle! Maybe there's like a sick...

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: Visual... almost like floating dot matrix — you know — style readout of your face?

SYLVI: [surprised] Ooh!

AUSTIN: You know what I mean? Like it's your face in ASCII art... [chuckles] but like: floating and glowing color inside of the cockpit. You know?

SYLVI: I think it's a one-way thing, probably, too.

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVI: And I think it's just a single— It's:

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): (coldly) This is your one warning to leave this... area of space.

AUSTIN: What— Yeah. What is—

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): If you don't comply... your death will find you.

AUSTIN: And is that when we get Cor'rina saying the Catchphrase?

SYLVI: Dre?

DRE: Yeah, I think so. It's very much like:

DRE (as COR'RINA): We're not just here for ourselves.

[AUSTIN laughs]

SYLVI: Wonderful.

AUSTIN: Uhum!

SYLVI: Wonderful. Um... Yeah. I guess then I'm gonna make my presence known.

AUSTIN: [excited] Uh-huh!

SYLVI: If they seem to just be staying in this space...

AUSTIN: What is your—

SYLVI: Do you recognize me, Cor'rina, at all? Or is the fidelity too low?

AUSTIN: That's a good question.

DRE: Hmmm...

AUSTIN: I think you have to recognize each other. I think that's part of the ...

DRE: Yea-yea-yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...the scene is that it's the two of you meeting again... you know, for us, right?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So I would say we have to be— It has to be clear who is here. And if you want to just do some open rp like... I think that that's well within our... [voice squeezing with a chuckle] our rights. As people.

SYLVI: Yeah, for sure.

DRE: [chortling] Our rights as people?!? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, aha!

SYLVI: [unfazed] It is...

AUSTIN: On this Earth!

SYLVI: RP as a human right.

AUSTIN: That's right!

[a brief pause, then SYLVI laughs]

SYLVI: If it helps, I can get into the thing that I was gonna Define on my sheet as a reward, to add a little more flavor to the scene. Um, if we...

AUSTIN: I think so, sure.

DRE: Yeah. Sure.

SYLVI: Before we get into things. I'm trying to decide whether this would fit under a Signature Weapon or Unique Customization...?

AUSTIN: Again, it doesn't need to be either. It can be...

SYLVI: It doesn't need to be either? Okay.

AUSTIN: The thing about Seizing a thing is it can be its whole own new category.

SYLVI: So this mech has wings made of swords is what I decided.

AUSTIN: Aaah! I see.

DRE: Uhum. Sure.

SYLVI: And that's what it uses to fight. And it's like... it has one hand, I decided. The other hand's like — we can get to what that is later.

AUSTIN: Uhum!

SYLVI And it just will like, reach back and like, use them however it sees fit: it throws them at people...

AUSTIN: So the thing is, I actually don't think you could do this.

SYLVI: No? Okay.

AUSTIN: I think that has to be bid in its own scene.

SYLVI: It has to be bid? Okay.

AUSTIN: What you're doing here is taking something from the world.

SYLVI: Okay!

AUSTIN: You are seizing something from the scene...

SYLVI: I thought it was just...

AUSTIN: ...which you can...

SYLVI: ...that you can define something.

AUSTIN: [not convinced] Uhm. [cites rules] "Whatever you" it says— okay— "you gain something useful from this scene—"

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: "which you can bid later. Write whatever it is on your Datafile, and it counts as a Defined Bid. This is your only chance to go 'off-menu'" [bewildered] I guess it doesn't *explicitly* say you can't.

SYLVI: I could do something else, then, here.

AUSTIN: Let me...

SYLVI: Everyone forget I said that and pretend it's really cool when it comes up later.

DRE: Sure, yea-yea-yeah.

AUSTIN: Uhum [chuckles] Only because — I really want to emphasize — you're Seizing Resources. Right? You're taking something from this space — *or* you're Causing Harm.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so I want it to be not...

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Does that make sense? Okay.

SYLVI: If you're gonna charge in I might just kill your unit. [chuckles]

[DRE & AUSTIN laugh]

SYLVI: Like... sorry. But...

DRE: No, it's fine. Listen.

SYLVI: This is what happens.

DRE: Yeah, no.

SYLVI: I did warn them.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: Um... yeah.

AUSTIN: That is— So again: the way that that works is: you would say “I’m going to you—” You say what you want to do to them — they decide what bid is. What bid meets that demand.

SYLVI: Oh! Okay, cool! So I think what's gonna happen is like: while I’m going to try and use the debris field to sort of separate the three of you—

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...as best as I can. Um... Like, try and use maneuverability to get you to look elsewhere, or split up just enough that there's... an asteroid in between the two of you, so you can't like, help um each other.

DRE: Uhum.

SYLVI: Basically just trying to separate one... from the pack each time.

AUSTIN: [encouraging] Yeah?

SYLVI: Which I think— Yeah. You can make that work for all three, I think, in a different way.

AUSTIN: Totally. Or a new one. Again, this is an opportunity to add a new effect.

SYLVI: Yeah, true.

AUSTIN: Let me add more space underneath. Here! So we have more lines to add... if we want different additional things. [pause] So Dre, how do you interpret that outcome as a new Destroyed Bid on your sheet? Or entry?

DRE: Ye-ye-yeah... I wonder if the whole Squadron is destroyed? Or just one person of it?

AUSTIN: Yeah, do you add a new like, Destroyed for just like... you're one dead friend?

DRE: Sylvi, do you have feelings either way? Would you prefer...

SYLVI: No, I'm— I'm down to just—

DRE: Okay.

SYLVI: I just wanna— cause some sort of damage to the unit. As a whole here. Doesn't have to be everybody.

DRE: Um...

[pause]

DRE: [reads from rulebook] "Or Define something new to destroy as part of taking harm"

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Okay. Um... [tentatively] I think this would Destroy my Reputation...?

AUSTIN: Interesting!

DRE: Um... To the extent that like— Cor'rina is seen as like a liability.

AUSTIN: [intrigued] Oooh! So, Onyx...

DRE: You know, they didn't...

AUSTIN: Go ahead—

DRE: ...they didn't survive because they were the best in their Squad. They survived, because they got lucky. And other people had to, like give themselves up because they weren't good enough.

AUSTIN: Right... [pause] So does Onyx Squad as a squadron survive, but the people in it were... hurt real bad, or even killed? Or— But like you're the only one left in Onyx Squadron until you get new people assigned?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, you don't lose it as a resource but whoever comes on it next is not this fellow young soldier and caring older mentor, it's other people.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Love it.

DRE: Yeah.

[pause]

SYLVI: Oh yeah.

[pause]

AUSTIN: Amazing.

SYLVI: And I think like— is that going to be the end of the scene then...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...where we end up face-to-face?

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVI: Or mech-to-mech?

AUSTIN: Mech-to-mech. Recognizing... You definitely recognize, Cor'rina: that is Miseri's face on your... dot matrix, you know, hologram display. [chuckles]

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: Maybe your mech is also, you know... either hiding...? Or, you know, out of action but not vulnerable for some reason? You know what I mean?

SYLVI: Yeah.

DRE: [affirming] Uhum!

SYLVI: Oh! I like the idea of— I think the Firmament right now is just like *completely* still in the middle...

AUSTIN: Love it.

SYLVI: ... of this asteroid field and... I'm kind of thinking of the way that the... in *Gundam Thunderbolt*—

AUSTIN: Uhum!

SYLVI: I've only seen the first season. The way that the Gundam is presented. As this like, very... terrifying thing.

AUSTIN: Imposing. Yea-yea-yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah

AUSTIN: Absolutely.

SYLVI: And this sort of has that going on as well.

AUSTIN: I really love— The thing I love about this sequence is that we've not seen *how* Miseri is killing people, [chuckles] and destroying mechs. It's just this like... knife in the dark. You know what I mean?

SYLVI: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Which, again, appropriate for the name. For Misericorde.

SYLVI: Yeaah!

AUSTIN: It's just like: "Yeah. This one's dead. That one's dead." It's just the movement...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...and then another mech floats by. You know?

DRE: Uhum... Almost like... that maybe the skirmish opens with you like... disabling my mech?

AUSTIN: [intrigued] Hmm!

DRE: And like... Again, maybe because you recognize me it's like "well I guess I owe you one so I'll just disable you instead of killing you"

[AUSTIN snickers]

DRE: And then I'm like floating in space...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: ...and I'm just hearing like...

SYLVI: I love that.

DRE: ...my Squadmates die over comms.

AUSTIN: Fantastic!

SYLVI: Yeah, you let me escape! I'm trying— I might as well let you live.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Do you exchange words at this point? Or is this the only... little bit of communication?

DRE: Um. I kind of like if... I mean, I don't— You know. We don't have to figure out how to justify this, like, mechanically, in terms of like how robots work;

AUSTIN: Uhum!

DRE: But I kind of like it, again, if like: Cor'rina can't say anything...

AUSTIN: Ummm!

DRE: But somehow they are able to receive comms still.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: Um... I think it's just...

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): Consider us even.

[AUSTIN snickers]

DRE: Yeah.

[01:57:25] Scene Two

AUSTIN: Alright. [reads from rulebook] "Scene Two: Some time has passed, but for some reason that one battle sticks out in your mind above all others. Maybe you'll meet again. Answer the background questions for your pilot, then set the scene together, then follow the special instructions for the Scene Two Auction. Background Questions: How would life be worse if your faction won the war?" Who has an answer?

SYLVI: I— There wouldn't be... god. If my faction won the war...? If it won the war today...?

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: I would be stuck in the same situation I am now...

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVI: ...and there wouldn't be any way for me to change that.

AUSTIN: The war is, in a sense, an opportunity for you to recover this—

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...your family honor and name. And so you *need* it to continue.

SYLVI: Yeah. This is the only way that I specifically am able to...

[AUSTIN snickers]

SYLVI: ...like advance myself.

AUSTIN: Right. And it's also the only way you're able to consider what an outcome to a war would be.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You're not thinking about the people of the Twilight Mirage being...

SYLVI: No!

AUSTIN: No? Okay. Yeah. Good.

SYLVI: This is a question for me!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Yeah.

SYLVI: Not for them!

AUSTIN: You're right. [chuckles] Cor'rina?

SYLVI: Come on!

DRE: Um... "How would life be worse if—" So it's not how it would be worse *for* my faction? It's just how life would be worse...

AUSTIN: "life would be worse if your faction won the war." Yeah.

DRE: Yeah. Um... god! I mean! Pft! I'm very much thinking like, you know, the United States invading Afghanistan and Iraq.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: Right? It just becomes like... We have an idea of like, you know, how to make sure that Palisade is maintained and maintains its... you know, its own democracy. And its own identity.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: And we become very involved in making sure that all of its elections and things go...

[AUSTIN snickers/sighs with distrust]

DRE: ...go freely!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: Quotation marks.

AUSTIN: Quotation marks. Is this something that Cor'rina can even conceive of? Or is this just you as the...

DRE: No. This is me. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yea-yea-yeah. Your character has no feeling about this at all, at this point.

DRE: No.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you feel, in fact that, that you were — after this initial conflict — losing to the Nidean, um... folks here... Is this a situation where it's like... You even feel *more*... certain about...?

DRE: Oh, yeah. They're monsters.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. Totally. Um...

DRE: They save my life just to torture me.

AUSTIN: Uhum! Alright, question two: What has life in the war shown you that you would never have seen without it?

[long silence]

SYLVI: Ooh... This is kind of a roundabout answer to it, but I think the answer is mercy.

AUSTIN: Umm!

SYLVI: Like, the fact that... Miseri got freed at all is... stunning.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: And very much like... He always expected if he got captured he would be dead, no matter what.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: He like... regardless of if he got freed by... Nideans at some point, he was as good as dead. And the fact that he was able to escape and like... *not* come back a hero but—

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...at least come back intact, and like, try and still push for that.

AUSTIN: This is of course appropriate—

SYLVI: Something he never expected.

AUSTIN: Because misericorde of course means “mercy.”

SYLVI: Yeah [snickers]

AUSTIN: So... Cor’rina?

SYLVI: [giggling] Good word!

DRE: Um...

AUSTIN: It's a great word.

DRE: Um... The cost of doing right.

AUSTIN: [snickers] You just thought it was so easy before a war, huh?

DRE: Sure. You know. Freedom isn't free!

SYLVI: [laughing with revulsion] God!

AUSTIN: [half-chuckling] Fuckin’ hate everyone! Alright.

[DRE laugh]

SYLVI: [laughing] Whoa?!?

AUSTIN: “Does your pilot respect the other players pirate— uh, pilot?”

SYLVI: [quietly] They're both such likable characters...

DRE: [loudly] Hell no!

AUSTIN: [half-chuckling] Yeah... Uhuh!

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: I... I don't know if respect is the right word.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: I am intrigued by the other pilot.

AUSTIN: Interesting. Alright. [reads from rulebook] "Set The Scene: Scene Two is a reunion, your first encounter with the other pilot since that fateful first encounter." I guess in our case that fateful *second* encounter. "Feel free to use one of these suggestions to set the scene for this second encounter, or come up with your own" The suggestions from Grant are: Assault on a significant base. The first firing of a new super weapon. Or a meeting between fleets that have prepared for the day."

SYLVI: Would this be like, a battle that comes as a result of this encounter?

AUSTIN: I can imagine. I think there should be some amount of time. You know?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because we need... Quorian— uh, Cor'rina to sulk for a little while after losing...

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVI: And get a new squad...

AUSTIN: And get a new squad and all that, right? So, I imagine we get the sort of like... you know this is— this is a three-episode OVA. Obviously!

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: And so that means that there's like, a lot of just some time jumps happening, because of it needing to be that... compressed, right? So it's like...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I mean, I guess the thing that happened there, right, is Apostolos doesn't get that easy... they get pushed out of the Scarnok Debris Fields. Right? Because Cor'ri... I keep saying Cor'ri instead of Cor'rina! It's because your last name is Corrine and my brain is getting...

DRE: So it's Cory & Topanga...

AUSTIN: [half-chuckling] Right, because cor... Yeah. Aha. Uh... But because Apostolos doesn't then get to remain in the Scarnok Debris Fields. I have to imagine: is it like you got

pushed back out to empty space and you're just kind of floating outside of the galactic arm? And trying to rearm...

DRE: Yes.

AUSTIN: ...and wait for another set of supplies to come in? And... being mopey?

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: And then probably other little fights, here and there, right? But you've not come across Miseri again? And then, Miseri what's it been like... without the fight in the time between the last scene and this scene? You've just been getting up to your same shit?

SYLVI: Yeah, I think just like... I think misery finds, like everyday military life very boring. [snickers]

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: So I think it's just a lot of like... shots of them reading, or like...

AUSTIN: Yeah

SYLVI: Try... or just like... clearly not socializing with any other like soldiers. Even though I think they — again we can get to it — I think they do have a squad themselves.

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVI: Um... Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know, maybe... things have advanced at this point a little bit. And the Nideans have begun to poke in, towards Palisade? You know. And like, have started to zero in on its final location for where it'll be on this next kind of like... low tide for The Twilight Mirage? I know we already have tides in use for Perennial in this setting, but also because we're at the edge of the Twilight Mirage — this is double tide. Right? So maybe they specifically need it to be a low tide for both the Mirage, where Palisade is as — you know — reachable as it possibly can be; *and* a low tide for the Perennial so that there won't be any fucking with the... mechanics or whatever... whatever the mechanisms are that let you find it, and you know, get there safely? So maybe this is like... let me pitch that this is something around... Misery, you may be escorting a group? Some sort of like science vessel to kind of lock down a... some sort of... Oh, here's a pitch! Could it be that you are defending the construction of one of the space... the... What do we call them? Not gates. We had a really good name I used in the last episode. I've already forgotten what we were calling them! The kind of gates between...

SYLVI: Portcullis?

AUSTIN: The Portcullis System! Yes! One of the Portcullis Systems. You're building one so that you can get a massive amount of forces in. You know?

SYLVI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: That seems like a fun stake. Does that work for you, Dre?

DRE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah. That's— Nideo then is building a Portcullis in the Palisade system that will be, you know, locked to them for their personal use. The same way that The Pact did, that went into the uncolonized arm that The Principality hadn't hadn't reached yet. In last season. Um... So that's I guess what our Sequence is. [reads from rulebook] "Auction: The player who won the Scene One Auction may Raise a maximum of two times. The player who lost may Raise a maximum of three times."

SYLVI: Ooooh!

AUSTIN: Aha.

SYLVI: Okay!

AUSTIN: So I guess let's... Again, I think both of you still bid... Your opening bid is still— Both of you get an opening bid and...

SYLVI: Uhum.

AUSTIN: ...and *then* you can... continue to Raise after that. So what are you bidding... first? [pause, to Sylvi] Is this where you want to bid your Signature Weapon?

SYLVI: No. I want to...

AUSTIN: You want to save that.

SYLVI: Maybe. Maybe I should put that— I'm thinking. I don't know. I was going to start by trying to bid a more, like, personality-based thing...

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVI: ...than a mechanical-based thing. Or maybe just like something that at least adds like more personal flavor, as opposed to like... here's the specs that their mech has.

[AUSTIN chuckles]

SYLVI: I... Part of me really wants to make their— doing my Catchphrase which is: "An ellipses" But I'm not gonna do that.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Ooh! That's very funny, though!

SYLVI: [giddily] I mean like, right! I got two— I can Raise twice! I'll think about it.

AUSTIN: Uhum!

SYLVI: I think like... Part of me wants to like, put the Support Crew for this down...

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVI: Because like, it makes... sense with this mission. And also lets me define some more like, personal relationships that Miseri has with like, people they work with.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So what's that look like? Who are your Support Crew?

SYLVI: I think it's specifically like... this is a sort of like... Research & Development unit that they're in charge of develop— making the Portcullis System, and...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...I think also developed the mech that I use. Or like, part of it?

AUSTIN: Interesting! Sure.

SYLVI: Or like, helped upgrade it. I think that it's like... there is a tie that— part of the reason why I'm defending this crew is because... we have worked together in the past.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: When they built this for me. So they know what it's capable of and are like: "Yeah, no, please bring the murder machine!"

AUSTIN: Uhum!

SYLVI: So yeah. I'm trying to land on a name for them, but they're— I'm just gonna write down like, "Nidean R&D specialists"

AUSTIN: Sounds good!

SYLVI: I think like, one of them's like— I think one of the the people in it is someone that I've known since I was like a kid. As like a family friend.

AUSTIN: Ooh! Okay.

SYLVI: Was the lead designer— ended up being the lead designer on the Mk.III.

AUSTIN: So they're here working on this Portcullis System?

SYLVI: Yeah. They're here because they want to like work on the Portcullis System and research Palisade itself.

AUSTIN: Okay. I think there's some— a little bit of extra color there, too.

SYLVI: Sure.

AUSTIN: Oh, what were you going to say?

SYLVI: I was gonna say: would that be Support Crew or Squadmates?

AUSTIN: I think that's Support Crew. That's Support Crew.

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yea-yea-yeah. They're not in their own, you know, Hallows fighting side by side with you, right? Um the thing I was going to say is... The thing I like about that too is there's a real— Nidean and and Kesh R&D is... they are the young scrappy folks here because Columnar and Apostolos are such giants of technology in comparison. And so it's like, you know, there's a real “we gotta play catch-up here. We are not the tech people.” And so there's like a real chip on their shoulder about a lot of this stuff. Which is fun.

SYLVI: Sure.

AUSTIN: Dre, what is your opening bid?

DRE: It's my mech's Unique Appearance.

AUSTIN: Uuh!

DRE: My mech is a— has a lily white paint job with two huge blood red gashes across its chest.

AUSTIN: [sympathetically] Oooh... for the losses you felt.

SYLVI: [enthusiastically] Fuck yes!

AUSTIN: Love it. Incredible. Incredible. Um... Cool! Incredible! Time to— time to Ante up! As a reminder... Cor'rina can do it three times, Miseri can do it twice. And you can ante up by either adding new stuff or Destroying stuff you've already Defined. [brief pause] With the note that, you know, part of that is... destruction might mean more in the accounting. At the end. You know?

SYLVI: Yeah

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: Also, can we take five? So I can run to the restroom?

DRE: Yeah that sounds good.

SYLVI: I'm gonna do the same thing. Be right back.

AUSTIN: Alright. Brb.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Alright, we are back. Actually, can we do a three-two-one-clap? I'll just do a clap, so Ali can see it. It's no big deal. Alright. So... Those are our opening bids. Who is ready to Raise?

[pause]

SYLVI: I mean...! I can— I talked about my cool sword wings.

AUSTIN: You did.

SYLVI: I can just make that a thing now...

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: It's time.

SYLVI: I figure I'm gonna put this under... Signature Weapon, actually?

AUSTIN: Yeah. That makes sense. Yeah.

SYLVI. And yeah. they're just a bunch of, like... They're beam sabers... So, like, I think that... there is an actual like, propulsion being caused by the energy, there.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: Like there is some sort of like...

AUSTIN: That's fun.

SYLVI: ...reason why the guy who made it was like: "no like—"

AUSTIN: "Trust me"

SYLVI: "the swords do a thing. It's not just cool. Though it is really cool."

AUSTIN: [chuckles] How many of them are there?

SYLVI: Um... How many of them are there? That's a good question. I— At least eight.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVI: Was what I was thinking...

AUSTIN: So they're... Are you flapping them like wings?

SYLVI: Um...

AUSTIN: Or are they more like jets?

SYLVI: They're more like jets.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVI: They're more, more still. Like, the way that sort of... I don't think that... I don't think they're like, posable in real ways. Like, they're swords.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVI: They're straight sabers.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVI: I think it's more to evoke that sort of like, angelic thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Are you using them by like... striking with them? As if they are like, blades out to your sides? And doing kind of like sweeping runs... with them? Or do they come off for you?

SYLVI: They come off.

AUSTIN: Okay, okay.

SYLVI: No, they come off. Like... he reaches... like he will grab them...

AUSTIN: Gotcha!

SYLVI: ...or they'll come magnetized to the hand...

AUSTIN: Cool.

SYLVI: And like. Yeah. And so like, it's a thing where he becomes slower depending on if he uses more swords but...

AUSTIN: Fun! Okay. Love it.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. Over to you...

SYLVI: I'm just gonna put...

AUSTIN: ...Cor'rina?

SYLVI: ...beam saber wings down.

AUSTIN: Beam saber wings. Yeah. Signature Weapon 1.

DRE: Um... I'm gonna bid my mech's Mobility System.

AUSTIN: Hm!

DRE: Which is a... system of... Or I should say a series of... micro-propulsar... micro propulsions? Micropropulsers? [deadpan] Sure.

[SYLVI laughs, AUSTIN chuckles]

DRE: A series of micropropulsers on each limb. So, basically allowing it to like, make really quick, rapid... evasive maneuvers.

AUSTIN: Sounds good. Love it. And like those evasive maneuvers are happening at the limb level, not just the full body level, right?

DRE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's really fun. Yea-yea-yea. So you're literally able to like, quickly dodge, for instance, an incoming beam attack! Beam saber attack.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Just by moving that part of your body or your limb away. Love it.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Very twisty, turning, you know, acrobatic maneuvers. Alright. Miseri, you get one more here.

SYLVI [indecisive] I do! [clears throat] Um... [pause] I'm trying to think of like, a rank here, now.

AUSTIN: Umm...!

SYLVI: Like how...

AUSTIN: There's some suggestions in the bottom, here. But...

SYLVI: Oh...

AUSTIN: Yeah, what are you— Yea-yeah, at the very bottom. They are suggestions just like: ensign, captain, initiate, managing director.

SYLVI: Yeah. I'm trying to think of like one that denotes like... They have people who are like... They have subord— like they have...

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

SYLVI: They have people who... like work directly under them. And answer to them. Despite their, like... desire to go on their own—

AUSTIN: Aha.

SYLVI: ...when they do combat.

AUSTIN: Uhh...

SYLVI: Maybe captain is right... maybe...?

AUSTIN: I mean, that is what it's written. It's the story of a Nidean captain...

SYLVI: That's true!

AUSTIN: ...escaping from an Apostolos base. So...

SYLVI: Damn! I— You know what?

AUSTIN: You wrote it—

SYLVI: I wrote it

AUSTIN: Yeah

DRE: Uhum, uhum!

AUSTIN: Captain.

SYLVI: Captain! There we go!

AUSTIN: What type of captain are you?

SYLVI: I think like...

AUSTIN: Like, emotionally. And leadership-wise, you know?

SYLVI: Oh, I'm the type of captain who has a really good second-in-command.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Aha-ha!

SYLVI: I think that's sort of the thing. Maybe I'll add them later in Squadmates. But I think that there's like some— like a... And again: they have like family ties of some sort.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: But... someone who ends up doing a lot of the like, people interaction stuff. As opposed to what Miseri does, which is the “we're gonna go here and this is how we're going to win this fight” stuff.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Love it.

SYLVI: Because he never really learned how to talk with people. That's...

AUSTIN: Apparently. Yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Love it. Cor'rina? You got two more.

DRE: Yeah. What's the like, current level of technology where we're at right now?

AUSTIN: So. We are a little— we are beyond where we were in Partisan, but still fundamentally in that kind of broader modality. Which is to say...

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: ...the invention of the Kalmeria Particle, which came from the finale of PARTIZAN, which kind of combined... some of the research that... Kal'Mera Broun was doing with the Motion— Motion's control of the Perennial Wave *and* the True Divine energy that was being sapped through the Girandole Gate. Combining all of that into this new thing that has spread through the galaxy, has changed— has opened up a lot of new types of... very, almost arcane styles of technology. But we're still in a sort of... material world, right? It hasn't shifted things such that— You know, our one— “a screen can only be a touch screen if it does one thing” rule? Still in effect.

DRE: Uhum. Ok.

AUSTIN: That screen might be able to be more easily powered by this new Kalmeria Particle, or it might be able to be a 3d touch screen [chuckles] that only does one thing, but it's still fundamentally that. Or maybe if you happen to have a really good Kalmeria Particle — you know — generator, you can make it do *three* things! Um... We keep talking about *Escaflowne*, but the way that *Escaflowne* mechs are like, incredibly magical, but also they're seemingly piloted by like, levers and pulleys [chuckles] is a really good touchstone, right?

SYLVI: It rules.

AUSTIN: Everything here still clicks and clacks. Everything here is still— like I mentioned ASCII art earlier. Right? Like in dot matrix printers. We're still that world, it's just that world has been touched with a degree of magic. You know? So.

DRE: Yeah. Okay. Um... I'm going to Define my first Signature Weapon.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: And it is... [pause] The Shield that was carried by one of my former Squadmates, Iso'dora.

AUSTIN: Oouuh! Love it. Iso'dora, you said was their name?

DRE: Yeah

AUSTIN: Okay. Great. Probably—

DRE: The Shield has the Squadron's old emblem on it. I don't think it's the current emblem, but it was a sun in the background and a sword and a key crossed over.

AUSTIN: Love it. Do you have a meaning for that, or is there— is that just open to audience and interpretation?

DRE: I think it's, I think it's open.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Cool. Uh... Right now we're tied. Do you want to push it and do your last Raise here, Cor'rina?

DRE: Yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Um... Let's see... So I'm thinking that in the first... in the first fight I probably wasn't in the Panta Rhei at that point.

AUSTIN: Right!

DRE: I think like, afterwards it was like "okay well this is serious so let's bring out the prototype"

AUSTIN: That prototype. Yea-yea-yeah.

DRE: Aaand... So, part of that is going to be... and I'm not sure which— where this would fall under. Um... [pause] I'm not sure if this would be more of an Alternate Mode or like a Tactical Suite or Utility Equipment

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: Or maybe even a— maybe it'd fall under Special Ability. But this mech is equipped with the Animus Prognosis.

[AUSTIN giggles]

DRE: Which is a special weapons control system.

AUSTIN: [half-giggling] What's it— What's it do?

DRE: Um. It allows you to better control individual weapons. So... normally for a pilot of... Cor'rina's skill, it would be really difficult to like...

AUSTIN: Aah!

DRE: ...have a melee weapon and a ranged weapon in each hand.

AUSTIN: In each hand! Right, right.

DRE: But this makes it a lot easier.

AUSTIN: That's fun. That's fun. So it's almost like a... There's a lot that I like about this that ends up connecting upwards to like Dahlia having— being the pilot— being the Elect of...the Divine that requires two pilots, but for some reason Dahlia is able to pilot it — you know — themselves. I guess I think we've already talked about the reason why is... Have I...? I don't want to say that out loud in case I haven't said it out loud.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: I have to check the transcripts. One second. Shout outs as always to Search at the Table. Searchatthetable.com And shout outs to the transcript team. I must have— I must have said it, right?

DRE: Yeah, I'm gonna rename this.

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay.

DRE: Because anima is Greek for soul. I believe.

AUSTIN: It is. It's Commitment.

DRE: I'm just gonna call it— Yeah. I'm going to call it the Split-Soul Prognosis System.

AUSTIN: Aaah. I love it. Yes. Okay, good. People in chat confirming I've mentioned Integrity. That Dahlia has Integrity. Which is what allows them to pilot Commitment by themselves instead of having had a second pilot. A second Elect. [pause, then half-chuckling] Thomas says I hinted very strongly.

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: Alright. Split-Soul Prognosis System. Incredible. A thing I love here, Dre, is that you've now gone hard into Miseri mode...

DRE: Uhum!

AUSTIN: ...having listed just weapon stuff this time. All connected to personal memory stuff— personal relationship stuff— I mean that's a— you know. Sort of, at least, right? At least some of it is. Whereas Miseri, you know, you did your beam saber wings but the other two things are about your personal relationships. You know? Did you get two? You've got your wings and you got your— Oh! And your R&D crew. Is that right?

SYLVI: Yea-yeah, the crew. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Did you— are you missing one?

SYLVI: That... Wait.

AUSTIN: Is that right? I thought there was a third thing. Or a second.

SYLVI: Captain. My Rank.

AUSTIN: Your Rank: captain. Yes yes yes yes...

SYLVI: That was the other one.

AUSTIN: Captain. Yeah of course.

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: So... it's time to judge this. Who— I mean, actually it isn't time to judge this! Because you [Dre] just have more things, right?

SYLVI: Yeah, I— I—

AUSTIN: I guess it's possible that you could win it if you had bid...

SYLVI: If I had Destroyed something?

AUSTIN: Yeah I think if you would just— if you were like “well, I’m destroying my Reputation.” Or “I’m destroying my... whatever— my mech to win this.” Then maybe we— there's a chance.

SYLVI: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Are we all agreed though? On Cor'rina having won it?

SYLVI: Yeah I think Cor'rina won this one.

DRE: Hm.

SYLVI: Especially like, she's coming in a new mech.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: It is...

AUSTIN: I know how these stories go.

SYLVI: Yeah. Exactly!

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: Like. Come on.

AUSTIN: Alright then. Dre, you tell me what's it— what's it look like? Get all these...

DRE: What does it mean—

AUSTIN: ...all the bidden stuff. I guess, let's go over all the bids, so we're all on the same page.

SYLVI: Do you want me to go through mine first?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Your new ones. Yeah.

SYLVI: Okay. I started with my Rank being "captain"; I've got my Signature Weapon 1, which is my "beam saber wings"; and my Support Crew, which is my "Nidean R&D crew, which includes the designer of the upgraded version of the Firmament."

AUSTIN: Do you have a name for that person?

SYLVI: I don't, right now.

AUSTIN: Okay. No worries.

SYLVI: I'll try to come up with one while we're going through stuff.

DRE: Yep. And then Cor'rina. What did you bid?

DRE: Yeah. I started with my mech's Unique Appearance, which is "A lily white paint job with two blood red 'gashes' across its chest"; it is equipped with "a series of micro-propulsors on each limb"; I am carrying The Shield of my fallen Squadron Mate, Iso'dora; and my mech is equipped with "the Split-Soul Prognosis System."

AUSTIN: I love it. So then, yeah. [cites rules] "Each bid must be used. Each bid must be present. And it must be exactly as it was Defined." Tell me what happens there.

DRE: What did we say we were doing as like... the opening of the scene... or like the basis of this thing?

AUSTIN: Nideo is here building a Portcullis, so that they can better access Palisade. They can start— Instead of going— So as a reminder: the way our space stuff works: space is big, and this system of gates connects [star] systems together. And so you can, very slowly — you know, *very fast* compared to where we, as humans on Earth today can make ships move, still very fast but not faster than light travel. Right? And so it still takes a long time to... Or maybe I think Apostolos has some FTL stuff... that other other cultures have not had. Or they have it in much-much lower supply. Maybe with Kalmeria it's getting there, but it's not quite there yet — it's still an Apostolosian specialty. Um... and so, Nideo has like set up — at the corner of Palisade, basically, or in the Palisade sector — close enough to build this Portcullis Gate, which will let them move in their, you know, their their big armada, to come kind of colonize this place.

DRE: Gotcha.

AUSTIN: Recolonize it, I guess. And Apostolos caught wind of it and is using that very quick speed that y'all have to get here, and either... And interfere in some way. You tell me how it goes.

DRE: Yeah. Uum. Let's see. So, I mean definitely the scene that I have, and that like I— if we just like, cut straight to the action, the scene I have in mind is that... Miseri is out in his mech... and Onyx Squadron has been tasked with like, sabotaging like, some specific part of the Portcullis System. On the outside.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: Thinking very much like— kind of like Death Star like...

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: ...rift run kinda thing.

AUSTIN: Yea-yea-yeah. Totally.

DRE: And I think specifically as... Miseri starts to fire their beam saber wings... that's when Cor'rina uses both the micro-propulsors on the limbs and The Shield...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: ...to quickly like, kind of intercept most of the beam sabers that are going after their squadron mates.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: Um. And then like, basically starts shooting back from behind The Shield. I don't know how to work in the Rank of captain and Crew.

AUSTIN: My...

DRE: I guess my crew is there.

AUSTIN: Yeah, well, the crew is there— Go ahead, Sylvi.

SYLVI: I was gonna say like: the easy way to do it is just that my guys start fighting your guys, right?

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVI: Like, I got some backup, um...

AUSTIN: That's a bigger, larger fight.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm curious if like, the type of captain you are comes into this, too. You know?

SYLVI: Yeah! I think that it does. I think that they're slow to respond, because they're used to doing other shit,

[DRE snickers]

SYLVI: ...while I'm handling the bulk of the like, primary objective.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: Like I don't delegate the important things...

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVI: ...to them that often. And so I think that's why I'm sort of caught off-guard here. I was gonna ask, Austin: are you cool with this designer guy being related to the Leson Family?

AUSTIN: Yeah let's do it.

SYLVI: Cool.

AUSTIN: 100%.

SYLVI: His name is Echelon Lesson.

AUSTIN: Great name.

SYLVI: So I'm just gonna write that down, too. Yeah. No, I think that like yeah, it does. It's... my unit's off-balance, basically.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: No better way to put it. Like we're caught off-balance here. On the wrong foot, because you have a more... sort of like... unified unit.

AUSTIN: Uhum. I'm curious, Dre: how does the camera show... cor in this more violent aggressive mode? Is this victorious? Is this shot in a way that's like "hell yeah, it's time to—" you know, "get them back for what he did to my crew"? Or is it a slippage away from the... you know, the kind of like naivete... and, you know... good soul that... you once were? Like, how does the— What type of music is playing in the background for these sequences?

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: You know what I mean?

DRE: [excited] Oh man. I mean it's— It's both. Right? And I think, again, it kind of comes back to like, how melodramatic we want it to be...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: ...versus like how like... Um... Definitely for Cor'rina is, definitely more of the former. Right?

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: It is like... it is revenge. It is "I have earned this moment." It is, you know, this is—"okay, now I really know what it takes to—" you know, "make the homes of all as free as our home."

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: And these are the steps that I have to take. This is the fight that I have to fight.

AUSTIN: Are you, um... Is there an opportunity for the two of you to talk again? Do you go after Miseri, right away? Because you recognize Miseri's machine?

DRE: [short pause] No — and I think that's also like part of it. Is that like...

AUSTIN: Hmmm.

DRE: Because of The Split-Soul Prognosis System I don't have to.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: I don't have to target exclusively Miseri's mech in order to like...

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: ...do damage to it or hold it off.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): Oh! That's impressive!

AUSTIN: Is that a thing that Miseri speaks up about?

SYLVI: Yeah! I think, like... [chuckles] I don't know if this is something said directly to Cor'rina. But I think it's like... maybe on comms with that second-in-command I mentioned who I need to find a name with for now. At some point. But I think that like... they mention like:

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): The pilot of that mech is... not like stuff I've seen before.

AUSTIN: Uum! Just one of *them* tell you who it is?

SYLVI: Yeah, maybe. I like that.

AUSTIN: One of your squadmates, or even maybe it's even Echelon, right, who who calls out to you and is like

AUSTIN (as ECHELON LESON): [flippantly] Hey, I think that's— I think that's Cider! That... Apostolos, uh, you know, pilot you left [chuckles] you left alive back in the debris fields!

SYLVI: I think that gets a big smile from Miseri...

AUSTIN: [laughs] Ooh...

SYLVI: ...and also is what gets him to sort of like, charge at the Panta Rhei.

AUSTIN: So there is— At that point you're still able to keep...

SYLVI: I guess...

AUSTIN: Cor'rina, you're still able to keep your attention off of Miseri, though? And focus on the mission. Even though Miseri is like, *really* going at you?

DRE: Yeah. And I mean I think that's where the camera like, zooms in on the shield.

AUSTIN: Riiight! Right, right. Sorry, Sylvi, you were gonna say something else?

SYLVI: No. I thought you were asking me a question.

AUSTIN: Oh, I mean if you have more to say though, please!

SYLVI: Aah... no. I think like, I was just gonna say I think I'm down to like... I think there's a couple different mechs that have had beam sabers thrown through them. [chuckles]

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Aha.

SYLVI: I like that I'm down to like three or four left on the actual wings...

AUSTIN: Uhuh!

SYLVI: Um... Yeah that's all I was going to mention, really.

AUSTIN: That's a good— that's an important image. I appreciate it.

SYLVI: Yeah. This fight's taken a lot out...

AUSTIN: Yeah?

SYLVI: ...but... Yeh.

AUSTIN: Alright. So then, what what do you... what do you win here, Cor'rina?

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: Again, you can claim your reward as either a Seized Resource, something new that you're taking from the scene; or by Causing Harm.

DRE: The thing that comes to mind for me first is like do we just seize this this whole Portcullis?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think so. I think that makes perfect sense to me.

DRE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right? I would add that as a Resource... just underneath your Personal Resources. You know. Or not *under* Personal— you know, just at the bottom, basically.

DRE: Yeh.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think it's a Defined one. I think that's like, you know... the Apostolosian, you know, symbol... the constellation tied to Apostolos. Which of course, we all remember... I have to open my constellations folder, and look. This is what it is. To do too many seasons.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: [half-chuckling] Is that you end up having to juggl— Oh it's a serpent! Right? It's the serpent. It's that almost like... it's almost like a W that then starts to go down a last time. It's like a sea serpent, basically. I'll drop it in. I'll drop it in here. Boom! Oh, that's huge! That's way too big.

DRE: Whoa!

[SYLVI & DRE laugh]

AUSTIN: It's way too big. Way-way-way too big. Boom. But there it is. That's the Constellation that appears in the... Portcullis. The... kind of empty space of the Portcullis lights up with that symbol as if to be like "this is fucking ours now." You've unfurled your banner, and it is The Serpent... Constellation. These are all Divines by the way. We've only seen Motion. I guess go back real far, Apokine. I know we saw Valour, too. We've seen Valor. Valor is what Xiphion is the Elect of. We've not seen Duty, Militance, or Aspiration yet. So. That's fun. I forgot that I had all these with all these great ones. Yeah. Uh, The Spear is— The *Partisan* is not theirs. The Partisan is the symbol of the entire Principality's war effort. Apostolos is the head of that symbol, but Kesh, Orion, Nideo, and Columnar make up the other nodes on it. So. Anyway. Um... God. These are very fun. I'm looking at all these Constellations again for the first time in a year! Alright! Um... so that's easy. That's an easy Seize.

[02:33:40] Scene Three

AUSTIN: The final act is here! [reads from rulebook] "Scene Three: The war is coming to an end and everyone knows it. What they can't agree on is who will win. You know this means you'll be seeing *that pilot* again soon. They would never give up the chance to settle this once and for all, and neither will you. Answer the background questions for your pilot, then set the scene together, then follow the special instructions for the Scene Three Auction. Background Questions: What does your pilot want from the other player's pilot?"

SYLVI: Oh! That's a really good question.

DRE: Hm-m.

[silence, as they think about their answers]

DRE: I think for me it's something alongs of lines of like "to justify my beliefs"?

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: Or like to prove the— Um... Basically to prove that like, "my beliefs are better."

AUSTIN: That's fun. I love that. Have you been thinking about that in time since taking over the Portcullis System and preparing to... preemptively "liberate" Palisade? Have you been thinking like "ugh that captain would be... if only that captain believed in something! They would be a — you know — someone who could fight for good"?

DRE: Yeah definitely.

AUSTIN: I love it.

DRE: So I think this could either be like “prove the... that my beliefs are better by switching sides, or...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: ...by like, you know, continuing to be the bad guy that I can just see is like “uugh.”

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: [continuing talking about Cor’Rina’s belief] “this is this is why Apostolos is going to win. Because we’re just morally better.”

AUSTIN: I’ve dropped another giant Constellation. This is the Nideo one. I’ll put it underneath Miseri. Wait, it’s the Kesh one. [uncertainly] This must be the Kesh one? You keep talking!

SYLVI: I’m just trying to think of like, a way to like... I think the wording on this would be like “to satisfy my curiosity”?

AUSTIN: Umm!

SYLVI: I was like “challenge” is too blunt...

AUSTIN: It is.

SYLVI: There’s something that’s like drawn... I think it’s both the fact that they keep running into each other...

AUSTIN: Uhuh.

SYLVI: ...and the fact that like, neither of them— Like, how many times— The amount of times that Miseri’s encountered someone on the other side... and they’ve both lived?

AUSTIN: And they both *lived*. Yeah.

SYLVI: They can count on one hand and it’s all Cor’rina. [chuckles]

AUSTIN: Yes. Yeah. Alright. The second question here is: [reads from rulebook] “What would you think of each other if you had met in more peaceful times?”

[silence, as they think about their answers; SYLVI sighs]

DRE: Yeah. What would the high school AU relationship be?

[SYLVI bursts out in laughter]

AUSTIN: [half-giggling] Uhum, uhum!

SYLVI: Oh my god!

DRE: Like “someone who has so much potential but they can't get out of their own way to realize it.” Like someone for me to, like, mentor and show the errors of their ways.

AUSTIN: [half-chuckling] This person who's a few years older than you. I love it.

DRE: Uhum. Yeah. Listen, age is just a number.

SYLVI: [baffled] That's not...!

AUSTIN: That's. No! Bad!

DRE [laughs, then realizes] Oh no! Not like— Ah! No!

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh. See? This is who you put yourself— just the company you put yourself in.

SYLVI: Um...

DRE: Hey, age is a very important number!

AUSTIN: Yes.

[SYLVI laughs DRE chuckles]

SYLVI: Oh my god! That completely fucked my whole train of thought. [bursts into laughter]

AUSTIN: Aha.

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVI: I think that— I would think they were um a... “naive idealist,” honestly.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: Like. I think that's kind of the impression... that I got when we met the first time. When I was captured. But it's also just like... [sardonically] “oh you really believe in like, *everybody*”?

[AUSTIN snickers]

SYLVI: [with the same tone] “That’s— I don’t know— I can’t fathom what that’s like but... cool.”

AUSTIN: The version of this where you’re just like “stop seeing the best in everybody!” And you’re both baristas and it’s just like...

[SYLVI bursts out in laughter, DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: ...it’s just Cor’rina talking about cor’s favorite, you know, customers or whatever, or like...

SYLVI: Ahhh... Exactly...

AUSTIN: ...”the manager isn’t that bad!” Yeah. Uhuh. Yeah. Finally [reads from rulebook] “If you did leave the war, before this final battle, what would be waiting for you?”

SYLVI: Pff... Disgrace?

[AUSTIN laughs]

SYLVI: Like, honestly!

AUSTIN: Uhum. Yeah.

SYLVI: I think that that’s sort of the way Miseri looks at this. It’s like, if I go back— if I left the war and I went back to Nideo I would be the heir to a like... a house that is like, hated by people.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: If I defect I’m the like fucking mass murderer from Nideo.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: Like... it’s kind of a fucked if you do, fucked if you don’t situation.

AUSTIN: It is. Cor?

DRE: Yeah, I mean, I think it’s it’s disgrace, but in like, a different way. It’s like um... it’s like a— it’s a repudiation of everything that they believe in.

AUSTIN: Yeah. “You’re on the precipice...”

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: “...of helping so many people!”

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Alright [reads from rulebook] "Scene Three is the final battle, the turning point of the war. Feel free to use one of these suggestions to set the scene for this final encounter, or come up with your own: In the heart of the largest battle the war has seen. Or alone, just the two of you, in a desolate place." [pause] Or, again: anything we can come up with.

SYLVI: Yeah. Umm... I'm trying to think of like, where we want to set this like, in relation to Palisade itself.

AUSTIN: I feel—

DRE: Oh, I mean like—

AUSTIN: Dre?

DRE: I think like, in the space outside of Palisade.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Like a one-on-one duel with Palisade like, looming in the background.

SYLVI: The tides coming in.

AUSTIN: The tides coming in! Yeah! For both the Mirage and Perennial Wave, right?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [excited] It's like both: I could be lost to the waves of time and I could have my ship— or my mech just shut the fuck down, because Perennial— a very high Perennial Wave is incoming. You know? A double wave situation.

SYLVI: Yeah. Damn.

AUSTIN: Is this— You said one-on-one. Is this one-on-one? And then two, is this during a larger, you know... like, space armada battle just like, the whole crew is here? Is this— Has some landing already started...?

DRE: What if it was going to be a big battle — and then the huge Perennial Wave hit...

AUSTIN: Aohh!

DRE: ...and like our two mechs are the first ones that turn back on?

AUSTIN: That turn back on! And you have the opportunity— I looove this. Everybody else's shit is just like EMPed, basically. But...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...you both have special mechs! And yours— you know, maybe yours did get knocked out for a second, like he said, and then they boot back up, and it's like you have this opportunity: if you can beat the other person you can then do so much damage in the moments that follow that you basically single-handedly have won this battle! Which absolutely would be the sort of thing, Miseri, that gets you your family's name back.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Maybe more. And you know, Cor'rina. That's— you know, this is the heroism you've already always dreamt of.

SYLVI: Oh, I love that.

AUSTIN: And it's exactly the sort of like, you know, third way individualism, but like...

DRE: Yea-yea-yeah!

AUSTIN: "Oh, individualism is good for everybody!"

DRE: Uhum!

AUSTIN: "You need—" It's the kind of like, great man theory of history by way of single battle, you know? Love it. I love it so much. Great idea. Um. Alright. [reads from rulebook] "Each player may Raise a maximum of three times. Each player must bid to Define when they Buy In, as usual..."

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: "but any number of other bids may be bids to Destroy."

DRE: So how does that work? The "bids to Destroy" part?

AUSTIN: So when you've bid to Destroy you're picking one of your own things and you're— I'll actually just read the Bidding to Destroy: [reads from rulebook] "War sucks. It's going to take a lot from your pilot. And, narratively, nobody will be responsible for taking more from you than the other pilot in your game. But *you* have the power to decide what your pilot loses. You cannot give up any more than you choose to. Even when receiving Harm a player has control over what exactly is Destroyed. In the scene following an Auction where a bid is Destroyed, that destruction must be *included* and must be decisive. You will be setting scenes in space battles, and you may presume there are always things getting wrecked, but Destroyed Bids are the explosions that the camera focuses on, and that your duel pivots around. A Destroyed Bid may turn out to be something your opponent focuses on, a thing your pilot is willing to sacrifice to protect what really matters, or the key weakness that leads to your pilot's downfall. While the bidder determines what is Destroyed, the winner of the scene has narrative power to say *how*. A bid that Destroys your support crew may lead to a

scene where they die, or one where they abandon you. Either way, it's permanent. Nothing Destroyed can return."

DRE [mumbling] Got that.

AUSTIN: [continues reading] "Many things on your Datafile are physical objects. They'll probably blow up. But some are more intangible. It's up to the players to determine what it looks like when a catchphrase is Destroyed, for instance. Maybe that means the pilot doesn't believe in the words anymore, or saying them has become painful, or they suffer an injury that removes the ability to speak. As long as it is dramatically purposeful and permanent, "Destroy" can mean a lot of things. A Destroyed Bid says more about your encounter than it does about the world it takes place in. These are moments that can be very large, or very small. If you're trying to win the Auction, it can help to push how big or small your story has become. Destroying something huge, something that would go up in a neon cascade and send shock waves for miles, is a major choice and may convince your opponent you have the higher bid. But Destroying something *personal*, something that makes you wonder how your Pilot will live without it, or how they could ever choose to part with it, may do the same. And even if your bid is topped, you still injected more drama into their life, and more intrigue into your game, so that you may better enjoy whatever comes next." So that's Destroying. You're kind of marking something to be Destroyed. You're not deciding how it's going to be Destroyed. You're saying "I'm willing to give this up to win."

SYLVI: Okay.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Who is bidding? Opening bids! Let's go!

SYLVI: I'm gonna bring in my Squadmates.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVI: We've talked about them a little bit.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: I decided to call them the 16th Epiphany.

AUSTIN: Great.

SYLVI: I decided that The Epiphany is just like a name for a type of military unit.

AUSTIN: This makes perfect sense in the...

SYLVI: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: ...very religious culture of Nideo.

SYLVI: Yea...

AUSTIN: I've forgotten—

SYLVI: I'm still working on a name for that second-in-command. But...

AUSTIN: Okay. You'll get there. Uh...

SYLVI: There... Oh, go ahead.

AUSTIN: I was just gonna say: I'd forgotten until I brought out this other... Constellation that the way that Nideo is set up, another core thing about them, is that they all... The Cycle... the head of of the received asterism is like seen as being the head of state *along* with Present. Present as their kind of... The Divine Present, as being kind of their... not second, but like, almost like an added filter but everything else goes into this person who is The Cycle. And so, this idea of like... all of their stuff being super religious themed, everything being tied to the faith, the idea of an epiphany is like — I love that. That's very good. Anyway. Come up with a name that's good. But yeah. No rush.

SYLVI: I think after that last battle that... Miseri has kind of been *trying* a bit more...?

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: With like, doing actual drills with the entire unit...

[AUSTIN chuckles]

SYLVI: ...and like, incorporating them into things. They are all in disabled mechs right now, but I think that—

AUSTIN: Right. Sure.

SYLVI: That like, before that happened, I think that... they were starting to sort of...

AUSTIN: Gel together a little bit, maybe?

SYLVI: Gel together a little more...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...and like I think both sides benefit— Like I think that there was a marked incr— like improvement in the piloting of the people in that unit...

AUSTIN: Sure. That makes sense.

SYLVI: Miseri stopped eating lunch on his own.

[They all laugh]

SYLVI: That's what he got out of it.

AUSTIN: [with a drabber voice, jokingly] "Hey guys! It's me, your captain. Uh. Can I, can I sit here?"

SYLVI: "Can I sit here?"

AUSTIN: [same voice] "Can I sit here? Did you guys see *Succession* last night?"

[SYLVI & DRE laugh]

AUSTIN: [same voice] "Kendall, huh?" [half-snickering] Dre! Cor'rina!

DRE: Yeah—

SYLVI: [tired] Oh my god!

DRE: Um, so I guess when I bid to Destroy I don't get to necessarily say like, how it's Destroyed? I'm just saying that—

AUSTIN: You're just— Yeah. 100% percent.

DRE: Yeah

AUSTIN: Correct.

DRE: Uh...

AUSTIN: You're decid—

DRE: I'll bid—

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

DRE: ...to Destroy my second Signature Weapon, which is...

AUSTIN: You cannot—

DRE: ...this...

AUSTIN: You cannot—

DRE: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: You have to Define— You can only Destroy something you've already Defined.

DRE: [enthusiastically] Ohh! Gotcha-gotcha-gotcha!

AUSTIN: Yes, yes.

DRE: Okay, that's where I was confused.

AUSTIN: Yes.

DRE: Let's see then.

AUSTIN: You could Define something and then Destroy it. But like, is that as powerful as Destroying something we've sat with for a whole se— you know what I mean?

DRE: Right, right, right, right. Yea-yea-yeah. Okay. [hm-ing while thinking] I have to rethink what I was gonna do.

AUSTIN: I actually think that the first thing has to be a Define, anyway.

SYLVI: Yeah, I thought that was...

AUSTIN: Your opening bid has to be something you Define. Yes.

DRE: Uum, okay. I'm going to Define my second Signature Weapon.

AUSTIN: Okay. Which is the... Auroran Fire.

AUSTIN: Hm!

DRE: Which is basically a... Oh god, what is it called? Um... it's not anti-air, it's like... when like planes shoot out like, chaff or whatever. It's basically—

SYLVI: Oh.

AUSTIN: Oh.

DRE: ...like a projectile... interruption counter...

AUSTIN: Yea-yea-yeah, a countermeasure.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Gotcha. So, it's meant to intercept incoming... like incoming uh...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...weapons or projectiles or something like that, basically, right?

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Give yourself some space. Cool. I love that both of your Signature Weapons are, in fact, defensive. In both cases.

DRE: Uhum!

AUSTIN: Alright. Time to start... uh... bidding! Properly.

SYLVI: I'm going...

AUSTIN: You can each bid up to three times.

SYLVI: I'm going to bid to Destroy my beam saber wings.

AUSTIN: Okay! Cross 'em off! Just cross 'em off!

SYLVI: Just cross 'em off?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Don't delete them, just cross them.

SYLVI: I was going to just mark— write Destroyed in front—

AUSTIN: [emphatically] Naah! Fucking take a pen and cross it.

SYLVI: [half-chuckling] Is crossing out much better?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uhuh.

SYLVI: Uhh...

AUSTIN: Dre! Cor'rina!

DRE: Hmm... I'm gonna bid my Signature Maneuver.

AUSTIN: Ooh! Okay.

DRE: Which is... Ugh! I can't think of what to call it! This is the tricky part! Of naming things. Um. But I think what it is, it's using The Shield and the the micro-propulsers to basically like just be spinning in a way that like, The Shield is constantly like, blocking things from every direction.

AUSTIN: Mm. Sure. Sure.

DRE: I think it even looks like... being able to like, toss the shield from hand to hand. Or maybe it even just like, attaches onto different limbs?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: So it almost looks like it's like, rotating and revolving around the mech.

AUSTIN: I love it.

SYLVI: Ooh. That's sick.

AUSTIN: Back to you, Miseri.

SYLVI: Yeah. I'm going to Raise my Reputation— Oh, wow! Hold on. [giggling] Roll20, what are you doing?

AUSTIN: Oh my— [laughs]

DRE: Oh wow.

SYLVI: [half-giggling] Okay. I'm gonna have to re...

AUSTIN: I got it. You'll be—

SYLVI: ...scratch out those things?! Yeah. I was gonna... scratch out my Reputation.

AUSTIN: Alright, you do that. I'll knock out the wings. You have to right click after you're done the line, otherwise it'll think you're still doing the line.

SYLVI: That is some—

AUSTIN: Or hit escape. Or change the tool. [irritated] Yeah, uhuh.

SYLVI: [mutters chidingly] Roll20!

AUSTIN: So you're crossing out what? You're crossing out...

SYLVI: Reputation...

AUSTIN: Reputation.

SYLVI: ...was the second one.

AUSTIN: Okay. Great.

SYLVI: I right click the bunch so I hope that works.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah it's good now. I can see it actually crossed out.

SYLVI: Okay, cool.

AUSTIN: So that's two. Back over to Cor'rina.

DRE: Hm-hm-hm-hm. [pause] Okay. So I have two left, right?

AUSTIN: Two left. Yep.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: You can Define or Destroy.

DRE: Uhum. [whispers] Man! [normal volume] I should count better because I had another idea to Destroy two things. But, um...

AUSTIN: You could still Destroy two things! Right?

DRE: Yeah, but...

AUSTIN: You've only introduced...

DRE: ...one of them was something that I was gonna introduce.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see. I see, I see.

DRE: I can't do that.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: I was gonna introduce and then Destroy a Distinct Look, so I could just go, you know, just...

[AUSTIN giggles]

DRE: ...be whatever. Be our Mr. Bushido.

AUSTIN: Aha!

DRE: But...

AUSTIN: Aha.

DRE: Uuhh... Let's see.

[silence]

AUSTIN: I mean, the idea that—

DRE: Is Mentor—

AUSTIN: Oh, go ahead.

DRE: Go ahead.

AUSTIN: What were you going to say?

DRE: Is Mentor like the person who's mentoring me? Right?

AUSTIN: Yes. I think so. But for our case is already tied to... Squadmates. Right? But actually, they're already dead. Right? So...

DRE: Yeah. Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah. So you could add a new Mentor there... Um...

DRE: I'm actually— I'm gonna add Support Crew.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Umm... Because this mech needs specialized mechanics.

AUSTIN: Right!

DRE: So like there's... there's a mechanic who basically like, only works on my mech and the two other mechs in my squadron because we're these prototype units.

AUSTIN: Right. [pause] Back over to Miseri. For the final bid. For you. Final Raise, rather.

SYLVI: Oh gosh. I'm trying to think if I should just go all the way and then just keep Destroying things here. Yeah I think I am! Because I kind of have an idea of like, two ways that these could play out regardless of how things end. So I'm gonna also cross out my Rank of captain.

AUSTIN: Oooh! Interesting! Okay. Who knows what that will mean in the end.

SYLVI: That can go a couple ways!

AUSTIN: It totally can! Alright, Cor'rina! Last Raise!

DRE: You know what it is!

AUSTIN: I don't!

DRE: I'm Destroying my Shield.

AUSTIN: Aah! Sure. Okay. Great. There we go. Alright. It is time for the final bid! Read me what you have bid in this... scene!

SYLVI: So I opened with my Squad, the 16th Epiphany...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...and I... crossed out— For all three of my Raises I have Destroyed my “beam saber wings;” my kink— My kink?

[AUSTIN laughs]

SYLVI: [self-correcting] My *Rank* of “captain.”

AUSTIN: Never!

DRE: Oh, word?!

SYLVI: Hey. Listen!

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: That's a whole— I gotta fundraise for that.

[AUSTIN laughs]

SYLVI: Destroying your kink is expensive. And I Destroy my Reputation as well. Um.

[AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: You don't say!

SYLVI: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah. Yea-yea-yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright!

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: So the Destroyed Reputation; Destroyed wings; Destroyed, uh...

SYLVI: Rank.

AUSTIN: Rank. Right.

SYLVI: Yes. Rank. [half-chuckling] With an R.

AUSTIN: Rank. And added...

SYLVI: And I introduced...

AUSTIN: ... the 16th Epiphany. Right. Um? Cor'rina!

DRE: Okay, so I started with my second Signature Weapon, which is the Auroran Fire Projectile Countermeasure System.

AUSTIN: Uhuh!

DRE: My Support Crew of “specialized mechanics.” My Signature Maneuver which is the “Rotating Shield.”

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: Hold on, I’m counting. Sorry, counting is hard. Um. And then for my last one I bid to Destroy uh...

AUSTIN: The Shield.

DRE: ...bid to Destroy The Shield.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. Huhh! What do we think? Strong feelings here, one way or the other?

[pause]

SYLVI: [sighs] I... I kind of have like, an idea for... I have an idea for both winning and losing that both kind of feel like losing, in a way.

AUSTIN: Uum! Uhum!

SYLVI: And I think it just kind of depends on the framing of, like... this encounter here. Like if the... The final bid here to me is kind of like, which one of us ends up winning this fight and then like...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...what happens after, can be...

AUSTIN: I’ll note you have a series of questions afterwards for what the Ending is.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So there will be some space to... clear... some bigger questions. To answer some bigger questions separate from, or on top of what we get here. Is what I’d say.

SYLVI: Um. Okay.

AUSTIN: So you could go either way, is what you think? Looking at this.

SYLVI: Should I just like, say what I’m thinking here, and we can like, figure out...

AUSTIN: We should start at—

SYLVI: ...what we're doing?

AUSTIN: We should start at the—

SYLVI: Or start at the beginning?

AUSTIN: We should just start at who do you think bid— Whose bid wins, is where we should start.

SYLVI: I... Hm.

AUSTIN: It sounds like you're torn, but like we should—

SYLVI: I am torn! Because I think Iso'dora's Shield being Destroyed outweighs a couple things.

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVI: Just because of what that is.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: Um, but I also like... wrecked all my shit, basically!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Yea-yea-yeah!

SYLVI: [in an exaggerated voice] So, I'm like: I don't know...?!

AUSTIN: Cor? How do you feel?

DRE: [groaning half-sigh] HUUUGH! I'm also very torn.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: Uhm... Feels very much like... a pyrrhic victory for whoever wins. Because of like... what we've both chosen to Destroy.

AUSTIN: Totally.

[DRE sighs]

AUSTIN: But the thing that I'll say is, that like, when I think about— The decision that feels like we have to make is... which... Cor'rina loses The Shield. Which is an important loss. And gains a bunch of weapons, and technology, and specialized mechanics, and action hero shit. Right?

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: A special maneuver, some cool countermeasures, etc. I think that's an— it's an interesting loss to lose your last— I mean you still have the paint job with... the gashes across the chest.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But you lose the physical thing from another person. And so there's a way to read that as being about a change going from the naive, you know, people-person who— But you didn't lose— you didn't lose your Catchphrase! Right? You didn't lose, you know, your Squadron. You didn't lose your Rank. You didn't lose all these other things that are about who you are.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: But you did lose Iso'dora's Shield. Which is something. Um... and I think that's an important thing. Whereas, I think the thing that we're looking at at Miseri— I mean, it depends on how these things break, right?

SYLVI: Uhum.

AUSTIN: But like losing Reputation: “feared”; losing “captain”; losing the wings. These are all images that are about you being a terrifying person.

SYLVI: Yup.

AUSTIN: And that to me is fascinating, also. In terms of like...

SYLVI: Uhum.

AUSTIN: ...who is— Maybe, here's my question, in terms of the bid: which one of you is *you still* after these lo— after these changes? [pause] The person who came in and the person who left? Regardless of who wins and who loses.

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVI: I, yeah. I don't know if Miseri is the same person as the start of this game. Um...

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVI: I think— I don't know. Yeah. I think that—

DRE: 'Cause that... Go ahead

SYLVI: That also like, comes out with... the Squadmates becoming an actual resource as opposed to...

AUSTIN: Aha.

SYLVI: And then like everything else sort of like fading away...

AUSTIN: I mean, I—

SYLVI: Sorry for interrupting, Dre.

AUSTIN: Yeah, go ahead Dre! You go, Dre!

DRE: Um-um. No, I mean I think like... with what you said, Austin about like, all of the... technology and stuff. Like, I almost see that as like — especially with this introduction of the specialized mechanic...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

DRE: ...as like — that is Cor'rina working with that mechanic to basically like: "I need to be able to answer for everything that Miseri's going to do."

AUSTIN: Riiight!

DRE: So that I can get close enough to have my one shot.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's probably how you survive the Perennial Wave stuff, right? You get all that—

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...that new shit. I want to remind everybody, this is probably the moment to do it: you could win a tiebreaker by Destroying one other thing right now.

DRE: Yeah. Boy, I will say if we're... using The Pact as like that... neo-liberalism...

AUSTIN: Aha.

DRE: ...and specifically like, Cor'rina— you know, that kind of like, third wave individualist stuff...

AUSTIN: Uhum!

DRE: There is something about "oh I've destroyed my shield because now I can pick up a sword instead."

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Yeah that's very fun.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: I love it. I do. I like either of these. I don't—

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I lean a certain direction. But I'd be really happy to run with either of these characters [chuckles] as shitty antagonists this season, let me tell you!

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Maybe both are able to show up. We'll see how these questions get— ended up.

SYLVI: We'll see.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean?

SYLVI: I— Part of me is like... [sighs] Trying to wonder if there is a thing here that I'd burn to... [pause] I might— Hmm...

DRE: That's what I'm thinking too. And I mean, the thing that comes to mind for me is the Catchphrase.

AUSTIN: Right!

DRE: But I—

AUSTIN: Boy, that's a fucking— It's so key...!

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVI: That's a lot cooler than—

DRE: Yea-yeah-yeah

SYLVI: ...me just being like [in a stupid voice] "oh, my mech breaks!" [laughs]

DRE: Dam— [laughs] Well, I feel like, the spirit of Cor'rina's character is that like, no matter what, that Catchphrase

AUSTIN: Stays.

DRE: The catchphrase stays, and it just becomes more and more sinister.

AUSTIN: Right. Right. But it stays. You don't lose it. Again—

DRE: So I think—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: I don't think calling it Destroyed just to say like "well it's the the spirit's still there—"

[AUSTIN laughs]

DRE: "... it's just it's more obviously evil."

AUSTIN: Yeah I'm with you.

DRE: That doesn't count. I don't think.

AUSTIN: Yeah. But we don't see Cor'rina giving up Onyx Squadron... Giving up the Portcullis Base. Giving up the— You know, none of that stuff feels right. Giving up the mech design or whatever. Yeah.

DRE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: I'm with you. I can imagine Miseri *losing more*. But like I think you're right that— I mean, I don't know. I think losing the mech would mean something big. Because Miseri is just like, a mech ace. I guess Miseri could be not hot anymore!

DRE: Oh no!

SYLVI: [in a quiet but rigid tone] That's non-negotiable.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVI: [same voice] Come on.

AUSTIN: I see, I see, I see.

SYLVI: Come on.

DRE: Have you ever played a fucking game with Sylvi before?

[SYLVI bursts out in laughter]

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's true. That's true. I'm sorry I forgot for a moment.

SYLVI: [still laughing] Oh I'm feeling so called out right now!

AUSTIN: [half- chuckling] Aha.

DRE: [laughs, then in a normal tone] You're not being called out, you're being lauded.

AUSTIN: Yeah

DRE: And recognized.

SYLVI: Thank you!

[DRE giggles]

SYLVI: [sighs] Okay.

AUSTIN: I'm torn. I— You know. It's not my call. Y'all are playing!

DRE: Uhum.

[SYLVI chuckles]

[long silence]

SYLVI: Broooww! [giggles] It's hard!

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVI: It's a really hard decision to make, because I'm trying to like, at the same time... figure out like, what I'd do if I won vs. what I'd do if I lost here.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Yea-yea-yeah.

SYLVI: Like, what makes sense for the character.

DRE: And there's no ties, right? Somebody has to win.

AUSTIN: No. Someone has to win.

DRE: Yea-yea-yeah.

[pause]

AUSTIN: I believe. Unless Grant says otherwise in the chat. But I'm pretty sure it has to be—

SYLVI: [searches for words] ...You know? It sure does feel like there needs to be one.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

[pause]

SYLVI: I am not gonna Destroy my mech. So Dre, if you want to Ante— Like, do another thing to Raise...

DRE: Yeah...

SYLVI: ...go for it! But, if not...

DRE: I mean, I can think of ways to Destroy some of these things, but they just don't feel...

AUSTIN: Meaningful.

SYLVI: Okay.

DRE: They don't feel meaningful and they don't feel earned. Like, you know. It's like it would be very obvious for me like "oh I'm going to Destroy my "Rotating Shield" Maneuver...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: ...because I already destroyed The Shield."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: And like it doesn't feel—

AUSTIN: I think that's—

DRE: ...meaningful to Destroy the Squadron, because they're not out there.

AUSTIN: Right, right. Well! I think it could be meaningful to lose these people! Permanently.

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: That's kind of interesting! Um... that would... there's something there for me. Um.

DRE: Like, yeah. 'Cause maybe it's... [sighs]

SYLVI: There's...

DRE: I guess to me it's like Destroying the Squadron because Cor'rina, personally, gets elevated so much higher.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVI: I think there's also another way of looking at it, too. Which is like with The Shield Destroyed, and like, the past bits of your— of the actual, like, Onyx Squadron... have also been Destroyed, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: Like, it works on a couple levels.

AUSTIN: The idea of... It's totally possible for it to be like... you know... The tragedy. I mean this whole thing is: you are both nightmare people working for terrible nations, who are going to try to oppress people. Uh! But the personal tragedy of being pulled away from this group that meant so much to who you were and instead becoming sort of a big symbol could be interesting?

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: I do like keeping "Rotating Shield" Maneuver but losing The Shield, because it means like "no I can still do that I do it with any shield." It doesn't have to be—

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That Shield—

DRE: [softly] Yea-yeah.

AUSTIN: ...wasn't mechanically special. Grant says "rules as written, somebody's gotta win. Tables break rules all the time, nobody's under any illusions there."

[DRE & SYLVI laugh]

AUSTIN: [half-chuckling] If we could think of a fun tie— we could think of a fun tie. But like, one of these sides has to win. You know?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um.

SYLVI: Yeah. Um!

AUSTIN: Regardless of whatever happened between Amuro and Char... you know, Zeon and the Feddies...

SYLVI: I—

DRE: Sure.

AUSTIN: ...that war happened.

SYLVI: I could suggest a tie ending for the conflict between these two, and then we can sort out the—

AUSTIN: Hmm!

SYLVI: ...the ending for... um..

AUSTIN: The—

SYLVI: ...the like, actual factions.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Tell me what you're—

SYLVI: What I...

AUSTIN: Give me your pitch!

SYLVI: I was thinking while we're fighting we get caught in one of the Waves and land on Pal— like...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Crashland on Palisade.

DRE: Yea-yea-yeah.

SYLVI: And then we don't know what happens with them after that. But there's these two characters out there with like... that we can have come back, or like...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! Tell me what—

SYLVI: This figures, yeah.

AUSTIN: I mean, I have to see that sequence, though.

SYLVI: For sure! I'm just like—

AUSTIN: You know? But I want—

SYLVI: Does that—

AUSTIN: I think it's fun.

SYLVI: ...sound good? Ok. Cool.

AUSTIN: Dre?

DRE: Oh, yeah. Listen. You've seen that sequence.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: You've watched Original Gundam—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: ...where they're falling through the atmosphere! [laughs]

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: I haven't seen Original Gundam. So...!

AUSTIN: You should watch Original Gundam—

SYLVI: I should. I really should. I...

AUSTIN: Like, it genuinely holds up. I keep seeing people online sometimes being like: “it doesn't look good” and they're just liars.

SYLVI: They're not wrong about that!

DRE: Yeah, they're wrong!

SYLVI: I watched some of it...

AUSTIN: Yeah...

SYLVI: ...and it's a stylish show...

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's really good.

SYLVI: Like, I...

AUSTIN: It has bad frames because that's what making anime looks like, you know?

DRE: Yea-yea-yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah, it's old! Like... that was frame animated? Like, cell...?

AUSTIN: Yeah. 100%. Yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah, so... [sighs] Do we just want to like, run through...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...like, how this fight goes, then?

AUSTIN: Let's do it. And talk about the things that you all brought up! And... let's hear you talking to one another. The comms are clear! You're the only ones who you can— No one else can hear you talking. This is the first time that's probably true.

SYLVI: I know—

AUSTIN: Because the Perennial Wave will have knocked everything out.

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: And between that and The Mirage, like everything is just so fucked up. You know. I like The Mirage— Like, the Perennial Wave hits all at once. Right? And just in it. And you don't see it, because it's nano machines. Nano machines. But The Mirage! Like kind of fluctuating throughout the fight coming in and out? And like sometimes you're caught up in its colors and other times you're not? Yeah.

SYLVI: Um...

AUSTIN: That's fun. That's my background addition.

SYLVI: Yea-yeah. I'm thinking about the... I'm trying to think of a way to like— I'm thinking of both The Shield and the beam— Both are weapons that break here, basically. And like... the interaction happening while that's going on. I'm wondering if it's just like, I have to bring *all* of these fucking swords out to break through this Shield.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: And then I'm left with one, which doesn't really constitute as Wings. Um...

[AUSTIN giggles]

SYLVI: And I think it's like... I'm trying to think of what he'd say. Um. [pause] Where, um... I think it's like... [sighs, then excited] I'm like, oh man! I'm getting too fucking... comic book movie with this in my head right now!

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: Hold on!

AUSTIN: [commiserating] Hm!

SYLVI: Just like...! I, I— Really does, like, feel to Miseri like they are supposed to fight *forever*...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...the way that they keep running into each other.

DRE: Uhum. Sure.

SYLVI: And I think he just straight up says that. Where it's like, um... I mean, like, they're Nidean. So I think like— he thinks it's like a divine...

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): It's divine providence that we keep being made to fight. Clearly, you are, like— Show me the ferocity that I bring out in you. And let me try and match it.

SYLVI: Like, there's a real excitement that they're the only two who are able to fight right now.

DRE: Yeah. And I think Cor'rina's response is like, you know:

DRE (as COR'RINA): This is why you're doomed to lose because you only fight for yourself. Whereas I fight for everyone.

[SYLVI snickers briefly]

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): Keep telling yourself that! I don't see— You wouldn't be so obsessed with taking me down if you were really fighting for *everyone*.

SYLVI: Saying, while two swords like...

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Aha.

DRE: Yeah. [laughs]

SYLVI: ...burn through what they can of this Shield.

DRE (as COR'RINA): But taking you down is what's going to let millions of children sleep at home tonight, safely.

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): [sardonic] Oh, I never realized I was so important!

SYLVI: I think there's like a kick to The Shield with like, the boot— like the jet boot on their mech, before— while they're reaching back for another sword.

DRE: Uhum.

SYLVI: Um...

[pause]

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): You talk big! I don't think you believe a word of it! I think you're just here because you're drawn to me.

[pause]

DRE: I think, uses the momentum from you kicking the shield to do like, an overhead like... axe kick. [bursts out laughing]

SYLVI: Fuck yeah.

DRE: That like, pushes you away. And says:

DRE (as COR'RINA): The sooner I can never see you again the sooner I can live the rest of my life.

AUSTIN: [giggling] Dooming yourselves to chain one another to each other—

DRE Aha. Sure. Yea-yea-yea-yeah.

AUSTIN: ...for the rest of your fucking lives!

SYLVI: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Great. Good.

DRE: [in sports chant cadence] "Fight for-ev-er"!

AUSTIN: Clap, clap, clap-clap-clap.

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): [impassive] I think just come kill me, then!

SYLVI: ...is the reply. Like...

[AUSTIN chuckles]

SYLVI (as MISERICORDE): Then fucking do it.

SYLVI: [laughs] I think that like, part of the thing of the Reputation being burned. Not necessarily the, like... I think people are still kind of like "oh, that's wow! That dude used a lot of swords! That's a little... that's a little fucked up!"

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: But I think it's more just like...

[AUSTIN chuckles quietly]

SYLVI: ...this is not some like... ice cold... like, killer. [searches for words] I think there was like, I think there's rumors where it's like "there's no pilot in that mech. It's literally just a machine." And now people seeing it act so, like... out of character...

DRE: Uhum.

SYLVI: There is more like, anger and it's fighting— Or like, not anger, but like less control in its fighting, than usual. And, like... It looks more like someone is piloting it, and therefore looks weaker. Because there are openings. Because of that kick that gets through. Because like... the having to use all these swords. Like, it isn't some fucking infallible death machine.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: It's a weapon that someone is wielding.

AUSTIN: Love it. At this, you know— At this point, is this where we... What happens to lead the both of you to end up crashing on Palisade?

SYLVI: I have two ideas. I think they could also work in tandem. Dre, let me know what you think!

DRE: Uhum.

SYLVI: I think like, we both get a disabling blow on our mechs, right?

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: I think like The Shield might shatter even while I'm— You're hitting my mech with it.

DRE: Uh! Uh! Uh! Uh!

SYLVI: And like maybe I stab yours— oh yeah, go ahead!

DRE: Uh! Uh! Uh! God!

[AUSTIN chuckles quietly]

DRE: What if you use your last beam saber sword to like... impale our mechs together?
And—

[AUSTIN scoffs]

SYLVI: Sick!

DRE: The Shield gets destroyed burning up in the atmosphere—

AUSTIN: Ooooooh!

DRE: ...and that's why we both like, make it to the ground.

AUSTIN: [excited] Oh, the shield protects both of you! Yeah!

SYLVI: [exhilarated] Oh I love that!

AUSTIN: That rules! That's so good!

SYLVI: Yeah. Perfect. *Perfect!*

AUSTIN: Love it.

SYLVI: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: Love it. [laughs] rwykes in the chat says “Alise Breka really went off.”

DRE: Yup.

AUSTIN: [exhilarated] And this is exactly it, right? Noone knows what happened to these two pilots. “We know that they had a duel.” Noone knows what they actually may have said to one another or what happened to the duel.

SYLVI: [giggling] Yeah.

AUSTIN: But neither returned. Uh, so... did Alise make all this up? Who could say?

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: Um. So I mean...

SYLVI: Like that we have— we also were kind of cagey about how much of this is true, how much of this is fabrication...

AUSTIN: 100%.

SYLVI: So like, yeah.

AUSTIN: Exactly.

SYLVI: You guys gotta decide.

[03:12:56] The Ending

AUSTIN: But a thing that we now will know is true one way or the other is the Ending. [reads from rulebook] “Look at your Datafile. Look at what was Destroyed, and what was not. There may be items there you chose to Seize, or—” I guess neither of you Seizes or Harms either. You know, at this point. Right?

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because neither of you won.

SYLVI: We are also both Seizing and Harming each other at the same time—

AUSTIN: ...at the same time. Yeah, exactly. Yes. [continues reading] "With the full picture in mind, it is time to make an Ending. First, answer the final, closing questions to tie up loose ends. Which faction won the war?" [chuckles]

SYLVI: You know?! Um... I don't know. We were kind of— We talked about this being the thing that will help decide...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Aha.

SYLVI: ...which is the Authority.

DRE: Hmm...

SYLVI: And I'm like torn between...

AUSTIN: It is still up in the air... at this point.

SYLVI: Yeah. Um.

DRE: Yeah. I mean the only thing that I would make the argument for is does the Portcullis Base swing it enough for Apostolos? Either by enabling them to get reinforcements in faster?

[AUSTIN sighs]

DRE: Or by stopping Nideo from getting reinforcements in?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Maybe. But like, if they lose this fight... the Portcullis is just going to get owned again by...

DRE: Right. Yea-yeah.

AUSTIN: ...Nideo. Right. So like... It's hard for me to say that that's— And also you're in Nideo space, right?

DRE: Yeah, totally.

AUSTIN: Apostolos has to come in from so much far farther away.

DRE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um. [sighs] Yeah for me it's really hard... to make that decision. Like, we could punt on this, certainly. And to see...

SYLVI: Do we... want...?

AUSTIN: I mean look ahead at the other games and see if there is— Go ahead! What were you going to say?

SYLVI: Do we want to try and answer some of the other questions before...

AUSTIN: Yes, let's do that.

SYLVI: ...we answer this first one?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

SYLVI: And then we can see if we have different feelings about it?

AUSTIN: [reads from rulebook] "What do your pilots think of the Motive on their Datafiles now?" Again, can you read your Motives again?

SYLVI: Yeah. Mine is "Glory. What rewards await a hero of your stature? My family's name will be restored."

AUSTIN: I think if Nideo wins your family name gets restored here. Right?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because it's like, you took out their ace. You died taking out their ace and protecting the fleet so that they could come back online and win. I could see that being a way to get your name restored. I mean, if it's fought to a standstill even, maybe that can still happen. But you wouldn't know that.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That would be happening out in space not where *you* are.

SYLVI: [slowly articulating] I don't think Miseri gives a shit anymore.

DRE: [laughing] Yeah! That's what I was kinda thinking, too!

SYLVI: I think it's like they like— I don't know how much we want to— how much epilogue we want to give here. But I think there's like the first time they get out of...

DRE: Damn, now *you're* Mr. Bushido!

SYLVI: Ah, yeah, maybe.

AUSTIN: You should have given up your hot looks to put on a mask! You know?

SYLVI: You know! Worked for Char! So!

AUSTIN: Uhuh!

SYLVI: Um. I was gonna— I think that there's just like... the cockpit opens on the crashed mech...

AUSTIN: Aha.

SYLVI: ...and there's just like a real— It's a sigh of relief. And that's the last, like, shot of them. Because there's no pressure anymore. Everyone thinks they're dead. [chuckles]

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: Figure out how to live on this weird planet now. But that's... whatever. They just had the most fun of their life! [laughs]

AUSTIN: [chuckles] Cor'rina? Do you still feel Idealistic?

DRE: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: Aha.

DRE: Absolutely.

AUSTIN: Great. So Motive's still 100% for you?

DRE: Yeah. Yea-yeah-yeah.

AUSTIN: [reads from rulebook] "Did you achieve your goals?"

DRE: I guess that comes back to who wins the war, for me.

AUSTIN: It does.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It does.

[pause]

SYLVI: Okay. Um... I think like part of me is like I... [half-giggling] As someone who's like "oh what bad guys do I want to fight against" I do kind of always prefer fighting against the monarchists, because it's like...

AUSTIN: Uhum!

SYLVI: ...a very easy thing. But the idea of Apostolos having won this with the others — like, in The Pact — and them being the sort of the group that tries to annex Palisade is like becoming more interesting to me as we've...

AUSTIN: As we talked through. Yeah.

SYLVI: ...fleshed out Cor'rina's stuff.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: Specifically, because I think that zealotry is really fucking dangerous...

[AUSTIN chuckles]

SYLVI: ...and I don't think she's the only person that has it, right?

AUSTIN: No. No. Definitely not. But there's a lot of zealotry on your side, too. Right? Again...

SYLVI: For sure!

AUSTIN: I think Miseri is almost an exception in how *cold* he's been. And you know, we get a lot of Nideo people who are like, rah-rah. This is true—

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm not— Again, I we should, we should finish answering these other Closing Questions and then come back around. You know.

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Do you— So I guess, Cor'rina, you probably don't feel like you achieved your goals. Until you've seen Nideo... until you see Apostolos—

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...and Columnar ships landing on Palisade. Right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then Miseri— I guess what is even your goal at this point, if you've gotten rid of your Motive?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [half-chuckling] I guess to have fun!

SYLVI: It's to like...

DRE: Fight forever. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Fight forever.

SYLVI: [half-giggling] Pretty much! Like I think it's like... "oh I gotta fix— find someone who can fix this mech so I can go fight more people with it"

AUSTIN: Uhuh.

SYLVI: Um. Yeah. I think that there's a big, like... a shrug over the answer to whether or not they achieved their goals.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: Like if they did: great! That's great for their family.

AUSTIN: Hm.

SYLVI: I don't think they...

AUSTIN: "I don't care"

SYLVI: ...are going back now, yeah. You know.

AUSTIN: [reads from rulebook] "What will..." Oh, go ahead. I guess I wanna answer, though "Which faction won the war?" before we answered this next one which is "What will the next war be fought over?"

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But I think we *can* ask: "will either of your pilots be part of it?"

SYLVI: Um... Not in the way they were in this one if they are.

AUSTIN: Right! I could see Miseri becoming a sort of mercenary...

SYLVI: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Just like. You're here to fight, it doesn't matter who, necessarily, at this point. You haven't inherited something you believe in, necessarily.

SYLVI: Yeah. All I inherited was, like... disgrace. Literally. Like...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: That's how I've been trying to play this character, is like: you just inherited a burden...

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: ...and now it's gone. Because people think you're dead!

AUSTIN: Cor'rina, will you fight in the next war? Which...

DRE: Oh, yeah!

AUSTIN: Which will, if your faction— if Apostolos wins this it will be The Pact colonizing Palisade.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: You know. Dea— Sorry! Dealing with “insurgents.”

DRE: Yea-yea-yea-yeah!

[SYLVI sighs]

AUSTIN: You know.

SYLVI: God.

DRE: “Maintaining the integrity of the...”

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: “...the Palisade government.”

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uhuh. Yes. I mean, this is an opportunity maybe to talk a little bit about a couple of things. Before we maybe make that decision. Though it feels like we're leaning in a certain direction, at this point. Which is interesting. Um... The things I want to talk about are about Armour Astir, and how Armour Astir works. Um... You might be listening and thinking “why is it that it can't be both... you know, The Curtain *and* The Pact take territory on Palisade?” And the answer is, like yeah, we could do that. But the way that Armour Astir's structured is that you have a Cause which is the player character's broader faction which they are part of. They're not the *whole* of it, but they are a sort of— You know, in Beam Saber terms you can think of them as a Squad inside of the Faction, right? The same way that... you know, inside of the Faction of Millennium Break there was the Squad that was SBBR, right? Inside of Kesh there was The Rapid Evening. And then there is the Authority. And the Authority is made— is a unified thing that in the structure of the game is kind of defending a collection of, sort of locations or, um... you know... programs or, you know — I think of them a lot in Netrunner terms as being the Agendas that a Netrunner Corporation has — that are called Pillars. And as long as they can control those Pillars, they maintain control over the territory and the— The Authority is made up of three different kind of sub-factions, basically. And, you know, in season one that could have been The Principality plus, you know, three Stels. Right. Or plus The Curtain and The Pact and Orion or something like that. Right? Because they're still fundamentally loosely affiliated on the same side, but the player characters are against them. Obviously, we were not there yet at the beginning of PARTIZAN.

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: The point of PARTIZAN was that there was no revolutionary movement. Especially not at the *heart* of The Principality. Maybe there were on the edges. Certainly, there were in places that were currently being colonized. But the The Principality's terror is that it's so fucking good at shutting down any sort of oppression— Sorry. Any sort of *resistance* that even in the most oppressive places the resistance gets squashed before it can... kind of become something larger, a more collective movement. And so the way that Armour Astir works is that there is a sort of um Faction Turn, a Conflict Turn in which the Authority has to manage um... its programs, while... the Cause, the greater Cause fights back. And like, you— I could theoretically do— You know, if the end of this was that just for Palisade The Principality decides to put its differences aside and land on Palisade together and create some sort of coalition government...

[SYLVI groan-sighs]

AUSTIN: ...between each other. And like, we could do that and have The Pact be one arm, and the...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And like, that's *not* nothing. That's not...

SYLVI: Definitely.

AUSTIN: ...a terrible idea. That's kind of fun. But it's not as incisive! You know?

SYLVI: It does kind of become like, a story about them trying to turn this planet into a second Partisan.

AUSTIN: Right. Right!

DRE: Uhum.

SYLVI: Which like, is a little on-the-nose for a sequel!

[03:23:00] Revision of The Ending

AUSTIN: Hello, this is Austin from the future — or the past, I guess. The future in a sense, if you're listening to the Live version of this, because I'm recor—

[SYLVI snickers]

AUSTIN: we're recording this *after* the episode streamed. But if you're listening to this either on the mp3 form— I guess that's the thing. You're— It's the future of when I've recor— when we've recorded the original episode.

SYLVI: Uhum.

AUSTIN: But only by a day. And it's all still the past to you, if you're listening to it in the mp3 feed. Because it'll be after we've recorded it. And not— You're not seeing the future somehow. [chuckles] With us talking. That's not how it works. It has to be the past. What's the Mitch Hedberg joke?

SYLVI: Oh, god.

AUSTIN: This is a picture of how— [chuckles] what I used to look like? Yeah...

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: That's just called a picture!

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: Something like that!

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, we... So my guess is that this going to go in place of a lot of conversation that we had during the livestream last night. In which we were trying to figure out how to square the circle of wanting the endings for your two characters to be indeterminate/a draw. Which we really love, and you'll still hear more of that stuff *after* where I'm dropping this in. Because I wanna end on those notes and not on the kind of big factional notes. But we didn't know how to represent that with the Nideo and Apostalos... stuff. Right? Because we knew Cor'rina and Miseri were going to do the thing where they fall on Palisade together. Which we've already kinda set up. Which you'll hear more about in a second. We're really torn on "but does one side win over the other?" "how do we determine that?" Um. "Is it a tie?" I've suggested a very convoluted thing where they can both end up the same Authority as part of a civic manager style arrangement. But then...

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: ...still have ties to the... And just none of that really sat well with me over the night.

SYLVI: Yeah...

AUSTIN: I don't know if that's true for y'all, also...

SYLVI: Yeah, nah. Yeah. I was like— Very much felt like we did a very long recoding...

AUSTIN: Yes!

SYLVI: ...and we're tired...

AUSTIN: ...and we wanna wrap up.

SYLVI: ...that just wraps it up...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: ...but it doesn't necessarily feel like what I would want for us going forward.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: Like, as storytellers.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Exactly. And so, our options, again, really come down to— And I think, maybe the thing is. Reflecting the fact that the two of you fought to a standstill, and decided to— neither of you decided to pull— were in the position to pull the trigger. I mean—

SYLVI: Uhum.

AUSTIN: ...metafictionally, play-game-wise neither of you'd wanted to pull the trigger.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And be the win— take the dub. But... *fictionally*, you fought to a standstill, where both of you did— gave it your all, and the result was neither of you dying. I think the thing that makes the most sense is that the other side still kind of exists as a player on the board, but does not necessarily... win. Um... You know, one side wins, kind of— One side is the Authority, the other may still pop up in, you know, a more real way than maybe what would have been the case, had one of you definitively won. If that makes sense. Does that seem fair to both of you?

SYLVI: Yea.

DRE: Uhum!

AUSTIN: And then— so then what we're left with is the choice here, is like: is it that Nideo and The Curtain control Palisade, lead the kind of colonization of Palisade? Colonization not in the Civilization, videogame, "oh, there's nothing here, and you landed here..."

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: "...and you just get to do whatever you want! And it's just— it's just plant life!"

SYLVI: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: "And some bears." But like— There are people down on Palisade. Or, and then have Apostolos as a third party — or fourth party — you know, trying to involve themselves and The Pact, you know, along with Apostolos. Or does Apostolos take it over and then The Curtain continues to try and undermine them. In a real way. And those are the kinda, two big

choices. Um... and obviously, Millenium Break will be the part of the Player Faction. Maybe not all of the Player Faction. But a key part of the Player Faction. As we'll play that game. Where do y'all feel in terms of like— of the two... which appeals more to you in terms of The Curtain or The Pact getting control?

[silence]

SYLVI: [sighs] God. I think— Sorry. I just had— Again.

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVI: I'm just constantly double checking—

AUSTIN: We'll get back to...

DRE: No. Same! [laughs]

AUSTIN: We'll get back to it. The Curtain...

SYLVI: I'm leaning towards Curtain here.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: No, me too.

SYLVI: Because the fun thing that that does is that lets The Pact position themselves as good guys. [nervous chuckle]

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVI: I mean, they'd be...

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: ...as liberators!

SYLVI: ...positioning themselves as that either way.

AUSTIN: Right. But it gives them a literal "you people are being oppressed by this outside group."

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: "Let us, a different outside group come in and save the day." Right?

SYLVI: Uhum!

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um. Which, presumably— And I mean, I'm happy to say this outright: my idea— my plan is for some of these other game is to talk about Millennium Break building relationships with the people on Palisade. And like, responding to a *particular* call for aid, versus [chuckles] imposing themselves. [clears throat] And what that might look like. So I think that that makes sense. I think the idea that what follows after this— And I think kind of reflects a little bit of some of the — I don't have the sheets open right now, because we're recording a day later — but it also reflects some of... what we'd set up... um... narratively and fictionally with the way The Curtain and The Pact were kind of positioned here. You know, Apostolos is still across... the bulk of the Apostolos is across that dark space arm, right? So like, this is Nidean territory, it makes a little more sense for Nideo to close in on this stuff... uhm... and take the final control of this place. Maybe that's what it even looks like? Is like: "Yeah, Apsotolos maybe controlled the Base... the Portcullis for most of this fight, but all it takes is Nideo to take it over. Which like we know Nideo, for instance has The Divine Present that can teleport anywhere, right? It's so easy to imagine "oh yeah, she teleports in and takes over this base;" and then turns on the Gate; and then a bunch of additional Nideo people come in. You know what I mean?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or whatever, right? And I think, also... one of the things that's kind of interesting is that we talked about Miseri losing the kind of— I guess gaining the R&D crew...

SYLVI: Uhum.

AUSTIN: ...losing the "feared" Reputation and all of that — and I just really love the two images of these two characters becoming, um... kind of propaganda for their respective sides. Miseri becoming the person who's like, you know: they died for the cause. You know? He...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: He gave his life. You get your— Have you thought of a name for Miseri? A last name?

SYLVI: It's been *one* day.

AUSTIN: I know. I know!

[DRE giggles]

SYLVI: I haven't figured that yet...

AUSTIN: Listen. I know.

SYLVI: But I would love to.

AUSTIN: Yes!

SYLVI: I wish I had one to just pull out here, so...

AUSTIN: No. No worries. But yeah. Miseri's name— you know, surname gets re— gets reintroduced. You know, their family gets their name back. It becomes like— Maybe either Miseri or a popul— A version of Miseri, or Misericorde becomes a popular name for babies born in Nideo space that year.

SYLVI: Oh my go-od!

AUSTIN: You know what I mean? It's like...

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You gave yourself so that people can take Palisade.

SYLVI: I did mention something about their sibling being more diplomatically focused...

AUSTIN: 100%

SYLVI: ...and using that as a stepping stone sounds perfect.

AUSTIN: I think— Yeah. 100%! You know, this is the Garma speech. Right? In... again, more for Dre than Sylvi. Sylvi, if you have seen Original...

SYLVI: [laughs] I'm working on it!

AUSTIN: You're working on it!

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: I guess spoilers! A character named Garma dies very early on in *Mobile Suit Gundam*. And his brother uses it as a springboard to kinda become the face of Zeon. Gihren. Gihren Zabi takes over the Zabi family, effectively, and rall... It's just a Nazi speech. You know?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's just 100% Gihren doing his Adolf Hitler impression. And it's also before his also fascist dad [half-chuckles] tells him. Pulls him aside like: "you know about this guy Adolf Hitler? I'm a little worried you're becoming like him!" [chuckles]

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: OH MY GOD!

DRE: God.

AUSTIN: [half-chuckling] It's wild!

DRE: I forgot about that.

AUSTIN: Aha.

DRE: Aaah...

AUSTIN: Gundam is...

DRE: What a time!

AUSTIN: Gundam is wild!

SYLVI: ...Zero politics in that show.

AUSTIN: Oh, no-no... Only modern mecha shows have themes in them...

SYLVI: [chuckling] Yeah!

AUSTIN: ...and characters.

DRE: Uhum.

SYLVI: For sure!

AUSTIN: That's not a... core thing.

SYLVI: [chuckling] Evangelion was the first—

AUSTIN: Yeah, that was the first time—

SYLVI: ...ever to tell a story!

AUSTIN: “You know, it's interesting. It's like other mecha shows—”

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: “...but it's more about the characters!” Uum...

SYLVI: [exhausted] Ohh!

AUSTIN: Anyway... [his bit gets a second wind] “It's about trauma, unlike other mecha shows... um...”

[SYLVI laughs]

DRE: Yea-yea-yeah.

AUSTIN: But then the other half of this... I think, Dre, you tell me, but it's easy to imagine Cor'rina being the kind of posterchild for [clears throat] "give it all you can, to save the— Cor'rina knew what was at stake!" You know?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And maybe even allowed for the... maybe you stopping Miseri from... destroying these ships opens up the possibility that like... some Apostolosians escaped. Um... I mean, you tell me. Do you think that myth for you is that you died a martyr? Or is it that you're still out there building a resistance? What's more fun for you?

DRE: Aaaaahhhh! I think the myth of Cor'rina having died a martyr is more fun.

AUSTIN: Okay. But is actu—

DRE: But is definitely out there doing the latter.

AUSTIN: [half-giggling] Doing the latter!

DRE: Air quotes "resistance fighter."

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Air quotes or hashtag.

SYLVI: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah. Yeah, aha.

AUSTIN: [chuckles] Perfect! So yeah, I think I like that. And that means that going into PALISADE, we're looking at a Pal— We're looking at a nation of— or the planet of Palisade being conquered by the Authority that is Stel Nideo and Stel Kesh. The Curtain. A more traditionalist, um, monarchist, you know, kind of deeply reactionary group... ties to a much more feudal form of government. And then as a sort of secondary antagonist, or a kind of, "don't forget that these people are here, too, trying to capitalize on this!" you have The Pact of Necessary Venture positioning themselves as a... sort of reformist group that— You know? Would I rather live under them, than under the feudalists? Probably. Are they also here to exploit people and, you know, maybe introduce a few more layers of... you know, deflection? Or layers of... kind of indirect control? Yes. 100% [chuckles] So... I think that seems fun to me. That seems like a good... beat. Any other stuff at this grander war level that we wanna talk about before we talk about before we talk about your particular characters? Any other images— final images of these fleets or your NPC... squad members...?

SYLVI: Well, if we're trying to... I was wondering if, like... this also decides which side's mechs come on first.

AUSTIN: Uumm... Uhum!

SYLVI: Because we talked about that standstill, right? So...

AUSTIN: Yeah. So do you think it's...

SYLVI: I can see those powering on.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So you think that that is thanks to your... R&D crew? Echelon Leson gets those ships back— gets everybody back online quick enough?

SYLVI: Yeah. I mean, we described it as the reason why my mech was able to move was because of... I don't...

AUSTIN: Echelon's work?

SYLVI: ...have pronouns figured out with Echelon. Echelon's work, yeah.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Ehm, I can imagine it also being one of those things that's like... everyone's watching you from their cockpits, and the way it gets written about in Nidean— So, remember, Nideo is our propagandist faction, in a real way. Right? Um. There is a movie about Miseri within the year, you know? [chuckling] *Besides* the version that Alise Breka has written. Um... People are wearing Miseri T-shirts, you know? They're wearing army fatigues and Misericorde T-shirts.

SYLVI: Oh my god!

AUSTIN: And... um...

SYLVI: The fucking scary mech been like— There's an SD Gundam version of it now...

AUSTIN: Oh, 100%! Yea-yea-yeah. You get the Battle Damaged Version of it that has only one beam saber left. Right?

SYLVI: [whispering] God!

AUSTIN: Um. [laughs] And I think that like, the way that people tell the story is like... "it actually wasn't the technology — it was the belief that brought everything back online, all at the same time," or "The Mirage combined with the Kalmeria Particle and the Perennial Wave, and the Nidean ships just turned on, because of our belief in our noble cause." [half-chuckling] And, you know...

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: ...obviously bullshit. You know? It's The Mirage just maybe retreated in that direction sooner, or the Perennial Wave diminished there first, or whatever. But you know how people talk about it. You know? And... Cor'rina, I think maybe, again, similarly for you.

Do you think this Apostolosian fleet dies here? Do you think that they get away? Do you think they retreat somewhere, to kind of...?

DRE: No, I think they get away.

AUSTIN: ...prowl? Okay. I can imagine them now cut off maybe from— Because you have to imagine after all this happens is Nideo basically makes that sort of — what we're calling this southern border between these two big galactic arms — it kinda reinforces it. Right? It has to build a sort of blockade there to prevent this incursion. The thing we didn't really focus on, is like this is WILD that this has happened. This is the first time that we've seen an entire Stel *truly* try to take territory from another Stel, especially in the middle of that Stel's territory. Do you know what I mean? It's like... in a way it is all naval warfare, in a way, when we talk about space warfare.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: That ends up being the thing that we can compare it to the most. But... This is like the difference between, you know, two people fighting via land, and then Apostolos arriving across the ocean that is black space between these two galactic arms. Where there's no place to refuel, no place to dock, and— You know, making that trip is like, *truly* surprising. And then like, to punch into the middle of it... Do you think they all go back to that black space, and, you know, just kinda chill there? Do they become roaming pirate-styl— you know, not pirates, or privateers, 'cause there's— I guess privateers are sort of official in a way. But you know what I mean.

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Like, hit-and-run guerilla-style units... Do they become... do they hunker down somewhere, and start building a rapport on some other planet? And quote-unquote "liberate" some other Nidean world? What do they do?

DRE: [sighs] I like the idea more of the hunkering down. Especially if they still have that Portcullis...?

AUSTIN: I think they would've lost that Portcullis, 'cause it's this system's Portcullis.

DRE: No, that's right. Yea-yeah.

AUSTIN: They get to keep it.

DRE: Yeah. But yeah, okay. Well then, maybe *then* that's why they go to another, a smaller Nidean colony or space station or something. And then kind of steal that and use it as their base of operations.

AUSTIN: That makes sense. So they're slowly building— They're still in Nidean space, still trying to like, cut off... or build a base of operations. It's not as important as what Palisade was, but it's still going to give them the inroad from which they can start to try to make Nideo fight a war on multiple fronts, basically. Love it. Alright. Well, then. We should talk about how

your characters end up in a more personal, you know just their fates sense. So I'm going to now throw back to us from last night. To ask the kind of final game-ending questions. So. Here we go.

[03:38:55] Epilogue

AUSTIN: [continued] But let's get back to Miseri and Cor'rina right now for your final little epilogue. [reads from rulebook] "Conclusion: Then, describe a short image of your pilot sometime after Scene Three. Use up to two or three resources from your Datafile as inspiration. Maybe they're lamenting something that was Destroyed, or enjoying something that wasn't, or giving up something that has no purpose in their life anymore. Give an idea of what life is like now. Your pilot may have died in the course of Last Shooting, which means getting a bit more creative in your Ending." That didn't happen at this point, so we don't need to do that.

SYLVI: Yeh.

AUSTIN: But! it's worth saying [continues reading] "The Ending's purpose is to give you closure, however you believe it would be best to close out your Pilot's story."

[pause]

DRE: Can you take us back to the screen with the Datafiles on it?

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Oh, I went back there and forgot to bring y'all back. Apologies.

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: There we go. Yes! Really quick, I do want to build on things— Lily Evans in the chat: "Sounds complicated for Cor'rina and their views on what cor is there for" I actually, that is exactly the thing I like about it the most. Is the idea that Cor'rina would come out of the wilderness to see there... see cor's, you know, own people now working with Nideo and be like: "but wait a sec— wait! We just fought a whole war over this!"

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That to me is the first thing we've... I mean or does cor just double down? And go like: "well, yeah. This is of cou— Okay, yeah. They're finally coming around. They're finally seeing the vision!" You know!

[DRE groans]

AUSTIN: Either one is fun...

DRE: I genuinely don't know! Yeah.

AUSTIN: We don't need to answer that today. I mean, what I do need is a short image of your pilot sometime after Scene Three. I kinda wanna do the Fiasco thing of going back and forth with little short scenes, you know? I guess we already kind of got one from Miseri hopping out of—

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...out of their mech, right? And out of their cockpit, smiling. What's the first image we see of cor coming out of... cor's mech?

DRE: Oh, that's a good question! Umm! [pause] Man, do you think— Did they land together?

AUSTIN: It sounded like it. Because of the...

SYLVI: Yeah.

DRE: Yea-yeah.

AUSTIN: ...The Shield protected both of you. And you were locked together with the beam saber. Right?

SYLVI: I mean, there could be some drift after... They could have gotten like, sort of slightly separated after like, the beam saber burnt out.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: With the shield burning up. But like...

DRE: Uhum.

SYLVI: Yeah. I feel like—

DRE: No—

SYLVI: ...they are at least near each other...

DRE: Yea-yea-yeah.

SYLVI: ...like geographically.

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVI: Depending on how you want to do this.

DRE: Uumm... I think the first scene of cor is like getting out and looking at like, the damage their mech took... And like, pocketing a shard of the destroyed Shield.

AUSTIN: Ouuh! That's fun.

[pause]

SYLVI: Okay.

AUSTIN: What's the next image we see of the two of you? Do you end up doing the classic "you work together to survive in the wilderness" thing?

SYLVI: Do you want to?

DRE: Oh! Gotta!

SYLVI: Okay, sure.

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: Which again mirrors now what we've said has happened with The Curtain and The Pact, right? In a weird way. Here on the planet. What's it look like? What are our images? Give me this montage!

SYLVI: [quietly] God. Um...

[pause]

DRE: How— like, how self-sufficient is Miseri? Is he just used to having like, people do shit for him?

SYLVI: Like— like a little, I think. I think that there's a level of like... he's self-sufficient in the way a soldier can be, but not necessarily the way someone who like, knows how to survive can be.

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVI: Like... I think that he is a pilot and like has worked as a pilot. So like, he can do mechanical stuff and like, knows like some basics if you get shot down. But I don't think that he is like... For example I don't know if he like, knows how to build a shelter overnight, or anything.

AUSTIN: Uhum.

SYLVI: He's been taught like, "here's how you send a distress flare..." Not necessarily...

AUSTIN: "Here's your solar blanket." Or whatever.

SYLVI: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: But you don't necessarily have...

SYLVI: Here's what you need for like, 24 hours — not four weeks at a time.

AUSTIN: So is that something you have to rely on Cor'rina for?

SYLVI: Yeah, I think so. I think I'm trying to learn it, too. Um... I think there's a lot of like... balancing wanting to get my mech fixed so I can fight them again...

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Uhum!

SYLVI: [half-chuckling] ... and trying to just make sure we both don't die out here. A lot of like "Stop fucking tinkering with your stupid beam sabers right now!"

[DRE laughs]

SYLVI: "We need to get food!"

AUSTIN: Aha! You've no interest in fighting hand to hand, huh? You want it to be in the mechs?

SYLVI: It's— Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's not the same.

SYLVI: It's not the same.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: It's like... There's something there! Like... when it comes to fighting like— Hand-to-hand combat isn't like, a thing that Miseri's shied away from, I think. Like, that's part of the scars that they have.

AUSTIN: Uhum!

SYLVI: But... it's also not... It doesn't give them the rush that piloting does.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Perfect. Um... Do we wanna— How much further do we want the camera to go? In terms of: do we want to leave them— Do we wanna leave here, where it's the two of them surviving... I mean, where are they? We talked about it being a beach. Or I mentioned it. I like it—

SYLVI: Yeah, you did mention a beach...

AUSTIN: I like the image of it being on a beach.

SYLVI: ...and my mind immediately went: "ah yes! The ending of Kingdom Hearts 2!"

DRE: Uhum.

AUSTIN: Oh, sure.

DRE: Sure, yea-yea-yeah!

[SYLVI laughs]

AUSTIN: I was thinking of a seas— an arc in a... I won't say which but in a Gundam series. I won't spoil it for people who may have not watched it yet. But yes. Um... But yeah. Do we want to see further... from this point? Do we want to see them meeting people? Do you want to see them getting their mix fixed? Or do we wanna leave it here, with all that up in the air?

SYLVI: I kind of like leaving it a little open-ended.

AUSTIN: Let's do it.

DRE: Yeah, same.

AUSTIN: Let's leave it here. Then I guess... Any final images from— at this point in the situation between the two of them?

[pause]

SYLVI [quietly] I don't know. I might be out of ideas here...

AUSTIN: I have a question.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I have one final question. And then...

SYLVI: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah, sure!

AUSTIN: ...this is my last one. Which is like. You know... You've reached something like stability, at the very least. You're not— you know where your next two meals are gonna come from. Or next three meals.

SYLVI: [softly] Uhum.

AUSTIN: You're pretty sure you have a direction where you *think* that there might be some sort of facility where you can go get some parts that you need. Something abandoned, left behind by The Principality of old. And it strikes you, for the first time... Or maybe it doesn't. I'll just give you the stimulus, you tell me what you feel. But it's a very clear night. And when you look up you can see The Mirage. You can see it... like, moving in to your kind of field of vision. Right? It's like dancing along the sky with the purples and oranges and blues and the

greens and all those colors. That we associate with so many things, because we've been to The Mirage in a previous season. But... what's your character think? At night, when they look up and see it? What's their emotional reaction to... that thing that so many people they know fought and died to, kind of reach out and grab?

[pause]

SYLVI: [sighs] I think it's hard to... [clears throat] I think it's hard to look at that and not feel awe, right? Like... regardless of how... jaded an existence Miseri's lead... it's like... it's... it is like that: just an experience that you can't really describe to people. Like the same way they felt when they got into space for the first time.

AUSTIN: Um.

SYLVI: And... Yeah. I don't know. There's a... feeling of... [sighs] There's something refreshing about it? This whole situation?

AUSTIN: Uhum!

SYLVI: In a weird way? [chuckles] It's like "oh I get to... figure out why I'm fighting now!" Instead of being told why I'm supposed to...

[AUSTIN chuckles]

SYLVI: Fighting is still obviously going to happen, that's integral to [chuckles] this man's identity, apparently!

AUSTIN: Apparently! Cor'rina?

DRE: Uh. Yeah, sorry! I just had like, weird technical difficulties for a second...

AUSTIN: Oh, shit!

DRE: So, like...

SYLVI: Oh!

DRE: No, everything's okay! My USB hub just like, lost power.

AUSTIN: [scared yeesh-like noise]

DRE: So my computer was just like, making lots of like beep boop noises.

[SYLVI & AUSTIN laugh]

SYLV: [laughing] Oh no!

DRE: But nothing that like, is podcast-related run through the USB hub...

AUSTIN: Uh, okay.

DRE: So it's fine.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Uh, sorry. What— what question am I answering?

[Everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: [chuckling] I did this kind of long, tortured explanation of looking up and seeing The Twilight Mirage in all of its beauty. And wondering what your character thinks of it now from this perspective, knowing how many people died trying to reach out and kind of grab it.

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: And now you're looking up at it and it's right there. And it like, swims in and out of your perspective. It kind of fades in and out of view. You know? Sometimes it's all around you, sometimes it's almost at a distance. Just a light in the distance. You know?

DRE: Yeah. Um... [pause] "This is so beautiful everyone who can see this deserves to be free."

[AUSTIN chuckles]

SYLVI: [whispering] God.

AUSTIN: U-huh. Love it. Alright. And on that note that's going to do it for us! Thank you all for playing! And again, this game is Last Shooting. The cover art — which you've seen throughout most of the game — is by Si Sweetman. You'll find Si's work at sisweetman.artstation.com.² You can find this game at— I want to get the exact thing right — it's: my-name-is-grant.itch.io. It is, again, a sort of hack of Vel Mini's Final Bid which is— Final Bid is like a... It's like a fictional film— it's a version of this with for more than two players, where you're bidding off parts of your characters in order to control the story of the... the kind of movie that you're playing. The one that I've seen done is the kind of wild west version of this. So again you can imagine how you might have, like: "Well, this is my hat. And then this is my six-shooter. Then this is, you know, my relationship with the bartender." And you know, stuff like that. But you can do a bunch of different genre stuff using Final Bid. It's really cool. So people should check that out! That is at uh liberigothica.itch.io. So check that out also. We'll be back with another episode of the Road to PALISADE in the [uncertainly] coming... weeks! Hopefully, next week. But you know how schedules are. We're doing our best to stay on these. So... Yes! Grant notes it's also available on [drivethroughrpg](https://drivethroughrpg.com) if you want a print-on-demand version. So, enjoy! Alright. Thanks so much for joining us everybody! Bye!

² Si doesn't have an Artstation (which is a mistake on Austin's behalf), therefore the link redirects to his website sisweetman.com

