

[Twilight Mirage 28: This Year of Ours: The Scoundrel](#)

Transcribed by geounstationary (Jess) [0 - 33:00] and thedreadbiter [33:01-1:16:24]

--

AUSTIN (as Narrator): An excerpt from the journal of Grey Gloaming, co-owner of the Brink space station and clearing house, and former agent of the Rapid Evening.

AUSTIN (as Grey Gloaming): I used to wonder if, sometime, deep in the future, far away from the here and now, someone would look back from a more perfect world and write about this year we've had. It has been eleven months since the Miracle of the Mirage.

[Music - "The Scoundrel" by Jack de Quidt begins & plays under - echoing piano]

AUSTIN (as Grey Gloaming): Eleven months since the living world of Quire split itself eight ways and enveloped us in the Twilight. Eleven months since millions disembarked from their generational homes in search of hope. [bass and wordless vocals enter] Eleven months since the secessionist ploy was foiled. Eleven months since a man of great reach was forced to confront the limits of his grasp.

Once borne across the stars, the newly renamed Divine Free States now sprawl across three worlds: [beeping synth enters] Thyrsus, Gift-3, Altar. Across three others, the New Earth Hegemony has colonized en masse: tens of millions spread across Skein, Crown, and Moonlock. The pirate world Brighton recognizes no authority—not even its own. [bass drops out] And on Seneschal the NEH and DFS live alongside each other in an experiment whose success is even more unlikely than the twisting of time, the distortion of space, and the horrors of Volition.

[percussion and swirling synth] And between those world, things must move. People, supplies, contraband. They move in silent exchange, with lookouts and passwords and bribes. And that is how I know that whatever words are put to page, no one will ever [music hushes] really write about this year of ours.

[synth, percussion and vocals glitching back in] Because this year was not only made by politicians and soldiers, by spies and scientists. It was built by the hands of those who came from little and those who fell from grace.

Those... like Grand Magnificent.

[fading vocals]

[2:17 - intro ends]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends.

I am your host, Austin Walker, and over the course of this next full week of episodes—one every day, Thursday to Thursday—we will be finding out what the main characters of the Twilight Mirage have been doing in the year that followed the holiday specials that just aired. And also we'll talk about how we are transferring those characters over from The Veil, which is the game that we used for the first season of the Twilight Mirage, over to Scum and Villainy, which is the game that we are now going to pick up, going forward.

Each episode is going to go over the character's new playbook, some of their moves and equipment, some of the thought patterns that went into that switch, some of the big picture ideas about what those characters have been up to, and then we're also doing, for each of these, a short vignette—I know I just heard Ali laughing as I said the word “short,” these were supposed to be fifteen minute vignettes, but it was fifteen minutes of Austin-Walker-Time, which means very sizeable vignettes—with each of the characters, that lets us see them kind of in action, so to speak. And all of this is kind of gonna tie up together as to how they're all still working together going forward. So, even if you are not a big fan of mechanics, and like, “Oh, what sort of gear did they take?” and stuff like that, these should still have some good juicy scenes just for you. So stay tuned for that.

If you *are* interested in hearing about how we are doing this, though, and about why we're doing it and putting in all this work, definitely take a look at our Patreon, which you can find at friendsatthetable.cash, C-A-S-H, or at patreon.com/friends_table. We have two levels that kind of are digging into this over the next couple of months. One of them is the \$10 Mapmaker level and one of them is the \$50 Pusher level. And we're releasing a bunch of info about the process that we're going through. We actually already put up a bunch of info about the first half of the season, some of the stuff we didn't get to, the entire, uncovered map of Quire is there at the \$10 level and some of the kind of info about that stuff is all up there. And at the \$50 Pusher level, I actually released a ton of information about what the first half of the game was designed like and kind of what some of the thought process was about trying to do this kind of big open world thing in Quire, and then on top of that, at the \$50 level, we are, um. We released an episode, an extra bonus episode for Pusher tier patrons, that was Jack, Ali, and I talking about how we decided to do everything from kind of Godspeed, Glory, which is the kind of crossover episode, through the holiday special and into these new kind of vignette-driven episodes. And kind of the thought process there, and about how we kind of came to the decision over donuts and coffee at the little donut shop near my apartment, while Jack was visiting in the fall. And, y'know, there's going to be even more stuff to come on top of that. We're gonna release the new character sheets and a bunch of faction info for everybody at the Mapmaker level, which is the \$10 level. And at the Pusher level, we'll be digging even deeper into character creation and inspiration.

And I did just want to say, because a couple of people have asked about this recently. People have asked if it's okay to bump their pledge up for a single month just to gain access to the new stuff and to the old stuff that's been kind of growing at those tiers in the last six months. And yes, absolutely, it's a thing I've done in the past as a patron a bunch, I'm totally okay with people who do that. There is a ton of good stuff at the Pusher and Mapmaker levels. For instance, a thing I think maybe a lot of people don't know about, I made character sheets for every member of The Beloved, including, like, Messalia, and Morning's Observation, and Chiron, and Waltz Tango Cache, like all of those characters have character sheets for The Veil that are all available at the \$10 Mapmaker level. And, like, yeah, if you want to like log in and check those out, they all have fancy fonts, it's fun. And, yeah, bump up to a \$10 level for just a month, that's totally okay. Or if you're excited by this change to Scum and Villainy and want to hear more about that and you're like "You know what? I'll spend the fifty bucks this one month", totally okay to do that and then drop back down to five dollars, or one dollar, or whatever you're at now.

And also, just to be clear, to people who are supporting us at those other tiers: whatever money you give us, if you give us a dollar a month, if you give us five dollars a month, whatever you give us, I cannot express my thanks enough. We could not do this without you, I literally mean it, in this instance, literally this thing that we're doing, this ridiculous Thursday to Thursday huge blast of episodes could not exist without your support. Ali couldn't have done the production work on them without this becoming her main job. And so, thank you so much for letting us do that.

And also, honestly, thank you so much to Jack and Ali, this thing that we're doing is one of the biggest, strangest things we've done, we are really trying to push things here and try out something new and see what we can do with the format. And so thank you to Jack, who has done a lot of composition, to Ali, who has done so much production work to make all of this possible. I love working with you both. And if you hear this, please know that I am so proud and joyous to be able to work side-by-side with both of you and with everybody else in the cast, every week. So, without further ado, today's episode, joining me is Art Tebbel — aka Grand Magnificent.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Tell me about your year. At this point it is, it is like... we're coming in like eleven months and two weeks after the Miracle of the Mirage — the so-called Miracle of the Mirage — and I'm curious, what's your year been like?

ART: [click noise] [Austin laughs] I just wanna preface that by saying that earlier today I came up with a great like "blank is my middle name" for Grand Magnificent and I didn't write it down and I can't remember it at all and I —

AUSTIN: This is hell.

ART: I'm basically ready to quit this season. Just like.

AUSTIN: That's the worst.

ART: I'm out, I'll see you back in Hieron.

AUSTIN: Can we just guess? Grand "Fucking" Magnificent.

ART: No, it was something — it was a non sequitur. It was one of those like... [AUSTIN: Grand—] I was looking at some kind of move and like wondering what it would be like to do the move and what someone would say. It's like, "Oh, blah blah blah's my middle name." And it's like... like, Grand "Integrity" Mag — that wasn't it, but like.

AUSTIN: That wasn't it. Yeah.

ART: [exhale]

AUSTIN: It wasn't one of the moves from Scoundrel?

ART: [exhale] No, I think it was just like, like an off-shoot of a move from Scoundrel.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. It wasn't Tenacious?

ART: Oh, it might have been Tenacious.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Grand "Tenacious" Magnificent is really good.

ART: Uhm. He's not. I mean, I guess maybe he is now. That's the thing. That's what we've done with Grand Magnificent. Um.

AUSTIN: Let's just talk about what the year was like. Actually — let's talk about mechanics first, and then we'll talk about the year.

ART: Ok. Yeah.

AUSTIN: So you're playing the Scoundrel!

ART: I am gonna play the Scoundrel, yeah. It was rough, there were some... there were some... oh, there was a conversation about whether it should be something else and we... [AUSTIN: Yeah.] didn't go that way.

AUSTIN: [over Art] I think that's true for—

ART: [amused] And I just ended up taking a lot from the other one.

AUSTIN: Yeah... the... uhm... You and a few other people definitely had a harder time of making a pure transition, but also, I think that was better, because [ART: Mmm...] the characters who were having a hard time coming over directly were having a harder time because they changed, partially. Right, like.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, there isn't an Aesthetic class here, but there isn't because, thankfully, [amused] or maybe not thankfully, Grand Mag kind of hung it up. Right, the closest thing for you was going to be Mechanic. The closest thing for Ali, too, would have been Mechanic, as like, hacker type thing.

ART: Sure, did neither of us end up taking Mechanic, is that the...

AUSTIN: [over Art] Neither of you took Mechanic. No, neither of you took Mechanic. Anyway, the point is, we went Scoundrel. After looking at other —

ART: Yeah, we went Scoundrel —

AUSTIN: Other possible things, you went Scoundrel.

ART: Yeah, because. Because we have to like reflect the change in the character, which I— you know, we're going to see in the vignette.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: But, you know, that Grand Mag had a bad year.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ART: But like, he's...

AUSTIN: That— Grand Mag had a bad... Grand Mag had a bad night that turned into a really rough year.

ART: Yeah. Yeah, and there's still like some things I have to work on — out on that. 'Cause like - what's it called? It's not your vice, it's your... uh...

AUSTIN: Yeah, vice is right.

ART: It's vice?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: And I'm trying to like to steer away from the cliché there, but I still haven't figured out what I want to do with it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: But like I do imagine that it's like, he had a really bad day and that bad day turned into like a bad week and then, like, he kind of had that moment where... you know when you like, you

like, you like skip a class and then like you skip that class and you have to skip the next class and then you've like— [cross] and then it's like -- fuck, I haven't been to this class in two weeks.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, Art, I skipped a class sixteen times once, so.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I've been there.

ART: Uh. We're all like — and it's because you've— but it's not real, you've just built it all.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Like no one, no one cared after the first one.

AUSTIN: Right. Yes. You could totally still go to that class and no one gives a fuck. But you're like—

ART: Yeah, but like once you get to sixteen you're like, fucking — what did I? Well, *now* it's over! Like!

AUSTIN: [laughing] Listen, I got a C+ in that class!

ART: Congratulations. Umm.. and I bet like no one's asked you about it in ten years.

AUSTIN: Not once! Cause it was like a bullshit math class I didn't want to go to!

ART: Yeah. Uhm.

AUSTIN: I went for the final. I did good on the final. It was fine.

ART: Yeah, but there's no final here, right?

AUSTIN: Right. Right. Right.

ART: I mean, maybe there is, maybe that's what we're going to get to, but like.. And he was like, well, I can't face my friends anymore, or anyone from my old life, and a lot of people from his old life were probably like "where the fuck did this asshole go?" Like, yeah, fuckin, you looked into the eyes of a god and you blinked, like, fucking, get over it. But he's like dropped off the radar, "can't be with my old friends, like, I'm gonna... I'm gonna wear long sleeve shirts with thumb holes cut into em now."

AUSTIN: [laughing] So that you can't see your sleeves where your tattoos are?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, and also because you're emo.

ART: Right

AUSTIN: Okay, the two reasons to wear long sleeve shirts.

ART: [stammers] With the thumb... the thumb holes.

AUSTIN: The thumb holes, yeah.

ART: Yeah, 'cause it's got... that's important, like, it could just be cold. People wear long sleeves when it's cold.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.

ART: But like... but if you're putting your thumbs into fabric and it's not gloves, you're having a situation.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Same, honestly. So...

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh... So let's talk about just like stat stuff. Name is obviously... is obviously still Grand Magnificent?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I mean, is that true? Do you still go by Grand Magnificent?

ART: Yeah, I don't think.... I don't think...

AUSTIN: [cross] Like, that's your name, we've been over this.

ART: [cross] I don't think he'd change that name, yeah.

AUSTIN: That is your name. It is a mononym. It is like, the whole name is Grand Magnificent.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Yeah, it's a mononym. Most mononyms are not two words, but like, it's the future.

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah.

ART: Um. You wouldn't believe what out there pop stars are like then.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Um. The...

ART: They make Aria Joie look like ... I don't know, who's a boring lady singer? I don't know. Fill it in for yourself.

AUSTIN: Fill it in — your own taste. uh. We've talked about look. Your look is that you have this — you're just like long sleeved shirt. You're not like prepped for adventure at this point, right?

ART: No, I think it's very... I think he's been doing, you know, we say like he — you know, like after he — he moped for a week, and then he got a job moving boxes or something.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

ART: So he's gone from this flamboyant, this is my — I'm performing "camping", to like, yeah, I don't know, I've got— you know, it's a much more utilitarian look.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I picture him wearing like a long john, long sleeved shirt, do you know what I mean?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I bet it's cold in space.

ART: Or you know... Yeah, you know like in TV or the movies where like people go to sea and they're like working at the docks or on a boat and they've got like a hat and a jacket.

AUSTIN: [laughing] People do that in real life, also.

ART: No, I'm pretty sure... that all real world boats are all robots.

AUSTIN: Okay, gotcha. Your heritage is the Memorius, still?

ART: Yes. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Your background, which is like your cultural thing. What did you write down for that, if anything?

ART: I mean, mech designer.

AUSTIN: Is it that you were an artist, basically — mech designer? Okay.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [typing] Okay, mech designer...

ART: Yeah, artist, yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. Um... and then your... your actions. What — so, by default you start with 2 in Sway, which is like your talk-to-people move.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Well, there's like a couple of talk-to-people moves. Sway... is specifically about influencing someone with guile or charm or logic. You might lie to someone's face, you might persuade a sucker to believe you, you might argue the facts with an officer. You could—

[15:00]

AUSTIN: —try to trick people into affection or obedience, but Consorting or Commanding might be better there.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh.

ART: And so I instantly took 1 in Consort because I think that's a little more in character?

AUSTIN: Yeah, and that comes from your heritage, right? That comes from being from Memorius.

ART: Yeah. Or I think, I think we said Rig was Memorius, Consort was... No, it must be the other way, [cross] it must be the other way, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: I think it's the other way. Yeah. Um... 'cause like, you know, you go to a lot of openings, you got to a lot of gala...

ART: So many openings!

AUSTIN: So many openings, so many gallery openings, so many wine tastings, et cetera. So many live performances, and you have to like hang out afterwards, after your friend did the one-man stage show and you're like, "It was fantastic, it was transformative."

ART: Yeah, and it was great.

AUSTIN: MM-hm! Um.

ART: Every gallery opening is awesome.

AUSTIN: [laughs] So that means you — so you have Sway, you have 2 Sway, 2 — or 1 Skulk, which is like sneaking around.

ART: Yeah. Which doesn't feel like super on-brand, but like, whatever, i can— how hard is Skulking, right? How hard is getting a 1 in Skulking?

AUSTIN: I think it's like... I can imagine it being that sort of dock-worker-y thing too, right. I bet you - I bet as part of this, you've done some stuff that's not illegal but is definitely like, "No, listen, Grand, I need you to go deliver this package. I need you to take this through the—through—" and you're like, "but I don't have the clearance." And your boss for this job,

who's just like, a dispatcher, is like, "I don't care that you don't have the clearance. Just go drop off this package." And like... alright. Or—

ART: And I think like probably like, ten, twenty percent of it is just not fucking like walking around like Grand Magnificent anymore.

AUSTIN: Yes, a hundred percent.

ART: Like, like, what if you did that... what if you just dialed it just back down to like a six instead of an eleven?

AUSTIN: I mean, that's the other way of thinking of it, is just, "I don't want to be seen". Right, like?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [emphatically] I don't want to be seen. The sort of days where you, you know, kind of tighten the jacket up a little bit more and like slouch down and look at the ground while you walk around. Like, no one's gonna remember your face. You know?

ART: Yeah, it's pulling that knit cap down a little bit [AUSTIN: Yeah.] and pulling the collar on your jacket a little bit and fuckin—

AUSTIN: Like in the movies. [laughs]

ART: Walking. Yeah. Yeah! Like only people in movies do. [Austin laughs] I wore a winter hat for the first time in five years this week, it was weird.

AUSTIN: It's - I don't like them. I hate them. And it got cold this week, it's like 28 degrees right now. It might be less [ART: Yeah, yeah.] right now 'cause it's nighttime. And I'm mad, I hate it.

ART: Uh—

AUSTIN: Uh. You know what, that's not true, this morning was like cold but brisk, and I kind of liked that. So.

ART: Mm.

AUSTIN: So what are your other stats? So, right now I have 2 Sway, I have 1 Consort, I have 1 Rig, 1 Skulk.

ART: I took 2 Rig.

AUSTIN: So you took another — you put another point into Rig.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And where's your last one?

ART: Scramble.

AUSTIN: Which is like running and jumping and stuff.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: I figure that's a good...

AUSTIN: Yeah. So, Rig, again, is like mechanical junk, right? Rig is fixing stuff, designing stuff.

ART: Yeah, you can't take the fixing out of the...

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Out of the boy.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So maybe some of the work you've been doing, too, has been like... fixing stuff.

ART: Like, yeah, like he's super the guy they go to when the forklift doesn't work, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. Yes, 100%. Um cool. So then abilities. What do we got? By default, you start with Serendipitous, which means your crew starts with +1 Gambit when the poll resets. Gambit is a new currency in Scum and Villainy, which is a bonus dice that you can spend to get a +1 on stuff, right?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. Um. What else did you take?

ART: I took Never Tell Me The Odds.

AUSTIN: Okay, which says?

ART: Which is I can get a Gambit when spending a Gambit?

AUSTIN: So normally the thing with Gambit is that when you — so... so... There's a lot of ways to get bonus dice in this system. So if you spend a gambit you get a bonus die. And the only way, normally, to get back a Gambit is to roll a 6 or a critical when taking a risky action during which you did not spend a Gambit.

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: So if you roll a 6 or a critical 'cause you did a thing, you would get a Gambit as long as it was Risky, which means not Desperate and not Controlled — specifically this middle ground Risky — but with Never tell Me The Odds, you like are a Gambit machine.

ART: Sure. What is the other one? Oh yeah! And I was gonna — did you talk to Keith? Should I...

AUSTIN: Uhhh.... He just linked in rough order what his most interesting ones are. His most interesting ones, in order, do not include — the one you like is Heart to Heart?

ART: And the one that we were thinking about is Old Friends.

AUSTIN: Right 'cause we were debating I Know A Guy vs. Old Friends, right? I Know A Guy is from your class.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So... Old Friends is his highest one.

ART: Right, so I guess I can't take that, although.... Jesus Christ.

AUSTIN: Heart to Heart is his lowest one.

ART: [amused noise] Okay. [pause] So I'll take Heart to Heart. Heart to Heart is exactly like the last move I took in the old game, and I like that.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: It does feel like something — it does feel like that should be my next thing. So maybe I should pick something to bridge that gap.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I wouldn't mind I Know a Guy as the next one, which is the one that's similar to Old Friends. Old Friends is a Speaker Move that says, "whenever you land in a new location, write down a friend you know." And I Know a Guy is, "When you first dock at a port after being away, pick one and ask the GM about a job." And basically you get a job that way. Which could totally be the next thing you pick up. So... let me—

ART: Why — I'm thinking I could start with I Know A Guy and the next thing I pick up could be Heart-to-Heart.

AUSTIN: Oh, totally.

ART: As like Grand kinda like gets back into his old stuff, yeah

AUSTIN: Getting back into it? Yeah, let's do that then.

ART: Sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: Let's go with that, then. That's actually a good idea. Alright, so then, I Know a Guy says "When you first dock at a port after being away, pick one and ask the GM about a job: it's not deadly; it pays well enough; it's not a rush job; it comes a faction you trust; it targets an enemy you have. You may spend 1 cred per additional feature. Though you keep an ear to the ground, sufficient time has to pass for additional jobs to crop at a port, usually a down time or two. The GM will tell you how you hear about the work. It might be a publically available bounty or something a contact reaches out about." I like that one a lot because it immediately positions y'all as a group that takes requests from people, and not just a governmental group, you know?

ART: Yeah, which is important, because. Yeah, we don't want to be The Man.

AUSTIN: Right, you want to walk the line here to some degree, right? Like, the thing that we — we've had a lot of talks internally, and I've done a lot of work internally, trying to figure out what you look like as a group going forward, because the thing you don't want to be is Secret Police of the powerful, who kick down the doors and are just enacting the Secret... you know, you're not close to the people in any way, people in power send you in to do their dirty work. Often outside of their jurisdiction, you know? And you don't also want to be mob justice, right? We tell a lot of stories in our world about vigilantes. [ART: Mm-hm.] Real vigilantes tend to lynch people. That's what vigilante-ism actually has looked like for hundreds of years.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We — especially organized vigilante-ism, right? We're not talking about citizen's arrest stops a killer with a gun, we're talking about like, "Oh yeah, we wear armbands." And like. Whoa, ok, let's not do that.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so this kinda walks the line to some degree. And I like the notion of your character specifically being the one who is called upon by locals when you touch ground and is told, "Hey, here's a thing you could do to help around here." So... so that's good. I like those a lot. Is there anything else? I think that might be it for your character. We'll- you'll need friends at some point. You have a list here of potential ones. We can also just come up with them.

ART: Yeah

AUSTIN: Also, I love that on the Scoundrel playbook... On every playbook it's like: Adjective Friend. So, Mechanic has Colorful Friends, and Muscle has Deadly Friends, and Mystic has Weird Friends, and Scoundrel has quote-un-quote "Friends". [laughs]

ART: My favourite thing — and I didn't check if this is for every playbook — but there's the list of things you do that get experience.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: And I don't have it in front of me, so you might have to read it for me. But there's one of those that's like - I'm going to have all the levels just right away.

AUSTIN: Which one?

ART: There's one that's like, like being a —

AUSTIN: You- uh- You addressed a tough challenge with charm or audacity?

ART: Yeah, it's audacity, that's the.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh.

ART: I'm gonna...

AUSTIN: Was that your middle name? Is audacity your middle name?

ART: No 'cause that's too true. That's -

AUSTIN: Yeah, I got yah. It's different for each class. So like Mechanic it's technical skill or ingenuity. Muscle it's force or threats. Mystic it's— like, weird shit, probably — wisdom or the way.

ART: All right.

AUSTIN: For you it's audacity, so that's good.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: All right, so I think that's your character for now. We're not going to go over all your equipment and stuff, like that's — we can do that later.

ART: Yeah, and honestly, probably not on a recording - no one cares.

AUSTIN: No.

ART: Well, people care, but like.

AUSTIN: Well, it'll come up when we start missions because you have to pick what you're bringing with you?

ART: Mmm.

AUSTIN: From that big list, but you have all that stuff, which is cool. I think one thing worth noting is you do have a fine sidearm, or a pair of fine sidearms and mystic ammunition, which makes you by default the only character in this group that has a gun that works. Like, regularly.

ART: Yeah, and it's too bad because going by fiction it's not... that's not who should have it

AUSTIN: No! But you do have it! And I like that- that means it is who should have it, right?

ART: Sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: In some way. Right, like I'm glad—

ART: I mean I'm not giving it away.

AUSTIN: No! Absolutely! We'll have to talk about what it is.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like. And where you got it. Like I know where you get the rounds. I know Cascabel sends you those. But like.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's like a just-in-case thing: take care of yourself out there, the galaxy's a rough place. But it's interesting to think about—I mean, the thing is, every class has quote-un-quote “blaster pistol” on the list, but those are literally now single-use items, so... that's not a thing you get to fire a second time. Whereas this is like, “no, this is my gun, this is my bla- this is my pistol and it fires these bullets that I get sent and that's it.”

ART: I mean the easiest way to do it in this- in this thing is oh, it fell off a truck.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: But like where was that truck going?

AUSTIN: Yeah, true.

ART: But that's just the, you know, that's the hand-waviest answer.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Oh, maybe it is just the one that you had from the holiday special.

ART: Oh, sure.

AUSTIN: Like, maybe it's actually Even's gun, or Even's modified gun that you just hold on to. And you won't let it up, you won't give it up because you should have pulled the trigger, and you didn't.

ART: Yeah. I hope Even's okay with that.

AUSTIN: Yeah. He'll be. He'll be okay. [amused] His situation's wild, so don't even worry about him.

ART: Are we—are we keeping the same foursome?

AUSTIN: No.

ART: No.

AUSTIN: I mean yes, no? Like, it's all one ship now.

ART: Oh right, we're doing that. All right.

AUSTIN: [stammers] We're doing—you can be in that group. You can be with Even one episode or one mission and not the next, so...

ART: Season Five's coming early.

AUSTIN: Season Five's coming early. Uh. Season we'll-see-if-this-works and then if it does we can do Season Five that way too!

ART: Yeah, or....

AUSTIN: That's really...

ART: Or Season Five's gonna change!

AUSTIN: Yep! Exactly.

[26:52 - start of vignette]

AUSTIN: All right, so what's your last year been like, Gig? I said Gig, let's start that over.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: [amused] I was looking at a list of names. [Pause] All right, so, Grand, what's your last year been like?

ART: I think it's been... you know, it's been a struggle. It's been a change. It's been a lot of acute self-loathing.

AUSTIN: Wait... like acute or a cute self-loathing? One cute self—

ART: Well, I mean the first one, but I also bet it's pretty adorable. I You know, just Grand Magnificent being like, "Rrrrrrrrrrr. I'm so mad at me."

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Um. And I don't say that to diminish people who have actual mental illness, I mean to say that he's not actually — I mean he is, but he's not like... He's doing—he's sort of like performing that in much the way that he performed the rest of his life and it just sort of became his life.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Ummm, you know—

AUSTIN: I can't stop thinking about Season 3? Ted Moseby?

ART: [slight laugh]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Which is a real weird pull, I know!

ART: [snort] Yeah. No, I see that.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean, though, right?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Just kinda like miserable, but there's *almost* a little bit of like... [sighs] Do you remember that comedy class we took in college — not comedy class, not improv class. We took a course, a...

ART: [interrupting] Right, no, yeah, we took a class in comedic literature.

AUSTIN: Comedic literature in history. Which was fantastic. Like that professor was—

ART: That professor was A plus.

AUSTIN: Oh! Fucking amazing dude! And I had this talk with him about feeling lost once. I think you were there for this. I was talking about like... having ennui and being a miserable twenty-year-old. You know?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And he was like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Uh-huh! You're a person. You're twenty. Of course you're going to feel like shit right now." But then he said that you need to have, the thing you should replace that with is — and then this word that I always [laugh] forget and then have to look back up — but it's like the German version of ennui... of ennui, which is like a little angry. It has a little bit of like... almost like a little bit of joyful anger at being fucking mad and depressed.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: I'm always forget the name of it and I'm always gonna end up trying to look it up again and like, it's just not going to come together. But do you think it's a little bit of that with— with him?

ART: Yeah. Or even to expand to on your much-less-good *How I Met Your Mother* parallel.

AUSTIN: [slight laugh] Yes.

ART: It's like, yeah, season three Ted Moseby is down-the-dumps all the time and like sad but like, you look at that: my life in New York was never fucking that together!

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: And I was doing fine! Like!

AUSTIN: Right, right.

ART: It's like, you know, you get that a lot on sitcoms: sitcom sad is like.

[30:00]

"Fuck you, you're doing great!"

AUSTIN: You're doing great! Things are working!

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Well, like and there was even a little bit of—the thing I like about season three Ted Moseby is also that there's also a degree of "I don't give a fuck." Like, "I don't give a fuck. I'm just—I'm living". You know, like?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: "This sucks, but I'm living". Uh....

ART: I think this is season four Ted Moseby.

AUSTIN: I don't — wait...

ART: We should not talk about it any more.

AUSTIN: Okay. I don't remember...

ART: 'Cause it's after he gets left at the altar, right, it's that Ted Moseby?

AUSTIN: Oh, I see, I see, I see. I thought that was season three? Was that not season three? No, season three is post-Robin.

ART: Yeah. Two is Robin, three is moving to st—and half-way through four I think he gets left at the altar?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: The point is, if you're going to watch *How I Met Your Mother* because you're listening to us say this right now: just pick a point at somewhere in three or four and just stop. Just walk away.

AUSTIN: Just walk away!

ART: Yeah, you don't need to know.

AUSTIN: [trying to say weltschmerz] Welt shmers. Welt shmerzh. Welt... [laughs] Weltshmerz? I gotta look on Google how to pronounce this word.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Weltsch... Velt... Of course, it... Mm. That's an interesting way to pronounce that.

ART: [snort]

AUSTIN: Ha-ha! Velt-shmerts. Is how you pronounce it, 'cause it's German. It's the German for world-pain. And Mental Floss says it was also coined during the Romantic era and it's many ways — it is in many ways the German version of ennui. It describes a world-weariness felt from perceived mis-match between the ideal image of how the world should be with how it really is. In German philosophy it was distinguished from pessimism, the idea that there is more bad than good in the world, because while pessimism is the logical conclusion of cool, rational philosophical pondering, weltschmerz was an emotional response. Though weltschmerz and ennui are pretty close synonyms, ennui foregrounds the listlessness brought on by world-weariness. It can also be a term for more simple boredom. And weltschmerz foregrounds the pain or sadness. There is perhaps a greater sense of yearning in weltschmerz. Part of the pain is that the sufferer really wants the world to be otherwise. Also, as an English word, weltschmerz is not as common as ennui, so there are fewer connotations about the type of person that comes down with it. [amused] It's a very German sound, that "schm" makes it seem more serious and grim than ennui. Thanks, Mental Floss!

ART: It's also like... it sounds like a funnier word!

AUSTIN: It's weltschmerz!

ART: And that's why it's like great that.... Yeah, that that professor was the one who said it! 'Cause like ennui isn't funny, but weltschmerz like...

AUSTIN: No, weltschmerz! Yeah, gotcha!

ART: Yeah... Like, I think that's the name of a Borscht Belt comedian.

AUSTIN: [laughs] [sighs] All right. Um.

ART: [dryly] But Doctor, but I am Weltschmerz.

AUSTIN: [laughing far away] What you need to do, you need to go see the famous comedian Weltschmerz.

ART: [laughing]

ART and AUSTIN: [unison] Ah.

AUSTIN: So — but what have you been doing, besides being miserable?

ART: I think he just took the first job, he like, he wanted to help.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ART: And he didn't want to do what he's good at, he's like I'm not gonna build anything anymore.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

[0:33:03]

ART: And he got just like the first job that he could get, and I think we've like decided he just became like a warehouse worker [AUSTIN: Yeah.] it's just like.

AUSTIN: Is it in one place, or is he like going through space and like delivering shit? Like on a big space truck?

ART: I mean, I think that's — it started — I think, you know, you ever read those like horrible stories about what it's like to work for Amazon?

AUSTIN: N — yes. Yes yes yes yes yes yes.

ART: Like being like an Amazon warehouse person?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Like I think he probably just started off as that, it's just like, okay, you're gonna start at 8 and you're gonna leave at 7.

AUSTIN: mm-hm.

ART: And you're gonna move boxes for fucking thirteen — [AUSTIN: Right. Right.] like eleven hours. And if your pedometer doesn't go fast enough, you're fired.

[AUSTIN laughs]

ART: And I think he like worked his way up —

AUSTIN: So you worked for earth, then you were definitely an earth — on an earth planet.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I like the notion of you being in new Rio, there's a city that's like — Earth landed there, and they're like, yo, this place looks it could be Rio! And they called it New Rio. Uh, it's like a seaside community in like a mountainous jungle region. I like you starting there, and then getting on a boat — and like eventually what happens is, someone calls in sick, right? [ART: Yeah.] And they need one more hand on the boat. And you end up in space. [slight laugh]

ART: Yeah, and [stammers] I think, you know, there's... there's that like, the good part of feeling just so world-weary like that [AUSTIN: Yeah.] is that it does sometimes make you really good at just repetitive tasks?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Um, and so like yeah, he was really good at moving, y'know, nothing boxes around a warehouse so when they did have that opening, it's like, okay, yeah, you, go!

AUSTIN: Yeah. And like you took on extra shifts. [ART: Yeah!] You were always there to like...

ART: 'Cause he doesn't have a social life, and he doesn't want to talk to anyone, and he feels like he's like not worthy of praise or affection, and so like, yeah, fuckin, put me on the boat! Great!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Do you guys — do I have to supply my own hat, or do you guys have hats?

AUSTIN: You have hats? Yeah, exactly. And then like probably had a bit of a mechanic's duty, too, on these ships, right, like you have that skill set, so it was possible for you to like, oh shit there's a ventilation problem. We need to put someone in the fuckin duct, and go fix this. Where's Magnificent?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know?

ART: Well, and I like the idea that like he never told anyone that, like it wasn't like, we need someone on a ship, and he's like oh, I can repair that ship [AUSTIN: Right right right.], it was just like, once he was on that ship otherwise, a thing broke and he's like yeah, I can do that.

AUSTIN: I got that. Yeah yeah yeah.

ART: They're like, what? No you can't! It's like, oh, yeah, fuck, shut up.

AUSTIN: What's the over-under on how many people called him Mr. Magnificent?

ART: Um. I mean, 10? 10 and a half?

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay.

ART: Like. [laughs] 10 and a half because that's how you make an over-under that gets more action [AUSTIN: Yeah, there you go.] I'm not saying half — there's no people or holes [inaudible]...

AUSTIN: Uh. And — but like do you still correct it?

ART: [clicks tongue] I think he did for a while, and then he sorta stopped.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Like, um. And, y'know, the people who listened when he corrected them, those are the people he got like closer with, and the people who didn't listen it's just like yeah, fine. You've signed my checks, great.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Exactly. You still write Grand Magnificent on the check, so.

ART: Yeah. Yeah, as long as, yeah. Don't write me any checks to Mr. Magnificent, that's not goin anywhere.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Uh, cool. Um, do you get outta that funk at any point, or are you just in it?

ART: I think it's one of those things — 'cause it's like, it's not fun to play a character in a funk.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Especially like I really don't wanna play Cassander again?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Cassander was in a funk.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: Um. So I think I do wanna just say that it stopped. Like, you know, we're four months out of like, hey, I have to — this — no. This is not my life.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: I'm not gonna work in this warehouse forever, I'm going to do something better. And he starts, you know — he's still not building, he still doesn't feel like he can build. But he—

AUSTIN: Does he just like start going to the card game? that's he's been turning down?

ART: Yeah I think— I think that's it, he starts like socializing a little more, he starts— yeah, he goes to the card game. He starts like doing people favors. He starts like collecting and using favors. [AUSTIN: Right.] He owes some people some stuff, some people owe him some stuff,

[Right.] but there's like, he's starting to like trade in social currency in a way that you don't when it's just like, goin to work, goin home, [AUSTIN: Mm-hm.] eatin dinner, going to bed.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ART: Like, you need to like — he needed to break out of that, and like, he is — we didn't like super get at this in this, in our like previous thing, 'cause like that wasn't the fun thing to do.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ART: But there are people that he is very good at talking to.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: And like he is good at making himself fit a situation when that's what he wants to do. That isn't what he wanted to do before.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: He was there like, I'm the genius, everyone should bend their will to mine.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: But like, you don't get to be a respected artist without some degree of being able to shmooze people, right? [AUSTIN: Right.] Like that's just...

AUSTIN: Well, we pick up, originally, with him at a party, right? Like that was the notion [Yeah.] was he was at— also, in my mind, that party was at the park slope place we used to live at, independently? [ART: Oh, yeah.] We never lived there together. But that's what, that was definitely the living room of that place is what was in my mind. Which is weird.

ART: I don't remember us ever playing music there.

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh my god, well you weren't at the p—...

ART: [cross] [stammers] 'Cause hearing that stupid song the third time, that's an important thing for me, but yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, there was a party there that I was at once. Wait! You played music at your going-away party! When they—

ART: I don't remember that party at all.

AUSTIN: Well. I mean, that's 'cause you remember the other part, which is like people — strangers — *drifters*! [laughs] Showed up and broke things!

ART: Yeah, but, yeah, and it was hard to fight that off, 'cause me and mine were druuunk!

AUSTIN: [laughs] That was a good...

ART: I don't think I've been that drunk since, honestly.

AUSTIN: [laughs loudly] That was a weird party. Anyway. Um. Yeah, Grand can smooze. Schmooze, for sure. Weltschmerz. [ART: Weltschmerz.] Welt-schmooze.

ART: [amused] Weltschmerz!

AUSTIN: [laughs] Uh, okay. Let's go back. So you — couple months in, you turn it around, or — it might not even be a couple months in, the thing that we talked about off mic, or actually it was like at a very end of the recording for the holiday special, was that like, it feels way longer, and might even be longer, because of how time is fucked up in here?

ART: Mm.

AUSTIN: Of like... For everybody else, it's been 11 months. For you, it's been 33 months.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And like. Every moment — like I think a lot about the — there's that Quicksilver comic in which someone's like why are you such a jerk? And he's like, yo! I just live faster than everybody else. In a world where like people are already too slow for you, like. You get stuck behind an old woman at a cash register who's like paying for cat food in pennies, and it's the worst thing of your day. Like, imagine me, who can move as fast as light.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And like I think there's a degree of that, not because you can move that fast, but because you just literally physically — you know, the Mirage reshapes itself according to the will of people. Now. [ART: Mm-hm.] Quire reshapes itself according to the will of people. And like I like the notion of there's this like time dilation around you, that like makes the world — like in Garden State, like in an indie movie — everyone else is just moving around you at a different speed than you are, you know?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like reverse Garden State.

ART: God, fuck that movie, though.

AUSTIN: [amused] Yeah, I know.

ART: Um.

AUSTIN: I'm with you. Ugh.

ART: Um. But in all, I think that's an important part of it, I also think it like kind of accounts — like this is a big shift, so having a little bit more time...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Is essential, like, 'cause yeah I'm gonna have — you know, he's gonna have the gun, right? [AUSTIN: Right.] He's gonna have the good gun, and so having more time to be like learning how to shoot it, although did I take any points in shooting a gun?

AUSTIN: You took no points in Scrap, which is the gun skill.

ART: Aw. Uh. Maybe I'll — ah, I don't know. Maybe I'll fiddle with that.

AUSTIN: Think about it. Think about it.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because right now, again, you have...

ART: 'Cause Scramble might be redundant for me.

AUSTIN: Redundant?

ART: 'Cause Skulk, right? [AUSTIN: Oh!] Skulk and Scramble are in the same family.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes. I mean that's the thing that's cool about this system is like, anything you could Scramble to do, you could Skulk to do, and I might just say like, "yeah, you could! But it might be harder!" Like. Um.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's a thing I like about...

ART: But it makes sense that he learned how to shoot than that he learned how to fuckin jump, right, like.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Here's the question. Scramble isn't built into the class, right?

ART: No.

AUSTIN: You added — yeah, yeah, then yeah. Then I would say take Scrap. [ART: Yeah.] 'Cause that's the other thing. I bet you got into a couple fistfights.

ART: Yeah, probably, I mean it feels like, one, even — like... [sighs] All of the versions of grand Magnificent in this 33 months are people that like you would probably wanna punch in the face, like.

AUSTIN: Yes, a hundred percent.

ART: Woe-is-me, self-loathing [AUSTIN: Yes.] Grand Magnificent is probably an insufferable person to be around. Like, I mean, most people would probably just like not hang out with him and not punch him in the face, [AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.] but like.

AUSTIN: Well somebody does.

ART: You know, there's probably — yeah, someone probably does.

AUSTIN: But for the first 22 months, he probably doesn't even fight back.

ART: Yeah. And then like he kinda starts fighting back a little, and then he goes back to being his old self a little bit, he goes back to being magnanimous.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ART: Like, "I'm Grand Magnificent!" And then fuckin that dude gets punched in the face too.

[AUSTIN laughs]

But by that time, he's a little better at not getting punched in the face.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. All right, cool. I'm into that. I'm into that. I'll just change that right now, actually, that way we don't forget about it.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [mumbling] [???] [42;24] That's Scramble. Put 1 in Scrap instead.

ART: Is this on Roll20, are you like [???]

AUSTIN: Oh, I have this like scratch paper page, that I've been using. [Oh, right.] It's just in the.. the drawer in google sheets, in google docs.

ART: Cool cool cool.

AUSTIN: Um. All right, so, eleven months and two weeks or so in, where are you? You just like in the middle of a ship haul? You on a ship somewhere moving stuff?

ART: Or like what's the space version of that hall in season 2 of The Wire, right, like? [cross] At the stevedore?

AUSTIN: [cross] Wait, which hall is t... Oh, the stevedore hall!

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh, there's a place — you want me to tell you where that is?

ART: Sure, yeah!

AUSTIN: So there's a club, [stammers] there's a space club, now. It's called The Brink, and it's [laughs]... This is like an interesting thing 'cause we get to color this in a little bit, and I get to reveal something, which is. So. You remember you met Demani Dusk, agent of the Rapid Evening, who abandoned her post to come warn everybody about Volition and Quire — and, you know, the stuff on Quire and the Mirage collapsing and all of that stuff.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: She has a partner, whose name is Gray Gloaming. Gray is a synthetic being who has a body — she's like Myriad, in that she has a body and also is a space station, is also a giant satellite.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: And they've turned — they've like left the Rapid Evening at this point.

ART: All right.

AUSTIN: And have turned Satellite's space station body into a — or like, from the core satellite, have built a space station around it that's turned into like the Deep Space 9 of the Twilight Mirage, that is just like, truck stop meets like bar and grill meets [amused] like, overnight hotel. And it's called The Brink, and it's out near the Shore. The Shore is a... like at the very edge of the system, just where the Twilight mirage kind of like move — like fluctuates at the edge of the system, there's like an entire ring of asteroids and debris and small objects, and that debris kind of moves up and down and all around the system, like in a wave, basically.

ART: Mm.

AUSTIN: And The Brink is... in the Shore. So in the middle of one of the parts of the Shore, which means it could be above the rest of the planets, could be horizontal to it.

[45:00]

AUSTIN: Gravity here does not make sense. It kind of moves around very organically, but not in line with physics, like it looks as if a gyroscope had tides, instead of had to do with gravity and magnetism and stuff like that, right.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: And force and velocity, and blah blah blah. So that is where you would like pull up your spac truck and hop out and deal with it — and the thing to note is like, there aren't that many space trucks?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: The only groups that can move around space in big numbers freely are like fairly big governmental agencies; members of the EarthSphere Economic Concern, so like, big corporations [slight laugh]; the Church of the Self, which is the kind of remnants of the old Crown of Glass, in some ways; the Ministry for Terrestrial Safety and Transport, which is... mostly bureaucrats and surveyors; and then like some other like space pirates, you know, you might — and then kind of independent contractors who would end up with their own personal small spaceships — so, assassins, and couriers, and, y'know...there's a group of travelling performers who have a spaceship who can kind of go here and there. But mostly pretty small in terms of what goes — what comes and goes, like it's — we're not flying cars in a big city, y'know, we're not The Fifth Element flying cars, [ART: Sure.] we're a lot more Star Wars, of like, all right, we can go get a ship, but like, there's gonna be seven in the whole dock on the whole planet, y'know? And.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or, y'know, on the side of the planet, and three of them aren't to be trusted. Y'know?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: And then the other ones are from the local government or whatever. So, that's the kind of set up — but yes, this is the place that you can do this. So what are you doin here?

ART: I mean, we're dropping something off, and it's probably something, you know, mundane, right, it's foodstuffs, it's widgets, [AUSTIN: Yeah.] it's ball bearings, it's, y'know, just nothing. [AUSTIN: Yeah.] Just like, y'know, a truck fulla nothing, probably like—

AUSTIN: And you're not even dropping it off, probably, right, you're like dropping it to be picked up by another, different truck to be moved somewhere else.

ART: Yeah. And there's probably like a couple things in there that shouldn't be in there, and we're probably like... taking those off and taking em somewhere else [AUSTIN: Yeah.], you know, there's probably like a—

AUSTIN: There are pirates here, who maybe they want a little something else, too.

ART: Yeah, and y'know maybe some of what they want is like one parcel of ball bearings, but maybe like some of what they want is some — I don't know — some contraband of some kind, you know, [AUSTIN: Right.] space drugs, space guns, space...

AUSTIN: Whatever.

ART: Yeah. Whatever. It's not important. [amused] Like!

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: It's important that someone wants it, it's not important what it is, like... You know, it could even be something like, y'know, that's... [???] [48:05] It's just some other mundane that wasn't supposed to be in there, right, like they need...

AUSTIN: I mean, they need food, right? Like.

ART: Yeah, they might need like, yeah. It could just be like, [cross] pigs.

AUSTIN: [cross] Pants. Right, yes.

ART: Yeah, pants, yeah. Uh, I was trying to think of like what's the — [clicks tongue] pork bellies! That's what it is, [AUSTIN: Yes.] that's like the commodity name for pigs.

AUSTIN: [amused] Yes.

ART: Um. Yeah, it's just like, you know, people just need shit, right, [AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.] 'cause it's hard to move stuff around, so. y'know. It's this up-and-up job that pays, you know, 15 dollars an hour, y'know, space trucking, and then it's also like, if you can get me, you know, a crate of jeans and some...

AUSTIN: [Huffs a laugh]

ART: And some bread, I'll give you, y'know, 200 dollars. [AUSTIN: Right.] It's like great, yeah. Now this went from being like a bad job to a good job.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Into it. Um. So you're like you've just made that delivery, and you're [yeah.] heading for a drink, what's the deal?

ART: Yeah, I think that's it, right, it's probably like a crew situation [AUSTIN: Yeah.], there's probably like three or four of us, [AUSTIN: Yeah.] and like yeah we're gonna go blow off some steam, have a drink, go to that bar and grill you were talking about, have like a chicken club sandwich, and see what's next. You know, are we gonna load up and go somewhere else, are we gonna go back empty, are we gonna hang out for a week and then pick up something else, like, where are we supposed to be next [AUSTIN: Right.] is like our next piece of information.

AUSTIN: So tell me a quick thing. Did you ever settle up your debt with the Marquis?

ART: Um. No? But the deal was first refusal. If you stop working, there's nothing to refuse.

AUSTIN: What about that same — okay. But he hasn't come after you.

ART: No, I don't think so. I mean, I don't know how, you know — i don't know what kinda juice the Marquis still has?

AUSTIN: Well, I just remember he existed, and I remembered that seconds after reading the group the Ministry for Terrestrial Safety and Transport, and he is, of course, the Marquis of Transportation and Fashion?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um. Also — and [laughs] those are two things that the New Earth Hegemony has a very strong grip on, and he feels like the sort of opportunistic asshole who would lean into that.

ART: Yeah. Um. And y'know maybe that's part of this, right, like maybe this is like. What are you gonna do, I'm doing your thing, like.

AUSTIN: Right. Um. Maybe the thing that I actually think happens here though is, the representatives he sends to find you want you to come back to work, for him.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: And so what you get is like, you and your buds, your space-truckin pals, have just dropped off your ball bearings. You're eating your chicken club sandwich at The Brink. And... a couple of New Earth Hegemony guards show up with ... a roomba? And.

ART: Like a tiny vacuum cleaner?

AUSTIN: Like a tiny vacuum cleaner. [Okay.] And when it gets in front of you, it like builds a little person out — it's like a roomba where the top of it is liquid metal, and then like it Terminators a person in front of you.

ART: Awesome. Love it.

AUSTIN: And it's the Marquis.

ART: Yeah. Um.

AUSTIN [as THE MARQUIS]: Grand Magnificent.

ART [as GRAND]: Yes. Uh. Marquis of Transport and Fashion, how are you doing?

THE MARQUIS: You found yourself quite a... quite a gig!

GRAND: Heh!

THE MARQUIS: No pun. No pun intended.

GRAND: [amused] I think you did! Um. Yeah, this is — it's a simple life, it's got simple pleasures, and right now I'm very invested in those simple pleasures.

THE MARQUIS: [delighted] Oh, speaking of investment! I see you're not... you're not wearing my fingers.

GRAND: Uh. No! Uh, they weren't...

THE MARQUIS: That was some phrasing, wasn't it?

GRAND: I don't know, that wasn't as good as the Gig one. If we're... if we're ranking em. [THE MARQUIS laughs] Um. Yeah, I don't need that work anymore, so.

THE MARQUIS: Oh. Oh, but you do! You do. Need that work. Because we need. *You*. To do that work.

GRAND: I don't know what to tell you. I can't do it anymore. Um. I haven't had an idea on that front for a long time. Uh, I understand that we have a bit of a balance. I mean, I have—you know, if you wanna see what you can get, I can be happy to return the tips to you. Uh, they're, of course, not here.

THE MARQUIS: [sighs] We don't need your ideas. We need your hands. We have ideas of our own.

GRAND: I mean, that's... I mean, that's really not what I ever did, and right now, it's not what I do at all. I mean, if you need some stuff to go somewhere, I'm your man on that front. I'd be happy to throw some stuff into a cab for you. I can get it past [clicks tongue] I mean, almost anyone. I haven't been to a system yet that me and my boys haven't been able to get some stuff through, but like.

THE MARQUIS: [sighs] Grand.

GRAND: I haven't even done a sketch in... I don't even wanna say how long, because it's gonna be confusing. [cross] You're not gonna understand.

AUSTIN [as GRAND'S FRIEND]: [cross] This guy bothering you, Grand? Huh? Who is this?

GRAND: This is...

GRAND'S FRIEND: Ooh, it's Mr. Metal over here! Ey!

GRAND: This... Yeah. [cross] This is the Marquis of Transport and Fashion.

GRAND'S FRIEND: [cross] Mr. The Marquis of Being Made Outta Metal, if you listen to me! Pal!

GRAND: All right. So the Gig one is still the one to beat, but they don't understand that reference.

[AUSTIN laughs]

GRAND: Uh.

GRAND'S FRIEND: No, we know Gig! Gig from the TV! I know Gig.

GRAND: Yeah, I used to know Gig. Um.

GRAND'S FRIEND: *You* knew Gig?

GRAND: Yeah. He's pretty okay. Um. You shoulda met his horse.

GRAND'S FRIEND: He got a horse, this guy says he's got a horse!

GRAND: Um.

AUSTIN: I have to start being the other character, otherwise i'll just be this character for the rest of my *life*!

[ART laughs]

AUSTIN [as THE MARQUIS]: Mm. You have some colorful friends, Grand. This is not an offer. This is a peaceful request. Come with us before it becomes less of a peaceful one.

GRAND: i remember the last time that you sent me a not-peaceful request, and those people came back to you in fuckin bags. And I'm way more prepared to do that this time than I was last time.

THE MARQUIS: This time I sent a lawyer.

AUSTIN: And one of the guys with guns steps forward. And he —

GRAND: What, seriously?! This guy's a lawyer?

AUSTIN [as LAWYER]: I have many roles, in the Hegemony. Uh, our schooling system is incredible. You have to understand. Uh. You know, I'm at a higher rank in the military because of my judicial expertise, um, and we have this paper—

GRAND: You're fuckin Jag?

AUSTIN [as LAWYER]: I'm like a half-Jag.

AUSTIN [as GRAND'S FRIEND]: Ah! He said he's a half-jag! Ey!

GRAND: [laughs] Okay, that's the best one, now. Um! You have a j — so you have a J.D. — you're Dr. Thug? [Hey!] That's what's happening here, that's what's...?

AUSTIN [as LAWYER]: My name is. uh, um. My name is —

GRAND: Dr. Thug, esquire?

LAWYER: It's not Thug, it's... [groans] It's Mil... It's Milvert. It's Dr. Milvert.

GRAND: All right. See, any lawyer who actually calls himself Doctor is a fuckin schmuck. Uh. Oof! Okay. I said that I would talk to a lawyer, I will talk to this lawyer. What do you got for me?

DR. MILVERT: Well, if you look at the paperwork —

AUSTIN: And he just like talks you through this complete bullshit paperwork that they've drafted up, that like basically says, because you didn't deliver the last thing, the way that the penalty of the right of first refusal goes, is that you were supposed to then deliver a secondary thing on time, a secondary design, and you didn't do that, and has been eleven months since that, which means that you are now eleven years in debt worth of designs. And so that is now what you owe them, please come with them.

ART: All right, so like Grand like takes these papers and like does like a big show of like reading them, like... I don't want him to have like reading glasses, but like I think he like definitely takes out reading glasses, like in this big flourish, and like puts them on and like reads them and all of this. Oh, I don't wanna... This is me, this is not Grand Magnificent, like, my gut instinct is to just fuckin Han Solo them?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ART: But one, the Scoundrel's really leaning toward that, [AUSTIN laughs] I did not take that move, but like, that's not quite right. That not quite who this — like I don't just wanna shoot this guy, that's not it.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Um.

AUSTIN: What do you wanna do?

ART [as GRAND]: I mean, like, this is bullshit. You — like, one. My signature's not on this. You've never served me with this. Like, this just isn't how this kind of thing...works?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

GRAND: Like I understand that you're saying it works, because you have force of arms, like, but like, this is not what I meant when I said send a lawyer. When I said send a lawyer, I mean fuckin, do shit above board, you scumbag. Uh.

[AUSTIN laughs]

It's over. I don't do this work anymore. You don't want me to do this work anymore because you don't want the work that I'm gonna do when I don't wanna do the work. This is what I'm gonna tell you. I would be happy to make some sort of token financial restitution, so that you don't have to tell people that your investment got away from em, but y'know, sometimes you buy a stock and it goes to zero. Grand Magnificent, mech designer, went to zero. Grand Magnificent, honestly pretty good space trucker? y'know, you wanna get in on that, we can talk about that. But this thing that we had? That's not a thing anymore. And... [sighs] And I don't wanna be this guy. y'know? I want to be the socialite that I've been, but I can say that my people right now are better than your people right now. And you should probably just pack it in, take the loss, and go away.

AUSTIN: [amused] Oh boy. Um. I — ah, what are you doing? So what is this? What is this roll? Because this is the way this system works. This system is not me now saying all right give me a blank, um, the way rolls work — this is the first time you've played this system, I guess, huh?

ART: Yeah, this is.

AUSTIN: All right, so. let me just read from the book then for you.

ART: But this is a Sway, I think. I think I'm Swaying.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think this is definitely — this could — this could be, again, it could be whatever you want. The thing that I then have to decide is... I'm actually gonna go to the book, because I wanna actually read again from how this works. So you state the outcome that you want, and the action rating you're going to... use. And like actually stating the outcome you want is valuable. Your goal is the concrete outcome your character will achieve when they overcome an obstacle at hand. Usually the character's goal is pretty obvious, but it is the GM's job to ask to clarify the goal when necessary. So you wanna be out of this. You wanna be out of this deal. Full stop.

ART: Yeah, I want this guy to fuck off.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um. And like not just fuck off for now. You want him to Fuck Off.

ART: Yeah. This is — I want to never hear from this guy again.

AUSTIN: Okay. And you're—

ART: I wanna go — I wanna have a drink and explain to my friends that he's not a marquis, and he just declared himself this shit, like.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Right.

ART: And I want us to all laugh about it, and then fucking puts five bucks in the jukebox to listen to Billy Joel for the rest of the night.

[AUSTIN laughs]

Or, y'know, Space Billy Joel, I don't know.

AUSTIN: Oh, fuck, I love new Grand Magnificent so much, this is really good! Um. So then you're using s—

ART: Don't just say you want every episode to be Bluff City.

[1:00:00]

ART: *Turn* every episode into Bluff City.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Exactly! Um. So Grand Magnificent, at this point, you've chosen to use Sway. I now determine a level of effect, between limited, uh, like normal— standard— , and great, and then also determine the degree of risk — like the kind of fictional position you're in. And I think what Sway to do this — this is just risky standard. You're gonna hear that a lot.

ART: Yep.

AUSTIN: You probably already heard it a lot from listening to Marielda. And so what you're gonna roll is your — what is your Sway score?

ART: 2.

AUSTIN: All right, so —

ART: I believe that's the default Sway.

AUSTIN: That is... Yeah, for the... the Scoundrel?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes. Um. So, you could add bonus dice. By pushing yourself — by getting assistance from a teammate, who — these guys are not gonna help you sway. [laughs a bit] Um. By pushing yourself and taking stress. Or by accepting a devil's bargain, um. I don't have a devil's bargain for you right now. Um. I don't think it's ever clear on whether or not I can offer a devil's bargain after the roll, but I like being able to offer them after the roll, because it's fun.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Uh, the third thing you would be able to do is to spend a gambit, but I'm not giving you gambit points for these little vignettes. So. Uh. [thoughtful noise]

ART: Rude.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I know. So just—

ART: Um.

AUSTIN: Give me that 2D6. [I don't —] Unless you have a move or something that I've forgotten about, with Sway. But I think you do. So we take your high roll — which is a 6! [ART: Yeah.] You rolled a 4 and a 6, you got a 6! So when you get a 6 on a risky standard roll, what happens is, you did it. And you get to add a gambit to the crew, as above! So what's this look like? What's the success look like? Does... the lawyer just back down?

ART: I mean, I think it's like... I think it's the lawyer realizes that like, yeah, you're — like you could probably execute this fake fucking contract, [AUSTIN: Right.] but like, then what? Like, you're come — like. You could get a judgement that's unenforceable, [AUSTIN: Right.] and you don't have the, y'know, my people are legit, right?

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: You're not gonna win this stupid fight. They're probably noticing that I have, y'know, the best gun they've seen in, you know, a year.

[AUSTIN laughs]

ART: Um. Like, this is like, yeah, it's not worth — what are we really getting here? I understand that we spent some cred, but like, let's not send good money after bad [AUSTIN: After bad money, yeah.], and that this is bad money, at this point.

AUSTIN: I think — yeah. I think at a point the lawyer taps his foot on the side of the little roomba disc, and all the metal, the liquid metal just like [foley] bddoo, goes back down into the top of the roomba disc. And he goes like,

[as DR. MILVERT]: All right, listen, uh [uncomfortable laugh] Mr. Magnificent. Uh. [laugh] You're totally right, this is bullshit, and I'm gonna — ah — I'm gonna put up with — I'm gonna go over his head. I'm gonna talk to his boss. And you're just not — you're not gonna see from us again. Uh. D — we're gonna get outta here. And you just, uh.

AUSTIN: And he like, he goes to like tap your shoulders and then backs his hands off a little bit.

[as DR. MILVERT]: You just keep — you just. Good luck in the trucking lanes.

ART [as GRAND]: Yeah, thank you very much! It was a pleasure to meet you, I'm really glad that this time he sent a reasonable person. Um. but it's not Mr. Magnificent, right, you don't call him Mr. Fashion.

DR. MILVERT: Whoa... Wait, uh. Uh-oh.

GRAND: Did you call him Mister — that's — it's just really — it's a big faux pas where we're from.

DR. MILVERT: I used to call him Mr. Transportation and Fashion, I thought like the whole thing was... It was Marquis, Transportation—

GRAND: So his first name was The Marquis of? This just — there's just bad internal consistency here. It's weird, 'cause he gave himself a real prick's name. Uh.

[AUSTIN laughs]

DR. MILVERT: You said he wasn't even a real marquis.

GRAND: No, there's no marquises. We don't have marquises. He just like — I mean, it's hard to say this as someone who named themselves Grand Magnificent, but everyone names themselves. You name yourself the thing you're going to be. And he named himself with, you know, this silly title 'cause he thinks it'll make people respect him. [Wait.] I'll be honest, it works, but he's not a landed gentry, we don't have those!

DR. MILVERT: But why are you still Grand Magnificent, then?

GRAND: 'Cause that's my name!

DR. MILVERT: Do you still wanna be that?

GRAND: [pause] I mean, of course.

DR. MILVERT: Even without the mechs and the art and all that.

GRAND: I'm pretty magnificent at what I do now, I promise you.

DR. MILVERT: I can imagine you doin something better!

AUSTIN: And somebody else rolls in, in a wheelchair, and it is Commander Pure Cascara, former leader of the Beloved, who you last saw giving you the mission to go kill Independence.

ART: [amused] Yeah, it went great!

AUSTIN: [amused] Yeah. And the lawyer's like,

[as DR. MILVERT]: [uncomfortable] Okay.

AUSTIN: And like steps away, he's like — [laughing] he actually does then like tap you on the shoulder, and he's like,

[as DR. MILVERT]: Seems like you got a bit of filled dance card! [nervous laugh] I'm gonna get goin, bye!

AUSTIN: And just like scurries away.

ART [as GRAND]: Have a good one.

AUSTIN: And Cascara rolls over to your table.

GRAND: Well! Look at this!

AUSTIN [as CASCARA]: Hard to find you, Grand.

GRAND: [amazed] Not hard enough!

[AUSTIN laughs]

CASCARA: You're on all these ships! Your ships, they come and go, they refuel, they drop off cargo, sometimes they drop you off. I've been to six different ships looking for you.

GRAND: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. You coulda called.

CASCARA: I did.

GRAND: Well.

CASCARA: How you doin'?

GRAND: Most of my numbers are fake.

CASCARA: Yeah.

GRAND: Um! I'm doin real well, honestly, I think, you know, I had some bad times there, but... you know, I'm here with my friends, we're at the start of a good night, you know?

AUSTIN [as GRAND'S FRIEND]: You want a beer, what do you want?

AUSTIN: 's talking to Cascara, and.

GRAND: Yeah, you want —

AUSTIN: She's like.

GRAND: You want something?

CASCARA: Sure, get me a beer.

GRAND: Great, they got great beer here. It's.

CASCARA: And a chicken club. I'll pay for it, but order it for me. You order at the bar at this place, I've heard.

GRAND: Oh, yeah, sure.

CASCARA: It's weird. [slight laugh]

GRAND: Uh. Yeah, it is a little — I mean, it's quaint, right? You kinda have to give them credit for that.

CASCARA: We're — [laughs]. We're in a floating box in space, and surrounded by asteroids that seem to randomly choose the direction they wanna fly in. [breathes in] Yeah! I'll give em credit.

GRAND: Yeah. It's consistency. I don't know where the asteroids are gonna be, but I know where to order in this restaurant, and it's the bar.

CASCARA: So, uh, what's next? You got ball bearings, you got sprockets, you got — what do you got? Pork bellies, I hear.

GRAND: Yeah. Um, yeah, a few. I think we're completely unloading here. I think we're gonna get some new cargo in a couple weeks. This might be some bona fide shore leave, eh, boys?

AUSTIN [as GRAND'S FRIEND]: Ehh, shore leave! Let's, ah. Oh, 'cause it's the Shore — 'cause we're at the Shore! Is that why they call it that?

GRAND: Uh. Yeah.

AUSTIN [as CASCARA]: Okay. Well, if you have a few weeks, then we have time to argue about something until you decide I'm right.

GRAND: [laughs]

AUSTIN: She grins.

GRAND: Oh, that's good! What are we gonna argue about?

AUSTIN: She like wipes her eyes a little bit. A beer comes, she takes a sip out of it.

[as CASCARA]: I'm building a team.

GRAND: Yeah?

CASCARA: I want you on it.

GRAND: *Do* you? I mean, I'm flattered, but do you remember the last time you wanted me on a team?

CASCARA: Last time, I didn't want you on the team. You were there, and it was a crisis. And you used everything you have.

GRAND: No, I'm pretty sure you wanted me on that team. I think, if I remember correctly, you were like, "Hey everyone. I need..."

CASCARA: [laughs] Uh-huh.

GRAND: "I need Even."

CASCARA: Uh-huh.

GRAND: "And I need Signet. And that's gonna be okay or whatever, but what I really need is brilliant artist Grand Magnificent."

CASCARA: You built the thing.

GRAND: And I said, "Please, please stop grovelling. It's not becoming to someone of your stature. I'll do it." And then. Uh, I mean, I... [stammers]

CASCARA: Little hazy after that, is that what happened? It got a little —

GRAND: Yeah.

CASCARA: Yeah?

GRAND: We don't need to...

CASCARA: Hm.

GRAND: We don't need to talk about *that*.

CASCARA: I'm not here to collect a debt. I'm not the Marquis of Transportation and Fashion.

GRAND: [laughs] What a fuckin asshole.

CASCARA: That guy's an asshole. I... I'm here to make an offer, because I see you makin moves. You know, eight months ago, you wouldn't have picked up the call because you would have seen my name and you wouldn't have been able to bear to hear my voice. Today...

GRAND: Yeah, I remember that one.

CASCARA: [sighs] Today I think it's because you're too busy. You're talkin to people. You're moving, you're shakin, you're droppin off sprockets. That's good.

GRAND: Yeah! Yeah.

CASCARA: I don't need an artist. Grand Magnificent. I don't need someone who can sketch machines. I mean, that would be great. You know. It's nice that you can fix stuff, but... [sighs] Teams need *people*-people. Wait, that doesn't really — hm, this beer. What's this beer, is this beer—

GRAND: No. No, I get it. Yeah, teams need people; *people*, because one person isn't a team. I hear — I'm all the way on the same page as you.

CASCARA: You can't build people without — oh, wait. You can't — there's no I in — hm.

GRAND: There's no I in people.

CASCARA: [laughing] There's no I in people! That's true! [groans] Okay. This is stronger than I thought it would be. Um.

GRAND: They do good work. You know, they brew that here, because you can't get stuff from anywhere else anymore...

CASCARA: [laughs] Yeah, that's why. You have to get all the hops here, and then all the parts. And also it's already a big metal canister, so. [Yeah.] Easy to fill it with the parts and then turn it into booze. [inhales] You know people.

GRAND: I do.

CASCARA: You talk to people and you get things.

GRAND: Mm-hm.

CASCARA: And no one knows who you are.

GRAND: [sharply] Ah, how dare you.

CASCARA: Anymore.

GRAND: I'm a — I — I'm famous, and I'm important!

CASCARA: You're not Gig Kephart. I like Gig. Mostly. But I can't send him into a bazaar somewhere and have him go pick up a package. He has a big floating eye thing that films everything he does. And everyone's seen him. [Yeah.] And that's useful! Don't get me wrong. In fact, he hasn't even agreed to this yet. But — I think [snorts] I think he will. And I'm pretty sure that anytime I send him anywhere, he'll be more of a diversion than... someone who can make things happen quietly.

GRAND: [scoff] Yeah.

CASCARA: And you're good luck.

GRAND: [sweetly] Aw!

CASCARA: Don't — fuck off. I mean it.

GRAND: [laughs] No, I get it. I've gotten real good at not... at not getting caught. Yeah. Yeah, let's save ourselves a couple weeks, 'cause you are gonna talk me into this. I don't... I don't wanna do this forever. This is fun. I'm having a great time. But I need to...

ART: Ugh. I was gonna — fuckin, that's from Avengers.

[as GRAND]: Um. I need to. I need to get straight, I need to make up for some lost times and bad decisions. And I'm never gonna do that, y'know, makin a few extra credits...

CASCARA: Here or there.

GRAND: Yeah. I've got bigger debts than that I'll ever pay.

CASCARA: What —

ART: There we go.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, that's it.

ART: Nailed it.

CASCARA: You have any...

AUSTIN: She's trying to figure out how to phrase this.

[as CASCARA]: When you used to build stuff for people.

GRAND: Yeah.

CASCARA: You'd ask them what they felt in their heart about what they wanted to communicate [GRAND: Yeah.] with the things you built for them.

GRAND: Yeah, that's it.

CASCARA: We are in the business of building this system. And what I wanna know from you, before we sign the paperwork and shake hands and get a second beer, is — in your heart, you look out on this galaxy, you look out on this system, look out from the window of this place. you see all those planets. [slight laugh] Those planets that weren't here a year ago. What do you want all that to look like? What do you want it to say?

GRAND: I want it to look like home. I want it...

CASCARA: Don't worry about it.

GRAND: Oh, no, no. I want it to say a lot of things, but what I want it to stop saying is "You fucked up, and this is your fault, Grand Magnificent."

CASCARA: Yeah. The second you said you wanted anything, you were good to go in my book. You spent a long time not wanting that. And... I just wanted to make sure I'm still working with a man who has vision.

GRAND: [amused] Yeah, I got that. Don't you worry about that!

AUSTIN [as GRAND'S FRIEND]: He's got vision, all right! Um. He, uh... You should have seen the way he looked, yesterday. Boom!

GRAND: Yeah. I forget what was leading right now, but it's not that.

GRAND'S FRIEND: Ah... I'll go back to the drawing board, Grand.

[AUSTIN laughs]

GRAND: I want you to know, I'm gonna drop this bit like a hot rock once we get back in.

GRAND'S FRIEND: [laughs] I'm gonna take improv class.

[Music - "The Scoundrel" by Jack de Quidt begins & plays under - echoing piano]

GRAND'S FRIEND: By the time I see you again, Grand, I'm gonna be a world-famous comedian, they're gonna call me the Weltschmerz!

GRAND: [laughs] Ah yes, the ancient comedian named Weltschmerz.

AUSTIN: [laughing] All right. And I think that's it for Grand Magnificent, I think... [ART: Yeah.] They get that second beer.

[Music - bass and wordless vocals enter, and music plays to end]

[1:16:24]