

PAliSADE 19: How It Always Looks Pt. 2

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Recap

[["Nothing is Stationary"](#) by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

Austin: Palisade is a show about empire, revolution, settler colonialism, politics, religion, war, and the many consequences thereof. For a full list of content warnings, please check the episode description.

Austin: And the Paint Shop is the only thing without Grip on it from the Cause. It's clean, you know? Connadine is in the Paint Shop, nice and safe. Whereas the gravtrain and Elcessor have now been made vulnerable.

Jack: I'm going to say something I hate, and I don't think this is good play, but I want to say it.

Art: Okay. [chuckles] Do go on.

Jack: We could take a point off the Diadem Gravtrain, and tell them that if they pursue the Stargrave, she'll pull the trigger.

Art: They'll just do it!

Austin: And they'll, then, then she'll pull the trigger, maybe.

Jack: It's a ramping-up of control of the rails. The first thing that you notice is that there are more troops, of every arm of the Authority. Uh, skirmishes from the Cause are getting thwarted, more and more, by like, there's just more presence on the stations. There's more presence on the trains themselves. We're making a hard countermove against this. However many patrols you thought there were going to be, there are now five times as many patrols. However many armed trains you thought there would be, they're coming by every, you know, 15 minutes now. The, the, the, the lines of the Diadem are just... uh, smoke-belching horrid low tank trains now.

Austin: And it's all of us, we all did this. We all went to Chimera's Lantern.

Art: Yeah. We all did this. This is, this is the end result of all of the hard work, all of the Stel's treasure and work has pushed us to this fantastic accomplishment.

Austin: Perfect, amazing. Love it. I think the first message you get back is just like, "We weren't here first."

Austin: Asepsis is in the room with you, and it, it... fills your heart with something. Every lie you've told in the last year, you can feel, you know? And let me tell you, you've felt, you've told a lot of fucking lies. And, and, and let's get physical with it, right? It feels like you haven't showered in weeks. You feel the grime under your fingernails, you feel old, cold sweat on your back. You know, you do begin to sweat, uh, et cetera.

Jack: When Zed realizes what he needs to do, he is able to, uh, output — you know, feeling like he needs to take a shower, feeling like there's grease under his fingernails. Uh, he is able to output a series of facts about, uh, the organization of the BIS that are both absolutely wrong, and that, in the moment, in that individual moment, he believes with utter certainty to be true.

[music ends]

Discussion Begins

Austin: All right. Nideo?

Jack: Yeah.

Art: Here's the thing. Here's a thing.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Last time we played...

Austin: Yeah.

Art: I did a chase, and a one on one.

Austin: Yeah. Wait, did you?

Jack: Yeah.

Art: And we just did a covert op — well, I did a one on one, while Jack countered with all-out war.

Austin: Right. I recall.

Jack: [chuckles] Yes, that did happen.

Austin: Yeah. But when'd you do a chase?

Art: Uh...

Austin: You did a chase the first episode.

Art: No, uh, uh, with, with the Witch in Glass.

Austin: Oh, right. Right.

Art: And we just did a covert op, and I don't know how to uncover the identity of the Cause —

Austin: Without a covert op.

Art: Without... or, a chase.

Austin: Right.

Art: [chuckling] Or a one on one. [laughing] I don't know how to do it with an all-out war, an unfurling plan, or a discourse.

Austin: Right. Because what you're trying to do is, uh, the Authority starts a new scheme or advances an existing one, right? Which would then let you do uncover the Cause's membership, right?

Art: Right. And not wanting to do back to back covert ops.

Austin: Right. Uh... I can imagine you doing unfurling plan. Uh... looking at some of these questions, I mean, it's a plan, but it's like, I guess here's the question. What's the way we want... what do you think the way is that, that uncover the Cause's membership could come together here?

Art: I mean, obviously I think you could do it with a [laughing] covert op.

Austin: I mean, yeah, no. I don't mean as a — I mean fictionally.

Jack: [chuckles]

Austin: Like, what's the camera look like?

Art: Uh, well one, I'm not sure I have — do I have the current — what's your, what's the date of your draft of this book?

Austin: No, I have a newer book. I think I have a slightly newer book. But I don't think this stuff has changed too much.

Art: So let me, let me check out the latest version of Discourse.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: I believe the Discourse generates no outcome. But that might have changed.

Austin: It does, but the, but the... uh... it generates no outcome, but it does tap a faction still.

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: But you don't get an outcome.

Art: So it taps a faction but still doesn't generate an outcome.

Austin: It won't generate an outcome, correct.

Art: Okay. I need an outcome. Uh, okay.

Art's Turn [5:00]

Art: So, I do see the way it could work with an unfurling plan, right?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Because the... it's just been so long, that if all of the people who had information sat down...

Austin: Right, exactly.

Art: And, and, and hashed it out, they would figure it out.

Austin: Right.

Art: Right? Like, this is, this is, that if everyone collected the information, and, and talked about it, the pattern would — if everyone, yeah, they put the pushpins on the map and then tied them together with strings —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: They'd see the pattern.

Austin: I like this. I like this quite a bit. Can we read —

Jack: Yeah, me too.

Austin: An unfurling plan here?

Art: Uh, everyone plays, taking the role of either members of the Authority as you hatch a plan of some nefarious nature, or, and I'm not going to even finish reading that sentence. Decide together where this meeting is taking place, and who else is present. Who are you both playing? What history do you have? During the conversation, anyone may ask anyone else for details on the situation and circumstances. Playing the scene, players freely roleplay, issuing challenges to escalate and complicate the scene. Continue playing until at least three rolls have been made, or the scene reaches what feels like a natural end. Look at the resolutions, the resolutions, are... fine.

Jack: Mm-hm.

Austin: Can I — this has to kind of — this feels like... I, I mean, I think that this is being opposed by Jade Kill. This is the moment. Uh, and the way it's, it's, the way that that happens will become clear if they succeed [chuckles] or if they fail. So I think we should just play the scene, uh, as normal, and, and, but it's Jade Kill is opposing, and it'll become clear at the end of this.

Jack: Yeah. Yep. Okay.

Austin: So who's here?

Art: I want to start with where are we.

Austin: Yeah, where are we?

Art: I think this is some, some big... ornate room, some reception room.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: And I think there's literally a big table with a map on it. You know, not, not a table with a map on top of it. A table with a map printed on it.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: Oh, that's great.

Art: But and then there are literal pins —

Austin: In the table.

Art: In the map.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: Yeah, just sticking into the table —

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Uh, with, you know, color-coded... tips isn't right. What's on the other end of a needle? You know, you know, a needle with a thing on the other side?

Austin: Yeah, yeah. A pin, like the pin, like a pinhead.

Art: A pin, yeah.

Austin: A pin top, a pin...

Art: Pin... but it's like the bottom of the pin.

Austin: Is it? Yeah, because the pinhead is the sharp part.

Art: Right.

Austin: A pin topper, a bin bottom.

Art: The pin legs.

Austin: Yeah, sure. All right. So, who is in, who is around this table of yours?

Art: I think it is... the — Gentian, and the, the, the non-sword-bearing attendants.

Austin: Okay.

Art: Perevel and Clawed. I think it's, uh, you know, some people from Kesh, from the, from some Bilat —

Austin: Right, right.

Art: Muckety-muck, or two, or three, like...

Austin: Right, this would, uh, Kenneth Marian Colver would love to be here, but is, uh, an Iconoclast in the ocean now. So, not here.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: He's experiencing new forms of existence.

Art: Oh, that's something that we should have —

Jack: Yeah. [chuckles]

Art: That was a thing that, that wasn't ours to —

Austin: They could have taken that, that's true.

Art: Eh. Uh...

Austin: I'm sure it won't, I'm sure it won't change. I'm sure it won't develop to anything.

Art: Well... only four more turns, and that can still be mine.

Austin: Yeah, that's true.

Art: Uh, but some Bilat, some... who's here from the Frontier Syndicate?

Austin: We have all those, remember those people we had before?

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: We played the, uh, Silverbrick and —

Jack: Extremely serious Eugene Levy.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh-huh. Silverbrick and, uh, Blank Shore, and, uh, Exanceaster — no, Exanceaster wasn't with them, but, uh, one of the Cross — Locke? Was Locke the one who was still here? Margate Locke? Or did she die? I always get these two confused. It was either, it was one of, it was either Cross or Locke.

Jack: I think Cross survived. Cross went down into Minotaur hell.

Austin: Cross survived. Yes, yes. Yes. I think that's right.

Art: I think anyone you would, you would describe as super-serious...

Austin: Yeah, is here?

Art: Is here. This is like, not only because they want everyone here, but everyone who's sort of involved with this wants to be a part of this meeting.

Austin: Right, yeah. So I think Maidstone Cross is here. I think, from Frontier, and I think, probably... [exhales sibilantly] I could imagine March being here. This is that big, you know?

Art: Sure.

Austin: This is a very secure location, presumably, right?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Good, good, good. Jack, who's here from Kesh?

Jack: Oh god. Uh, it's not Connadine, because Connadine, uh, the — the threat to the Stargrave, the, the, the psychological threat of the bomb going off —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Is Connadine's number one priority right now.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: So he has sent, uh... let's say, let's say he's sent Fool, his, his second in command.

Austin: Oh, yeah. Fool Factotum, right?

Jack: Yeah. Fool is really cool, because she is a, uh... she's an artist. She's a spy artist. Uh, you know, Connadine is like, "I'm a cross between a psychological operations person and a folklorist." And they have spies who are like, "I'm a counterintelligence specialist." And Fool Factotum is like, "I'm a painter, who is also trained as a spy." Or... not a painter. She's like a mixed media artist.

Austin: [laughs] All right. Everyone's gathered, everyone's looking at the table. Some people have drinks.

Art: Yeah, and I'm... I think there's another table, a smaller table, that's stacked high and wide with, like, manila folders.

Austin: Right. Photos inside, sketches inside. Recordings that play when you open the manila folder, like a Hallmark — [chuckles]

Art: Yeah. [muffled card voice] Hello! [normal voice] Like a Hallmark manila folder.

Austin: Uh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: [chuckles]

Austin: [chuckling] Uh-huh. Exactly.

Art: Pictures of people where they're... you can't really see them.

Austin: Right, yep.

Art: With question marks drawn on them in Sharpie.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Routine Rennari's poem.

Austin: [chuckles] Right. Playing in the background. Yeah.

Austin (as **March**): [sighs]

Austin: — says Exanceaster March.

March: I understand what we would gain, if we understood what we face.

Art (as **Crusade member**): Good!

March: On the other hand, our objective would remain the same. Crush the dissidents, secure Palisade, move into the Twilight Mirage. I'm hesitant to commit my resources to this. I have other places to be. I have other problems that need attending to. Direct problems. Who will roll and try to convince me?

Art: Uh, Perevel will. Gentian is, is... doing sort of a bad job at being too aloof for this.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Art: You know, Gentian is trying to sit back, and, you know not pay attention. But is paying attention. This is very important to, to everyone in the Crusade business.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Uh, Jack took all the low rolls, I want to say. This is really...

Jack: What are we, what are we, what are we trying to hit here?

Austin: This is a 1D6, you're trying to roll under a [chuckling] 3, right?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Phoof. Okay. 1D6. That's a 4.

Art: Nope.

Jack: Okay. Do I reroll this, Art?

Art: It sort of doesn't matter where the rerolls come, right?

Jack: No, it doesn't. But the question is, do we want to dramatically get them out of the way first, or...

Art: Well...

Austin: We should spend the reroll.

Art: We only need...

Austin: Right?

Art: Yeah, we should spend the reroll. Yeah.

Jack: Yes. Uh, uh, uh...

Austin: What happens here, how do you get — Exanceaster stands, and is like...

March: I don't... I think you can handle this without me. Without my resources.

Art (as **Perevel**): It's not about... what we can handle, it's about having all of the information!

Art: And the, the, the cup of Gentian is sitting on the main table, sort of like off to the side. But if anyone approaches that, you know, Perevel shifts and... you know, no one's allowed near the cup, and at this, they, they bang their hands on the table.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: Mmm.

Art: And it, it clinks, you know? It's not in danger, but it's, it's surprising. And, and Perevel shifts to, to make sure that if something was going to happen to the cup, that they would be between the cup and harm.

Austin: Right, right, yeah. There's like a —

Art: But it —

Austin: A, “Bee-doo-beep!” Of a phone, from Exanceaster's, like, comms device. Let's get this reroll and I'll tell you what the comm says.

Jack: Ugh...

Austin: Hey!

Art: Oh, that's a success.

Austin: That's a success.

Art: Where's, where's that —

Austin: Exanceaster... [sighs] Takes the phone out, and looks at it, and goes:

(as **March**): Hm. It seems something that needed my attention doesn't anymore.

Austin: As the false information that Zed fed to the, uh, to the Cause, leads them into a trap somewhere, or —

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Or pulls them off to the side. And, and Exanceaster really hits that, as if to say, “It has nothing to do with your theatrics, that made me stay.” You know what I mean? And then hits a couple of buttons, and says —

March: My team will be here with their information shortly.

Austin: And sits back down.

Perevel: Great. We're doing manila folders.

March: ...Yeah. Yes. I see.

Austin: Uh, and then, and then, just to show the Cause here a little bit, Maidstone Cross, uh, takes a few steps to peer out a window, having, you know — hm, is anyone, is anything, is there anyone moving out there? What's going on? And we don't see more than that, at this point.

Jack: Okay. Uh... I think Fool Factotum stands up. Uh, you described Fool in the past as like uh, uh, having a similar property to Connadine, right? Of, of agelessness and, uh, uh,...

Austin: Mm-hm. Specifically, it could be 22, could be 52. Could not be 32.

Jack: Right, yes. [chuckling] She's dressed immaculately. She's dressed in this sort of like, bohemian style, uh, uh, been, you know, lounging and thinking and taking notes. Uh, stands up and says —

(as **Fool Factotum**): Millennium Break, as we all know, are terrorists, capable of building nothing, busy only in the art and ideology of destruction. Or, such is the message that it is advantageous for my division to spend as much effort as possible to work. Uh, just as we try to counter the methods in which we understand that they are capable of moving carefully, are capable of forging alliances. This, of course, has to be suppressed.

If what you say is true, and there are people on this planet who have joined under their banner, how are we going to be able to clearly and, uh, stridently, maintain the tactical advantage that what we are dealing with are disorganized, outsider terrorists, rather than an organized, ideologically motivated interior force?

Jack: Uh, and I'm asking you, explain to me how this represents the Authority/Cause's ideals.

Perevel: Well, this is not a published report we are assembling —

Austin: [laughing]

Perevel: This is for us, this is... you cannot let your, you cannot believe your own words on this. We see what Millennium Break is doing every day. The, the... point is that we would know who we are, exactly who we are up against, which would make our propaganda sharper. It would make your job easier if you knew every person you had to undermine, instead of scattershot, like a... scatter... shooting... gun.

Fool Factotum: Are you suggest that we, we claim that all these people are Millennium Break?

Perevel: No, I'm suggesting you use the knowledge of who is Millennium Break, to know who to say is and is not Millennium Break, to dissociate them with people who, who are looked upon kindly by the populace, and associate them with people who they, who they, the populace fears and reviles, and, and you will know what is true.

Jack: I think the thing, I think the thing she's saying is, is, uh... when it becomes clear that there is broad public support for this movement, in something like Joyous Guard, or in, in Sinder Karst, how can we continue to paint these people as, like, uh, uh,—

Austin: But the response is, this isn't — no one but the people in this room will know that.

Art: Yeah, by lying!

Jack: [laughs] Sure.

Art: Is the [chuckling] answer to your question.

Austin: By not talking about this, right? Yeah.

March: Speaking of the truth... ahem.

Austin: And 17 people show up, with manila envelopes. Uh, and they are dressed like... they have white polo shirts on, with the Frontier Syndicate logo, and business slacks.

Jack: [chuckles]

Austin: Uh, and they each put down their, their manila envelopes and begin to open them. Uh, and a tiny little drone flies out of each. And Exanceaster March says,

March: Manila envelopes, right?

Austin: And each of the drones hovers about 6 feet above the table, that has the map on it. And they begin to lock into place, forming a sort of lattice. Uh, I'm imagining these, these drones as being almost like little T-shaped, black, tiny little things, right? They're, they're, they're, you know, smaller than a phone, right? They're like half the size of this kind of small phone I have. Uh, uh, smaller than a wallet, you know? And they each have a kind of cross, you know, a black piece of plastic that goes up to down, and then left to right, forming a sort of cross symbol. And they lattice up, and each of them has a little holoprojector or a laser light or something like that, and on top of the map that has been painted into this table, suddenly there are all these lights moving back and forth. And they're all color-coded, and they're all, uh, uh, these kind of bright, dark — it's almost like watching a 4X game or grand strategy game at superspeed, you know what I mean? Like, you're seeing movements —

Art: Mm-hm.

Austin: Across the places. And March stands up and says —

March: I want you to follow the... Lilac colors here. Moving between the tip of... the mountain, uh, Steeple Catterick. And the Isle of the Broken Key. I believe this was one of your operations, Factotum. Yes?

Jack: She nods.

March: Mmm. It seemed as if... whatever the Dim Liturgy and their recent converts were up to was neatly in hand, until last week. And then suddenly, as

if... these dissidents knew that they had been infiltrated, there was a response, which led to death, and disorder, and problems. Now, how would they know that, unless the Paint Shop had, itself, been infiltrated? If your operation had gone without notice, it would have succeeded.

Austin: I present evidence of a spy in our ranks. Roll to see if it's taken seriously.

Jack: Oh my god.

Austin: Who's rolling on this? I guess —

Jack: I mean, this is, this is our comba — this is specifically —

Austin: Yeah, I know, I know.

Jack: The Paint Shop's ranks, but it is our combined ranks, so I think Art can still roll here?

Austin: So, so — yeah, Art can roll. It's Art's scene. I like making Art roll, instead of us.
[pause] Hey!

Art: It's taken so seriously. Everything stops —

Austin: [chuckles]

Art: The record scratches —

Austin: It was a 1, by the way, another success.

Art: No one even knew the record was playing, but it was. It was like a, a soft little... some thinking music, you know?

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Jack: God... they call Connadine.

Art: Bum bum, bum bum, bum bum... grrrrk! That's not what a, what a record scratching sounds like.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: [laughs]

Art: What does, I — get Keith, can we get Keith on the —

Austin: Can we get Keith on real quick to do —

Jack: Voop!

Austin: Zvoop!

Jack: It's like a, "voop!" sound.

Austin: Yeah. It's like a... yeah.

Art: Bzzt! ...I think I did an F1, uh... pit crew —

Austin: You did like a... yeah, a pit crew taking a tire off.

Art: Grrk! Vrrrr Vrrr Vrrr! — that's not it either, I don't —

Austin: That's, that's pretty close. That's pretty close.

Jack: We don't have the skill. You know, we can make a wide range of sounds. But we can't make every sound.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And the difference between a wide range, and every, is so many sounds.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Oh, god, it's deadly serious. This is taken deadly seriously.

Art: Yeah. A new table comes out —

Austin: [laughing] Yeah.

Art: For new information.

Austin: Rapid spray-painting.

Art: Yeah. Clawed, clutching the tome of Crusade, looking over this —

Austin: [chuckling] Uh-huh.

Art: New table with a furrowed expression.

Jack: There, there must be protocol for this, too, right? Like, I feel like any spy organization worth its salt would have stuff ready for, “We have been infiltrated.”

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: There's a good book about it called, “Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy.”

Austin: Ah.

Art: [wheezes]

Austin: During this the, the, uh, the Lattice holoprojector laser light show just lifts higher so the new table can be brought in, and then kind of lowers back into place. Uh, it has the sound of just like, a nice fan, like, all the little micro-fans and motors running at once —

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Are just kind of like good background noise now.

Art: That's great.

Austin: Uh, uh, and then I think we get a shot of members of Joy — or, of, uh, of Jade Kill, uh, uh, and, you know, Reunion, and the, the subgroups they're in, checking their equipment, you know. Extreme close-ups on faces, as they give hand signals, uh, you

know, clips being loaded in, weapons being oiled, movement in the dark. Authority has two successes here. It's not looking great for the Cause.

Art: Yeah, especially because 3 is the minimum we need. And I'm going to stop the vote.

Austin: I think that we — I think the way we've been playing this has been, if you get 3 in a row, it's done. I can imagine if, if, I mean obviously, if the Cause gets one here, it's back on, and we can talk about what the vibes are, if we feel the scene has come to a conclusion, if the Authority then gets another one. According to our little thing, it seems like it's definitely limited in terms of how far it can go, in terms of our, our personal UI/UX experience, but...

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: Let's see where it goes. So what's, what's next? Now they're taking spies seriously. Uh...

Art: Taking spies seriously. We've gotten someone to commit their resources.

Austin: So now is it the time to look at the stuff? The rest of the, the manila envelopes start to get opened. Everyone is poring over information. It's like playing Sherlock Holmes: Consulting Detective, or Detective, and you're looking through all the data, [chuckles], you know?

Art: Mm-hm.

Austin: Uh, and everyone has a newspaper, a fake newspaper in their hands. Uh, everyone is —

Jack: [chuckles]

Austin: They're subdivided into little teams. Eventually that little desk that was covered in manila envelopes is empty, and like, there's a couple of people just surrounded on that one, looking at a single photo of something blurry, and they're trying to like, figure

out what it is. There's some sort of physical, like, analog device, that can sharpen a physical photo, you like, put a little disc down and start turning it —

Art: [laughing]

Austin: To try to sharpen it —

Jack: Oh, that's great.

Austin: But it's hypothetical sharpness, it's like, it's like an LLM, you know what I mean? It's not real. It's guessing. But it can guess in a thousand different ways. And so it's like, okay, well, let's tune it to 116 and then sharpen it up. All right, tune it to 117 and then sharpen — and, and so, you're not getting real information from it, you're getting hypothetical real information from it.

Art: [chuckles]

Austin: And, and it's about seeing which hypothetical real information shows up the most, and then that gives you a weight of what it might mean, likely, you know?

Jack: Yeah, that —

Art: Yeah, sounds miserable.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. [chuckles] Then police are going to use this to arrest someone. And that's the world we're moving towards, genuinely.

Jack: Yeah. [chuckles]

Art: Yeah, that's not even —

Austin: *Genuinely.*

Art: We're not even talking... [chuckling]

Austin: Right, we don't need pre-cogs, we just need blurry jpegs that someone's going to feed into an AI, quote/unquote AI.

Jack: We, uh, we... uh, we figured out Bitcoin before Bitcoin was a thing.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: We would like to be clear here that we're not figuring this out before it's a thing. This is a thing. We're telling you about it.

Austin: This is a thing. Uh-huh. Uh... not the analog part. They can't do it with a physical photo.

Jack: Thank fucking god.

Austin: Yeah, I mean, you can just scan the physical photo. But it would be, but it's, you know, that's the, the difference here is that they're doing it with a big, physical object, and... I can obsess over that part, because it makes me feel good instead of bad.

Jack: Cigarette smoke hanging in the room...

Austin: Yeah, exactly.

Jack: There's, you know, uh, uh... is the meeting going long, as well? It's like...

Austin: It must be, right?

Art: Yeah, I think —

Jack: The room's getting stuffy, someone opens a window.

Austin: [amused] Can I be goofy? Can I do a — this, is, no, this is too goofy. This is — the thing I was going to say is, a step of our planning is left undone, who will roll to suggest a solution? And the thing I was going to say was, we, we, we don't have catering for this many people. But that's not a thing worth rolling for.

Jack: It could be — people are getting tired.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: There is like a lot of stuff going on here. I don't know, I don't want to suggest for Art. Uh, or, no, I would be picking this one. Uh...

Austin: Mm-hm. Sure. Anyone may issue a challenge.

Jack: Oh, yeah, that's true. [pause]

Austin: So is that your challenge?

Art: So the step of planning left undone is, the meeting's going long and there's... [chuckles] there's no coffee?

Austin: There's no coffee, there's no food, we didn't think about this as like a... uh... you know, we —

Art: We're in the middle of the Bontive Valley, so it's really silly.

Austin: [chuckles]

Jack: Yeah, I, I — yeah. Uh, also, we're also professionals at this. I would hope that like, we would have —

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink.

Austin: Yeah, it's not really — doesn't quite work.

Jack: The Bontive Valley. Yeah.

Art: Yeah, like no one wants to go out and have like a raw ear of corn.

Austin: Right. Uh...

Jack: Oh!

Austin: Go ahead.

Jack: What about... mmm, no.

Austin: I mean, I think with one of these, we should raise this one. Which is, I point out a blind spot in our intel. Will we recommit resources, reducing a beneficial clock by one step, or roll and take the risk? And I think maybe this is someone... maybe Maidstone Cross. This feels Maidstone Cross-y to me, is like—

(as **Cross**): Listen. You want to find them? We get out there and we find them. Stop looking at photographs. Start using your eyes. We need to deploy people.

Jack: [laughs]

Cross: I know we all have our little pet projects going right now. But if we just, all of us. Pulled something off of, uh, something we think needs to get done tomorrow, and say it can get done next week, and we spend this week putting out a net... we will just find them. These people aren't invisible. They go to the store. They send messages to one another.

Jack: I do just want to point out that, "Stop using cameras and start using your eyes," and, "These people aren't just invisible," is extremely funny given the last time we saw Cross, fighting —

Austin: [cracking up]

Jack: Invisible Minotaurs with a camera in a labyrinth.

Art: [laughing]

Austin: That's all she can think about now. That's all... every... she constantly metaphorizes around it.

Jack: And why not? Who wouldn't?

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. That's the thing, she's like —

Cross: Listen. Two months ago, I fought invisible Minotaurs —

Jack: [laughing]

Cross: You can only see with a camera. These people aren't that!

Jack: [still chuckling] We've heard this story before.

Austin: So many times.

Art: No one believes this.

Jack: [laughs] Mmm... yeah.

[30:00]

Cross: It was an Affliction!

Art: Yeah, yeah, the invisible —

Austin: [cracking up]

Art: And they had Triceratops heads.

Cross: And they had Triceratops heads! Tricerataurs, they were called.

Jack: You climbed to the top of a ruined church tower, I bet. And then, I think, zip-lined down? Yeah, okay.

Austin: Ugh... anyway, we'll —

Art: Just, just say you got lost.

Austin: Just say, yeah, just admit it. Will we recommit resources, reducing a beneficial clock by one step, or roll and take the risk?

Art: Here's the thing. If I reduce a beneficial clock, does that count as succeeding in a roll?

Austin: No, it does not. You have to succeed in a roll.

Art: I mean, I still think — then I think I should roll. Because I'm, I'd still be up 2 to 1, and we have a reroll.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, if you succeed, uh, Art, Austin might use, uh, his reroll, to, to try and engender a failure.

Austin: No, I wouldn't. It's not — the Frontier Syndicate has a, has a —

Jack: Oh, it's the Frontier — wait, what's the, is it —

Austin: It says the director may force a reroll during a conflict scene. I'm not going to — that's the Frontier Syndicate's maneuver.

Jack: Okay, that's the Frontier Syndicate's director. I didn't know if we were doing that thing where it's like, there's that —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: The distinction between players and, uh, —

Austin: Right, right, right. Are you going to roll?

Jack: Yeah, in that case, roll it. I just, I wanted to see if that was going to happen.

Art: Yeah, I'm going to roll.

Austin: Nope! The, uh, —

Art: What?

Austin: Carmine Bight is spending their tap to get an autosuccess.

Art: Who?

Austin: Uh, Carmine Bight?

Jack: The fucking pirates.

Art: Oh.

Austin: The pirates. As we get scenes of, uh, ships undocking and moving into action, supporting whatever this Jade Kill operation is. Lights across the water.

Art: Wait, but how does that affect the, the resources thing?

Austin: Uh, wait, what do you mean the resources —

Art: Oh, it's a blind spot in our intel, never mind. Okay.

Austin: Right. And, uh, instantly, you know — even if, so, one is, you're not committing resources. You're saying, fuck it. We'll go with what we got. You're choosing not to commit more resources by —

Art: No, no, I just forgot what the challenge was.

Austin: Oh, right, right, right. Yes.

Art: And so I thought that — I, I forgot the challenge wasn't about the resources, and like, well, that doesn't, that's, that's not what those pirates did. But I'm —

Austin: Right, right, and like —

Art: I'm now rereading the — yeah.

Austin: This thing, in my mind, is like, when you don't put out the network, the Cause gets to support each other in the dark, right? Do they get to move in ways they shouldn't be able to move, right? Because, you have a team watching places that you know, uh, Jade Kill can move to, but they don't, they, they have more space than just that, you know? They also have these pirates who are not currently being considered part of the Cause, and aren't, therefore, getting the full attention. So, 1 to 2. As everyone dismisses Maidstone Cross, who really, truly did fight invisible Tricerataurs.

Art: Yeah, right.

Jack: I bet they weren't on a sick Deviantart. Blades, blades somebody.

Austin: Yeah, exactly [laughing] yeah, exactly. Bladeboss27.

Art: Those are the silliest thing we've ever invented, right? Those —

Austin: [negative] Uh-uh.

Art: Or at least, they're up there, right?

Austin: They're up there.

Jack: It was also a fucking great action scene, though. I was really proud of that.

Austin: Yeah, that was a really fun, fun run. We had all sorts of cool shit going on throughout. So, what's next?

Art: Well, there's only one more roll option on the...

Austin: Sure, but we can, we can lap, loop back around, if you want to. We don't have to only, we don't have to only do these things once.

Art: Sure. I think people start putting some stuff together. I think we start getting like, you know, some of the, some of the pictures on the table are starting to, you know, work out, right? Like, oh, here's a picture of Fealty, here's a picture of... Phrygian, with the glasses that say Phrygian.

Austin: Uh-huh. [chuckling]

Art: You know, the pieces are coming together.

Austin: There's just, maybe there's too many pieces, right? It's like, and also —

Art: This is — right, there's also like, you know, I don't have names for people who aren't in the story —

Austin: Well, Clem, right? We, there's Clem. We get a picture of Clem, it's like, well, is Clem in the cause? Uh, the Witch in Glass.

Art: Sure, yeah.

Austin: Uh, well, she must be.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: She's a huge... look, the ships are coming in and out of there all the time! Uh, and it's like, well, no, does that mean she's part of the Cause, does that mean that she's allied with them? Does that mean... who could say? We know that Stereoma, the, the group that is the, the assassins, uh, sorry, they're an agent-type Wayward Faction. The Pact true believer, Cor'rina Corrine and cor rival, Misericorde, uh, dedicated only to violence, have begun building a surgical anti-Bilat hit squad on Palisade, right? And so we're getting like, we have video of them killing some colonel somewhere, or some, or some baron of the, of the glass fab — you know, the Fabreal Duchy, rather. Uh, stuff like that, right? It's like, well, we have all these other people. Who isn't? You know, there's video of the Afflictions, you know?

Jack: Yeah. Uh...

Art: But I also want there to be just like, a dude who was just —

Austin: Yes.

Art: In the wrong place 3 times.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: 100 percent.

Art: It's like, "This person is in the background of these photos."

Austin: Uh-huh. [chuckling]

Art: "They must be involved!" And they're just like, you know —

Austin: Yes.

Art: Jason Smith.

Austin: [chuckling] uh-huh.

Art: And they're not.

Austin: And they're simply not involved. Or are they?

Jack: Yeah, this is, I think this is, a step of our planning is left undone, who will roll and suggest a solution? Because, what, what we are doing on, on one level is quite a wise move, which is saying, well, there are going to be multiple, uh, uh, better to have a higher upper limit, than a, than a lower limit that is too high, you know.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: We, we should account for multiple people here. But I do think that what is happening is, we are, we have too many. We don't know how many factions we are dealing with, and we are over-egging the pudding, in terms of like, how many things are we actually facing.

Austin: Right. All right.

Jack: Who will roll?

Austin: Who will roll? Who is being like, "We can cut these people off of this?"

Art: Uh, because this is going to be this successful thing, this is what's going to win the whole deal —

Austin: Yeah? Okay... uh-huh.

Art: This is going to be Gentian.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Oh, sick.

Austin: What's Gentian say or do?

Art: Well... should I know the result first?

Austin: Well, that's the framing? Is, is Gentian standing up? Does Gentian look like it's time to speak? Like, as the room grows pregnant, yeah —

Art: I think Gentian asks to consult the book.

Austin: Ah.

Jack: Ooh.

Austin: Good, love it. We don't know what's in this book, we're going to find out. Or we won't.

Art: Or we won't.

Austin: 1D6.

Art: Just loosening up, I'm loosening up.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: I'm, I'm, I'm making sure my rolling —

Jack: It always feels like playing the tower stacking game.

Art: Mm-hm.

Art: I'd — can we do that? I bet I can stack a 7.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: [chuckling] I think you gotta roll the dice. Unbelievable!

Jack: Unbelievable.

Art: Three 1s in a row!

Austin: Three consecutive 1s. It was not meant to be, Cause. The, the, the uh, tell me what, what happens here?

Art: Uh, Clawed, you know, brings the book over. Uh, yeah, I think it's cool this way. Sort of kneels and becomes a book stand.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: Whoa.

Art: And again, Clawed's so big. Clawed is so big.

Austin: [chuckles]

Art: But like, folds up into this thing, and this slight older woman comes, and she, she consults the pages. And we don't, we definitely don't see the pages on camera.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: And if we did, they would be in an impossible script. And I mean that like, literally, an impossible script.

Austin: Like, a person couldn't have written in that, in that...

Art: A person couldn't have written in it, and it's indecipherable. You need to commune with the Divine —

Austin: Right.

Jack: Right.

Art: To, to know what this says —

Austin: To make sense of it, yeah. Yeah.

Art: Uh, and then... I need to like, come up with a parable.

Austin: Mmm.

Art: Not like a parable really, a, a...

Austin: Like an aphorism? Like a...

Art: Yeah. Like a stitch in time saves nine.

Austin: Right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: And honestly — [chuckles]

Austin: Is it about like —

Art: It's pretty close to a stitch in time saves nine. [laughing]

Austin: Yeah, but what you're looking for here is like, something about separating the chaff from the, from the wheat or whatever, right? Like, you're looking at, like...

Art: Yeah.

Austin: The cream rises to the top, et cetera.

Art: It's like, yeah, when, uh, you know, when you're looking for shells on the beach, don't spend time sorting sand.

Austin: Right, right, right. Yeah. I get what you mean, yeah.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: You walk. You keep walking. You'll get to shells. Don't start digging.

Art: You keep walking, yeah. You look for shells.

Austin: Right.

Art: You don't dig.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: There's an infinite amount of sand.

Austin: Right. And then just like, sweeps away the proper ones — Clem and the Afflictions, and Stereoma, and —

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Phil Jackson, or whoever you just said — it wasn't Phil Jackson —

Art: Brushes them, like, like backwards, right?

Austin: Jason Smith. [chuckling]

Art: Jason Smith.

Austin: Basketball [wheezes] legend —

Art: Face cast as Jason from Home Movies.

Austin: Oh, Home Movies, yeah. Not part of the Cause. Uh, yeah.

Art: Like, flips them, like, flippantly, you know, you know, dismissively waves with their hand, you know. When your hand's backwards and —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: You know, not this one, not this one, not this one, not this one. And just perfectly —

Austin: Each time you do that, it cuts to people from Jade Kill in action. And they are like, "Not this one." You move that, and it cuts to them, like, crashing through the windows of a palace. "Not this one." And they're running down the hallway, and they're gunning down guards. "Not this one." And they've busted down the door of the Stargrave. And she isn't there. And they've done this operation, over in Tintagel, they've been doing it in the background the whole time. And they've, they've closed their snare with this wild operation in, in tandem with, uh, uh, with, what was the pirate group called again? Carmine Bight. And it didn't come together, right? They've, they — they took their shot here. And while it was happening, you found out who they were, right? You

found out who the Cause was. In fact, maybe this operation even helped give it away. And it's like, there's only one question left. Are these two... you know, is Carmine Bight part of this? And like, in that moment you get a call from Tintagel, that is like, "Carmine Bight was just spotted delivering members of — or, you know, those pirates, the pirates of Rifle Island, were just spotted working with Reunion from Joyous Guard. They're part of it, too."

Art: The Tintagel ring camera caught it, yeah.

Austin: Right, [laughing] exactly. Right, right, like, instead of the Stargrave being there, who has been brought away, uh, uh, instead, they get, they get caught in a, in a trap, you know.

Jack: Like a trap of their own making, almost.

Austin: Exactly, exactly. And the thing that I was going to do here was, just before you put together who it is, uh, the Stargrave gets killed, and that pulls everybody away from this project, just before you solve it, and instead, uh, it turns out that, you know, you never come back to this table because everything is in chaos, because the Stargrave has been killed. But that didn't happen. Uh, instead you did succeed. And the Cause's membership has been revealed, I guess, right? That's what you're choosing as your outcome, right?

Art: Yeah.

Jack: God. Can we just get like a, a really scary montage of pinning up manila envelope pieces of paper of like, you know —

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Jack: I don't think that they — maybe they do, I don't know if they have the code names. I could, I could make an argument for how they got the code names, which is that they extracted them. They code broke a line of things that they previously thought were not connected at all.

Austin: Right.

Jack: Uh...

Austin: Or were parts of Millennium Break.

Jack: And put them together, and they're like —

Austin: And now you've realized you were too zoomed in, right? You thought they were bits of Millennium Break, but now you understand, they're parts of the Cause, which is unnamed, which is frustrating, because that's part of why you couldn't figure out what it was, because they don't have a fucking name. They don't have logos, they don't have sayings, they don't have speeches that unite them all, you know?

Jack: Yeah. It's a really unsettling montage, because you see people say things like, "I think this is, uh, I think that this is... uh, you know, Jade Kill." And they put a label on the wrong one, and then someone says —

Austin: Right.

Jack: "Nope, it's that. It's got to be this." And they go, "Oh, wait, you're right."

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And one by one, they move these pieces around until, you know, all of their guesswork is being proven correct.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Six factions.

Austin: They —

Jack: And —

Art: Hold on one second.

Jack: Did you say hold on a second?

Art: Yeah, sorry, I was chewing.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Oh.

Austin: Art said, "Mm-hm!"

Jack: Uh, and they —

Art: I have another thing to paint.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: Which is, the security forces across the planet start getting these —

Austin: Yeah. Right?

Jack: Yeah!

Art: These pieces of information. And I don't want to, it's not like, no one gets caught, no one's captured. That's not what it was.

Austin: The action hasn't happened yet. The, the snare, the counter snare hasn't been pulled.

Art: Right, but they start to like, spot people. Public meeting places become less safe, you know.

Austin: Right, right.

Art: Whichever division it was, and I'm making this up and no one's said this before, like, instead of being able to meet in this coffee shop, now they have to meet in a basement.

Austin: In a basement. In the basement of the coffee shop, which means —

Art: Right.

Austin: That you see people going into the basement, and which means, that means that they're probably members of, of the Cause, right?

Jack: Yep.

Austin: All of this gets harder. And so, yeah, it's up on the, it's up on the board. Blue Channel. Gray Pond. Jade Kill. Carmine Bight. Violet Cove. Rose River.

Naming the Cause [0:43:16]

Austin: And then, what do they write underneath it? What do, what does, you know? They didn't give themselves a name. [chuckling] What does the Bilateral Intercession call them?

Jack: Oh, good question.

Art: Psh. Uh... how do you stick with this thing and give it a name that's really, like, repugnant?

Austin: Yeah.

Art: I guess it doesn't have to stick with the thing so much, but like the...

Austin: Oh, yeah, it doesn't need to. It doesn't need to.

Art: The Seven Seas, derogative.

Austin: Right, right, right.

Art: The —

Austin: Six something isn't too bad. We can call them, The Six. No, wait.

Art: The Six. The, uh...

Austin: [chuckles]

Art: The Riptide, the..., uh.

Austin: It's hard. This is why they didn't do it to begin with. I do like zeroing in on six as a, a thing to pull on, you know?

Art: Yeah. The uh... Sinister Six. [chuckles]

Austin: [wheezes] That's them.

Art: There, there they are. The, uh...

Austin: Uh... oop.

Art: What if, what if the attempt is to paint them as outsiders?

Austin: Oh, interesting, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: The, the six interlopers. The six outsiders.

Austin: Uh, I'm looking up synonyms here.

Art: The six gentrifiers. [chuckling]

Austin: [laughing] They're the gent... I don't think they're gentrifying.

Art: Austin, this is also just a lie.

Austin: Oh, shit, okay, I see. Uh... I do think the, yeah. We already used the word Adversary to be about Perennial, which, not really going to work here. Uh...

Jack: I'm looking at wordhippo, and one of the options is just squatter. The Six Squatters is fucking grim.

Austin: Very funny and bad.

Jack: Just being like —

Art: Yeah, that is —

Austin: Strangers?

Art: The Six Strangers is not bad.

Austin: I feel like it's not creepy or bad enough. It's not, it's not...

Art: The Six Stalkers, the six...

Austin: Those, the thing is, we're hitting individual words — or we're hitting names for people. What we want is a name for like a group, you know what I mean?

Jack: Maybe we should look at collective nouns.

Austin: Oh, yeah, I love these.

Jack: Hard to go wrong with collective nouns.

Austin: Uh-huh. Hm... this is the process, folks.

Jack: You know, turtles, six turtles are called — not six turtles. A group of turtles [chuckling] are called a bale, BALE. That's cool.

Austin: That's fun.

Jack: A mustering of storks.

Austin: A mustering of storks. What are bad animals? What are animals that are thought of as dirty or evil? Sharks.

Jack: There's only one bad animal, Austin.

Austin: Humans.

Jack: The fucking snake. Him what gave Eve the apple.

Austin: The Six Snakes. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Right, yeah. He just said some, some words. He didn't climb that tree.

Jack: Yeah, and it was, it was, “Have this apple.”

Austin: It was, “Have *that* apple.”

Jack: [chuckles] That's a critical distinction, isn't it?

Austin: [laughing] You know, apparently.

Art: Outlanders.

Austin: I can't not think of Morrowind.

Jack: There is, we can't, I... yeah.

Austin: What do you think of, Jack?

Jack: That fucking show, the —

Austin: Outlander.

Jack: Is that called Outlander?

Austin: It is, it is.

Jack: Yeah, the...

Austin: My mom's a big fan. It doesn't... not for me, probably.

Jack: It is a Morrowind thing, too.

Austin: Outlander.

Jack: Because they all watch that show in Morrowind.

Austin: Right, they're big fans. [chuckling] “Terrorist organization names.”

Jack: The Targets. Targets. The Six Targets.

Austin: The Targets. But targets makes you feel... if this is a name that ends up going public, it shouldn't make the Authority sound like they're... the ones holding the weapons.

Jack: But we don't want to go public, right? We want to just say, "This is Millennium Break."

Austin: I guess so, yeah. Six — yeah, but then that's not as fun.

Jack: We did this once with Millennium Break, and it ruled.

Austin: Yeah, right.

Jack: It also took us forever.

Austin: It did.

Jack: Uh...

Austin: And we did it with, uh... something at the end of Hieron, too, and we found a great word for that, too. But that was also a similar kind of word.

Jack: Oh, we did! That did also take us forever.

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Art: I clicked through enough on different synonyms that I got to, "Virgins," and like, that's just funny, just —

Austin: The Six Virgins.

Art: [chuckling] The Six Virgins. That's — we're going high school on this one.

Austin: [chuckling] The Six Dorkwads. There are — this is a stupid question. Is there a synonym for six? Like, could they just be like, the Sextet?

Art: Uh...

Austin: Uh, why is cardinal and six related?

Art: Senarius?

Austin: What's that?

Art: Uh, I don't know, it comes up on [chuckling] synonyms for six. A Latin verse of six iambic feet.

Austin: And they're like, "Why was he saying those sonnets?"

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: They're the Senarius. I didn't know — I guess, of course, everybody uses iambic. I didn't know that there were Roman things written in iambic, but of course there are.

Jack: Oh, yeah, sure. They must've figured it out very early, and —

Austin: Yeah. Jack, you seemed also excited about the idea of the Hexad, or...

Jack: Uh, Hexad, yeah, it just sounded good. The Hexad sounded like a, or, it sounded like a wizard thing, if I'm honest. [chuckling]

Austin: It does sound like a wizard thing. A group or set of six. The Hexad. I think I like those more than I like the Six Somethings.

Jack: God. Yeah, I'll make another pitch.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: What about Hexagon?

Austin: Oh.

Art: Just —

Austin: Just straight up, Hexagon.

Jack: Just, just straight up, Hexagon. This organization —

Austin: They're called Hexagon, because they have six sides.

Jack: Yeah...

Austin: I don't mind that.

Jack: Because they have... [laughing]

Art: And we'd like them to be hexa-gone!

Austin: Boom! Get 'em. I'm on the Wikipedia page for the number 6.

Jack: Hexagon.

Austin: [chuckling]

Art: [chuckles]

Austin: Sextets.

Jack: What things have six things?

Austin: Hexagons.

Jack: Yeah. [laughs] Uh...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh... dice. Dice have six sides.

Austin: Dice do [chuckles] have six sides. There are six whole tones in an octave.

Art: So they could be like —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Snake eyes. Boxcar.

Austin: That's already different numbers, right? Snake eyes is two.

Art: Well, boxcars is two sixes. [chuckling]

Austin: [chuckles] There's only one six!

Jack: That's 12!

Austin: A guitar, a guitar —

Art: Or are there?

Austin: Has six strings.

Art: And these people are wanted dead or alive!

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: I kind of like Hexagon. Target Hexagon. Like — the name of the smallest [chuckles] group of Cub Scouts and Guiding equivalent's Brownies, traditionally consist of six people, and is led by... a sixer. Bad.

Jack: Bad. I mean, this is the other question, right? Would these people, in this room, name them this way, at this point?

Austin: Yes. Oh, I think so. I think, Exanceaster March would say —

(as **March**): Hexagon. They have six sides. We'll crush them one by one.

Jack: First, they will become a pentagon... [wheezes]

Austin: Exactly.

Jack: [laughing]

Art: [laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

March: And then a square.

Jack: Followed by a square.

March: A triangle will be next. And then it gets... tricky.

Jack: Some —

Art (dubiously in character as **Perevel**): Arguably, a line. But...

March: It's a V, first, I think. For victory.

Jack (dubiously in character as **Fool Factotum**): Then a line. Then a point.

Perevel: And then a point.

March: And then a point, and then we've won. And then they'll have learned the point. Because —

Jack: Hexagon isn't bad, I think —

Art: Just high fives all around, at this point.

Jack: Exanceaster naming it — Exanceaster naming it Hexagon, it has a real Frontier Syndicate ring to it, actually.

Austin: Yeah, it does.

Jack: Hexagon.

Austin: Like, gets up, and, and — you know, they're up on the white board, the pictures of each of the — here's the Blue Channel, here's da-da-da. And like, gets up and draws the line from one to the other, you know what I mean? Here, I'll do it. On the map, [chuckles] that we have. We have the thing. We have the thing in front of us on roll20. We're doing it, right? Because I had Annie do this, with the things? With the icons.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: We can draw the line.

Jack: Austin is being a coward by moving the things first, when what he should have done is just drawn them where they were, and we should have named it after whatever shape appeared.

Austin: Okay, well, let's go back. Let's see what, let's see what happens!

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: Is this all back? I think this is all back. Well, this is not a shape anymore, is it?

Art: Well, you don't know until you try.

Jack: You don't know until you try.

Austin: Okay — where are we? Okay. So from Rose River, all the way across to Rifle Island — to Carmine Bight, is that right?

Jack: Yep. Yep. Yeah.

Austin: You know what, I'm going to get this line — you know what, I'm going to use the line tool and not the freehand tool.

Art: That's probably correct, yes.

Austin: Uh, how do you do that now? Wait.

Jack: Oh my god, it's —

Austin: Where the fuck did the line tool go?

Jack: It's a — three-quarter perspective image of a man playing cards!

Austin: This is a fucking box. Where is the line tool at? Is it... polygon? Yeah.

Art: For me it says, polygon slash line.

Austin: Okay, so there's one. Then from Carmine Bight up to where? Up to, up to Violet Cove. And then Violet Cove over to Blue Channel.

Jack: Yep.

Austin: Then Blue Channel up to Jade Kill.

Jack: Yep.

Austin: Then Jade Kill... down?

Jack: Uh, that's the only place we can go, right?

Austin: I believe. 1, 2, 3, 4 —

Jack: A shoe!

Austin: Wait, who are we missing?

Jack: Wait, who are we missing? Uh, we're missing a couple of faction tokens.

Austin: We're missing a faction token. This is 5.

Jack: Two, three, four, five.

Austin: Who the fuck are we missing? Did I delete somebody?

Jack: Yeah, we are missing... uh, we are missing Rose River.

Austin: Oh, no, I, we — we drove over them. It's, it's Gray Pond. Gray Pond's right up here, next to Jade Kill, because they're —

Jack: Oh, I see, yeah.

Austin: Next to each other, which doesn't really, you know. It's like, it's like here to here. And then it's like, here to here. It's a fucked-up triangle is what we've drawn here, isn't it?

Art: The Fucked-Up Triangle.

Austin: It's like a shoe.

Jack: [laughing] It is. It's a shoe.

Art: The Shoe. [laughing] It is a shoe. The Loafers.

Austin: The — yeah. [chuckling] You know, that kind of hits your outsider thing.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: No, I'm doing it.

Art: Well, and it implies that they're lazy.

Austin: It implies that they're lazy, sure sure sure. So Jade Kill up here, you know, and then we're going to put them over here, and then here, and then, you know. This isn't really working, is it? This is... I have too many.

Jack: God, and there are. There are photographs assigned to each faction, and then there is the name that has been drawn on a little piece of butcher paper or whatever, separately from it, so that they could move the names of the pictures around while they were working it out.

Austin: Yeah, exactly.

Jack: And I keep coming back to this thing of like, they got it wrong several times, but they ultimately got it right. As that same, it's the, it's the dread inverse of the feeling of playing a game like Wavelength or something, where you are —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Watching your friends figure out something that seems really difficult, and they just nail it.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Uh, and here you are seeing the Authority, just, piece by piece, carefully, assign the names to the photographs.

Austin: I appreciate you stalling for me so I could draw this line, these lines.

Jack: Thank you.

Austin: These hideous lines I'm drawing. Don't go to —

Art: I hope you also got a screenshot of the loafer, though, for posterity.

Austin: You know, oh, I did not get the loafer, I'm sorry. The loafer is gone. The loafer is just for us.

Jack: [wheezes]

Art: It was beautiful, everyone.

Austin: It really was great.

Jack: First they will be the loafer, and then they'll be some sort of open-toed sandal. Then —

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: [laughing] Moving on, they'll be a plimsoll, and then [laughs]

Austin: Uh-huh. Uh, all right. Well —

Art: Then some sort of sock.

Austin: [laughs]

Art: You know, one of those socks that people wear outside.

Jack: Then it gets tricky again. Oh, this looks pretty sick, though.

Austin: Yeah, there it is. That's the damn Cause. The Hexagon, I mean.

Jack: No, Hexagon.

Austin: Just Hexagon.

Jack: Not The Hexagon.

Austin: Not The Hexagon. [chuckles] That's Exanceaster. Someone says, "All right, so how do we get this — how do we get the Hexagon?" And he goes —

March: No. Just Hexagon.

Jack: Just Hexagon.

Austin's Turn [55:00]

Austin: Well, that's a turn. Uh, I'm left, right? I'm the only one?

Jack: Yeah.

Art: You're the one.

Austin: Fuck, I haven't thought about this literally at all.

Art: And you still have a reroll, because I rolled —

Austin: Because you rolled, right, you rolled —

Art: All those 1s in a roll.

Austin: All those 1s, you crushed it. Uh, and so we've uncovered the Cause's membership. What can I do? I can learn a secret, I can start a new scheme or advance an existing one. Uh, and, or I can take two extra tokens during the next downtime. Uh...

Jack: And the next downtime is going to be a rolling fight, as they determine —

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: [laughing] What to do about the ultimatum.

Austin: Yeah. Uh... I think I actually know what I want to do. Which is, all-out war.
[chuckles]

Jack: Okay!

Austin: Uh, as always, I have, uh, the Authority starts a new scheme or advances an existing one. And the one that I've been chasing is this long, six-step one, harvest the fundament nodes.

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: And so that's how we got, uh, you know, that's where we started with the, the big group, uh, uh, mission going down into the Diadem, the Diadem, the kind of depths of the Diadem, to, to locate that, the fundament nodes, with Partial Palisade and all that, and we got the follow up, with Margate, uh, uh, Locke, being, uh, uh, you know, chased and then killed, but getting a message out. Then we got the Tricerataurs in the hills of the Shale Belt, underneath Braunton. And now, we get them trying to find another one and secure another one, and it is on the Isles of New Oath, just to the east of Greenfield, the, uh, the big, uh, section, the kind of middle of the map that the Frontier Syndicate owns. Uh, you'll see that like, they basically go right up against to where Rose River and Fealty are, right? Right there. And I think that that's where the next fundament node is. And we have not really seen the Frontier Syndicate in pure war mode. I think we've only seen one Frontier Syndicate mech at this point, is that right? I want to say we saw the Gueridon, which is the, like, uh, kind of big, walking tabletop tower, that like, has like a sort of siege, siege tower vibe.

But I think we see a few other things today, from them. There is a sort of, there's one that's just straight-up called, this isn't an Altar, it's like a, a souped-up Hollow called a Bench, uh, uh, that is effectively a mobile workstation and infirmary. Uh, it's sort of like, you know those dogs, you know those robot dogs? You know the robot dogs?

Jack: Oh, yeah, those horrible robot dogs. The —

Austin: The horrible — what if one of those was as big as a building?

Jack: Mmm!

Austin: And inside was a mobile workstation and infirmary, you know? Uh... we get the Altar. They're all called Altars? It's because this group, the Lone Marble group from the Frontier Syndicate, designed a thing called The Altar. And so we get those. Uh, and I think these are as close to our, like, you know, I really am not, I don't have a strong design element for them in my mind. My brain always is going to go back to like, some Gundam shit with these. Uh, I think that, I mean, I know they are basically just like, the fundamental regular-ass model, they have a basic humanoid design. They have kind of a little more mobility, I think, than something like the Troop from last year.

They have, you know, a face with maybe like a, a sort of shield covering parts of the face's, like a kind of an Optimus Prime style shield on the mouth, type vibe, you know what I mean? Uh, and, and otherwise just like, they have a rifle, they have a, you know, they have a big hammer, or a big, you know, sword, or beam sword, or whatever, right? And so those are pretty basic. Uh, but, but then, in general, they have this other thing going on, which is, uh, and maybe I'll just reveal one more of their things. They have these things called Thrones, uh, the LMG Throne 3, is based on the same Altar model, but it is, all about, uh, denial and drones. In general, I would say the Frontier Syndicate stuff is, all their names are named after tables or foundations. Altars and Gueridons and Benches and Thrones, and things you sit things on.

Uh, and then generally, thematically, they are about either having little guys who do your bidding, like the people inside the Gueridon.

[1:00:00]

Austin: Or, kind of, again, drones that they fire out, uh, that, that do stuff for them, or, when you think of, in mechs, funnels and bits, this sort of like, if you've been watching the current Gundam, the way Aerial has the kind of big floaty things that can be used to form a shield, or turn into something else, or go, you know, be kind of floating guns. The Panther from, from COUNTER/Weight is very similar to this, right, made up of these things. So their designs are that, and the Throne is a combination of things. It is, it

launches a bunch of these little drone bits to go harass an enemy. And then also, it has a denial field that makes every other approach nearby mundane, instead of being whatever it is. It has a scepter that kind of puts out a field that changes the — any other weapon type into mundane. And then if it's done that, it also changes the use from whatever it normally is to limited.

So it's like, if you had a gun that used to shoot Divine energy, it turns that Divine energy into just basic physical matter, and then you're going to run out of it, because you can't pull from the Divine source anymore. And so, this is the army that is marching towards Fealty and Veronique in New Oath. I don't think it's in New Oath proper. I think this is probably in this kind of western, uh, big, uh, kind of wilderness island, is what I've imagined it as. A kind of barrier between the city of New Oath and everything here. And this is like a deep forest combat. You know, misty woods, uh, uh, you know, morning, people disappearing between these giant trees. You know, maybe they're, uh, maybe this is like a redwood forest type vibe, right, just gigantic, gigantic trees. Uh, and so that is, that is what the Cause — not the Cause, what the forces of the Frontier Syndicate look like as they come marching into all-out war.

“Everyone plays. Players distribute themselves between the Authority and the Cause, evenly if possible, casting themselves as soldiers channelers, and other members of the division or faction.

“The director may freely play characters from both side where needed to facilitate the scene. Decide together where your battlefield is, what the stakes of the fight are, and how these characters feel about the war and their place in it. Freely roleplay the clashing forces, Altar against Altar, carrier versus carrier, and so on. During the struggle, anyone may ask anyone else for details on the situation and circumstances. Players freely roleplay, issuing challenges to escalate and complicate the scene. Continue playing until at least three rolls have been made, or the scene reaches what feels like a natural end. Look at the resolutions below for what that might look like.”

Uh... so, yeah. I think that the, the goal here is to like, reach a point deep into the woods where one of these fundament nodes is. Uh, I think it's a tree. I think the tree

holds the fundament node, and it looks exactly like every other tree. Uh, which makes this conflict tough, because we don't want to destroy it, necessarily.

[laughing] Uh, so, yeah. That's my stage setting. Uh... who's here to defend it? Do Veronique and Fealty come out? Are there other members of Rose River, who are from the, the sort of lost-in-time New Earth Hegemony group that come out to help? Or does somebody else defend it entirely? Rose River doesn't have to be the one to defend it. We could choose somebody else, whose outcome we want.

Jack: Well, there are, there are limited, uh, factions, starting to show, you know —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Jade Kill is tapped, actually, right?

Austin: Oh, Jade Kill is tapped here, yes. Correct.

Jack: So the only one untapped is, uh, Violet Cove and Gray Pond. And, uh, uh, —

Austin: And Rose River.

Jack: And Rose River. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Mmm.

Art: Uh... or the five Afflictions.

Austin: Right, or the five Afflictions, or Stereoma.

Art: That's less fun.

Austin: Well...

Art: Uh...

Austin: I think it's kind of fun, the idea that that group would finally show up, and it would be those two characters meeting up with Fealty and, and Veronique, feels like it makes more sense than them meeting up with, you know, the people who are dyed-in-the-wool true revolutionaries, no offense to Veronique and Fealty, who want to protect the Twilight Mirage. But I feel like there might be a better way in for the Stereoma folks, you know, that — this way. It would be dangerous, though, because [wheezes] the Stereoma outcome is brutal.

Jack: What is it? It's, uh...

Austin: Disrupt the Authority, removing 1D3 grip on a faction or pillar —

Jack: Ooh! Disrupt the Authority. Shit! Shit!

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh-huh. That would be really bad. Uh... I think the other Cause outcomes are not so bad. Rose River's is, uh, give key intel, uh, key intel gives the party advantage when they next lead a sortie. Gray Pond is, replace a seized faction, or untap any other two factions. So that would be very useful for them [chuckling] right now. And Violet Cove is, of course, something unexpected and strange happens. [chuckling]

Jack: Mmm. Our dear friends, Violet Cove.

Austin: Mm-hm. I have a hard time that they're here to protect Rose River at this point.

Jack: No, no, they — they're doing their own thing.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Or rather, they're in a really weird place right now.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: I think it's Fealty and Veronique.

Art: I'm, I'm torn between my two, my two instincts here.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Which are, to give the people what they want, and to not give the people what they want.

Austin: [laughs] Uh-huh!

Jack: [chuckles]

Art: And I don't know what's right here.

Austin: Giving them what they want, you mean, is put Veronique and Fealty on screen.

Art: On screen, yeah.

Austin: Mm-hm. [pause]

Art: Or, tell 'em to pound sand!

Jack: Now as we learned from the book, if you're looking for, uh, shells, and you pound sand —

Austin: Hu-huh.

Jack: Uh, I think Veronique and Fealty is, is interesting in part just because of the image of this, like, massive giant redwood forest with a mech made of statues in it.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Yeah. No, it's a great image. Uh...

Austin: And like, being harassed by all the little flying drones of these Frontier Syndicate mechs, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Art: With the little flying drones that are Fealty, [unintelligible]

Austin: Right, exactly. Exactly. Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, it's just little flying drones all the way down.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh... yeah. Okay. I could start.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: Uh... it is very quiet in the forest. You know, there's obviously the sound of the engines of the mechs. Uh, but there's not necessarily, the, the sound of, uh, an advancing foe that you would expect to see from an enemy. There's birds up in the branches, light coming down through the trees. And then, all of a sudden, what you thought was, like a, a... like an embankment covered in moss and roots, lifts itself up, to reveal itself to be, I don't think it's Fealty itself, but I do think that it is, uh, an Astir, an Altar, run by the Violet — not Violet Cove, sorry — by Rose River.

Austin: Rose River. Yeah.

Jack: That just hauls itself out of the ground, and launches an attack at your rear guard. I lead an unexpected ambush. Uh, and roll to see if I catch you by surprise.

Austin: Okay. I will roll. So I need, what, a 1 or a 2?

Jack: No, no, no. I roll.

Austin: Oh, you roll to see.

Jack: If I catch you by surprise. I thought it said roll, too. But...

Art: But it's the same... success?

Austin: Yeah, it's the same, it's 1 or 2 is a success.

Jack: Oh, yeah. Well then you should do it. It's, it's, it's —

Austin: For the Authority. It's, it's 3, 4, 5, or 6 for the Cause, right?

Jack: Uh... yes.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: I believe, we're right about this. We don't have to, I don't have to throw out everything we just did in previous... yes. If it's tied to the two minor divisions, a 3-plus is a success for the Cause. So a 1 or a 2, therefore, is for the — all right, 1D6. That is a 3, which is a success for you. Correct?

Jack: Uh, yes.

Austin: All right, I'm going to force a reroll.

Jack: Uh, I'm going to see if —

Austin: Using my ability.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: Uh... uh-huh?

Jack: Do you want to say a bit about what that is?

Austin: Yes. And it is of course that, this is arcane. These Altars are arcane. And arcane Altars from the Divine Principality, or at least from, yeah, I guess for all the Divine Principality ones, are recognizable, and announce themselves through the sense of sight. Floaters in your eye become darker; brief migraine auras, bright and painful; the appearance of a parhelion, the doubling of the sun; other visual hallucinations or effects. And I think that there was an underestimation of how strong that would be with this many units being mobilized at once. Uh, it is, it is, it, you know, Exanceaster March is effectively deploying this many units not just because of how useful having that many units is, but this is a kind of shocking thing, if you've not faced them —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: At this, this level before. It doesn't matter. [chuckles] With a 5, the Cause pushes through. What's that look like, Jack?

Jack: It's, uh, we get this image of like, all the diffuse shafts of, uh, light from the sun, and also the various light effects in the eyes of the pilots from the, uh, the arcane effects —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Passing through the falling — we see it in slow motion, passing through the falling earth and roots, and creating this kind of myriad fractured pattern of shadows through, as this mech just, just tears through like a back line of units with like a polearm or something.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, but in much the same way as it was last time we saw Rose River, this is all shot in this dreamlike, Terrence Malick, uh, you know —

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: Picnic at Hanging Rock —

Austin: I see it. It's right there. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Deeply strange.

Austin: Mm-hm. Yeah. Uh... I seem to drop my guard. Uh, uh, you know, we don't retreat from this. We kind of pivot and turn, as if we're letting ourselves be hit. Uh, and then begin to march forward in such a way that's like, "Wait, that's not... we're winning, we won that initial, you know, skirmish, why aren't you pulling back?" If you seize this opportunity, roll to find out if it's a feint or not. Are we just now trying to push you back, or intimidate you back? Jack, do you want to roll? Art, do you want to roll?

Jack: I think Art should take this one.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Yeah, I'll take this one.

Austin: That is another success for the Cause. A 3. What's this look like?

Art: Uh... I think Fealty is relentless. I think you can't... You know, we've talked about Fealty being an older Divine, and there's a, that there's a difference.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: It feels different to fight an old Divine. And you can't... or you might be able to trick Fealty, but you can't, like, mmm... It doesn't matter.

Austin: Mmm.

Art: That Fealty falls for your feint, and rolls over, [chuckles] and rolls over you anyway.

Austin: Mm-hm. Wonderful.

Art: You can't, you can't tactics through an old Divine. You have to.. do it.

Austin: Mm-hm. [pause] Anyone else have an idea for a challenge?

Jack: I was briefly reading the wrong thing, and I read, "How does your plan better serve the common people?"

Austin: [laughs] Well, you see, once we have the fundament nodes, it'll all be, it'll all just shake out in the wash.

Jack: Mmm, mm-hm.

Austin: It'll be good for everybody, trust me.

Art: Well, it sort of works, that now we're at all-out war, Jack should read another scene.

Jack: [wheezes] Read, reread the other book.

Austin: Read a different, yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: I know how this goes.

Austin: Uh-huh. [chuckles]

Art: I slip through a busy, crowded place — [laughs]

[pause]

Austin: Uh, I, you know, Fealty... [sighs] Hmm... our battle — we're too far from civilians, I'm not going to use this one. I don't think I've earned, I don't think that that's set up. There's one that's like — our battle endangers a group of civilians. If you refuse, hold back. But there aren't civilians out in the woods here. I mean, there could be, but we have not —

Jack: The picnickers!

Austin: Right, the picnickers. You know, I could invent, like, “Oh, yeah, the Twill moved out here.” I mean, we did say that. We did say that a lot of the Twill went to Rose River because of an alignment to that, so. The battle does begin to move towards, you know... This battle is big. It's all-out war, right? This isn't a skirmish. This is an ongoing conflict that lasts, you know, a long time. You know, days, not, not minutes, right? And so maybe this is like, you know, after that last exchange, things go quiet for some time, and then they bubble back up, and then they go quiet again. And eventually, you feel that we are slowly moving the front, to get closer and closer to the Twill, uh, uh, you know, refuge that has been set up in these woods. Uh... our battle endangers a group of civilians. If you refuse to hold back, roll.

Art: I think Fealty would want to hold back. I don't know what Veronique would want.

Austin: Veronique? [pause]

Jack: I mean, it's their anchor relationship, right? I think that, I think that at this point in the war — it's like you said, you can't trick an old Divine, or whatever. I think that there is

a point at which, if Veronique sees Fealty say, “We have to hold back and protect these people —”

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Actually, if I'm being really honest, “We have to protect these people who are looking for a refuge,” has been the motivating factor for Veronique from the moment she appeared in this story, right?

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: Like, that's seeing the Twilight Mirage and going, “I have to flee with this information or war will come there.” So I think it makes sense for her to also hold back.

Austin: Okay. Then yes, the conflict doesn't, uh, you know, there might be a consequence to this in some way, right? Which is like, the Twill have to retreat. Maybe some of them are captured by...

Jack: Like, fields burn, or...

Austin: Right. And the fields burn, there's a long-term cost to this. But it's not that they were killed en masse as collateral damage, because you didn't fight with, because you decided it's more important to win this one skirmish in this fight, than to win the war. But I don't, I don't like, get a success from this, I don't believe, right?

Jack: Uh, no, especially if we're following the same rules as we did last time, with Art, and the, uh... yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Agreed.

Jack: I don't know what one that was, but... [pause]

Austin: Uh...

Jack: Hmm. Okay, uh... the, the fighting continues. Uh, it's like you said, it's been going on for a really long time. And it is becoming clear that the forces of Rose River, and

specifically kind of like a coordinated effort by people who have spent a lot of time in the Diadem, have understood, you know, how to move unseen, or create weird, blind alleys, in combination with sleep detachment soldiers, you know, people who have combat tactics that are from a different place, and at a different time, are, uh... Creating voices in the mist, and illusions and mirages that separate you from your supporting forces. Roll to see if you can regroup.

Austin: Mmm, okay. Uh... I think that the person trying to do this is a sort of mercenary who works for the company run by Maidstone Cross, at this point, which is, Locke and Cross, named... uh, I'm going to give this person a name, even though they might be about to die. This is Occam Olio, OLIO, uh, Occam like Occam's Razor. And is like, trying to desperately to rally people to them. They are a Columnar, they, you know, kind of bought the hype around, uh, Exanceaster March, and this big, dramatic betrayal of the Columnar, uh, and like, signed up immediately, and rose through the ranks until they could be a sort of, like, whatever the, the mercenary equivalent of a non-commissioned officer is, you know, it's like a sergeant in this group. Uh, well-liked by their peers, uh, uh, but also not necessarily thrilled with being in the middle of the woods on a distant planet, uh, uh, seeing their friends get killed. Let's roll some dice. Hey!

Jack: Ooh!

Austin: That's a 1, that's a success for Olio.

Jack: Whoa!

Austin: I'm glad I invented a character with a name, uh... [chuckles] because —

Jack: And it's a good name.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. Uh, yeah. So I think this is, this is like, you know, Occam is in, a, just a basic Altar, right? But with a line of blue, like a kind of soft blue, on its shield, and maybe like, it has like a special antenna, signifying that it's like a, a field command unit. This is not, you know, again, this isn't the person who gives the big orders, this is the person who gets their people through. But in this moment, there has been a loss of

connection from the home base, right? And so this is like, “Okay, I have to lead this here.” And I think that their plan is to get the mission done, right? I, you know, they're going to try to get their little group of people together, push towards the objective, pull out this, uh, fundament node thing, get the fuck out, or at least, at least, you know, uh, get it home, even if they don't get home.

Uh, so I think this is, I lead an unexpected ambush. Roll and see if I catch you by surprise. Uh, they redeploy their forces in such a way that is about, the surprise is not the ambush. The surprise is that the ambush, this is actually a feint, right? This is actually a feint in the sense not of, I'm trying to win this, but I'm — the real me is making a run behind enemy lines as this ambush tries to cut off the people who would chase me, you know?

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: I think it's literally a chase. I think that in this Altar unit, Occam runs ahead full speed, and is running past people who have snuck into place to try to catch out any other Altars or members of Rose River. Hopefully not Fealty, who will just overcome this. But, uh, one of y'all should roll.

Jack: Uh... okay. Do you want to do this, Art? I'm, I'm happy to do it.

Art: Uh... I'll roll.

Austin: 1D6. Hoo, hoo hoo!

Jack: Ooh!

Austin: That's a 2. 2 to 2, baby!

Jack: Wow, now we got a game!

Austin: Now we got a game! Occam Olio got put in the game, and is just, is just on fire right now.

Jack: God, do we have a facecast for Occam Olio? He has graduated from a name to —

Austin: They're, uh, they're a Columnar, right? So they're a robot of some sort. I think —

Jack: Oh, right, yeah.

Austin: Uh, I'm picturing like a real, uh, I hate this, because I can like, see it in my head. It's so hard to not be an artist in any fucking way, because I can't even describe the thing that I'm thinking about here. Okay. [chuckles] Imagine a soldier, a contemporary soldier, of the US army, who has a helmet on, right? You know what I mean? Like an army helmet.

Jack: Yep. The sort of round, rounded helmet.

Austin: Rounded, but — and it's that shape, except the whole thing is a head, right?

Jack: Okay.

Austin: Uh, uh, and it is, uh, uh, a sort of, um, it was silver once. The face part was silver once, but the sheen is gone. Uh, it's been, it's matte now, it's lost a lot of that. Uh, and the part that looks sort of like a helmet has like a green outline around where the helmet edges would be, basically. Uh, uh, but is otherwise the same color as the rest of the face. Uh, uh, and it's kind of like, you know, I guess I'm kind of thinking of like a, there's a real Virtual-On look to this person, uh, uh, — God, Art, were you a Virtual On person?

Art: I was not a Virtual-On person, I'm sorry.

Austin: That's a shame. That's, that's — they're good, they're good is the thing. There is a, I'm finding in my mind that I'm nearing a very, like, there's a character in that game, or mech, I guess, in that game, that is a very military-designed thing called an Apharmd. Uh, is a very funny name. Uh, there's a bunch of them. Uh, but I guess I'm kind of describing one of these. These guys are bulkier than what I'm thinking of, but I'll link you

to the Apharmd. Uh, Palisade faction. Here we go. You know, what if a soldier was a robot is truly the vibe.

Jack: Yeah, look at that. Wow.

Austin: And —

Jack: That robot is wearing trousers.

Austin: I mean, yeah, this one — well, no, it isn't. Its, its legs are painted as if they're trousers, Jack. You see.

Jack: [laughs] Whoa...

Austin: Right? It's very different, it's much different. Uh, uh, there's a bunch of different sub-versions of this robot. It's great. Uh, anyway, uh, I think that literally, Occam got this body when they became a non-commissioned officer, in the Locke and Cross mercenary unit. Like, they literally moved their consciousness over to this body that they like, saved up for, and got subsidized via the Frontier Syndicate's health plan, that if you've done such and such amount of service and you're getting a work-related body frame, you can get it partially subsidized through the Frontier Syndicate's health services, which probably has some truly grotesque name, you know? Uh, what is the, what is the health services called? Uh, it's something very judgmental, right? It's like something about, it's like not called self-care, but like it's, the point of it is, you have to do the work yourself. You know, it's like bootstraps —

Jack: Yes, it's like Independent —

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. [chuckles] It's Independent — yeah, it's one of these, right? It's late. It's, it's late, we've been going for a long time. I cannot come up with the terrible healthcare for the Frontier Syndicate right now. What I can do is come up with another thing, unless someone else has one.

Jack: Uh... God, I'm really proud of, uh, this, uh, uh, awful guy.

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh!

Jack: This awful robot. Uh... what a great example of coming up with a character just on the fly, and then being like, “Oh, wait a second, they’re sticking around for longer than I thought!”

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, this was, uh, I remembered, this morning I was doing the crossword puzzle and Olio was used as an answer. I was like, “Oh, that’s a great name. I’m going to use that tonight.” And here it is. Occam Olio. Didn’t have Occam, found Occam. Might like Occam with a K — no, I’m keeping it like the razor. Two Cs. Uh...

Jack: Do you have one, Art?

Art: Mmm... We haven’t done the key objective one, right?

Austin: No, but you know I’ll just do it and... win, right? I guess you’re not, you might not care about that, because you’ve both become Authority-pilled.

Jack: [wheezes] Well, now, well now, hold on.

Austin: Do you want to read it?

Art: Oh, if you don’t roll, you — wait.

Austin: Yeah. You could complete a key objective at a cost. What would you lose? If you, if you give it up, don’t roll. Just add a success.

Art: Oh, so you can’t —

Austin: If I said — so if you said, you could complete the objective at the cost of Occam Olio’s life —

Art: You would give up Occam Olio?

Austin: In a second. After all this? Occam Olio would give up Occam Olio.

Art: But that’s not the question, is it?

Austin: That's not. [chuckles]

Art: Uh...

Austin: It's actually more interesting there, right?

Art: I — yeah.

Austin: If it's actually not me or Occam who makes that decision, but is, you know, Locke, back, looking at the file, looking at the battlefield, who gets in control again, and who remains silent to let it happen, you know? Could be like, oh, no, get out of there! And doesn't, you know? [chuckles]

Art: Yeah. What about the other, what if you were ordered to — well, it's 'you're ordered to pull back, do you follow orders' — it doesn't have a roll.

Austin: It doesn't give me a roll. And wouldn't, right? Occam wouldn't pull back. It doesn't explicitly say it would be a success, so I don't think that would count, you know?

Jack: Uh, we could have Fealty launch a, launch an assault. I don't know if we'd had Fealty launch a direct attack — I come straight for you, weapons ready. Roll to see if you can hold me back.

Austin: [chuckles]

Art: What if something creepier?

Austin: Oh, here we go.

Jack: Oh, oh!

Austin: This is why we play the game.

Art: What if... I lead an unexpected ambush, and roll to see if I catch you by surprise, as the figures of Fealty start just coming up from the ground.

Austin: Good. Great.

Jack: Whoa! With like, dirt and clay all over them.

Art: Like —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: Like a, like a zombie movie. But they're not zombies.

Austin: Right. Like a zombie movie, but they're giant. They're like the size of giant statues, or mechs, and they're here to defend the fundament node.

Art: Yeah. [pause] And it doesn't work.

Austin: Well, do you roll, or do I roll?

Art: It says I roll, right?

Austin: Oh, it does, doesn't it? Did we do this again? And roll — wait, I lead an attack —

Jack: And roll to see if, yeah.

Austin: Yeah! Holy shit.

Art: Roll to see if I catch you by surprise, and I failed.

Austin: And you failed! How does Occam Olio succeed? Against Fealty's surprise?

Art: I don't know. Uh...

Austin: Occam Olio isn't in this mech. The Frontier Syndicate's mechs are all about being drones. This is a fake mech. This mech has the Titanfall 2, you know —

Jack: Fake mech thing. [chuckles]

Austin: Fake, the, the nuclear ejection thing in it, you know? Uh, it pulls all these guys away —

Art: Sure.

Austin: Or it launches, like — it explodes into some sort of EMP blast, that destroys all of them. Uh, and then Occam, you know, decloaks in another mech just outside of the ridge. You know, you lost them in the, in the woods at some point, and, and they switched into some other mech. And this is the third success.

Jack: They're called Occam because the simplest explanation is that there's only one mech. Except...

Austin: Except —

Jack: [laughing] Except!

Austin: Yeah, except, there's actually more than one. Uh... all right. I didn't expect to win that one.

Jack: No, me either!

Art: No, I didn't think that would happen. So that's a sweep. Authority sweep.

Austin: [laughing] Authority sweep. Goddamn.

Jack: Yeah. If there are any listeners thinking, did we put our thumb on the dial there, I want to be clear, we had a lot of conversations at the beginning about how to play aggressively, but that was all dice rolls, baby.

Austin: Yeah, that was all 1D6, and like, most of those D6s are on the side of the Cause, normally.

Art: Especially when we get to the secondary factions. I don't know what the odds are on this, especially because you failed the reroll — the second reroll.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. It didn't go well. That wasted that reroll. Or, it didn't waste it, but it didn't work out.

Art: Waste, but, yeah.

Austin: Totally. So this —

Art: We used one successful reroll, but legitimately got 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 out of... 8, 2 or lower.

Austin: 2 or lower.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: That's wild.

Jack: Whoa.

Art: Discounting the first rerolled success.

Advancing Schemes [1:29:18]

Austin: Yeah. And so I'm going to advance an existing scheme, and move, uh, harvest the fundament nodes to 5, or to 5 out of 6, rather. And I think that like, you know, in the chaos of whatever this big EMP blast is, the rest of the extraction unit, you know, one of these Bench, you know, giant robot dogs is able to run up and get the fundament node, you know, loaded onto it, and then, and then escape into the, into the mist, you know, as the, as the sun sets, or whatever. And, and the Frontier Syndicate is now 1 point away from, from doing this.

Jack: Wow!

Austin: Guess what? I'm going to try to do that during the downtime, because I can do that with a director point, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, with my director token.

Jack: It won't be good.

Art: And Fealty is struggling. I don't know how to represent that.

Austin: Yeah, what happen — what, yeah! Why, what — [sighs]

Art: I don't know if it's about rebuilding, I don't know if like, I literally don't know how Fealty — I mean, it must've happened before. It probably even happened in the episode and I don't remember it.

Austin: Right.

Art: But like —

Austin: God.

Art: Fealty having to replace —

Jack: Well, something we've seen Fealty do, there was that great bit where they sort of shut down and started building things, to try and create, uh, to, to box out their memory.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: We know that Fealty has a real capacity to be like, "I'm going to be still, and I'm going to build. I'm going to like —"

Austin: Right, I remember this.

Jack: "I'm going to try and, uh, physically make things."

Austin: Yeah. I'm going to, yeah, yeah, basically go into recovery mode.

Art: So like, that's something that's worth, I don't know how to note that mechanically in any way, but like —

Austin: Mm-hm. Well, I mean, you're tapped.

Art: That Rose River is, is down a Fealty. But probably like —

Austin: But more than tapped.

Art: Probably like, when they're untapped, they probably need to get untapped again to have —

Austin: Fealty, specifically.

Art: Fealty back.

Austin: Right, right.

Art: But, you know, that, mechanically, that doesn't necessarily mean anything, but narratively.

Austin: Right, because they can work on, the sleep detachment can help out more, the Twill can help out more now. But fictionally.

Art: Unless something happens that needs —

Austin: Right. Fictionally, they're in a rough place. Phew!

Jack: So the only, so —

Art: I guess unless the Blue Channel wants to go and help, but they... they don't.

Austin: I — [chuckles] Not right this second, probably, right? Eh, well, one person could, right? That's the thing, right, is it doesn't take everybody, every time. So, maybe they'll decide it's time to stay on it more, so that they don't have to devote a whole downtime to it like before. Who could say? Who could say?

Jack: I'm going to say it to try it out in my mouth... most of Hexagon is tapped.

Austin: Yeah. It's true. I'm going to type it. I, I typed it into the name of the Cause section of this sheet, that has been empty for this whole season, so far.

Jack: If they didn't name themselves this whole time, we —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: We, we got to.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: We got to it.

Austin: One more quick thing. I'm going to advance, "Unlock the power of the Iconoclasts for herself," Clem —

Jack: Great!

Austin: From 2 to 3, out of 4.

Jack: Whoa!

Austin: So it's getting there.

Jack: What's that looking like, in, uh... [chuckles] are there any signs that we can see?

Austin: Yeah, Art, what's that look like?

Jack: That Clem's clock is increasing?

Art: How does, how does that get untapped?

Austin: Uh, the same way [sputters] that it normally would. Another faction has to go do it, uh, using a downtime thing, uh, or the fiction has to change in such a way. I imagine, whatever this Iconoclast thing finishing might untap the Crown of Glass, you know?

Art: Okay. I have no idea what this looks like. Uh...

Austin: Did I already say that I don't think Perennial's happy about this? I don't remember. Or did I think Perennial was happy about it?

Jack: I don't think you said it, but —

Art: I feel like I knew that. I don't know if you said it. [laughs]

Austin: I don't remember what I said.

Jack: Perennial's great, because it could, it could, I could genuinely make a good argument for either.

Austin: For either. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Jack: And it's not just, she's a weird, she's, like, “wow, so random!”

Austin: Yeah. [chuckles] That's very funny, though.

Jack: [laughing] Perennial. Typing in all caps.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: No, I don't remember which it is. But we should figure, we should figure it out. We should figure out which that was.

Austin: I'm trying to check.

Jack: Oh, wait. Uh, we did it by looking at the tenets. We looked at, uh, Clem's tenets.

Austin: We did.

Jack: And I think we found that it matched one, and as such, Perennial would, would give it the nod.

Austin: Mm-hm. We said Perennial 50 times, shoutout to the transcript project, which you can find out about by going to [Twitter.com/transcript_FATT](https://twitter.com/transcript_FATT). We did not say it 50 times. I'm — oh, yeah, we did. We did. We did. Uh, anyway. I'll look this up later. What's this look like? Any, any thoughts? Is this, is this Clem like, not in the literal lab, but like, you know, doing this research, like a witch — you know, you know what I mean, right?

The shadows are long in the laboratory, or whatever a witch has, instead of a laboratory. The cauldron room.

Art: The cauldron room.

Austin: Something else? Any thoughts?

Art: I'm thinking it's like, yeah, it's like a Dr. Frankenstein thing, right?

Austin: Right, right, sure.

Art: It's like a mixture of science and magic, right? It's the, like, the... there's, it's a thunderstorm, and it's like, [laughing] she's, maybe gets struck by lightning.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: I mean, is that it? Is it like, I'm testing the properties of this thing? In some sort of safe room...

Art: I think it's that, yeah. It's like —

Austin: Some sort of safe box facility. Oh, does anybody remember what the reason was that Clem was gone during the final game of the Road to Palisade, City Planning Department?

Jack: She was looking for like, she didn't know what she was looking for. She'd been sent to look for something. And she came back with a key in place of her index finger.

Austin: With a key, yeah. Uh-huh. And I think there's something interesting about that, along with, what was Kenneth Marian Colver's ability as given, and, and the Usher of Truth's ability?

Jack: Oh, it's — it is to make Iconoclasts out of anything you can open.

Austin: It's to, it's not to make them out of it. It's that when you — she could open a door. Anything she could open was opening a door to —

Jack: To the Iconoclasts.

Austin: The Iconoclasts. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Which I think there's some fun doubling there with the key, and doors that open, and whatnot.

Jack: Yeah, absolutely.

Austin: I don't know if that means anything, right? But like, that's some imagery that's fun to play with. So, yeah. The work continues, and we'll fill in the next little bit, presumably. We'll see.

Jack: Yeah, getting increasingly intense there —

Art: Yeah.

Jack: In the Crown of Glass.

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah. Absolutely. And I think I'm going to start a Stereoma project, that's also only 4 steps. Uh, and I think that like, they are really, truly — I mean not both of them, right? Because Misericorde just wants to kill people. Uh, uh, just wants to fight and win in that exact anime archetype. Uh, but Cor'rina Corrine is preparing a, uh, building a Pact counteroffensive here. And has probably already done that to some degree a little bit, but is, is really working towards it, you know? Wants to build a, a sort of Pact-aligned cell that can prepare for an eventual return of the Pact to the system.

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: So that's like, getting storehouses together, putting spies into place, you know, replacing, uh, uh, you know, killing people. Probably doing a lot of killing people. So...

Jack: That's the bit that Misericorde is happy to help with.

Austin: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly. Stereoma prepares for the Pact.

Jack: Yeah, like, make ready the master's table for the —

Austin: Right, exactly. And it's, it's also a lot of propaganda, right? I think in some ways the more public events of stuff like, trying to, you know, the taking over of the Bontive Valley, gives someone like, uh, Cor'rina a lot of wiggle room with how they start doing the propaganda work for the Pact. Because cor can just say, uh, you know, "Do you want to work under the terrible power —"

Jack: [chuckles]

Austin: "Of the Bilats? Or do you want to suffer under the violent tyranny of Millennium Break? There's another way! There's a third way." You know? Et cetera. And advocate for the Pact. And there's almost a religious element to it. Like, not literally a religious element. But there is like a real, "The day is coming. The Pact will come. The Pact will get here." You know? "They're not going to leave us behind."

Jack: Yeah. Just once they get through the, just once they get their forces together, just once they get through the blockade, you know.

Austin: Yep. Exactly, exactly. Yes. They're working on it right now. They're moving as we speak. [chuckles]

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: All right. I think that's an episode. Any final, any final words for the other side?

Jack: Be very careful! Listen to me. Be very, very careful. [laughs] The Stargrave is not playing around. [laughs]

Art: Be flippant!

[["Nothing is Stationary"](#) by Jack de Quidt plays]