

Twilight Mirage 37: Along A Route

Transcribed by Mal [00:00 to 9:58]; meko

[[*The Notion*](#) begins playing]

AUSTIN: High above the world of Gift-3, caught in the saffron shade of today's Mirage, the L-shape of a single massive arm hovers in orbit, bolted in a frame of metal, people the size of specks moving across its length lit in its shadow by the flash of welding torches. It is the arm of Gumption, once left in the center of Composure's Coliseum on the ship of Seance. It now serves as a constant symbol of hope to the Mandati who dream of bringing their Divine back.

The camera slowly pans down, and below, the planet bustles with activity. Short-hop transport ships dot the sunset sky, as caravans transport daily hauls from the outskirts to the cities of Big Garage and Seiche. Smoke rises from open-air barbecues, and in the distance, there is a sound, something like a cross between an old fuel engine and a lion's roar.

We follow that noise, and it leads us to the Crashyards, the final resting place of all the technology that is, or that might be. Ships planted nose first in the dirt and sand, hills of discarded consumer electronics topped by dozens of flickering digital assistants with no one to help. Long, high stacks of personal vehicles, entertainment displays, and old replicator machines have turned the flats into canyons. And moving through one such gulch are the Excerpt Signet, the pilot Even Gardner, and the pathfinder Echo Reverie.

(music plays without v.o. for roughly a minute, then 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. Joining me today for our first full session of Scum and Villainy, is... Andrew Lee Swan.

ANDREW: Hey, you can find me on Twitter @swandre3000.

AUSTIN: Also, Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: Hey! You can find me on Twitter @bleating_heart.

AUSTIN: And Sylvia¹ Clare.

SYLVIA: Hey, I'm Sylvia, you can find me over at videogamechoochoo.com—and also, you can find my twitter at captaintrash.rip!

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

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a good—that's a good new URL, I didn't know about that one.

SYLVIA: Yeah! SYLVIA: Five dollars a year, so I was like, 'eh, why not.'

JANINE AND AUSTIN: (laugh)

SYLVIA: Ehhh...

AUSTIN: Uh, yeah! You know, what's—What's five bucks? (laughs)

SYLVIA: That—A lot for me, but—

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh—

SYLVIA: —I make terrible decisions...

AUSTIN: What's five bucks next to having a good URL for your Twitter account?

SYLVIA: Exactly.

DRE (distantly): Yeah!

AUSTIN: We are playing, I guess, Scum and Villainy, which is a game by Stras, I forget how to pronounce this name, Asimovic? I can't remember if it's ['ah-simovic'] or ['asch-imovic'], if there's a C in there, there's two Cs... Anyway, Stras and, and, John LaBoeuf Little, again, [LaBoof], [LuhBowf], I don't, I don't know, I'm gonna have to reach out and... and get clarification, I should do that soon...

Scum and Villainy is a hack of Blades in the Dark, which was a game by John Harper, and it is really cool, and we are finally going to start really playing it in earnest today. Just briefly, can we go over your—you know, I guess first and foremost, as always, I should actually read my—my goals, which are: to convey the fictional world honestly; to bring the Twilight Mirage to life, and to play to find out what happens.

And then, I'm just gonna one more time read these Best Practices, the Best Practices for you as players. Embrace life on the rim; chase danger and action; describe the action faithfully; advocate for the story you want; use your stress; it's okay to go with a fun idea; start fresh, add detail and play; and plan on the fly.

So, are there any questions before we start? Are there any lingering, like, rules things, or do you want to go over any moves you have, or anything that you're not sure about?

(Brief silence)

If not, that's totally cool, and, always, quote, "ask questions as we play", so...

So! We are gonna kinda jump into things a little bit here, because that is one of the things that Scum and Villainy does really well. The camera kind of, I think, pans down, does that good Lucas, you know, pulp, slow pan down from the sky, and what we see is, just a—sort of a ship graveyard that goes on for miles and miles and miles. It's cavernous, you know—there are these sort of, like, tall towers of cars, one on top of another, and huge hills of discarded MP3 players, and... It is, effectively, a junkyard, it is in fact, it's called—here, it is called "the Crashyards". I'm actually gonna move us, on roll20, to the system sheet for Gift-3.

You all are walking through the Crashyards. You're on your way back from a reconnaissance mission that is part of a larger mission. You've been sent here by Cascara to, to.... do—you know, spread the word, of the Notion, and to spread the word of Seneschal and, and the idea that the people of the Quire system could find some, um, overlapping identity and culture that is not so divided.

And, specifically, you, this group of three here—Signet, Even, and Echo—are being sent to help reconnect a group of refugees with another group of refugees—the two sides of the disconnected Tides of Harmony, one of which landed here on Gift-3, and the other of which landed on Brighton—which is where the Rogue Wave are, it's kind of an ocean-y island planet and—the way you're going to connect those two is through this thing called a Stitch, which, Echo, you have firsthand experience with—in fact, you have a lot of firsthand experience with it. You had that meeting in your vignette—but also have, like, examined them, and tried to get your head around them over the last year, it's been kind of one of the big things you've been doing.

Cascara put you in touch with a, a farmer, actually—or kind of a rancher, I guess—named Graph-2, who is a synthetic rancher who has kind of a, a whole family of, like cattle herders, basically, that lives out on the steppe—this is, this whole world has kind of a semi-arid climate; there are these—again, there are these huge junkyards all over the entire planet that have been kind of summoned by the will of the people on this planet, who are—who have an entire culture built around scavenging, and repairing things, and investigating technology that they don't understand, and it's kind of that the combination of Quire and Gnosis and the Miracle have covered this world in technology from across the Milky Way Galaxy. Which means including stuff that no one has ever seen before, at all, from cultures that no one has ever interacted with, at all.

And, you've been put in touch with Graph-2, who is sort of a—I don't want to say an elder, cause, I mean, he's just a robot, so he's not—I don't want to put the picture in your head of an old guy with a beard who lives on a hill, uh, old mansion on the hill or something... But he has a sort of, a leadership role among a group of citizens who are spread out across the open steppe, in between these kind of huge Crashyards, you know, junkyards, basically. And, the first step of

getting that mission done and kind of reconnecting these groups was to find out where the hell that Stitch was. And you found it, which is great. Less great is that where you found it—where you found it is a place that is under lockdown by someone else already.

There is what is marked by signage as, quote, “An archaeological dig site” deep in the middle of the Crashlands that is operated and defended by a group that you already have a bit of beef with [chuckles], Advent—also known—or, like, the long form of their name is Advent Discovery and Salvage Society. They are a group of treasure hunters who are not from the Divine Fleet, are not from Earth, are not from Quire, they’re kind of galactic grave diggers? [laughs] Grave robbers? They are super shitty, and they have set up a base around the location of this Stitch.

It is in the shadow of a massive orbital elevator, a space elevator, that connects the body of Gift-3 up to the space station that Advent has here. They have a number of space stations throughout the system and they have an HQ off on the far outer rim of the system. But here, they have one in space that is all about technology. They have a space base on a different planet that’s all about culture, they have one that’s all about biology, but this one is all about technology, that’s why they set it up above Gift-3.

And your kind of first reconnaissance of it revealed that it is under lock and key, there are some armed guards there, there is what you identified as someone who is an Advent expert at kind of countering the weird uncanny shit that is happening inside Quire right now? And, a handful of guards, maybe a dozen guards, with some, you know—they have, like, melee weapons and they have, like, a handful of ranged weapons, some drones, and you know that the—that what they are probably doing here is sending stuff between here, this source of technology, and Brighton, which was this, this ocean world where you know that they have a biological research station, and who the fuck knows what they’re getting up to but it’s probably not good? And it’s definitely in the way of connecting these two communities back together.

This is what you’ve learned during your reconnaissance. One of those things that you, that you noticed, were those drones that I told you about. They are these, like, flying—you know frisbees that don’t have a middle? Like the sort of ring frisbees? So they’re like those but a little bit bigger, and then in the middle of them, hovering in the middle, is a little eye drone sort of like Gig’s except the entire thing is cast in, like, a kind of copper color. And they rotate around the ring with the eye in the middle that can—the eye can kind of bobble down or up as if it’s held in place by a sort of, like, an elastic gravity—an invisible, like a—an invisible wire or something that’s keeping it in the middle. But it can kind of, like—it will pop up and then like elastically pull the whole body of the drone up and it will fly up higher or lower or whatever.

And you know about these, partially because you saw them before and partially because you hear a couple of them near you now as you walk back through the canyons of car towers and debris, back towards the nearest safe town. And you can hear them, like, doing their [droe noises] “buh-buh-buh-buh-buh-swooo” scanning of the area around here. What’s everybody doing at this point? It’s just the three of you, there’s no one else with you at this point. You’re just

trying to get back to HQ to kind of figure out next steps. You haven't been spotted yet, but you do know that these drones—there's a chance that they would see you.

DRE: And we're pretty—These are Advent drones?

AUSTIN: Yeah, hundred percent, definitely. Like, they have very distinct—very distinct technology, their stuff. They go out of their way to brand it theirs with lots of wood panels, lots of copper and bronze and gold...it's—it is very, like, I have described them as being shitty steampunk adventurers. Like that is very much what they are. Like, lean in, think about gears, think about, again, steam coming off of things and, like, that is what this crew is. How do you—so you see there's a group of three of them that are spreading out across this canyon. If you do nothing, there is a chance that they will see you, is what I will say.

JANINE: I don't really feel like I understand the space well enough to know where—

AUSTIN: Sure, I'll draw it a little bit for you.

JANINE: Okay.

SYLVIA: Thanks.

AUSTIN: It is—you're in, like, a pathway—here, one second. So, let's just draw a big space here. Like, assume that this is the big, a big space on a continent, right, this is the size of a state or something, right? It's the size of, like, I don't know...smaller than Ontario, I know two of you are in Ontario.

[Dre and Sylvia laugh]

AUSTIN: This is like the—I would say like the size of one of the Great Lakes, right?

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like a middle-sized Great Lake. The place that you were looking at is in this spot in the northwest, right? And then all through here there are just, like, rows of broken cars and big spaceships and you are currently on your way back to—you're on your way back to Seiche, which is the closest big settlement near here, which is on the southeast of this area.

And currently, you are in between this row of towering, abandoned vehicles stacked one on top of another. You can—you know, there are places where you could maybe try and slip between them, there are places where you could kind of crawl out into, you know, and hide inside one of them. They seem—they seem pretty steady, like you would have to put in a lot of force to knock one over or something like that. They're not—you don't feel like they're going to fall on you at this point—you've walked through them once already and it was fine. And so now you're walking

back towards them and there are these three drones kind of spread out and scanning these—the kind of north, south, and center lanes, [mutters] not to use fucking use MOBA terminology [Dre laughs], but I just did.

SYLVIA: No, that's language I understand, thank you.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I know, you're a big MOBA fan.

JANINE: Can I jungle?

AUSTIN: Yes, you can jungle.

[Dre laughs]

JANINE: Can I currently jungle? Thank you.

AUSTIN: Yeah, if you jumped through—well, you know, it's funny you say that, Janine.

JANINE: [laughing] No, I don't want to jungle.

AUSTIN: No, it's too late.

JANINE: There's a—

SYLVIA: Everyone knows Signet is better as a mid or an offline anyway.

[Dre laughs]

JANINE: Yeah, she's definitely not a jungler. That's for real.

AUSTIN: Well, it's funny because you hear this—in fact, I think, Dre, you probably recognize it first. Even does, like instantly. It's a very familiar sound. Can you describe what the sound the Amprunner made again when it roared was?

DRE: Oh man, it was like a—like a really bad old 8-bit tiger handheld noise.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Like just really crunchy and messed up, yeah.

AUSTIN: So you hear that, and it's funny you say tiger because it was also kind of like a sabertooth tiger mech, right?

DRE: Yeahhh.

AUSTIN: So you hear that once, a little quiet—much quieter than how you remember it. And then you hear two of the drones going [drone noises] “Brrn brnn brnn” and they spin overhead and you can see these kind of laser scanning, the sort of like—it’s very visual, very clear that they’re scanning this area, it’s covered in like a red haze, or a red—almost like there’s a filter now over this area. And looking through some of the car doors and the kind of, like, empty—through where there were once windows and different vehicles and stuff, you see movement. And you see a pack of small Amprunners running through the sort of debris jungle and roaring up with broken tiger [laughs] electronic roars up at these drones, and beginning to kind of jump up onto these towers of cars.

And the—one of the drones above you starts to spin rapidly. And you can see that as it does, there’s like a light blue edge that appears around the edge of it—or let’s say a light orange-yellow. It’s like a glowing blade kind of comes out of the outside of this ring. And, within a second, there is a strange melee between these tiny Amprunners—who seem to be sentient? And not piloted as far as you can tell, there aren’t just little pilots in there—who are now fighting these flying drones. You also notice that these little Amprunners do not—they have what would be the—where the railgun was, but in place of those is, like—or in place of the gun, there are either spears or sticks or just, like, kind of curved metal there. There—they do not have guns on them. And so now they’re jumping all around you.

DRE: Austin.

AUSTIN: What’s up?

DRE: I’m so excited that I get to reenact my favorite scene from Jurassic World.

[Sylvia laughs]

AUSTIN: [amused] Okay.

DRE: Where fuckin’ Andy Dwyer gets to meet his pet raptors again.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh [Dre laughs]. Is that gonna happen? Are you gonna try and talk to these things?

DRE: I mean, yes.

[Sylvia laughing in the background]

AUSTIN: Okay! Tell me what this looks like. So what do you start doing? So there’s three drones flying in the air now, slashing down. One of the Amprunners gets knocked—I think one of them

just, like, flies over the top of this tower of cars and the top cars comes falling down after it as y'all are moving through this space. And it scrambles out of the way and blocks the—actually, maybe it's right in front of you, 'cause it falls right in front of you, blocking your path forward. And so now there's just, like—it's—when I say small, I don't mean like cat-sized, I mean like tiger-sized, right?

DRE: Sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: Maybe even a little bit bigger than that.

DRE: It's not big enough for me to jump inside and pilot it, but it's like—

AUSTIN: Not at all.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then it sees y'all and its tail whips around—also their tails now have little blue plasma flames at the end. And it whips around like a—it's also like a—I imagine it's thinner, I don't think it's as thick of a tail, I think it has like a thin, phone-wire style tail or something, or like a coaxial cable, with a blue flame at the end. And it whips around and then comes up into the sky and then goes like [growls] “brrruwuwuw” [Dre laughs] at you. In its loudest roar, showing its teeth. And is pacing back and forth, kind of—you don't know what it's doing. It's pacing back and forth. What do y'all do?

DRE: Um, okay. Are any of these drones, like—like, they're still around us, right? Fighting the rest of these Amprunners?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'd say there's probably five of these Amprunners and three of these drones. Those two other drones are busy—or, those three other drones are currently engaging with those other Amprunners.

DRE: Okay. I want to use my grappling hook, which is one of my Pilot class items.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm?

DRE: To try and basically grapple-hook onto one of those drones and then just tug it, like, you know, thrown it down into the ground.

AUSTIN: Alright, so you are—you are, like, throwing it up there? Is it propelled by something or is it just like a toss?

DRE: I like it being a toss.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Like, in this low-tech world.

AUSTIN: Me too.

DRE: I like this being like a toss.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. I think that's probably—I mean, you tell me. What do you—this is the difference between this system and other systems.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: One of my—one of the habits to break for GMs in Scum and Villainy is, like, don't tell them what move to do.

DRE: Yeah [laughs].

AUSTIN: It's pretty clear about that. So, you tell me, what action are you thinking this is?

DRE: So I think it's probably either a Rig or a Scrap.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

DRE: And I'm leaning more towards Scrap 'cause I think this is just like I'm putting my back into it to try and basically just pull this thing off course and slam it into the ground or into a wall or something.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah, I think this is definitely—I think this is definitely Risky, and you know what I'm gonna do? Boy, this is quick, we're in it. Guess what I'm about to pull out?

SYLVIA: Oh, are you about to do a clock?!

AUSTIN: Hell yeah, about to do a clock!

DRE: Give me that clock!

JANINE: Mm.

SYLVIA: Oh, fuck yeah, Friends at the Table is back, baby!

DRE: Oh man.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Alright, I put a clock on the table. I'm gonna call this clock the "Escape the Junkyard" or "Escape the Scrapyards" clock.

JANINE: Is it missing a line?

AUSTIN: No, it should be six. One, two, three, four, five, six. It's a six—it's a six clock.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Clocks in this system can be four, six, or eight. So it's one, two, three, four, five, six. The top left and bottom right are just not equal in size. Okay, so I think it's Risky because you're going against these drones and there's these Amprunners all around, and I think that the effect would be Standard. This is not like an especially powerful thing but it has the chance to do some serious—to give you some progress to getting out of here. So go ahead and give me a Scrap. What is your Scrap?

DRE: It's one, so I think I might push myself and take two stress to get an extra die.

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah. So here are the things that you can do at this point. I just wanna go over those maybe for a second.

DRE: Yeah, sure.

AUSTIN: One is you can—so you're gonna roll the stat that you have, the action that you have, which, again, Scrap is one. You can push yourself, taking two stress to add an additional die. You can spend a gambit, you have one gambit, currently, as a crew, and you can add another die from that. [laughs] This is probably not the roll to add your one gambit to.

DRE: Yeah, I'm not [laughs].

AUSTIN: Other people, at this moment, could take one stress to assist you, adding to your roll by one die. You could lead a group action instead, but this doesn't feel like a group action. It doesn't feel like you're protecting anything. Or you could set up another character so that instead of doing—instead of advancing this clock, you could be setting up the clock to be advanced by somebody else. Um, anyway, that's—those are the things you can do. So, yeah, I think Risky Standard. You're gonna push yourself, so take two stress.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: The only thing I can think of that would modify this would be to—I don't know if either—like, Echo, I don't know if you want to do this as a setup so I'm basically holding it in place and then you jump in and cut that thing in half with your ninja sword.

SYLVIA: I mean, I do like that plan.

[Austin, Dre, and Janine laugh]

AUSTIN: I would say that the—yeah, you could totally do that. The thing that would be—the thing that that would do is it would probably give Echo an improved position.

DRE: Sure.

AUSTIN: So that it's—so that Echo, they have a Controlled position instead of a Risky one. So yeah, do you want to do that instead? And have this be a setup?

DRE: Yeah, that sounds good.

AUSTIN: Alright, cool. So go ahead and give me the action.

DRE: Okay. So I'm still rolling Scrap, right?

AUSTIN: You are still rolling Scrap. Are you still pushing yourself?

DRE: I think I will, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Uh, four.

AUSTIN: That's a four. So okay, so that means—on a four, with a Risky roll, you do it but there's a consequence. You suffer harm, a complication occurs, you have reduced effect, or you end up in a Desperate position. So I think this is the thing that happens. Even, you grab it with your grappling hook, you pull it down and slam it into the ground, perfectly tied down and locked in position for Echo to come up and do something with it. And then you hear another roar, [growls] “Rrwrwrwrwr.” And this giant Amprunner—not giant, but this—it's not giant anymore, 'cause the real Amprunner was actually gigantic [laughs]. This much more reasonably-sized Amprunner pins you to the ground. You are now in a Desperate position. It not here to play with you, as far as you can tell.

DRE: Aww.

AUSTIN: Well not yet anyway, I don't know what y'all do at this point. So that is—you are now in a Desperate position. Echo and Signet, what are y'all up to? Oh, also, I guess I should say really quick, because this is one of those things that we did not do a lot of in Marielda: you can resist the thing I just said. If you want to resist that complication, you could roll an attribute to try to resist it...probably take more stress but not be put in that Desperate position.

DRE: Nah, I'm gonna cuddle with this tiger.

JANINE: Hm.

AUSTIN: Okay, good [laughs]. Signet and Echo, what are y'all up to?

SYLVIA: I think I'm gonna go with the plan to destroy the drone first.

AUSTIN: Okay. Sounds good.

SYLVIA: Just because if that gives away our position, we have even more coming down on us.

AUSTIN: Absolutely.

SYLVIA: And I think that would be Scrap, probably.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so. I'll say—I'm gonna actually say Controlled with Great effect.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: Because you have—you have a really good sword and you have this thing completely tied down. And because you haven't been revealed yet.

SYLVIA: I have one bonus dice right?

AUSTIN: From—no, what you have is—

SYLVIA: Nope, I have the Controlled, the—okay.

AUSTIN: The improved position, yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly.

SYLVIA: Wow.

AUSTIN: That's also a four and a one [laughs].

SYLVIA: That's the exact same thing.

AUSTIN: It is the exact same thing. But that's—so that's a four, which means that on Controlled, you hesitate. Withdraw and try a different approach or else do it with minor consequence. A minor complication occurs if you have—a minor complication occurs: you have reduced effect, you suffer lesser harm, or you end up in a Risky position. I think that you're gonna suffer—you go in to cut it and as you cut it, it starts to spin back up, and that kind of glowy yellow-gold energy blade catches you on the knee as you do it.

SYLVIA: Nm.

AUSTIN: So you would take the level one harm Scraped.

SYLVIA: Okay, I'm fine with that.

AUSTIN: Okay, so you're not gonna resist that?

SYLVIA: No. I'm gonna take this thing down.

AUSTIN: The thing to remember is, if you now have that level one harm, you will have less effect by—whenever you do a thing, basically. Whenever you do a thing that that relates to.

SYLVIA: Affects. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly. I believe that's how that works.

SYLVIA: Yep.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. So go ahead and add Scraped to your level one harm thing.

SYLVIA: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Cool. Signet, what are you up to? [laughs] As drones start flying and weird animal robots start attacking.

JANINE: Yeah...uh, fuck. I don't—I don't have a lot of experience with either of these things.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: Especially not the robot tigers.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: Hmm, I think the thing I should probably be trying to do is help Even.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: He's probably not enjoying that as much as he's letting on.

[Austin laughs]

JANINE: [sighs] God, what's the best fuckin' way to do that though? Um—do I still have my sash?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so. We didn't actually go over enough of your—all of your stuff, but I wouldn't take that away from you. And I think that that is totally such a key part of who Signet is that that seems like it makes sense to me.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I would even say that that would be, like, instead of a blaster pistol, that would be your sash. You know?

JANINE: Yeah, that's what I was thinking. Especially in the context of a blaster pistol here being, like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: —a somewhat limited weapon with, you know—

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: That's—it's like the sash is you sort of take a shot—

AUSTIN: Okay, you know what it actually is? It's probably the Mystic-class item “a fine melee weapon.” Which is—which takes two slots because it's not—because it's a fine melee weapon, which means you'll have bonuses on certain rolls and stuff.

JANINE: Mm. A fine melee weapon to me is like, I don't know—blaster pistol makes a lot more sense to me than a fine melee weapon because it is a—

AUSTIN: I think it's way too—

JANINE: It's not a thing Signet holds and uses though.

AUSTIN: I think it's way too versatile to be one thing. To be a one-slot item.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: That's like really what it comes down to, is like, it is a mystical—

JANINE: I don't have a thing in my thing for this thing.

AUSTIN: I would—heavy blaster is what I would use for it.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And then that should still add up. One, two, three, four—or maybe, yeah—now you're over by one, so you'd be in a heavy situation.

JANINE: Yeah, I took some stuff off.

AUSTIN: That's fine.

JANINE: I don't think I'm—

AUSTIN: Gonna need most of that stuff anyway.

JANINE: —doing the math—it's probably fine.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Okay.

JANINE: Anyway, the thing I was gonna say was I wanted to use that sash to—I don't know if I ever—I feel like I must have done this at some point—but basically, not quite clotheslining—

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: But something where the force of the two ends is doing most of the work, but the actual thing—it's sort of catching in the middle.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Basically around its neck. Or—it has a neck, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, definitely.

JANINE: Okay. Yeah, I'm not familiar with the robot tigers [laughs], so I'm assuming they have a neck that I can wrap something and pull.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's the same tiger that Even used on Volition that helped pin down Independence.

JANINE: Ohhh, okay.

AUSTIN: It's just a tiny version of that [Janine snorts]. A tinier version of that. Tiny is too tiny. It's a—you know what I mean.

JANINE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Okay, so you are gonna—you are going to—say that one more time?

JANINE: Um—

AUSTIN: Like, wrap it around the neck and pull back, basically?

JANINE: It basically—the sort of two embellished ends shoot out with the middle catching the neck.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JANINE: So the force is on the two ends and it's basically yanking it back.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

JANINE: By the neck.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that—so I'm guessing—again, you tell me. That sounds like Scrap, but you tell me.

JANINE: I was also thinking Scrap.

AUSTIN: Okay. So I def—I think this is Controlled because—oh, you know what? It's Risky but the risk might not be to you. It's to Even [laughs].

JANINE: Mhm.

DRE: Fair.

AUSTIN: Like, it's a risky situation in that things can go bad here, but because this thing is fine quality, and specifically because we know that the Amprunners are—have, not shoddy but are not—I guess, mm, maybe they only look shoddy, right? That was actually part of it, right, Even?

DRE: Yeah, that was like the whole thing was that it looked bad.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: As a way to give Even sneakiness advantage.

AUSTIN: Right. Okay, I'll still give you Great effect on this though, because the, the—your fine quality outclasses it. So go ahead and give me a Scrap roll.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: And that is Risky Great.

JANINE: Oh, wait, I fucked up then [laughs]. New system.

AUSTIN: No, totally fine.

JANINE: New Roll20 plugins.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Uh-huh. It's true.

JANINE: Great? Okay.

AUSTIN: Great, you got it. Also, I need to start marking clock stuff, one second. That's a five! Oh wait—oh, do you not have Scrap?

JANINE: I guess I don't, no.

AUSTIN: Okay. So then three, which is not great.

JANINE: Nmm. No. Cool.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um—

DRE: It's fine!

JANINE: Nmmm.

AUSTIN: It's gonna be something alright! Give me one second, 'cause I have to mark a clock segment. Um...

SYLVIA: Oh, we're in it now! Clock segment just got marked.

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Uh-huh. It's about to, it's about to. I'm gonna mark, I'm gonna mark three for your Great effect, from the first—from the sword slash, Echo. Then [chuckles], oy, this one's gonna be a little rough. So you failed that roll, on Risky, things go badly. You suffer harm, a complication occurs, you end up in a Desperate position, or you lose this opportunity. I'm actually going to lose this opportunity. So actually, what's gonna happen is you pull back on the Amprunner, on its neck. And the—so, to remind people, the way that these worked is looked like they were more poorly armored and built than they actually were. And when you pull back, there's like a—the fake rust all over its neck shreds off and when you pull, all you do is pull off this fake layer of aesthetic armor that protects it. Like, it was a good pull, you had it, but you didn't know about this special feature that it had [laughs]. And so maybe you pulled too tightly or something, like almost like when you're fishing, you know what I mean?

JANINE: Mm.

AUSTIN: You didn't snap your sash or something like that, but, you know, you gave it the right amount of pull for how armored it looked but it was not—it was actually much more armored than that. And so it slips away, and then the thing that it does [chuckles] is it lifts Even by—it flops Even over and it grabs him by the back of the neck, digging in with its teeth, and then leaps up on top of one of these towers of cars all around you. Even, take the level one damage Bitten.

DRE: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: Unless you want to resist.

DRE: Um...so level one harm, you just—you do less effect when you make—

AUSTIN: You do less effect.

DRE: Less rolls or certain rolls?

AUSTIN: I believe it's in related rolls, rolls where the thing makes sense to, um, cause a negative.

DRE: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Which, to me, would be like you're bloody, you're hurt, so anything physical, you know? Or, I don't know, I bet talking to somebody while blood [laughs] is running down the back of your neck is also not great either.

DRE: Yeah, yeahhh. Um...I'll take it.

AUSTIN: Okay. Alright, so then add that to your sheet. And we are back to you, Even, as you're being pulled away [Dre chuckles]—or pulled up to the top of this tower. You can look around and see that two of the other Amprunners have been destroyed by those two drones, and now those two drones are—one of those drones is now fighting two of the remaining Amprunners and the other one's coming towards you as this Amprunner begins to stuff you into a car [Dre laughs loudly, Sylvia laughs], as if saving food for later.

DRE: Oh, good. Um...I want to know—okay, I want to know where this thing came from. So I think this is gonna be another good conversation thing as we figure out how this works.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: So it's got me—does it still have me by the neck? Or—

AUSTIN: No, at this point it's, like, shoving you into this old Honda Civic, basically.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: You know what it is? It's like a hatchback and it's shoving you into the back of this hatchback.

DRE: Gotcha.

AUSTIN: And is like turning to roar at this drone.

DRE: Okay. So as it's trying to stuff me in—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

DRE: I brace myself kind of against, you know, like the inside of the car.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

DRE: And two of my hair tendrils snake out and try to touch this baby Amprunner.

AUSTIN: [intrigued] Okay.

DRE: 'Cause I want to see if I can somehow either get more information about it or talk to it or, like—I don't know.

AUSTIN: Yeahh. So the way you talk to machines in this way is Attune, in this system. But you also have a special thing that says—you have a move for this, right?

DRE: Yeah, “machines speak to you when you study them.”

AUSTIN: So I think that means you can Study here instead.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That’s what that reads like to me.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which is very good, because your Study is two and your Attune is zero.

DRE: It is zero, yep [laughs].

AUSTIN: Also because the thing you described was not talking, it was figuring out where it came from, basically, right?

DRE: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. So I actually don’t think that this is a Risky—I don’t think this is—I think this is a fortune roll, not an action roll.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which means that I don’t think you’re at risk to do the thing that you’re talking about right now. So go ahead and give me your Study. So, for people listening, a fortune roll is just the same thing, basically, as an action roll, except because there is no risk, like—the failure here is just gonna be about what Even does or doesn’t get.

DRE: There’s no failure, Austin.

AUSTIN: Exactly. Exactly.

DRE: ‘Cause that’s a six.

AUSTIN: That is a six. That’s a good outcome, standard effect. So you’re specifically—do you have any questions specifcially or are you just like—[Dre sighs]. There’s some good Gather Information rolls—

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or questions at the bottom of your sheet if you ever really wanna know.

DRE: Um—

AUSTIN: But I'm happy to answer a couple of questions about this. Like what, um—I can give you a little bit. I can give you a little bit for free, or not for free, but just from my side.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is, all the technology on this place is built from the collective will and dreams of the people on this world. This does not mean that this came from you though. In fact, where it probably came from—like maybe what you get a shot of is the vision of a—of [chuckles] a group of mercenaries who are traveling down the side of a mountain towards a convoy that they're attacking. When suddenly, breaking through the atmosphere, is this giant mech. This Amprunner. That lands, that then you get into and then fuck up their whole day. This is—this—these things are a reflection of this very intense memory that one of the mercenaries that attacked the Doyenne had, back in the first Quire game. Like, "I remember that they looked shitty, I remember they had a big thing on its shoulder, I remember it was a tiger that roared weird." And like, bit by bit, between that, between records that it had, records that existed in computers about the Amprunner, these things were built out of that by Quire during the Miracle.. So that's where they come from. And they're alive. They are just as real as a real tiger would be.

DRE: Okay. And so—there's probably no—like, there's no recognition from these things of who I am?

AUSTIN: Umm...you know, on a six I'll say yeah, there is. Like, on a six on a Study. You're part of them in a weird way, right? Like, they move, and I think maybe this is part of your hybrid self. We've talked before about the way that muscles can have memory and we want technology to be in a similar sense here, that like they have you in them in an almost genetic sense. Because, when it moved, and the people who saw it move, those mercenaries saw it move, they saw you moving. And so it moves the way you used to pilot it. It sweeps with the same grace that you would have swept around your rear tail and charges ahead with the same ferocity. And so it is not just like someone cast Animate, it is as if there is a little Even Gardner piloting it [chuckles] in terms of the way it moves and jumps around.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: Which maybe gives a bonus on a roll to try to Attune, you know what I mean? I think maybe it gives you a plus 1d to Attune if you wanted to try to do that.

DRE: But overall their intention is just—they are just like—

AUSTIN: They're animals.

DRE: They're wild animals, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes. They're wild animals and you look really tasty because of being a weird technology person.

DRE: [laughs] Sure, yeah. Alright.

AUSTIN: And so do the drones, for that matter. You know, they're predators.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, cool. I like that. Signet and Echo?

SYLVIA: Ooof. [clears throat] Okay.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Deep breath. Okay.

SYLVIA: Let's figure this out. My knee is fucked up.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: Even's being pushed in a car.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

SYLVIA: But the drone thing is taken care of, right?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

SYLVIA: Okay. Yeah, I'm not entirely sure what I can do here.

AUSTIN: Think broad.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, zoom out the camera. You don't have to be in the spot you were in. Think about how the anime would go, where we would cut and maybe you wouldn't be on the ground anymore, you'd be somewhere else.

SYLVIA: Would you count this encounter as an ambush, Austin?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, it's definitely an ambush.

SYLVIA: Okay. So maybe—

AUSTIN: Well—yeah. It is.

SYLVIA: So I have a move called Ready For Anything.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

SYLVIA: “When being ambushed, you gain potency to all actions during flashbacks and your first flashback costs zero stress.”

AUSTIN: Oh shit! Okay.

DRE: That’s rad!

AUSTIN: That’s really cool.

SYLVIA: So I’m thinking of doing something with that, but I’m not entirely sure what [laughs].

AUSTIN: Does anyone have ideas about a cool flashback for how Echo could have prepared for this?

DRE: Uhhhh.

JANINE: Training montage with catching stuff out of the air?

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: Training montage—that’s totally fair.

DRE: Yup.

AUSTIN: Or like training montage while jumping and then catching stuff out of the air? Like, specifically jumping from the side of this canyon to the other.

JANINE: Oh, like a sort of zipper jump between two walls to snatch some sort of, like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Not a Golden Snitch but some other reference [Austin laughs] that’s not as played out of a thing that flies

SYLVIA: They played a lot of Mario Odyssey, that’s what’s going on.

AUSTIN: Exactly. Exactly.

SYLVIA: Gotta get that moon.

AUSTIN: Gotta get that moon.

SYLVIA: I like that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, no, totally, I would totally—that'd be really cool. Though the thing that that gets is, like—I guess, yeah, what that would do is maybe that would work as a setup action for yourself—

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —to get a better effect in the next thing, right? I'm just trying to figure out how that works mechanically. 'Cause we can have that flashback but I need that flashback to then relate to the thing you're doing now in a way that's—

SYLVIA: Yeah, that's my problem.

AUSTIN: I don't want you to have to roll twice just to have that effect, do you know what I mean?

SYLVIA: Yeah. Um—

AUSTIN: You know, maybe the way to do that is just like, you've done that flashback, we know you have that. You have potency on that flashback, right? Which means that it's going—is that what it is? You have potency on the flashback?

SYLVIA: You gain potency to all actions during flashbacks, and your first flashback costs zero stress.

AUSTIN: Okay. So potency, again, is just like a quality thing.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which means like, 'Oh, I'm going to get a better effect here,' basically. It's like—you know how we talk about, like, 'oh, it's a small gang'? You can fight as a small gang.

SYLVIA: Um—

AUSTIN: That's scale. Potency is like strength slash—strength, and then quality is another thing that can give you an advantage.

SYLVIA: So I did just have an idea.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: So I've talked a lot about how Echo acts as a scout.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

SYLVIA: Would it be safe to say—and what I'm asking is, is it cool if we say Echo scouted through here a little bit?

AUSTIN: Oh, a hundred percent. Totally.

SYLVIA: Okay. So I have this thing in my inventory called a detonator.

AUSTIN: [amused] Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: And what I'm thinking is that I planted a thing along a route.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

SYLVIA: And I'm—and can use—like, I didn't know I was gonna use it for this; I expected to use it against soldiers or something.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: But it's basically like a falling rock trap type thing.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: And I use it to take, like, using it against the group of Amprunners, basically.

AUSTIN: Right. So—

SYLVIA: As opposed to using it against soldiers like I intended.

AUSTIN: Can I, can I suggest something which moves it away a little bit—

SYLVIA: For sure. 'Cause I'm reaching here.

AUSTIN: Which is only—it's, I mean, the way the system works is it could be exactly where you want, it would just mean more stress but because you have that ability would cost you no stress.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So you could absolutely have it do the thing you were talking about, which is, like, you set it up, you pull the trigger, it all happens. Like, a hundred percent I will let you have that if that's the way you want it to go

SYLVIA: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: But I kind of also like the notion of it not needing to crush anybody. Like, if there's a big explosion, what happens? Okay, the drones get scared and the Amprunners get scared—

SYLVIA: Oh yeah!

AUSTIN: And everything just scatters. Instead of it being about killing something, it can be about scaring them off.

SYLVIA: For sure. So, where are we on the map? Are we still here on this 'X'?

AUSTIN: You're in this—no, you're in the little red area here.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: You're, like, literally here.

SYLVIA: Alright. So what if I left it on this path here?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Exactly

SYLVIA: So it's close enough to make—like, so that's to the left of us.

AUSTIN: Yeah, to the west, yeah.

SYLVIA: So it's close enough to make a loud noise.

AUSTIN: Yep.

SYLVIA: But not—we don't get hurt from it.

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: And it also will sort of wall off that path.

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So I think that that's Rig, is what that sounds like to me.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Or sorry, again—again, you get to say what this is.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I'll tell you what the position and effect are.

SYLVIA: [exhales] Phoo. I can't—I don't have anything that I could really make a case for [Austin chuckles], 'cause I don't think Scrap makes sense at all.

AUSTIN: Scrap would make sense if you were throwing it.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It actually gets into that. It's like, if you're throwing a grenade, that's Scrap.

SYLVIA: Yeah, but—

AUSTIN: But if you're setting off a bomb that you planted—

SYLVIA: Um—

AUSTIN: It could be—it could have been Skulk if you were sneaking through it.

SYLVIA: Skulk actually I think could work because I was sneaking through the area and that's the action, right?

AUSTIN: Oh, you know what else it could be? It could be Scramble, which is you've climbed up to the top of the thing.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So then it's about—it's kind of like, what's the camera framing?

SYLVIA: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: And so like—

SYLVIA: I mean, I do like—we talked about the sort of jumping around—

AUSTIN: Double j—yeah, totally.

SYLVIA: And I do like that visual.

AUSTIN: Yep.

SYLVIA: So we can kind of tie that in using Scramble here.

AUSTIN: So then, yeah, let's use Scramble. Let's use Scramble and say that that is—again, it's potency so it's gonna have—you have potency so you have Great effect there.

SYLVIA: Um, what's my position here? Risky still?

AUSTIN: I think Risky because I can think of ways in which this would [slight glee] all go really bad.

SYLVIA: And Great effect?

AUSTIN: Great effect.

SYLVIA: Four.

AUSTIN: Four. Okay. Um, let me see something one second...so four again is there's a complication, right? So here's what happens, I think. We—the—it's just lesser effect, is the outcome here. The explosion goes off and the cars start to fall, like the entire row of them starts to fall over over to the west. And the two remaining drones go like, [alarm noises] "Brrrrwohh, brwwwaoh" and take off to the west to investigate that. And so you've dealt with them, but you still have the problem of these three remaining Amprunners, one of which has Echo pinned inside of a Honda Civic [laughs].

SYLVIA: I think you mean Even.

AUSTIN: Oh right, sorry, Even. Yes, yes, yes. So you're close.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Five of the six clock pizza slices have been filled in [laughs].

SYLVIA: Ooh, we gotta start calling those pizzas instead of clocks.

JANINE: Nmm.

AUSTIN: They're slices, you know? Pizza pie slices. Instead of calling them clocks, we'll call them pies, you know? [quietly] I want pizza.

JANINE: It's funny, 'cause when I saw this clock I thought, "Wow, Austin definitely never worked in a pizza place."

AUSTIN: [defensively] I didn't draw this clock! This is what clocks in this system look like!

DRE: Wow, harsh.

JANINE: Okay [laughs]. Alright. It's just a little uneven, is all [Dre laughs]. It's just, you know, it's—it's a—if you sent that medium out, someone would complain.

[Austin sighs]

JANINE: It's fine, it's a good clock.

AUSTIN: You should see—okay, you should see what the original fucking clocks looked like.

[Dre cackles]

AUSTIN: You want to talk about an uneven slice, look at this shit right here. It's bad. I—you know, that's three big slices and then three tiny slices.

SYLVIA: Yeah, that's terrible.

JANINE: What the fuck is that?! Oh my God.

AUSTIN: It's a clock. It's a clock [Janine sighs] and so it's meant to be like a—

DRE: Where is it? I don't even see it. Oh—

AUSTIN: I linked it in the chat, I linked it in the chat. Yeah, that's what the original clocks looked like in Apocalypse World.

DRE: Oh yeah, that's bad.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: That's bad.

AUSTIN: And then the thing I've shown you is literally what the Apocalypse World clocks look like. Basically, there's a—the southeast and northwest slices are very big.

JANINE: Oh, this is the seduced clock.

AUSTIN: Yeah, for if you were being seduced, for instance.

JANINE: [laughing] Okay.

AUSTIN: It's only a six—

JANINE: Time until seduction, right, okay.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly. Versus the broken leg clock, which is an eight—an eight slice clock.

JANINE: Takes longer to get a broken leg than be seduced, I guess, is what—

AUSTIN: I think get a broken leg fixed, is my guess.

JANINE: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Which, yeah, uh-huh, I've seen movies. Lots of people falling in love while their broken legs are healing.

JANINE: So—Mm. Okay. Uhh, God. Fuck. I—New systems are hard to figure out.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Think about what Signet would do and we'll work out the system shit second.

JANINE: [laughing] I mean, I kind of can, but that's the problem is I don't have a thing for that anymore.

AUSTIN: Tell us what it is and we'll figure it out.

JANINE: I can't touch a robot and make it do different stuff; that's not really in my book here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it is. That's Attune. So that's totally just Attune.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like, that's the thing, is like there are definitely—it's because there's action systems in this instead of just moves and instead of just—

JANINE: Okay. That's fair.

AUSTIN: Like, a lot of it will fall in that general action space, you know?

JANINE: Hmmm...okay. So where are these—okay, so there's the one—

AUSTIN: There's one—

JANINE: The one Amprunner that's stuffing [Austin laughs] Even into a trunk, or whatever.

AUSTIN: Has Even—yeah. Mm-hm.

JANINE: And then there's three others?

AUSTIN: There's two others left.

JANINE: Okay, two others.

AUSTIN: And those are out in the same kind of car fields near you. Frame—

JANINE: Are they largely preoccupied with the drones right now?

AUSTIN: No, 'cause the drones have left now.

JANINE: Okay. Okay.

AUSTIN: So now they are like—I think now they are trying to get their bearings and figure out what the fuck to do. There's kind of a downbeat here where you can frame the scene however you'd like.

JANINE: Okay. Then I think the thing that Signet does—she kind of moves sort of alongside, like just behind one of the junk towers to sort of get into a flanking position, I guess would be the best.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: If that's possible, I'm not entirely sure on this map, but—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And then I think—I think she basically wants to get behind one of the Amprunners and, um, maybe not grab it by the tail 'cause that's on fire, there's like some sort of—

AUSTIN: There is a fire thing, yeah.

JANINE: Yeah, so maybe not grabbing it by the tail. But probably just get close enough that she can—she can sort of make that sort of weird connection.

AUSTIN: Are you sneaking up on it? Are you leaping on it? What's the—what's that physically look like?

JANINE: Uhh...I hadn't considered leaping, but then you said leaping [Austin laughs]. And I was like, "Man, I need to play more Horizon [Austin laughs], what if Signet's just Aloy?"

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: Hm.

JANINE: Which she's not—

AUSTIN: No.

JANINE: —but that's fun.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: So maybe, maybe—she hasn't been acrobatic in a while, fuck it!

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: Like let's—

AUSTIN: Alright, yeah, so—

JANINE: She's been doing church shit; she wants to maybe jump around, get a little exercise in.

AUSTIN: Awesome. Cool. So I think you have that. Scramble is jumping stuff, right? Is that the—

JANINE: I think so.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I think Scramble like scrambling to or scrambling from.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. And, like, climbing or jumping.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: "Climbing, swimming, traversing harsh environments," yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. So, um, I'd say again this is definitely Risky. Risky Standard.

JANINE: That makes sense.

AUSTIN: Yeah, this is for the getting in there, making that landing, and, like, catching it. You have to do that—you're gonna need to do that before you Attune with it, because otherwise you can't—

JANINE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: You know, so—

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Kind of a multipart thing. So this will not add to the clock; this will only set up that next move for yourself, basically.

JANINE: Risky Standard, right?

AUSTIN: Risky Standard.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Oof. That's a three. That's no good.

[Janine sighs]

AUSTIN: So, you make that jump and—so things go badly. You suffer harm, a complication occurs, you end up in a Desperate position, or you lose this opportunity. So you—I need to think of what the most interesting thing here is. I think you take this leap and you land on it and you, like, it shakes you—it begins to shake you off and then slams you into the side, like it does a hard shoulder turn and flings you into the side of one of these other towers, and the tower begins to fall downwards on you because of the force that it flung you with. So two things happen. One: you're in a Desperate position because this tower's gonna fall, and two: you take the level one harm Bruised. Again, you can resist either of those and that would avoid one or the other. You could avoid being in a Risky position—or being put into a Desperate position—or

you could avoid the harm. You could do both, you would just have to roll twice to resist and potentially take on some stress.

JANINE: I'd actually like to resist the being in a shitty position thing.

AUSTIN: Totally. Okay. So to do that you use one of your attributes. You have Insight, Prowess, and Resolve. This would be Prowess, 'cause it's about physical distance and stuff like that.

JANINE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Physical movement, rather. So you roll one die per attribute dot. In this case you have two, because you have Helm and Scramble. The attributes are made up by how many skills that you have underneath it. So for people at home who don't see these sheets in front of them Helm, which is your piloting skill; Scramble, which is your climbing skill and athletics skill, kind of; Scrap, which is your fighting; and Skulk, which is your sneaking around...all of those are Prowess skills. And because she has Helm and Scramble, she has two Prowess. So go ahead and you'd roll two dice.

JANINE: So bonus dice two or no?

AUSTIN: Uh, if you hit Prowess—

JANINE: I just did—yeah, that's what I did—

AUSTIN: Bonus dice none.

JANINE: Okay, so it's just gonna automatically...alright.

AUSTIN: You got it. So you suffer six stress, minus the highest die result. So in this case, you rolled a four. You rolled two fours. So subtract two—so two, you have two stress. So mark two stress boxes...boom. So that means you still get—you still can't get in there for the Attune but when it throws you against the side of this car, you're able to slide out of the way, putting yourself back into a regular Risky position instead of a Desperate one. Maybe we even see the tower fall over and separate you from this—from this Amprunner. Not separate as in 'it's gone now', but you would have been there; now you're not and you're safe. [laughs] You have not been crushed by this tiger—or by these cars or this tiger-creature.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Even, what're you up to? In the back of this [Dre laughs]...this hatchback?

DRE: So—

JANINE: Oh wait, was this a Desperate action that I would mark XP for? Was that like—

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah! If you did a Desperate—that's actually an important note to make. Whenever you do a Desperate action, you should mark XP. And you should be marking the XP in the attribute that you've done. So who has done anything Desperate so far?

JANINE: I don't know.

AUSTIN: It'll tell you, thankfully, this new system that we have. Desperate...I don't see any Desperates. Risky, Risky, Risky, Risky, Risky, Controlled, Risky, Risky. Yeah, I think we're good.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, nothing Desperate yet. Though I do believe, Even, you might be in a Desperate position [laughs].

DRE: Oh, do I still have an angry tiger-zoid on top of me?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: I think at this point it does a howl, as if to, like, "Alright everyone, we've got dinner!"

DRE: Oh man. Okay, yeah. Let's go for it. Let's get all—let's get all Jurassic World up in here.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: I made the stupid joke and let's follow through.

AUSTIN: Let's follow through. Exactly [laughs].

DRE: As it's howling, Even puts out a hand.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm?

DRE: And just, like, very authoritatively says "Even Gardner, in the Amprunner, coming online."

AUSTIN: [laughing] Oh buddy. Okay. What is that? What is that?

DRE: I would say Command?

AUSTIN: Oh, interesting! Okay. So I think—

DRE: But—but!

AUSTIN: Mm-hm?

DRE: I could also see, like, how, with the way that this works and technically talking to robots, that it could be Attune as well.

AUSTIN: You can use either, it's just that the effect's gonna be different.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: So Command, for me, is like you are—it's like talking to a dog. It's like "Sit!" It's so much just in your voice; it's in the cadence of how you're talking. It's in the way you're standing; it's in the way that you're addressing this creature. Attune is, it understands you. Not just it understands your tenor and it understands that you're directing it, but it understands you. And so I would say that Command has a lesser effect. Not lesser, but—actually, yeah, I think Command has lesser effect, which would be one tick of this clock.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which would be enough to—if you nail it, it would be enough to succeed. But Attune would be normal effect, regular effect, because it's actually communicating with this thing. Regardless, this is gonna be a Desperate roll.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: So, you tell me which of those two you want to do.

DRE: Are you still willing to give me that extra die on the Attune? Because of the last roll here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

DRE: Yeah, let's do it. Let's go for it.

AUSTIN: Alright. So go ahead and give me an Attune roll, with a plus one bonus, because otherwise you'd have a zero.

DRE: And that's Desperate, right?

AUSTIN: Is anybody—yeah, that's Desperate, totally. Again, you can push yourself. You could—I can offer you a Devil's Bargain if you'd like another die, also.

DRE: Oh boy. Um, I mean, I'll hear it [laughs].

AUSTIN: Um, it's—

DRE: Or is it that I have to say yes before you give it to me?

AUSTIN: No, you can—I can offer it to you first. Which is, the Devil's Bargain here is simple, it would be Heat. The—what would happen is the—by doing this, you'd be leaving your mark on these things and then, you know, fast forward a week from now as one of the factions who doesn't like you is like, "I think Even was here recently," they'd be able to scan these Amprunners for your—for this moment and recover you from that—recover the image of you. And we'd just get plus one heat inside of Gift-3.

DRE: I mean, not if I make them *all* my friend and they come on the ship with us.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yeah, okay, fair [Dre laughs]. You get an army of Amprunners.

DRE: Yeah. You know what? I'll take that Devil's Bargain, 'cause I think it's interesting.

AUSTIN: Okay. So then two dice. I'm going to mark the first Heat box here. Boop!

DRE: And also, yeah, let's just get all the mechanics out right now.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. So Heat—

DRE: Talk about Heat, talk about bonus dice...

AUSTIN: Exactly! Heat is the thing that lets you—or that kind of references your—the fact that people know you're here and are looking for you. So anybody who doesn't like you, Heat—it doesn't mean that people on the planet don't like you; what it means is, like, if someone was to—there are factions here who don't like you; those people know where the fuck you are and are able to find you, basically.

DRE: Alright, here goes.

AUSTIN: Alright, give me your Attune with two bonus die.

DRE: Fuck me!

AUSTIN: That's bad.

DRE: That's two twos!

AUSTIN: That's two twos. That's two twos. Make sure you mark that XP [laughs].

DRE: Well, there goes that hand I was holding onto [laughs].

AUSTIN: Yeah man, this is not—it's the worst outcome. You overreach your capabilities. It's the worst outcome: you suffer severe harm, a complication occurs, you lose this opportunity. Those other tigers are gonna get up here, buddy.

[Dre guffaws]

AUSTIN: Those other Amprunners start coming up at you. And they, uh, they dig in. You're gonna take the level three Harm...what's a good word for being chewed up?

DRE: Like mauled?

AUSTIN: Mauled.

DRE: I'm gonna resist that [laughs].

AUSTIN: You can resist this—yes. Yes. I'm still gonna say that your resist is—it's gonna just lower it to a level two harm, probably.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's not gonna reduce—or, you know what? It'll lower it to a level one, is what I'll say it does, if you, you know, by doing—so how do you resist this? Are you just, like, crawling away? Are you, like—trying to get out of here? Is it just like—

DRE: I think, yeah, it's like a moment where he says that, and then maybe he says it one more time, and then it's just like, "Oh, fuck. This isn't gonna work."

AUSTIN: Right, right.

DRE: And he almost, like, kicks or punches the thing in the face. Not to hurt it—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: But just to be like, okay, I'm gonna buy myself an inch of space here.

AUSTIN: Mmm. Mm-hm.

DRE: And just kind of tries to, like, almost just jump off from where he is. Because like, "Okay, I might land on something bad—"

AUSTIN: Ohh, sure.

DRE: “—but it’s probably not the same as having a tiger pack eating me.”

AUSTIN: Getting eaten, yeah, exactly. Exactly. Quick question: do you have armor on?

DRE: Ohh. Um—

AUSTIN: Because that could be one of those things that helps you.

DRE: Yeahh, I’ll say I have armor on [laughs].

AUSTIN: Instead. Because then, *then*, and we can kind of talk about how armor works then, also.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: As we continue to walk through all the systems of this game.

DRE: Have we—I guess since we jumped right in, we haven’t really declared load or anything.

AUSTIN: No, I’m letting—I’m being flexible here because I want this opening scene to be pretty fun.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is like, yeah, let’s just—as long as we’re not—as long as you’re not going over your heaviest load or whatever.

DRE: Sure, sure, sure.

AUSTIN: Then you’re good. So the way armor works is: [reading] “If you have a type of armor that applies to the situation,”—and just ‘Armor’ would do that—“you can mark an armor box to reduce or avoid consequence instead of rolling to resist. For instance, Aman is taking the level two harm Scorched Ribs and the fight isn’t even over yet. So Juan decides to use Aman’s armor to reduce the harm. He marks the armor box and the harm becomes the level one Winged. If Aman had had a power that gave him additional armor, such as Cerberus’s Crew power, Loaded For Bear, he could mark a second armor box and reduce the harm again to zero. When an armor box is marked, it can’t be used again until it is restored. All of your armor is restored when you choose your load for the next score.” So I’ll say after this scene, you’d be able to get that armor back up to snuff, basically, but, but—Ah, you know what? Maybe I actually won’t. I think if you lose your armor here, you lose it for this job, you know?

DRE: That makes sense. But I'll go ahead and use it here, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, so go ahead and mark that you've used your armor. Got it, cool. Awesome. So instead you take the less effect, the level one harm. You've already gotten Bitten and Bloody, huh? I think this is from the fall. I think maybe you do get away and the thing that—it's like winded. Where, like, you just—you get it knocked out of you.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So take Winded. Signet and Echo. You see Even fall out from the top of one of these towers. Here's another little reminder: the goal of this fight is to get away, not to kill these things necessarily. Oh, fuck. I moved everything and now it's all fucked up...there we go.

SYLVIA: There we go.

DRE: I don't think we're gonna get any new animal friends, guys.

JANINE: Nm.

DRE: I tried! I tried!

AUSTIN: Two of you tried! I;m, you know, I was rooting for you, I'm not gonna lie. I liked the notion.

JANINE: Ehhh, I mean, there'll be other animals.

AUSTIN: True.

DRE: [laughs] If there's anything Twilight Mirage has taught us, it's that there will be weird animals.

AUSTIN: [laughs] I gotta do foley, you know?

[Dre laughs]

JANINE: I mean, okay, so what's the recap here? Even's now on the ground, at least?

AUSTIN: Even's now on the ground. Like, has the wind taken out of him but is alive. Why are these nameplates not showing?

JANINE: Uhhh, okay, I think—I mean, the most practical thing to do here is to help Even get back onto his feet. So we can move, go.

AUSTIN: Totally. Yeah.

JANINE: Now that the problem isn't that he's being put in a car-tree by a robot panther or whatever.

[Austin and Dre laugh]

AUSTIN: Yep, you got it.

JANINE: Would that be Doctor?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that would be Doctor. Um—

JANINE: I'm really desperate for an okay roll. Just one.

AUSTIN: Just one.

JANINE: I just don't want to spend my first night with a new system rolling nothing but trash from a butt.

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughs] Oh, okay. Yeah, gotcha. Uh, yeah, I think that the thing you're describing—so what do you do? What's this look like?

JANINE: I think this is, um, I mean, Signet—Signet's already sort of on her own feet.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: Like, she had—she got sort of tossed off. And I imagine she—I picture that scene as like her hitting the wall—that garbage wall sort of thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Stack of crap. But then springing away pretty quickly. Just sort of, you know, being acrobatic and cool.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And I think this is probably a delayed sort of third step in that movement. Of, like, there was a moment of delay to figure out, 'Okay, that didn't work, what next?'

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: And then Even gets chuckled [Austin snorts]. And then she's like, "Okay, that next."

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: And then sort of bounds over to scoop him up. Not scoop him up, but, like, you know...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Hasten his not-being-on-his-back-edness?

AUSTIN: So are you—are you doing something to address the wounds or the—

JANINE: I don't know that this is the time for that, exactly.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Like, I have a fine medkit but I feel like if he's just winded at this point it makes more sense to maybe get somewhere safer before whipping out the medkit kind of thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I'm—

JANINE: Or whatever that medkit actually is, I'm not actually sure.

AUSTIN: Is it then—it's more about, like, "Come on, get on your feet. We're getting out of here," type of thing.

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. I still think—

JANINE: It's like a sort of "I got you. But we need to go."

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right, right, right. Yeah, I think that that—you can totally do that with Doctor. And the thing that I'll actually say is, and we'll—we can maybe do all of the—mm, yeah, I think maybe it's just Doctor. Yeah, I think that that's just Doctor. And then the way that works is it's Risky, 'cause again there are these tigers around, and Standard, for effect. So Risky Standard Doctor.

JANINE: What the fuck! Like—

AUSTIN: Those bad rolls. Not a great roll.

DRE: Mm.

AUSTIN: It's a one and a two, on that Risky Standard.

JANINE: So I just trip on him and then faceplant into another garbage pile?

AUSTIN: No, no! One of the—one of the things here is always—one of my principles is literally like, 'When you fail, it's not because you're shitty.' It's because there's something you didn't account for; it's because there is, you know, someone else is just as skilled as you, or something. It's not because you're incompetent; like, that is one of the core things in Scum and Villainy. You are weird, badass adventurers in space. Like, Han Solo doesn't trip over his own shoelaces; there are more Stormtroopers than he expected. And that's the thing that happens here. It howled to tell everyone dinner was coming. You've slipped into a Desperate position: there are not three Amprunners, there are ten. Dre is up—Even is up on his feet. But the chase is on. So y'all are in a Desperate position.

SYLVIA: What size was this gang, would you say?

AUSTIN: Oh, this is a small gang [laughs].

SYLVIA: Is this a small gang?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Hmm! So I—

JANINE: Austin. Austin, if you were in a room with ten tigers, would you say that's a small gang of tigers?

[Austin and Dre laugh]

AUSTIN: Alright. Alright, it's a big gang of tigers.

SYLVIA: No, I want him to say it's a small gang.

AUSTIN: It's too late! Janine just dug you deeper.

SYLVIA: Aah.

AUSTIN: It's not, it's a big gang. It's a large gang.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: I'm sorry. But you can hear them now, moving through the, through the—you don't know the number, actually. That's actually not fair, ten is not fair. There's a number of tigers. It is a small gang of Amprunners. But you don't know how many. It might be two more showed up, it might be four more showed up. But you can hear them all, like [growls] "Hrraghghgh" through the entire area, and you can hear them leaping from car-tree to car-tree [laughs]. And so that's the thing that happened here. It's that not you—it's not just like, 'Oh, you didn't deal with the harm that had occurred,' it's not just Even didn't—isn't just like ready to roll, it's you have been slipped into this more desperate position. [defensively] They sound like Muppets because Even and Grand Magnificent designed them to sound like Muppets!

DRE: Yeah.

JANINE: Grand Magnificent is Canadian so he loves puppets.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly [laughs]. So what do y'all do?

SYLVIA: I might do the fuckin' Echo special, and by that I mean 'be a distraction'.

AUSTIN: Oh no. What's that—what's that mean?

SYLVIA: Um, so, I think what it is, like—so what I'm thinking here is I'm trying to drag them away, like get them to chase me.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: So I'm thinking it's mostly just, like, taking my sword out and clattering it against some stuff while I'm running, basically.

AUSTIN: Interesting. Okay.

SYLVIA: Make noise so they follow that instead of following my hurt friends [laughs].

AUSTIN: [makes sympathetic noises] Um, cool. What do you think that is?

SYLVIA: I was gonna say Scramble.

AUSTIN: I—I think the Scramble would be, like, the keeping ahead of them

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which is fine too.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think then, the way we frame that scene is you jumping all around the place and getting them to follow you more than it is the—like, my thing is I think getting their attention would be Sway.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Getting—keeping ahead of them would be Scramble. There is another way to do this though.

SYLVIA: Mm-hm?

AUSTIN: Which is, we could maybe give you the role of the person who is gonna get hurt from whatever goes wrong here [laughs]. By letting you do that as a sort of leadership role, like, one of the teamwork things is lead a group.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: [reading] “Lead a group action: roll for each character who participates in the group action. The best single roll counts as the action result, which applies to every character rolled.” But *you* would take one stress for any failed result, including your own.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So I think that represents the thing you’re talking about, which is, like, you’re distracting them while the whole crew can try to get away.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So everybody can roll their—can roll their Scramble now.

DRE: Oh good. I have none in that.

AUSTIN: So you’re—go ahead and hit roll on that and you’ll see what happens. You’ll roll two dice and take the lowest one. But again, it won’t affect you! It’ll affect—

DRE: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Risky Standard for me? Or—

DRE: Risky Standard?

AUSTIN: Risky Stan—uh, no it's Desperate. It's Desperate Standard for sure.

SYLVIA: For everybody?

AUSTIN: For everybody, yeah, yeah, yeah.

DRE: [singing] Mark that XP! Aw man.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a shame!

DRE: There's that six.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's such a shame.

DRE: There's that two two.

SYLVIA: Fuckin' Christ.

AUSTIN: Okay, Signet.

[Janine sighs]

SYLVIA: Alright, so how much stress do I—

AUSTIN: Signet has to roll.

JANINE: What do I roll?

AUSTIN: You're rolling Scramble.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Uh, does anyone want to use a gambit or push themselves? I guess Signet is the only one who hasn't rolled yet, but—

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It might be what you're—what's your Scramble?

JANINE: One.

AUSTIN: Maybe push your—I guess you already took stress, right? Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Eh, maybe that one'll [Dre laughs] be alright.

[Janine sighs]

DRE: Oh man, I miss playing Blades.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a lot of bad dice.

JANINE: [exasperated] Yeah, cool, it's another three. It's my fuckin' third—fourth? Third. Three.

SYLVIA: Sooo.

AUSTIN: Everyone mark XP in Prowess.

SYLVIA: How much stress am I taking here? One for everybody?

AUSTIN: One for everybody. You're taking three stress.

SYLVIA: [muttering] Fuckin'—

AUSTIN: Which is not good. So this is the thing—here's the thing that actually ends up happening. And I think this is how we get out of this sequence. We see you all, like, running through the Scrapyards as the—you're running through the Scrapyards and the towers are getting higher and higher and higher to the point that the sun—or not the sun, but the light is being blocked out by the height of these towers. And we get a long shot of the tigers behind you jumping up off of all these different cars and stuff. And then—they're getting closer and closer and closer—and in front of you, you can see that you're finally getting towards the exit of this area, and it begins to open up. And there is—one of them leaps in front of you, like, jumps past you and blocks the exit. And then another one does. And for a brief second, it looks like you're trapped.

And then you hear the sound of a mortar shell being fired. And then the first thing you see is, the mortar where that—something on the distance explodes. Like, you know that it's the thing that fired the mortar. Like, it's the mortar shell gun, it's the actual mortar itself, is what blew up because you can't fire weapons on planets anymore without the weapons being destroyed. But then the mortar shell hits those two Amprunners. And you're looking out over the steppe and the other Amprunners all flee at that point. And then you see a Jeep hovering over to you from where the mortar was fired. And you can see Seiche on the distance—in the distance. And in that car—Sylvia, I need you to describe somebody for me.

SYLVIA: Oh! Okay.

AUSTIN: What's Ballard look like?

SYLVIA: So, uh, Ballard is, like, I'd say probably around mid- to late-twenties.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: They're about six feet tall.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: They're in good shape. They—you can immediately tell that they also do a lot of the same type of training stuff that Echo has done, with the same sort of toning and shit.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Okay.

SYLVIA: The big difference is that, like, Ballard had this much more intense look to him.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Than Echo does. Like, he's got kinda some stubble going on.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: He's got the same color hair that Echo does.

AUSTIN: That blue—that dark blue-violet.

SYLVIA: Yeah, that sort of dark blue.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: He keeps his long still. And he's got these fuckin' two dope-ass swords on his back too.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: He is wearing a dress uniform as he pulls up in this Jeep. With a—you know what, it's not even a dress uniform. It is like an OD green M-65 army jacket, with khaki pants and a white dress shirt. And around the arm, he is—around his left arm he has an armband that has VOS, V-O-S, written on it with, like—in my mind, it's one of those things that's like it's a V and then an O that kind of goes into it, and then S that's like lower, do you know what I mean?

SYLVIA: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: It's not exactly right, but you know what I mean. Like, it kind of has a diagonal down vibe going on that looks like something that would be on an armband. And you know that that is the armband signifying the Volunteers of Seiche. Seiche is the—is one of the largest settlements on Gift-3. Seiche was half of the *Tides of Harmony* and the *Tides of Harmony* is the ship that you're from, Echo.

SYLVIA: Yep.

AUSTIN: And those split during the Miracle. And Seiche landed here, on Gift-3. Seiche is, I imagine it a sort of very agricultural center city. Which is to say, it's not a population center. It is not a metropolis. It is a town of markets; it is a town of some warehouses and kind of manufacturing centers for the goods that are brought in, but it is not towering skyscrapers. And, in fact, one of the biggest defining characteristics is, like—when you described the Tides of Harmony to me you talked about how housing was built on top of each other because everything was so cramped.

SYLVIA: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Here, I imagine it as being almost like everyone has their own little estate, with an acre or two of their own land, because they have a whole planet. And so it's—the population is large in the sense that it is a—it is one of two bigger population centers on the planet, but it is spread very—it is spread out the way Los Angeles is spread out, but nowhere near as dense. And so it's just kind of these...rolling McMansions.

[Sylvia laughs]

AUSTIN: That are then centered around—farmland for miles and miles and miles, which is kind of what you come out into, and then these mansions and estates and farmhouses, basically, and then, finally, you get into the city center where there's marketplaces and warehouses and shipping and stuff like that. Probably a spaceport for sending stuff into orbit. Or like, to send stuff up to connect to other long-range freighters, basically, stuff like that. And I think this is the first time—Ballad uses he/him?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right. So this is the first time you've seen your brother. But here he is, saving the day.

SYLVIA: I mean, that's always been what he does.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yeah. And I think it takes him a second, but he's like—I think he spots your hair first. And he's like—what's he—is he someone who would say “Holy shit!”?

SYLVIA: [laughing] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

AUSTIN (as Ballad Reverie): Holy shit, Echo!

AUSTIN: And, like, you hear the [vehicle noises] “b-b-b-b-buhhhh” and he turns on the hover speed a little faster. And pulls, like, rushes out to y'all. And does a drift-turn to stop in front of you. And then gets out and runs over to you and gives you a huge hug.

SYLVIA: I mean, yeah, no, Echo's like—the second he's out of that car, Echo's running towards him too.

AUSTIN: It's nice.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: When was the last time you saw him?

SYLVIA: God, it would have been pre-Echo's arrest even.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

SYLVIA: Like at least a year, I'd say.

AUSTIN: That's a while. That's a long time.

SYLVIA: Yeah, it's been a while. And like—yeah.

AUSTIN: And then we just get—we the wide shot of the Scrapyards—the Crashyards, rather—and we get Ballad pointing over his shoulder with a thumb to be like, “Hey, get in, get in.” And it's all just kind of in the shadow of the Crashyards; it all looks kind of gray, and the sound drops out, and we just get this panoramic view of y'all getting into—and I'm picturing some of the shots from Arrival, if you've seen Arrival, out near the Anomaly-thing. And then, like, we get y'all getting into the car, and then it cuts, and then we're at a dinner table. At one of these farmhouses, where Ballad—where Ballad lives with [laughs]. And we get a very weird shot, like, it's cut and it opens on what looks like a Thanksgiving turkey. It's probably synthetic meat—it might not be, there are farmers here, they could grow organic meat. It's like, it is like a Thanksgiving spread, it's like a holiday dinner spread. And then—so it's a closeup of that and then it cuts again to a wide shot of everyone at the dinner table, and it's a bunch of people in

military gear all wearing the VOS, the Volunteers of Seiche, armband. And Ballard is there talking with you—or Ballard is there at the table, everyone else is here at the table. Everyone can clear their level one harm; if you have higher than level one harm, you don't—you cannot clear it [laughs]. But level one harm can clear at this point.

DRE: Yaay. Both of them, or just one?

AUSTIN: Um, and—both of them, both of them.

DRE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: You've been taken care of by this crew. And you're now being served dinner with Ballard and a couple of other officers of the Volunteers of Seiche. And it's good, it's good food. And, uh, Ballard is like:

AUSTIN (as Ballard): Y'all can stay as long as you need to, just let us know. How long have you been in town?

SYLVIA (as Echo): [exhales] Not—not long. I mean, longer than you'd think but not that long.

AUSTIN (as Ballard): What were you doing in the Crashyards? That place is dangerous, Echo.

SYLVIA: God, what was it we were specifically looking for again?

AUSTIN: You're finding this Stitch that—

SYLVIA: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: And again, we're using the word "Stitch" to talk about these weird anomalies that are kind of like gates between different planets, that exist on both planets at once and that can kind of allow you to fast-travel between them if you know how it works.

SYLVIA (as Echo): We're looking into the Stitches between the different planets. And we found one out there.

AUSTIN: You can see that his second-in-command, like, slides—her eyes quickly turn—like, not spin, what's the word I'm looking for? They, like—

SYLVIA: Widen?

AUSTIN: No, no.

SYLVIA: Oh.

AUSTIN: They very quickly connect with his.

SYLVIA: Ohh.

AUSTIN: Like, she looks away from you really quick to look at his and they make eye contact for a second. And he takes a big bite out of a drumstick [laughs]. And then puts it down and leans forward and says:

AUSTIN (as Ballard): You found one? The three of you—I didn't know you were experts in things like this.

SYLVIA (as Echo): I mean—

AUSTIN (as Ballard): I knew you all served during the Weeklong War. I saw—I'm sorry, I should better introduce myself, because I know who you all are. You're all heroes. Even Gardener, the pictures don't look like this but I've heard about how you look now, so. Your service, thank you so much. And Signet—

AUSTIN: He bows his head a little bit.

AUSTIN (as Ballard): You mean so much. You mean so much, to everyone. You kept our hope alive.

SYLVIA: [laughs] This is when Echo punches him in the shoulder and is like:

SYLVIA (as Echo): Stop being weird!

[Janine laughs]

AUSTIN (as Ballard): I'm sorry. It's just been a long year, you know? It's been—it's eleven months and three weeks to the Weeklong War, to everything a year ago. I didn't—we were moving through space towards Quire, and there was still just one Quire, and we...everything seemed like it was gonna fall apart. I'm doing my best to help people, I'm trying to be like my, you know, be like my hero, Echo.

AUSTIN: And he gives you a little grin.

SYLVIA: Echo punches him again, this time a little harder.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN (as Ballard): So tell me about this Stitch.

SYLVIA: Do we have the location—we just know that it's there, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you have the location. Here, again, let me what you know for sure.

SYLVIA: Yeah, thank you.

AUSTIN: You know it's in the middle of the Scrapyards. You know that it's close to what is called the Advent Tech Main—like a 'main' like a pipe—which is this massive space elevator that connects Advent Discovery and Salvage Society's space station to the ground here, to the service here. It's not at the space elevator but it's in its shadow, basically. You know that Advent is protecting it, and that it's protecting it with a collection of their own people. And it seems like it's being led by someone—what you saw was someone in a long duster and gas mask-looking thing and black armor, which you know is what the Concrete Town Particulars wear, which is this kind of group of people who specialize in the uncanny and weird shit happening in Quire and how to deal with it. Specifically, how to prevent it from happening and keep it safe and locked down and pave over it, basically. So, you know that.

And you know that your job, your actual job, is to then—is to meet back up sometime soon with Graph-2, who is a synthetic who you've spoken to briefly, who's kind of like a cowboy. And eventually to lead him, another pathfinder and a small family, a family of three, to that Stitch and get them through. That's like your A-objective. Your B-objective is to, like, make—like, get that thing in the hands of people you trust, get that whole Stitch in the hands of someone you trust so that you can actually use it to ferry people back and forth and reconnect the *Tides of Harmony*.

DRE: Wait, a Stitch—is it something we can move?

AUSTIN: No.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: But if you have it under lockdown, it's connected to Brighton which is where Perigean is, which is the other half of the *Tides of Harmony*.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So you can't move it but you could—if you could figure out how to drive off Advent or get them to agree or something, then you could actually, you know, help a bunch of people reconnect with their families.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So that's what you know.

SYLVIA: Okay, so I think—I think what I let Ballad know is that, one: that we know that Advent have control of it.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

SYLVIA: And I'm not really sure what the relationship between VOS and Advent is.

AUSTIN: It's negative; as soon as you say their name, you can hear people in the room go like, [negative mumbling noises].

SYLVIA: Okay. Good. I'm glad [laughs].

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SYLVIA: [laughs] I'm glad I wasn't like, "Well, it's under the control of these Advent guys," and they're like, "Oh, we love them!"

AUSTIN: Right [laughs]. Totally. You, uh—the woman who is his second-in-command, she's like:

AUSTIN (as Second-in-command): [scoffs] They're just as bad as Earth, as far as I'm concerned.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yeah, they're not great.

SYLVIA: I don't really address the Earth thing there.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: I'm just like, "Yeah, I don't like Advent much either."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA (as Echo): But we're trying to do, basically, is set up passage through the Stitch so we can connect the two Tides again. Essentially.

AUSTIN (as Ballad): Holy shit, you really are a big hero. If we had known that that was a thing this close, we would have worked on this way earlier.

SYLVIA (as Echo): They're kind of hard to track down. They're really archaic and we don't know a ton about them. But we were able to track down alright, so. I mean, if I had known you guys were here...

AUSTIN (as Ballad): Well, now you do. Everyone, eat up. We're here if you need anything. Again, we have beds prepared. And we'll see everybody—I'll help you with anything you need.

AUSTIN: And so I'm gonna kind of zoom out on the action a little bit here, unless people have other questions for Ballad. But like, I don't think we need to have the long conversation. Again, unless someone does have questions for him, in which case I'm totally cool with answering them.

SYLVIA: I don't have a world question, I do have a little thing I want to do with him.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay, let's do it.

SYLVIA: So—actually, I don't know if I'd be able to do this yet. 'Cause I don't know if I'd be able to just get stuff back at the ship, huh?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you totally could.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: You're not that far off. Like, what are you trying to do? What's the scene?

SYLVIA: I'm trying to give him my old jacket.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's good.

SYLVIA: 'Cause it used to be his.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And I stitched the design on the back.

AUSTIN: [awestruck whisper] Oh, that's so good!

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Let's actually save that for the moment before you kind of go off to do your thing.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean? I kind of think that's a nice notion of, like, once you go off to do this—I mean, maybe—we'll see. We'll see maybe how this shakes out and we can—

SYLVIA: We'll, we'll—

AUSTIN: —place that sequence where we need to place it.

SYLVIA: —put it somewhere. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. But you're well fed. They take care of you. Again, they stitch up any wounds you have. Signet, they actually have a—like in town, they have a—I guess you tell me. What does worship look like on the range, so to speak? Like kind of out here in small-town—in this agricultural center. Is there a big church? It is—is there a temple to Harmony that also has, like a chapel to other Divines?

JANINE: I don't know that a big church would be feasible. I think it would probably look a lot more like—especially given the spirit of the faith that we've sort of seen.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I think that it would look a lot more like—in Stardew Valley, I think it is, one of—I think it's the grocer just has an altar in his home?

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes.

JANINE: And it—I think it would probably just be someone like that—or something like that. Where just the person who has the space for it.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: Has a room that is open to the community.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: To use for worship and stuff like that.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. So yeah, that's what we—you can see that. In fact, I think we even probably—I mean, actually one of the things Ballard—maybe we even get a scene of Ballard saying to you that, like, they'd really appreciate it if you went by the chapel that's attached to the dock house [*The Notion* begins playing].

AUSTIN (as Ballad): But, no pressure alright? I know that the world—we make big asks of you all the time. And I don't want to assume. I know that you have big, important work to do here as an Excerpt.

JANINE (as Signet): I'm here to work but I'm not here on vacation, you know. I can certainly make time to visit.

AUSTIN (as Ballad): Cool. Well, thank you again.

AUSTIN: And he kind of makes a fist pump [laughs, Janine laughs]. Not a pump but like a shake, do you know what I mean? Like, we're in it together. Like, you know.

[Janine laughs]

AUSTIN (as Ballad): Anything you need, just let us know.

AUSTIN: And he gives you a salute. A very military salute.

JANINE: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: And then leaves.

[Music continues to the end]