

COUNTER/Weight 0.2: Valuable Connections

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Recap

[music intro - "[The Long Way Around](#)" by Jack de Quidt begins]

Austin: You're headed there today, hired by one Orth Godlove for your first mission. Trying you out. And the thing is, normally, Orth wouldn't work with untested people, but it's the fact that you have no record inside of the CCT that makes you perfect for this. Because Orth's a little concerned about how the current CCT administrator is running things, or really, more what the current CCT administrator of the Sill has gotten themselves into. One Coffee Affogato has been arrested by the Ithikos family,

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Keith: Mako's bored. If we're waiting, Mako's bored.

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Art: If we are gonna go around this blockade, what's the—how do we hop the fence? What's the...

Keith: I identified the dumbass in charge as a weak point.

Ali (as **Aria**): How do you know he's a dumbass?

Keith (as **Mako**): Because I stole a bunch of donuts by sending spam to his computer. It took one second.

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Jack (as **AuDy**): We're wasting time. Do you three always stand around?

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Austin (as **Security Guard**): Looking for a missing man? That's not what we do here. We are not detectives.

Jack (as **AuDy**): I'm looking for Coffee Affogato. Have you heard from him lately?

Austin (as **Security Guard**): Have we heard from him lately? Uh... we work at the rest stop. [quietly] Coffee isn't what I would call a sort of hands-on administrator.

Jack (as **AuDy**): I represent your employers.

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Austin (as **Fan**): I'm sorry. You're Aria Joie.

Ali (as **Aria**): Oh, hi! Yeah.

Austin (as **Fan**): What are you doing in the Sill?

Ali (as **Aria**): Oh, well, I'm on Counterweight now.

Austin (as **Fan**): Oh, like, you're doing—like, you have a residen—are you gonna do a show at the Cerulean?

Ali (as **Aria**): Um, well, I've, um...

[music intro - "[The Long Way Around](#)" by Jack de Quidt ends]

Introduction

[1:49]

Austin: So, let's recap before we get further in. Cass, Mako, and... a third person? Went forward?

Art: No, I think just...

Austin: Aria went forward into the body of the Sill. You went into the actual, like, colony part of this. You got past the front gate, as it were. AuDy, you have stayed behind and kind of provided a degree, I would say, of cover for everybody. Is that right?

Jack: Yes, I'm intimidating these poor fucks.

Austin: Yeah. That's the last time—what I have written down here is that you have given the security folks here, between you and Mako, both distracted and ad spam, and then I think you, maybe, did like, another—what was your follow-up? Did you hit them with something else that gave them more than distracted? I'm trying to remember the exact thing here. I guess, actually, I can just check this, because I can look at our dice map.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: And see that, in fact, you must have put a—yeah, you must have put this—made something sticky, because you only have two push dice and I have one.

Jack: I think I made—did I make distracted sticky?

Austin: That seems likely to me. Because I think—

Jack: As I leaned further into the...

Austin: Yeah. As a reminder—I guess, high level. Who wants to recap what you're here for?

Jack: I can do it.

Austin: Okay. Thank you, Jack.

Jack: Okay. Orth Godlove has sent the recently formed mercenary outfit, the Chime, to a sort of cross between a casino and a demilitarized zone, almost, called the Sill. It's like a sealed casino and recreation ground being run by a family called the Ithikos family, who are wealthy Apostolosians who have sort of been—this place predated Counterweight as we understand it.

Austin: It predated the war.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: It pre—this place was built originally during the era when there were still diplomatic relations between the three great powers who were in this region, basically.

Jack: Yes. Orth is concerned about the fact that someone named Coffee Affogato has been detained inside the Sill. They are a Consolidated Counterweight Technocracy administrator, and they've been detained here under suspicion of killing someone named Cameron McLeod. I'm not sure if we know this.

Austin: You do. I guess you—

Jack: We do.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. I think the message sent to Orth, or sent to—I think that the message Coffee sent to Orth was like, "Hey man, they think I killed this guy." You know?

Jack: And who was Cameron McLeod?

Austin: You don't know, as far as I recall.

Jack: Yeah, I guess we wouldn't know, in some respects.

Austin: I guess you—you don't see his name in the list of the connections that you have. So you don't know who Cameron McLeod is. Killed a person named Cameron McLeod.

Jack: Yes. We arrived, and everybody who enters the Sill has to kind of get in as this airlock opens once every 12 hours, after going through the Byzantine Tourist's Union. The Chime being the Chime, [laughing] we have decided first to kind of circumvent the airlock and try and get in ourselves, and then I think perhaps out of just "let's make things right for Orth", it would be great if we could get this done by the time the airlock door opens. You know. We've set ourselves a goal.

Austin: Yeah. Which I love, because now I get to make it one.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Because now it's like, yeah, you know what? Sure. That's kind of interesting, right? And, you know, maybe part of what happens here is that if Coffee isn't rescued by then, or isn't out of the situation by then, Coffee is going to like, hit the emergency—the actual emergency switch, [Jack: Right.] or maybe there's just a process by which this is gonna happen, that if Coffee doesn't check in by hour blank, you know, the CCT is just gonna send in the troops.

Jack: Which—

Austin: You know? They're gonna send in their military police or whatever, right?

Jack: Yeah. And we know some stuff about Orth's characterization at this point, but he—already, Orth is someone who is like, "I'm gonna try and avoid this breaking bad again as much as I can."

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: And I think it also looks really good for the—

Austin: Yeah, the last thing Orth needs is for the Consolidated Counterweight Technocracy to go to the last Apostolosian-run part of Counterweight with a bunch of giant robots and guns and kill a bunch of people on a raid to rescue, question mark, someone who was like a career slacker, who may also be a murderer.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Right?

Jack: Yep.

Austin: Last thing that the CCT needs.

Keith: First thing or last thing? First thing?

Austin: The last thing. The last thing Orth needs.

Jack: Last thing.

Keith: Last thing, got it.

Jack: Orth's a good guy.

Austin: It just makes his job harder. I don't think it's even a "good guy" thing. I think it's a, like, the CCT's authority is constantly undermined by OriCon and the Diaspora, and the last thing that he needs is for it to be further undermined in the eyes of the people as being, like, not just ineffectual, but like—

Keith: By themselves.

Austin: Yeah, but like, authoritarian, you know?

Jack: Yes.

Keith: Sure.

Austin: Like, the whole thing with them is that they're supposed to be, like, a trustworthy mediating force that isn't a galactic space power, and is actually made up of people who live here and not power brokers from a different sector of space. [chuckles] You know? Or chained to giant robot gods, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So.

Jack: Yeah. What else? Aria met a fan who fully did not believe...

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: Yep.

Jack: I think, perhaps, in part, because we are making PALISADE right now, in her most Captain Brnine conversation yet, Ali met a fan who—Ali?

Ali: Aw. [laughs]

Jack: Aria met a fan who did not believe she was actually Aria, kind of struggled through that. Cass and Mako are trying to break in through this door. AuDy has been throwing their weight around in front of some low security lackeys who AuDy [chuckles] initially believed would furnish them with all the information that they needed.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: They did not.

Austin: Yeah. Mhm.

Jack: Anything else? Let's see. I'm checking my notes here. We all have relationships with people inside this casino.

Austin: Or inside the—again, it's not a casino. It is a—it is a colony. It is like a, like a—you know.

Jack: Oh, right, but it has within it a casino called the Cerulean.

Austin: Sorry, I've moved us off the map. Yeah, there is a casino called the Cerulean which you can see on the map if you scroll down. It's, you know, it's huge, but it's not as big as like—it's smaller than the big public park and marketplace, the Agora, to the east. Right?

Jack: Right, yes, that's true.

Austin: So. And, again, pretend the dark grey on this map is all, like, smaller city streets and homes and stuff, right? And, you know, three-story walk-ups and stuff like that, so. So yeah.

Mako, Cass, Aria

[8:55]

Austin: Let's come back in on the trio of Mako, Cass, and Aria. You're here. As a reminder, each of you knows someone here in some way. Mako, you remember that you have a protective relationship with Grandpa Hart. You feel protective of Grandpa Hart, who is wise, prepared, empathetic. The Diasporan old-timer who runs the open arms campground at the rear of the Sill. That's all the way to the west there, you can see it.

Who else has someone here? Aria, you have Voski Kovacs, who is, let's see here, solid, calm, and melancholy. The last mayor the Sill ever had now runs a small whiskey bar simply called Kovacs. And Cass, you know Hunter Cash, you're sympathetic towards Hunter. Hunter is a cyborg boxer turned reticent enforcer for the Ithikos family. They are scarred, stubborn, and skeptical. Classic—classic, you know, “being a prize fighter, getting caught up in the mob” type situation.

What do y'all do? How do you kick off this investigation? As a reminder, the way Technoir works is that you want to—and maybe we should read this again. Let me find the actual thing that I'm thinking of. The phrase that keeps coming to mind to me is like, work your angles, you know? The way this game works is that you go investigate places and talk to people, and those things will potentially connect you to other things, and this plot map that we have in front of us will slowly fill out until you get closer to the truth of the situation.

And as a reminder, the truth of the situation is something we'll figure out together. This is not a pre-written adventure, I have—it's a pre-written transmission, it's like a playset

that I've built, and I know what those hooks are, and we'll see which ones develop, and we'll roll for some things, and we'll see how some other things just, you know, whatever fits from the kind of pre-gen'd stuff that I've made. But yeah, your objectives per Technoir are: "To work your contacts, to shake the tree and see what falls out, to get hurt, to come at them sideways, and to play them against each other." So what do you do?

Keith: How far past the checkpoint there where AuDy has the guards distracted did we make it?

Austin: You're out of the checkpoint.

Keith: We dipped out—fully out. Okay.

Austin: Yeah, you're like all the way—you're past the checkpoint.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: You are at a kind of—we ended with a shot of y'all, like, looking down from a tall stairwell or something, kind of a side exit, you know, from this, the main airlock. High up, looking out at this long cylindrical, you know, kind of settlement, and seeing it, you know, almost like looking out from a tall building across a small city, or something like that. So yeah, you can go wherever. There's no—no one's checking for you at this point. You're not being tracked, you've, you know, none of you have any—I don't think any of you have any sticky tags on you at this point. Negative tags, at least, so.

Keith: Nope.

Austin: So yeah. What do you do?

Keith: I think Mako's gonna be like,

Keith (as **Mako**): What about AuDy? We're just gonna go?

Art (as **Cass**): AuDy will catch up.

Keith (as **Mako**): Okay.

Ali (as **Aria**): Yeah, they're providing an opening.

Keith (as **Mako**): Oh.

Ali (as **Aria**): It's team dynamics.

Keith (as **Mako**): Oh. Where are we going?

Ali (as **Aria**): Cass?

Art (as **Cass**): In?

[**Austin** chuckles]

Ali (as **Aria**): We're going in.

Keith (as **Mako**): I like this big blue.

[**Ali** laughs]

Austin: You point out at the giant casino called the Cerulean, which is this like, kind of gauche, giant blue building, you know?

Art: Do we have a map? Is there a map I can be looking at?

Austin: Scroll down.

Keith: It's probably below, yeah.

Art: Oh, whoops.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: I zoomed out.

Keith: See that big blue?

Art: No?

Austin: You don't see the big blue? Am I on the wrong page?

Keith: I'm seeing it.

Ali: I'm seeing it.

Jack: I'm seeing it.

Art: All I see is the big dice.

Ali: Are you on the wrong...

Austin: No, Art's here. Arthur T, it says.

Ali: Huh.

Art: I'm looking at all our dice, picking up...

Austin: Nope.

Keith: Oh, weird. We're on a different page.

Austin: Refresh that page. When's the last time you refreshed this tab?

Art: I don't know, what am I?

[**Ali** and **Keith** laugh]

Austin: Okay.

Keith: Who am I, mister refresh over here?

Austin: Who am I, using the computer?

[**Ali** and **Keith** laugh]

Art: The tab should refresh itself.

Ali: [cross] Well, who refreshes fuckin' Roll20? Yeah, exactly.

Art: Yeah, Roll20 does the refreshing.

Ali: This is a live service.

Austin: You should close the Roll20 thing when you're done with it. It leaks memory like a motherfucker.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: Well...

Art: Well, I turn the computer off when I'm done recording Friends at the Table, the podcast.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: So you refreshed it just now, so something weird is happening.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: Is this the third thing in a row that's like, not working?

Austin: Yeah. It could be.

Ali: Oh, no. I wished for death and... [chuckles]

[**Jack** laughs]

Keith: I can at least do this for, um...

Jack: Oh, yeah, we can screencap.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Here, Art, so at least you can see this.

Art: No, I know, I got there. I refreshed, it worked.

Keith: Oh, you got it? Okay.

Austin: Great, okay.

Art: I'm just against it.

Austin: Oh.

Art: I'm—

Austin: Dead metal over here.

Keith: Against the refresh.

Ali: Well, we shouldn't be frickin' refreshing 420 every time they—[laughs] I just said 420.

Keith: Did you say 420? [laughs]

Ali: Roll20. [laughs]

Austin: You said 420. You said you shouldn't be refreshing 420.

Ali: Every time you change the screen, that should happen. That's—

Austin: No, I agree. I agree.

Keith: Yeah, yeah. We—

Austin: That sounds like it's busted.

Keith: None of us like it.

Austin: Yeah.

[Ali chuckles]

Keith: None of us are pro. [chuckles]

Art: Anyway, I think the Cerulean sounds like a fun place to go.

Keith: I mean, nothing wrong with the big blue, as far as I'm concerned, but I'm willing to hear...

Austin: You can go right there if you want, I'm not—don't look at me. You're the Chime.

Keith: No, I'm looking at them.

Art: I'm looking at Aria.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Keith: I'm looking at these two.

Art: I also said that sounded good, so.

Keith: Oh, okay, okay.

Ali: Sure.

Art: You're not looking at me.

Ali: Hi. Yeah, let's go.

Art: I think a casino scene sounds fun.

Austin: Alright. So you—how do you get there? What's the visual of you traveling across this place? Are you walking there? Are you hopping in a cab? Are you renting some sort of—

Keith: Well, how many minutes is the walk? Is this a 12 minute walk?

Austin: No. It's much longer than that.

Keith: Okay. Well then, I'm definitely taking some sort of transportation.

Austin: That's your upper limit? Mako's upper limit on a walk is 12 minutes?

[Ali laughs]

Austin: You don't do a 15 minute...

Keith: I just got here, I don't want to be doing walking.

Ali: That's pretty far, that's like a mile, half-mile.

Keith: There's only five places here.

Austin: No. There's stuff in between. I said a moment ago the grey is all city streets.

[Ali laughs]

Keith: [laughing] No, I know, I know.

Austin: I'm not adding—I'm not doing the fucking Mode City map again in my life on Roll20's map builder. [chuckles]

Jack: [laughs] That was a good map. It's a shame about the years that it took off your life.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. These days, when I dissociate, I don't have as much free time, so.

Jack: Mm, I see.

Austin: [chuckles] I can't just place little triangles and squares.

Art: I think it's a fun walk. I think, you know, the image of us sort of like, sneaky walking.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Can we take city bikes?

Austin: Yeah, you can rent some city bikes.

Art: I don't know what they have here.

Austin: They have—yeah, they have something like a city bike, I'm sure, they have some sort of...

Keith: They have like, a hover bike.

Ali: Ooh.

Austin: Hover bike, yeah, little hover bikes that you've got to put in your, like—but this is the thing, right? Is, again, it's not connected to the main—to the main...

Jack: To the Holiday.

Austin: Yeah, it's connected to Holiday instead of the Mesh, so you have to, like, do some sort of credit transfer, or use just whatever cash you have on hand.

Keith: Or steal—steal the—steal it.

Austin: Yeah, you could steal it. If you want to, like, immediately, you know. Risk getting in trouble.

Keith: I mean, I can hack.

Jack: Cut to Orth in his office [Ali laughs] explaining to some higher up being like, "They're good people."

[Keith laughs]

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Keith: Hey, I'm—

Austin: You want to try to hack yourself some bikes to get around so we can get some hover bike action? Y'all can just add some hover bikes to the sheets if you succeed?

Keith: I would love that, yeah.

Austin: Okay, let me figure out who the fuck you're rolling against. It might be the same type of—the same people, generally, here, that you were before, people with similar stats. Let's see.

Keith: Oh.

Ali: I only agree to this if it's a tandem three-person hover bike. [chuckles]

Austin: Oh my god.

Keith: You don't want your own hover bike? You want a much less useful bike for later when we might need them?

Jack: They can—it's the future. They can connect to each other to form a tandem bike.

Ali: Ohhh.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, they can connect or disconnect. A hundred percent.

Keith: They've got hyper mags.

Jack: Yeah, hyper mags.

Austin: Right.

Art: I like how I was pitching this, like, stylish noir kind of like moving through the city, and then everyone's like, what about a three-person tandem hover bike?

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: In fact, I insist upon it.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Jack laughs]

Keith: Well, this is why I didn't want to walk. I felt if we didn't walk, then we could describe some weird vehicle, and we did get there.

Ali: Mhm.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Well, here we are. We are describing this vehicle.

Art: Now we can have the song Daisy in this, uh...

Ali: Oh.

Austin: I think that this is actually straight up operated by the Ithikos family, like some sub—actually, you know what, no no no. This is pretty obvious. This is run by the Tourist Union, right? The Tourist Union—

Keith: Right.

Jack: Oh, yeah, totally.

Austin: —is who provides this.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: So yeah, you're gonna—let's talk about rolling dice. I know we did it last time, but the last time was a few weeks ago, so. So, recharge your push dice. Let's go over and look at dice. Boom. Recharge your push dice, you already—you've got three of them now. So bring that one back over, Mako.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Then establish your vector. What are you doing? What's this look like? How do you—how are you doing this?

Keith: Um, we've got—this is a—this is a card, this is like, a chipped card.

Austin: Oh, it's a little swipe. It's a chipped card, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Yeah, and I've got—I've got, like, a pocket full of like, card blanks, that—

[Ali snickers]

Austin: Yeah, that's good.

Keith: Yeah. That I'm putting into, like—I don't know, like, imagine a 90s toy that was like, a toy that interacts with Digimon cards or something.

Austin: Sure, sure.

Keith: And you like, just chunk it in and then you do whatever thing, and then you pull it out. It's like that, but with like, blank credit cards and swipecards and subway cards. Just, you know. Blanks.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I gotcha, I gotcha.

Jack: So this is not stratus fogging.

Keith: No, this is normal style hacking.

Austin: This is regular hacking.

Jack: This is old school regular hacking.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Your brain is not connecting to this in any way.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: You are going—you have like a sneakers style, like, digital connection little laptop on your wrist or something.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You've got that style of, like, early 90s hacking tech.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Because it is worth remembering that when Mako, like, fogs shit, he goes into this weird, like, representative space.

Austin: Yes, yes.

Jack: Which is fine if this is, like, low tech stuff, I just want to make sure we don't get to a point where Mako fogs something and we cheat ourselves out of a really cool alternate universe where Mako is like, paddling a boat down a stream or something.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Yep, yep. Totally. Alright. So then you've gotten your vector?

Keith: I've just got a billion things for this. I have—first of all, I have 4 Hack.

Austin: You do have 4 Hack, that's true. You have—so now, let's pull your action dice up into the dice rolling spot. You have four of them. Go ahead and pull those up.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Nope.

Keith: Where—

Austin: Nope. Not those. Those are your push dice. Over here, the action dice.

Keith: Oh, here they are. Here they are.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Yep.

Austin: Cool. Then, are you using any of your adjectives or objects or tags to add push dice?

Keith: Um... Okay, so, when I do this, [**Austin:** Yes.] it's—I'm adding my tags. These become discharged, but then, later, if I want to make it sticky, it's unused ones that I give to you.

Austin: No. Wrong.

Keith: No, it's the used ones.

Austin: It's the used ones. You have to use them—you have to spend them in the roll. You have to discharge them [**Keith:** Right.] in order to then spend them as currency and make it sticky.

Keith: The reason that I get confused, we went over this last time, but then it's the unused ones that I can use for protection after.

Austin: Correct, yes.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: That is correct.

Keith: So, I'm just gonna use all three.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: And I'm going to tell you that this is from my...

Austin: I just want to remind you, that means that they stay there until your next action roll.

Keith: I guess that's a good point.

Austin: That's the thing is, you don't get to use them as defense if someone—if you fuck this up somehow, and someone wants to respond, or, you know, maybe you don't fuck it up, it's just that like, something leads to another dice roll being used against you, an NPC wants to act on you, you won't have them ready to go. That's the dilemma.

Keith: The thing that I'm worried about is the Tourist Union being, like, secretly tough to roll against. That's the...

Austin: Right. Mhm.

Keith: Because it's not the joker at the front gates.

Austin: Right. It's the Tourist Union. And they, you know. Those guys...

Keith: It's the Tourist Union and they mean business.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah, so let's roll—ah, fuck it, we'll do just 4. And I can roll these, random side...

Austin: Mhm. Look at that.

Keith: That's a 6.

Austin: So—wait, we kind of—we want to make sure we go through this all right.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: You didn't tell me what your push dice was coming from.

Keith: Oh, I'm going to use my headjack.

Austin: Okay, yeah, sure. Totally. So we see you jack in in that way, you know, we show that shot of it, you're plugging into like, the card reader or whatever, [**Keith:** Yeah.] or to the card printer, the thing that adds the data to the card, and now you have rolled a 2, a 4, a 6, a 5, and a 3. So that means your highest is a 6.

Keith: It's a straight.

Austin: You don't have any hurt dice. It is a straight. The reaction here is a 3. So yeah, so you have—you have done more. You've gotten higher than their reaction score, which is only a 3. I am not spending any push dice on defense here.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Are you gonna make some—what is the adjective you're gonna use, and are you making it sticky?

Keith: Um... Yes, I'm making it sticky.

Austin: Mhm. So I will just take that dice, that die, boom.

Keith: Right. And this is against the...

Austin: This is against Cole, the Tourist Union, like, you know, IT guy, basically.
[chuckles] The network security—the Holidaze security lead.

Keith: Can I make Cole absent?

Austin: How? What are you doing?

Keith: I'm sending an alert that says—

Art: Woah, Mako's killing this guy.

[Keith laughs]

Austin: This is the thing. This is why I'm like, what is the thing you're doing to them?

Keith: Can I send them an alert that is like, an emergency that they have to go take care of elsewhere?

Austin: What is the—what is the emergency?

Keith: Um...

Austin: Is it like a sick family member, is this a...

Keith: That was my gut feeling, was like, family member in the hospital.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: But then I was like, but I don't want to—well, but I already—but I succeeded, so.

Austin: You did succeed.

Keith: So it's not gonna be like, "I don't have a wife. Sorry."

Austin: Yeah, no, it's gonna be—they'll have someone they care about, if that's what you're going for.

Ali: Do like, a busted pipe or something. That's so mean. [laughs]

Keith: Yeah, it's mean. But I need them to not be checking on the bikes.

Art: "Your grandma has a busted pipe. You gotta get down here."

[Ali and **Austin** laugh]

Keith: But—yeah, I guess busted pipe is fine. I like busted pipe.

Austin: Alright. Cole, absent, busted pipe. Giving Cole they/them here, also.

Jack: Cole is just getting their kitchen redone.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: They just bought a new, like, high tech fridge.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Mhm.

Art: Called Grandma.

Keith: The fridge is spraying coolant everywhere. It's the Grandma fridge.

Austin: Nooo!

Jack: [chuckles] No!

Austin: Alright, then yeah, you get the like, *cla-click*, [**Keith:** Yeah.] and all of the three bikes pop off, the hover bikes pop off, you can totally link them up to do tandem biking. Is that a thing you're doing?

Keith: No one wants to do this but Aria.

[**Ali** laughs]

Austin: Did Aria even say that or are you speaking for Aria because you just know in your heart of hearts?

Keith: Well, it was—

Art: It was Aria—it was Alicia's suggestion. Aria...

[**Ali** continues laughing]

Austin: Oh, you're right. It was—wow, Alicia.

[**Keith** laughs]

Ali: I know, I know, I know, I'm being—yeah.

Austin: Like a mad parent.

Art: "Ali" and "Aria" are too similar, I was worried I would...

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Art: ...have there be a homophone there.

Ali: Uh-huh.

Austin: I don't think we've said the word "Alicia" outside of "Alicia Acampora" at the beginning of an episode ever.

[**Ali** laughs]

Keith: You know what? Jack said it recently, and I was like, Alicia?

Ali: [laughs] What did I not want to do? I'm sorry.

Keith: You were the only one that wanted tandem bikes.

Ali: Oh. Well, yeah, 'cause it's funny. [laughs]

Keith: But the question is, was that something that Aria said out loud, or...

Ali: Oh, no. No, no, no. No.

Keith: Because it would have to be to get it to potentially happen.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Well, no, because we've just invented that that is the—oh, sorry. It could now potentially happen because it's true about the world. Now you can all look at the bikes and see that they all—when you unlock all three of them, it goes “Tandem mode?” Question mark?

Keith: Right.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: And they—and *badoop*. Like, do you want to hit yes?

Keith: And so, in my mind, it was like, Cass hits no, Mako hits no, Aria hits yes, and then it goes like, “1 out of 3!” And then we're like...

Jack: We're in Trick Tower.

Art: And it happens anyway.

Austin: Uh-huh.

[Ali and Keith laugh]

Ali: That is exactly what happens. She goes,

Ali (as **Aria**): It'd be faster!

Austin: [chuckles] It'll be faster.

Keith (as **Mako**): It's not faster.

Ali (as **Aria**): Well, because—

Art (as **Cass**): It might be faster.

Ali (as **Aria**): Yeah.

Art (as **Cass**): 'Cause three people are pedaling.

Ali (as **Aria**): Uh-huh.

Keith: We are now driving a 25 foot long vehicle.

Austin: I don't think that's true. [laughs]

Art: [chuckling] Wait, this is an 8 foot long bike?

[Ali laughs]

Keith: Okay, it's a 15 foot long vehicle.

Austin: 8 and a third. Yeah.

Art: [laughing] No, no. These are 8 foot long bikes.

Keith (as **Mako**): They hover! Hey, they hover. This is not—this is not a chain and gear system.

Ali (as **Aria**): Well, I was gonna check if that guy was following me, and then record a thank you message while you guys were pedaling.

Art (as **Cass**): So you weren't gonna pedal?

Keith (as **Mako**): So you wanted us to drive you.

[**Ali** laughs]

Ali (as **Aria**): Well, it'd be faster.

Art (as **Cass**): [Art laughing] That's not faster than pedaling.

Keith (as **Mako**): [Keith laughing] It would be faster for me to drive you?

[**Ali** and **Austin** laugh]

Keith (as **Mako**): I don't think that would be faster, and he's not following you.

Ali (as **Aria**): You don't know that.

Keith (as **Mako**): Have you not been checking to see if people have been following us?

Ali (as **Aria**): Yeah, online.

Austin: Hard cut to that guy in the car on the phone. "Yeah, it was really weird. She said she was Aria Joie?"

[**Ali** laughs]

Jack: "Why? Why lie about—I mean, I guess she's famous, but..."

Keith: "And then, when I was up close, I could tell it didn't really even look like her."

Austin: "Nothing like her!"

Ali: "Do you think she just dresses like that all of the time?"

Austin: "Is there like a convention in the Sill? Maybe it was like a cosplay thing."

Art: Yeah, like you're gonna see Aria Joie at the weird space gas station.

Austin: [laughs] You all pedal away, I'm gonna go over to AuDy.

AuDy

[28:37]

Austin: AuDy, they've moved you to a room. They've led you to a room with a bunch of chairs, and they ask if you want anything in the sort of tenor that a—the sort of guard at a toll plaza type, or—it's not really a border crossing. You know what I mean? Like, it kind of is, but it's less fraught than that. It's a—

Keith: It's weirdly more of a border crossing than normally would be inside of a city. Or—

Austin: Or in a—yeah. Well, that's the thing, right? Is like—

Keith: Like, a neighboring town.

Austin: It's a neighboring town. But it's less of a border crossing than, you know, coming to Counterweight from another planet is, right?

Jack: Right, yes.

Austin: And—but they, like,

Austin (as **Security Guard**): You want any coffee?

Austin: Basically, looking at you, not knowing if you're the type of robot that drinks coffee.

Jack (as **AuDy**): I'm not the type of robot that drinks coffee.

Austin (as **Security Guard**): Alright. Well, if you need anything, you let us know. Erneste will be in in a second.

Austin: I'm pretty sure Erneste is the name I gave for the head of the guards here before. And a few minutes later, Erneste shows up with two coffees.

[**Jack** chuckles]

Austin: And he goes, like,

Austin (as **Erneste**): Yeah, I didn't know if you wanted it black or what, so I got one black and I got one with cream and sugar. Which one?

Jack (as **AuDy**): Black coffee.

Austin (as **Erneste**): Black coffee.

Austin: Hands it to you, sits down with the other one. This is a room that used to have a desk in it and has bad carpeting. You can tell it used to have a desk in it because it is—you can see the square, or like, the rectangle outline, where the carpet is a lighter—or is a deeper shade of blue, [**Jack** chuckles] because like, the fluorescents haven't bleached the carpet.

Jack: Oh, god.

Austin: And you're sitting in, like—there's like seven hard plastic—maybe you're not sitting, maybe you're standing, I don't know, you tell me, but he sits down in a hard plastic chair that has the sort of, like, you know, like, not like a school chair, but not a comfortable—like, a DMV chair, [**Jack:** Yes.] or a, like, jury duty waiting room chair, or like a—you know what I mean? Like, there's a real particular shell shape to these things, the ones that I have in mind.

Jack: Yes, I know exactly the one you mean. One of the most lowkey unpleasant experiences I've had at an airport was when—I can't remember where I was flying into. My bag was lost in, like, LAX, or in JFK or something, and they just said, "Okay," you know, "Mr. de Quidt, you need to go through this door and just wait in that room." And I went into this room sort of expecting, like, a little side room where I'd wait until they told me where my bag had gone, and it was wild, it was a room full of chairs, and there must have been about 45 people in it, all of whom were—had also lost their bag, had their bags lost—

Austin: Oh my god.

Jack: And the energy in this room was just rancid.

Ali: Mhm.

Austin: Mhm.

[**Keith** hums]

Art: Mhm.

Jack: And we were all sitting in these DMV chairs looking up at this small television that would display a passenger number and our name, and then we would have to go up to a desk and be told where our bag was. And the answer would be like, “It’s in Cleveland.”

[**Ali** laughs]

Jack: [chuckles] Or, like, it’s in whatever. And it’s like, you know, there are much worse experiences that one can have in an airport or crossing a border, but something about that room just full of these awful chairs, this tiny television, and everybody just all wrapped up in like, angry anxiety, really has this feel of this little border crossing in the Sill to me.

Austin: Yeah. So, Erneste sits down across from you. As maybe a reminder for both of us, the thing that I recall that you did was you said “Hey, Coffee Affogato, your boss’s boss, basically, or your boss’s boss’s boss, has been—is being held by the Ithikos family.” Is that right? Is my memory on this correct? And that you’ve been sent here by CCT higher-ups to deal with that situation?

Jack: Yes, and I pressed them on it.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I really tried to play the, like, essentially “how dare you”, you know, “treat your superior’s man like this.”

Austin: Mhm, mhm.

Jack: You know, and I—AuDy is not a man, I use “man” there in the sense of, like, hired person. You know?

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Like, they have sent in AuDy to clean this up and you are just, you know, brushing them off.

Austin: Yeah. Erneste is not here with that same energy. Erneste has on a name tag, has on, like, the CCT, you know, uniform, basically, for a—the equivalent of like a sergeant. They have a nametag on that is “E. Ecstasy”, their name is Erneste Ecstasy, their mother was a pop star named Ilene Ecstasy, kind of a failed pop star, but a pop star who changed her name legally and then just had a kid, [chuckles] and so her kid’s name is Erneste Ecstasy. And there is something about that in the way that they—or, the way that he talks to you, that is like, he is trying to manage a situation in a way that is less trained security professional, and more media-trained. More, you know, raised by someone who has been in and out of the public light. And so Erneste is like, alright, so, how can we—

Austin (as **Erneste**): How can we make sure that this all gets taken care of? We want to make sure that you don’t leave here feeling like we weren’t helping you out with anything you needed.

Jack (as **AuDy**): [hums] Affogato is detained, correct?

Austin (as **Erneste**): That is our understanding. We had surmised as much, but we weren’t a hundred percent sure. You have now confirmed that. Your name, or your operating unit, or... how should I be referring to you?

Jack (as **AuDy**): I’m Automated Dynamics.

Austin (as **Erneste**): Automated Dynamics. Got it.

Austin: He kind of writes it down in like a little handheld, you know, with a light pen, basically. *Do-do-do*. “Automated Dynamics.” It’s like a click pen that produces a little beam of light that he writes with.

Jack: Ooh.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Why were you unable to confirm this prior to my arrival?

Austin (as **Erneste**): My understanding is that my agents may have mentioned that Mr. Affogato is occasionally the sort of person who we lose track of from time to time. Coffee is not what I would call a—and forgive me for saying this—not a hands-on unit leader. Is not someone who takes a lot of pride in their position here. And what they do make sure of is to take advantage of the beneficial placement here in the Sill. They—he really does his best to show his face around the Cerulean and the Agora and things like that, and so, while we’d heard some reports of him perhaps being led through the Cerulean by the shoulder, we weren’t sure where he wound up. He’s been known to cause small scenes and be escorted off the premises, or to be escorted into a comped room where he sleeps it off. And we weren’t sure if that was the situation.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Small scenes. Tell me about the small scenes.

Austin (as **Erneste**): He gets drunk, he bets a lot. He wins sometimes, more than he’s supposed to. Things like that. But he’s a—he has a little leverage as being the CCT agent here, the lead, and that means that they put up with him. And frankly, I think that they like having the chief technocrat of the area, you know, on their tab, so to speak.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Cameron McLeod. Does the name mean anything to you?

Austin (as **Erneste**): Cameron McLeod. The gambler?

Jack (as **AuDy**): You tell me.

Austin (as **Erneste**): Yeah, Cameron's in and out of here pretty regularly, it's on the circuit. I didn't know Cameron was here right now. Last I heard, they were on Vox for the big tournament there, but I guess that they came back here, if you're saying they're involved. Let me check our records really quick.

Austin: And like, *boop boop boop boop boop*.

Austin (as **Erneste**): Yeah, looks like they got here last week. They came in through on a weekend entry.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Where are they now?

Austin (as **Erneste**): I don't know. Why are you raising them to me? It sounds like you have information about Cameron. We don't operate inside. We don't have—

Jack (as **AuDy**): Then you need to let me inside.

Austin (as **Erneste**): Of course. Again, anything you need to make sure that this is not an issue for you. And I would like to apologize for any confusion or any mismanagement from our crew down in the waiting area. If we had understood what your purpose was, I'm sure that we would have gotten you face to face with me as soon as possible.

Jack: Just head turns, you know, barely acknowledging the clearly feigned apology.

Austin: Mhm.

Jack: This is like a—AuDy is not the sort of person who would go “I have raised questions for these people unnecessarily, and I now need to clean that up.”

Austin: Mhm.

Jack: And I am resisting my temptation as a tactical player to go, “Well, I need to tidy up what I've done here.” Because I don't think that's true to the character.

Austin: Mhm. That makes sense. Do you have any other questions for Erneste or are you just gonna get issued in to the main part of the Sill?

Jack: Let's see. What do we got? We got Affogato is a lax boss [**Austin:** Mhm.] and is regularly, you know, kicking off in and around the casino, and Cameron McLeod is like a high-stakes gambler who has flown in from Vox, which is the Diaspora's capital.

Austin: Yeah, though, again, was mak—Erneste was making it seem as if—the thing I was trying to communicate was like, Cameron is a professional gambler and goes from tournament to tournament or from city to city, you know, to play poker or whatever, right? We should come up with—I don't know what our card game is. I don't know that we ever came up with whatever the pazaak equivalent for COUNTER/Weight was, but.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: It would be impossible to come up with an equivalent to pazaak. It's so unique.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. [chuckles] Certainly not blackjack.

Jack: What is pazaak? Is it just blackjack?

Austin: It's just blackjack.

Keith: It's blackjack where you can add and remove cards by getting dealt a hand of plusses and minuses. It's great. I love pazaak, but.

Jack: See, this is why COUNTER/Weight is, on some respects, more challenging than Twilight Mirage. Because if you said "come up with a Twilight Mirage card game," I could do it in ten seconds flat.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: The deck has 1400 cards. You know?

Austin: [chuckles] Right.

[Ali and Keith laugh]

Austin: Yeah. But in COUNTER/Weight, it's basically poker, isn't it? It's poker, but it's like, sadder, somehow.

Jack: It's basically poker.

Keith: Which is sabacc.

Austin: [chuckling] Right, right. Which is sabacc. Which is a different Star Wars card game. I have a sabacc deck right over there, actually. I'm looking at it right now.

Keith: I've actually never played sabacc, but I've always had a sort of irrational grudge against it because of being a pazaak person.

[shuffling noises in background]

Austin: [distant from mic] Right, no, I gotcha. Pazaak for life.

Jack: Austin is disappearing.

Keith: 'Cause it's just like, you can tell that one of them copied the other one's name, and I genuinely don't know which one came first.

Austin: Which one came first, right, sure.

Keith: But I like pazaak.

Austin: Here is my sabacc Coruscant Shift 62 card deck here.

Jack: Woah!

Austin: Yeah. 2-4 players. "Perhaps the galaxy's oldest and most popular card game, sabacc is played in a bewildering number of variations." So, you know. There you go.

Keith: Bewildering.

Austin: Yeah. Anyway.

Jack: Let me just check my verbs real quick. I don't think I can steal anything.

Austin: Really, I was just looking for more talking or more, are you trying to get anything else, you know?

Jack: I don't know what I can usefully get here prior to, you know, with the information that I have [**Austin:** Yeah.] about this place.

Austin: Stuff that I said that I didn't mean by anything at the time, but now I kind of do—no, you know what? No, I'm not gonna say it. Now that I'm putting together the mystery, I'm not gonna highlight the shit I said. Fuck it.

Jack: Yeah. Fair enough.

Austin: Yeah. I'm just making my own notes over here.

Jack: I need more information to [laughing] ask questions.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And I think with that information, I need to get into the Sill. If they weren't gonna let me in, I was gonna knock him out and take on his identity, [**Austin** scoffs] which would have been really funny.

Austin: That's very funny.

Jack: Ernesto Ecstasy is now a parking robot.

Austin: Yeah, no. Mm-mm.

Jack: But no, I've been let in.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Just, you know, brushing him off completely, brushing off the pleasantries. I am taking the coffee, though, which is just getting cold, you know?

[**Ali** and **Austin** laugh]

Jack: Held rigidly in...

Austin: By the time you get escorted outside, you can see your coworkers on the bikes. Bike or bikes, [**Keith:** Bikes.] you know, below.

Art: Well, it's one bike once it's put together.

Austin: Yeah, well, I wasn't sure if in this particular moment it was fully tandem-ized or not. But biking away in the distance, you know, below, probably 10 minutes away from you by—you know, you have to walk down this big stairwell, and then, you know, by the time you get down there, they'll be long gone, but you can see them biking westward towards the Cerulean.

Jack: That's okay, I'll figure it out. [laughing] I can head in that direction myself carrying my coffee.

Keith: Sabacc first mentioned in the novelization of The Empire Strikes Back.

Austin: Oh, wow. So a long time ago.

Keith: Wow. Long time ago.

Austin: Because of Lando.

Art: Probably some sort of Boba Fett scene. Oh.

Austin: I think it's probably a Lando, Han lost the, you know, Lando lost the Falcon's—

Art: The Millennium Falcon, yeah.

Keith: I think that that's right, because its first appearance is a Lando novel from '83.

Austin: There you go.

Art: Oh, 'cause it's not—it's—Han Solo's not—didn't lose gambling to...

Austin: No, got it from him in a game of sabacc.

Keith: Lando Calrissian and the Mindharp of Sharu.

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah, all the Lando—keep looking. Tell me the next Lando book.

Keith: I've genuinely not heard of this. Followed by Lando Calrissian and the Flamewind of Oseon.

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh. There's a third one.

Jack: It's pronounced "ocean". [laughs]

Keith: The Starcave of ThonBoka.

Austin: ThonBoka. There you go. Those are the big ones.

Art: Everyone named all those places while looking at a liquor cabinet.

[**Austin** and **Keith** laugh]

Austin: It's true, yeah.

Keith: "Mindharp of Sharu" is awesome.

Austin: Mhm.

Keith: I like that.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: I'm always thinking of the title "Splinter of the Mind's Eye". I think that's a great title.

Austin: That's a pretty good one.

The Cerulean

[43:56]

Austin: Alright. Pull up at the Cerulean, there is a bike parking zone, hover bike parking zone. Once you get close enough, it just like, a little thing pops up that says “Would you like to park at the Cerulean?” And then if you hit yes, it like, takes over the piloting so that it can like, park—

Art: Oh, it de-tandems the bikes?

Austin: It de-tandems the bikes and like—it’s like when in a mecha show or in a super robot show the, like, super robot parts recombine into, like, the Megazord.

Keith: Sure, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: It’s like that, but the tandem bike slowly de-connects and then like, pulls into the parking spots very smoothly. It’s nice. One of them, Cass, AuDy, Mako—or Cass, Aria, Mako, in that order, Cass, your bike misses the landing, it like, comes up slowly and just does not lock into place, so it backs up and tries again, and it just won’t do it. You just have to get off the bike and, like, do it yourself, you know?

[**Jack** laughs]

Austin: I rolled a die there, that’s what was happening, I was rolling a die, that’s why I said their names.

Art: I don’t work for the bike company, I’m just gonna leave it there.

[**Ali** laughs]

Austin: You’re just gonna leave it backing up and going back and forth until it runs out of battery. Perfect. And then yeah, you’re at the Cerulean. You’re at this giant casino which, again, used to basically be the building for what would have become the space U.N. here in the Golden Branch sector, and is now the space Bellagio. You know? What do you do? Where are you going? What’s your play here?

Art: Well, we didn’t get the information about [laughs] Coffee being a gambler.

Austin: That’s true.

Jack: I could contact you.

Austin: Do you have a local range communicator? Do you have like, a—

Jack: Yes. I have a—I have a—hm.

Art: We have Sidekicks?

Jack: Yeah, 'cause I'm not connected to the Mesh here or anywhere.

Austin: Anywhere, yeah. None of you are connected to the Holidaze at this point.

Jack: But—

Austin: Do you just have like, a radio?

Jack: Yeah. It's a radio. Absolutely.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Hello.

Austin: [imitates radio static crackling]

Keith (as **Mako**): Hi.

Art (as **Cass**): Hi.

Ali (as **Aria**): Hello?

Jack (as **AuDy**): This is AuDy.

Ali (as **Aria**): Hi!

Jack (as **AuDy**): Why were you on the bicycles?

Keith (as **Mako**): To get to the big blue building.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Did they need to be a tandem?

Ali (as **Aria**): Well—

Keith (as **Mako**): No. Did they need to not be a tandem?

Jack (as **AuDy**): I just spoke with the boss of the gate security. Useful information about Coffee and Cameron.

Jack: And I relay what I've been told.

Keith (as **Mako**): Oh, that's perfect. We're at the casino.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Good. Over and out.

Austin: [laughs] Oh, that's AuDy. AuDy, as a reminder, you have a connection here, also. Your connection, though, is not to any human being, but is instead to—or to any humanoid, human, you know, organic being, I guess—but is instead to Club Stealheart Unit 22, aka Twotwo, who is stylish, friendly, and careful, professional conversationalist and flirt. Was he just programmed that way? Question mark. Club Stealheart is somewhere here. You can tell me where. I imagine it's possibly in the Cerulean, it could be in the Embassy District, it could be in the Agora. Just, you know. I'll let you place wherever Twotwo works. I know—I mean, it's Club Stealheart. Steal with an A, like you steal your heart, you know what I mean?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: But yeah.

Jack: Yeah. I think it's in these—I want to put something in these little streets that you haven't drawn.

Austin: Love it. Awesome.

Jack: I think it's between the Agora and the Embassy District.

Austin: Perfect. I'll add it as a little spot.

Keith: Do you have a way to get to the Cerulean? Do you want me to send Cass's broken bike back to you? It's already not working.

Jack: I'll walk. It's fine. I'll take a bus. [chuckles] I'm not gonna ride a bike...

Art: It's not cool to take a bus. Like it is cool in the real world, [**Keith:** Right.] but in a futuristic tech world, it's not cool.

Jack: AuDy's not cool.

Austin: Yeah, that's true. That's true, isn't it?

Art: You're gonna get some comments as a parking robot on a bus.

Keith: Can we upgrade bus? Can we have like, a moving sidewalk, or something?

Austin: No, it's just a bus.

Keith: Damn.

Austin: [imitates platform lowering] You know? It lowers a little bit to let AuDy on. AuDy gets on, you know? You know, you pay in whatever the local currency is, which you've had to—or are you—maybe—do you just show your badge or something? They don't care about your badge here, actually.

Jack: I'll pay.

Austin: Okay. You just pay.

Jack: You know, counting out—counting—no, it's a card. There's no cash in this world. [chuckles]

Austin: Yeah, yeah. You just have a credit chit or whatever that you hand over.

Art: But AuDy would be very quick at counting...

Austin: It's true.

Jack: Oh, unbelievably quick.

Art: ...currency, yeah.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: Yes. As I'm doing this, I'm trying really hard to fall away from playing Pickman, who is another person of few words and—

Austin: Mhm.

Jack: But I think the difference is that AuDy would count cash very, very quickly, and Pickman would count it out very carefully, one by one individually.

Austin: Yeah. Absolutely.

Keith: These two are opposites in terms of how they count money.

Austin: It's true.

Jack: In terms of how they count cash. And they have different views about trains.
[chuckles]

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Oh, sure, yeah. I mean, it's really easy to have an uncomplicated view of trains.

Jack: In COUNTER/Weight.

Keith: If you didn't grow up on a haunted train.

Jack: [laughing] Yes, that's true.

Austin: Mhm. That's true. Alright. You begin to head towards Club Stealheart. The vibe that you get from here, AuDy, as someone who used to be a driver, and still is a pilot, is like, there's a lot that has changed in the 20 years since these roads and this kind of driving system were set up. There's a lot more traffic here despite not being as dense as some of the bigger domes. There's a lot of stuff that's not automated. There are not the sort of like—the driver is an Apostolosian, the driver of this bus, and is like, making decisions based on, you know, experience and gut, they are not waiting for—they are not hooked up to some connected Mesh that helps shape the overall dynamic direction

of traffic, it's all—it's driving. They're driving here. You know? So, vibes are different. Yeah.

You pull up to Club Stealheart. You get off the bike, or not off the bike, off the bus.

[chuckles] The famous Friends at the Table trope, we gotta get off the bike. We gotta get off the bike.

Jack: We gotta get off the bike.

[**Keith** chuckles]

Austin: You get off the bus and are able to walk the rest of the way towards Club Stealheart.

Keith: The bus is actually the most tandem bike you've ever seen.

[**Ali** laughs]

Austin: In a way, that's the—yeah. Everybody has to pedal. The club, it's early enough, the club is not—

Art: This is the Flintstones—a Flintstones bus.

Austin: It's a Flintstones bike.

Art: Flintstones bus.

Austin: Yeah. All bikes are Flintstones bikes, aren't they?

Jack: [chuckles] That's true.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Generally, I guess, if they have pedals. The club is not open yet. The club is doing its like, you know, it'll open in 90 minutes or something. People are getting here, they're getting in their uniforms, they're getting ready to like, you know, the, you know,

the chairs are being taken down, the daily specials are being put together, the kitchen is opening up and getting together their stuff, and stuff like that.

Keith: They're not listening to club music yet, they're listening to someone's MP3 player.

Austin: Yeah, that's exactly the vibe. A hundred percent, yeah. Or like, someone's—it's someone's MP3 player playing music that they wrote, right? Like, their own album.

[**Keith** laughs]

Austin: Someone is—has the news on. This is the least sexy place there is until 90 minutes from now when it will become the home of the coolest people inside of the Sill, and the most attractive and fun and clever people you could ever spend 90 minutes and 90 dollars with, you know? Twotwo is, you know, maybe like, not—is on his way into the back room to get set up. Twotwo is a very humanoid-looking robot, synthetic. Has a—has human features. Has fingers, has a head. AuDy does not have a head, as a reminder, or does not have a separate head from their body, right?

Jack: No face.

Austin: No face. Interesting.

Jack: In some versions, a head, some interpretations, a head, sometimes, but not...

Keith: Sometimes it's shoulders all the way across, like a super battle droid.

Austin: Yeah, that's the one that I always imagine, but maybe that's just from seeing art. Maybe I have that—

Keith: Got a little head bump.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Maybe I've just—that has become the default AuDy in my head, you know?

Jack: Which is great. I'm happy either way.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: AuDy's head or face is the least interesting part of AuDy's character, so it doesn't come up very often.

[Ali chuckles]

Austin: Right.

Keith: Yeah, it shows how unimportant it is that it's not even worth saying whether you should or shouldn't include it as part of the design. [laughs]

Jack: Yes. Go for it. Feel it out.

Austin: Yeah. Twotwo is not this. Twotwo is human-shaped, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Human face, human features, shiny metal. Currently wearing a t-shirt, like a cut-off t-shirt, and jean, like, high-cut jean shorts. Has, like, a hat on. Will be, you know, changing into a very nice suit. How do you know Twotwo? I know that you have the relationship... where is it? Loyal, to Twotwo. What is—where does this come from?

Jack: Um... Oh, it's, um... It's—let's see. I helped Twotwo out of a situation where I was the—you know how they say that very often bystanders won't act, and so you are told to say, "You, person in the red shirt, or whatever, you need to act."

Austin: Right.

Jack: I think that, like, this is the exact inverse of that. Twotwo got, like, carjacked or something.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: You know, there was some—and AuDy just stood up from the other side of the street and came over and, you know, kicked the shit out of the person and made sure Twotwo was okay.

Austin: Was this pre or post AuDy gaining the sort of—the type of sapience or sentience that they have now?

Jack: Just post.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Not just in the sense of days, but post enough that it was from that sort of early, you know, waking up from a dream experience for AuDy.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And since then, you know, AuDy has made sure to, you know, check in every so often, see how Twotwo is doing.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And I think, you know, is—genuinely begins that way with Twotwo.

Austin: Mhm.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Hello.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): AuDy. Was not expecting you here.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Is now a bad time?

Austin (as **Twotwo**): No, now's a great time. 15 minutes from now would be a bad time. I have to get in my routine, I have to get ready to put on the face.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Of course. I was stopping by with the crew.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Do you want to take a seat? Is the crew here? Do they need anything? Drinks?

Jack (as **AuDy**): They got on a tandem bicycle and drove towards the casino.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Of course. Sure. Take in the sights.

Jack (as **AuDy**): It's a new outfit.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Oh. How are they? Synthetic, or...

Jack (as **AuDy**): All organic.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): [sighs] Good luck.

Jack (as **AuDy**): You don't know the half of it. Some Apostolosian scion.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Oh, brother. That's a shame. Ithikos, or?

Jack (as **AuDy**): [cross] Aria Joie—

Jack: Oh, sorry. [chuckles] Yeah, no, let's pull this thread, actually.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Berenice.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Berenice? That's not "some scion".

Jack (as **AuDy**): [hums noncommittally]

Austin (as **Twotwo**): If it's the one I'm thinking of, they are high-ranking.

Jack (as **AuDy**): They spend a lot of time trying to decide things, or communicate their decisions to other people. I can tell sometimes that they have a plan ready to go, and then the other two flap around their heads like birds.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Honey, I talk to organics every night. That's all of them. They think they know what they want. They want to be told what they want. [sighs] So, are you here for work, then? Do you need info?

Jack (as **AuDy**): For work, yes.

Art: [laughs] Sorry.

[**Austin** laughs] [**Keith** laughs]

Jack (as **AuDy**): I need information—

Austin: Keith? You want to read that one for the class?

Keith: Yeah. [laughs] I wrote in the chat, “Damn, AuDy’s racist in this one.”

[**Ali** and **Jack** laugh]

Jack: I would like to call listeners’ attention to the conversations between Mako and the Jim unit in the early part of COUNTER/Weight. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. Agreed.

Keith: I don’t remember that!

Austin: Yeah, don’t worry about it, then. You know?

Jack: I do.

Austin: Check the—you can go check the tape.

Jack: [laughs] “Damn, AuDy’s racist in this one.” It’s the early reviews. [laughing] Early leaked screening of COUNTER/Weight’s new...

Austin: [laughs] “Ugh, yeah, that new movie came out, did you see AuDy is racist in this one?”

[**Keith** and **Ali** laugh]

Jack: [laughing] “Damn, they made AuDy racist in this one?”

Austin: They made AuDy racist in this one.

Keith: [laughing] Fuckin’ reboots, god damn it.

Jack: Oh...

Art: “Damn, AuDy’s racist in this one” is gonna be our best-selling t-shirt ever.

[**Austin** and **Keith** laugh]

Ali: [laughing] Shut up.

Jack: AuDy is not racist in this one! AuDy’s—

Austin: Twotwo is the one being a little racist, to be clear, but also, I bet Twotwo has fucking gone through it, so. Anyway.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): What do you need? Do you want to sit?

Jack (as **AuDy**): I need information on—I’ll sit. I need information on Coffee Affogato, as much as you’ve got, and I need information on the missing gambler, Cameron McLeod.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Woah, woah, woah. That’s a lot pretty quick.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Mhm. I know you’re good for it.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): You want information from me, normally, it’s “Hey, where’s a good place for a stakeout? How did some no-name wind up in the wrong place at the wrong time?” You just named two important people here in the Sill. I don’t know if I can get into this one.

Jack (as **AuDy**): That’s okay. I’m sure you can help somehow. Have either of them visited recently?

Austin: You’re gonna need to make a roll here.

Jack: I am going to need to make a roll.

Austin: You are.

Jack: The good news is that against all the odds, AuDy is good at Coaxing. Now, usually, the way this is characterized is AuDy throwing their weight around.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: But I think that in this moment, there is a kind of... This is not AuDy playing softer, [Austin: Yeah.] this is not Aria Joie's 3 Coax, but this is very much, like, you know, I'm prepared to cut you a break here, I know that you're giving limited informa—AuDy doesn't say this. [chuckles] I think this is what they're implying.

Austin: Mhm.

Jack: "I know that you're able to give me limited information, but anything that you can give me, I will be able to make use of."

Austin: Sure, sure. Yeah.

Jack: Okay, so.

Austin: So let's start by building—what's your Coax?

Jack: My Coax is 3.

Austin: So let's go ahead and—first of all, let's recharge your push dice.

Jack: Mhm.

Austin: So you still have—now you have two push dice left.

Jack: I do.

Austin: Then let's pull up three action dice into the dice rolling spot. I think we've seen what your vector is kind of already, you know? You're talking them up, you're leveraging your relationship with them. Do you have any other particular—are you gonna spend any push dice here to activate any adjectives? Or tags, or whatever? I'll note that the loyal tag is one such thing, I believe, because you have that relationship with them.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: But you could also use other stuff that you have that's for you, you know?

Jack: No, I will use the loyal tag.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: So I'm prepared to sort of use this push dice here.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Alright. No hurt dice, I have no bad adjectives.

Austin: Not yet.

Jack: Cool. Which of these dice—it doesn't really matter 'cause we can always just put it back in the other place, but I'll drag this one up here.

Austin: No, do the one that is—I mean, the other one should become not discharged, then, right?

Jack: Oh, yes. Right, yes.

Austin: This is the beginning of a roll, you start by un-discharging, so if you're gonna—yeah.

Jack: All the—yeah.

Austin: Yeah, exactly.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: Alright, roll—this is four dice, you're—I don't remember that you know what you're looking for at the beginning. I think that you determine the reaction rating after the fact, right? So.

Jack: Yeah, roll the dice and then determine the reaction.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. So go ahead and roll those dice. Ooh, that is a 6. 2, 4, 5, 6. That ain't gonna happen here. I'm not gonna get up to a 6 here even with this robot who is

a—I don't believe I'll get up to a 6. I don't think he has a 6. That would be wild. Let me see if I can get there with a push dice, though. Or with some push dice. Uh... no.

Keith: Which you have two of now? Yeah, you do.

Austin: Which I have two of right now. Yeah, I have two. What adjective do you want to apply to Twotwo? And are you spending a push dice to make it sticky? As a reminder, non-sticky dice—non-sticky adjectives are useful for you in situations like this, still, where like, all you need is for them to open up and give you some intel, right? You don't necessarily have to make it a, you know, a big thing, you know? Whereas sticky things are really useful when you're like, trying to put someone in a position long-term, you know?

Jack: Yes. Okay. I have some thoughts here. One of the thoughts I have is “confiding”.

Austin: That's fine. Let's just move. Like, let's not—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Let's not spend a lot of time trying to find the perfect thing, that's one of the things that got us held up before.

Jack: Yes, that's true.

Austin: Are you gonna make it sticky? Or are you gonna keep it loose?

Jack: I am going to keep it loose, because I want the information, and I think I'm gonna talk and go.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: Maybe it's too early, but I'm loving this mechanic so far.

Austin: It's a great game.

Keith: It's great.

Austin: It was great then, we were just younger, and looser on it, you know? Okay. Look at that. Okay. Interesting. So let's move back over. I've just rolled on—for people who don't know how this system works, I don't know—I didn't know until a second ago what Twotwo was going to tell AuDy. Twotwo, like every major character on this character list, has a sort of table of other things, of items, characters, locations, et cetera, that I've already written, that I then roll a die on to determine which one gets connected to the mystery. And there's two different sets of tables. There's one for if Twotwo was already connected to this mystery via some other thing, and there's one for it's just—it's, you know, Twotwo is not yet connected, which is the one I rolled on. And I have rolled a thing here. Let me...

Keith: That's sick. I love that.

Austin: It's really fun.

Jack: It's a sealed envelope containing the solution to the mystery!

[**Art** and **Keith** chuckle]

Austin: It kind of is, right? In some ways. How does he bring this to you? I'm gonna flip a coin to see which one of these people. One is Coffee, two is Cameron. Alright, Coffee.

[**Jack** hums]

Austin: Data logs. Okay. So, let me draw a line really quick—that didn't work at all. Why did that not work the way it was supposed to? 'Cause I did the wrong thing. There we go. Boop. And then... there we go.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Do you have a way to read some data logs? I know you don't really do the Mesh, and I'm guessing Holidaze is not your thing, either.

Jack (as **AuDy**): No. Can you show it to me on a device?

Austin (as **Twotwo**): I can.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Will it put you in trouble?

Austin (as **Twotwo**): [chuckles] Only if it gets tracked back to me, though... what are you here for?

Jack: Let me see. AuDy doesn't sigh.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Affogato's been detained. We've been sent in to figure out why go some way to clearing it up.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Well then, honestly, I don't think he'd mind. Take a look.

Austin: And does this thing where it looks like he's blinking, but what's happening is his eyes are rolling to a different—going from input to output, and little, like, projectors, a little projection beam begins to, you know, shoots out onto the table between you.

Jack: Huh.

Austin: And you see some incriminating logs, is what I've written here. Comms data, transfer logs, and other info, proving bribery and corruption. They have the tags encrypted and—I mean they're not encrypted in this way, right? You know, I think if you took a—maybe what happens is you get a physical, like, data chit of these that has the tags encrypted and fingerprints on them. Twotwo says,

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Coffee brought these to me as, I don't know, a security blanket? A back-up plan? They'd been being threatened and blackmailed by someone who wanted to buy something from them. I don't know what, it's never really clear in the logs that I read. And I shouldn't have read any of them, to be honest. Cloudy was—I don't know, trying to buy something from Coffee, and it wasn't going well, and one thing led to another, and it went from "I'm trying to buy something from him" to "I'm trying to blackmail him into giving it to me." And some of what's on this, from what I can tell, is their interaction, and some of it is what Cloudy was using as leverage on Coffee. They set up a meet in a public place, that's the last I heard about it.

Jack (as **AuDy**): This is useful.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Is Coffee okay?

Jack (as **AuDy**): Detained.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): But not hurt?

Jack (as **AuDy**): As far as I know.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Alright.

Jack (as **AuDy**): You called him “Cloudy”.

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Cameron McLeod. Cloudy.

Jack (as **AuDy**): You know this person?

Austin (as **Twotwo**): I know a lot of people.

Jack (as **AuDy**): Is that all I’m getting?

Austin (as **Twotwo**): Cloudy is a gambler, and has been a really good one, and, um... I don’t know. Little bit of a losing streak in the last year or two. Maybe he got a little desperate? I’m not sure. Stopped coming in here when their pockets were empty. We’re an expensive establishment.

Art: Oh, this is gonna be awesome. We’re gonna have Aria play cards.

Jack: [laughs] Oh my god.

Austin: Well, now we have to cut from here to the Cerulean.

[Ali laughs]

The Cerulean - Cards

[1:08:00]

Art: Where Mako and Cass are talking up Aria to play cards.

Austin: Mhm. Mhm.

Art (as **Cass**): It's the only way it works. You're famous, you could have a gambling problem.

Ali (as **Aria**): Excuse me? I wasn't allowed to gamble.

Keith (as **Mako**): Famous people love gambling problems.

Art (as **Cass**): But you're allowed to gamble now.

Ali (as **Aria**): [hums nervously] But, but—but—but...

Art (as **Cass**): If I do it, it'll attract too much attention.

Keith (as **Mako**): And if I do it, it won't attract enough attention.

Ali (as **Aria**): Well—

Art (as **Cass**): We need just the right amount of attention, that Aria Joie special.

[**Austin** laughs]

Ali (as **Aria**): Can't I just, like, stand outside and smoke or something?

[someone snickers]

Art (as **Cass**): No, you need to be at the table. That's where the magic happens.

Ali (as **Aria**): But—the magic... Fine.

Austin: So you're gonna go play cards.

Art: Yeah, until someone tells us what happened, just like...

Austin: Okay.

Art: Casual-like.

Austin: Alright. I can't believe we yet again have some sort of card tournament thing happening. We're really playing the hits here in space Atlantic City.

Art: I can't believe we haven't had more card tournaments.

Austin: Yeah, you're right. That's fair.

Keith: Yeah.

Ali: And whose fault is that, you two?

[**Austin** and **Jack** laugh]

Keith: Hey. I'm available.

[**Ali** laughs]

Austin: I keep hearing this. Alright, what's—who are you playing? You're just playing against—you're just playing at whatever table will have you?

Ali (as **Aria**): Hi, everybody! What are you playing?

Austin: This is the middle of the day, as we've set up, or it's like the late afternoon, it's not even night-time yet, so this is like... These people are serious, you know what I mean?

Ali: Mhm.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: They're here to burn time. They're here to play cards.

Keith: "I'd love to play with you. I'm the real Aria Joie."

[**Ali** laughs]

Austin (as **Gambler**): Uh, yeah, we're playing cards.

Ali (as **Aria**): Right, right, but is it like, um... Is it like, war, or is it, like...

Austin (as **Gambler**): [incredulous] Is it war?

Ali (as **Aria**): ...poker, or is it like...

Austin (as **Gambler**): It's more like poker than war.

Ali (as **Aria**): Mm. Can you teach me?

Austin (as **Dealer**): Take a seat, ma'am. We'll teach you. We can walk you through any process.

Austin: Says the dealer.

Ali (as **Aria**): Wonderful. Do I—do I—I knock on the desk like this? [knocking sound]

[**Ali** and **Jack** chuckle]

Keith: "Come in!"

Ali (as **Aria**): "Can I have some cards, please?"

Austin (as **Dealer**): You can use your words and just tell—yep, I'm gonna deal you a hand.

[**Keith** laughs]

Art: Who's there? It's cards!

[**Keith** and **Ali** laugh]

Austin: And then—

Jack: It's like licensed decks. It's like, there is some weird—

Austin: Fun, yeah.

Jack: But not licensed in the sense of like, movie licenses, or whatever, licensed in the sense of, like, in the early days of—

Keith: Like Fortnite.

Jack: No, not—[laughs] in the early days of Hollywood, Thomas Edison wanted really restrictive patents on his cameras, such that he would hold rights over any films that were shot with those cameras. Which, of course, was chaos.

Austin: Right.

Jack: Which was not going to happen. And it was part of the, you know, pushback against that that led to Hollywood being set up in Los Angeles and like, the flight from New York out to the West Coast to get away from a bunch of patent goons.

Keith: Imagine if Nikon was like, we own every picture that you've taken. [laughs]

Jack: I know. It would be [1:10:18 ???] as one of the most powerful film producers on the planet.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: But it's like, the decks are licensed to certain games. There's certain games that you can only play through certain companies.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I mean, this is video games, to a certain extent, you know.

Austin: Yeah, it is.

Art: Yeah. You've invented analog video games.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Uh-huh. You know, there's no roll—

Keith: Nintendo gets back into the card business.

Austin: Yeah. There's no immediate roll here. You know, how are you going about trying to learn information? Are you playing cards? Do you know how to play this game and you're just putting this on, or are you—

Ali: No.

Austin: You don't know how to—

Ali: We didn't learn how to play poker in Disneyland.

Austin: I don't know.

Keith: I never even learned how to play poker in my life.

[Ali laughs]

Keith: In my real life, human life. Where, on Earth, they play poker.

Austin: Keith, you don't know how to play poker? Tell me everything you know about poker.

Jack: I also don't know how to play poker, so.

Austin: Huh.

Keith: Okay, so, I know a decent amount about poker. I know that the hands are like Yahtzee hands, and I know what most of them are. I know that like, you're—so you're trying to put together these hands, I know that there's a bunch of rules about how many cards you get at once. The one that I'm most familiar with, I think, is Texas hold 'em—

Austin: Very popular.

Keith: —where you get, like, only a couple cards, and then the rest are in a pile in the middle.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: And everybody gets access to them.

Austin: Yeah. You know poker.

Keith: And the thing that I don't understand—

Art: To describe them as “a pile in the middle” is very funny.

Austin: [chuckles] It is.

Keith: [laughs] A line in the middle, I guess, is the easier way. But the thing I don't understand is like, there's calling and raising and checking, and I don't understand the difference between calling and checking, and I don't know when you do anything except that you can raise whenever when it's your turn, and then it's always one of the other two if you haven't raised, and I don't know—

Austin: Sure.

Keith: And I don't know how to not lose at it.

[**Ali** and **Art** laugh]

Keith: Like, I don't know what is a good enough hand to not give up for.

Austin: That makes sense. I see what you're saying. Yeah. Yeah, I get what you're—[laughs] I get what you're saying.

Keith: Most of what I know about poker comes from Yahtzee.

Austin: Right, which I barely understand. I've played it probably two dozen times in my life, but I don't—not enough to where I just know it, you know what I mean?

Keith: It's the exact thing where you just—you just have the six-sided die, [**Austin:** Yeah.] and all of the suits—all of the hands, like, you can get a pair, or a three of a kind, or a full house, or a straight, you know.

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah. So here's—can I tell you what a check and a call and a raise are?

Keith: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Okay. I'm talking about Texas hold 'em here, which is the one that I kind of know the best, I guess.

Art: Yeah, the “call, check, raise” system is basically the same in all no limit games.

Austin: Yeah. That's my understanding.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Someone—you know, every time it's a new round, every time it's a new, you get a new hand of cards, someone—

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: In hold 'em, in my experience, it's two people, it's one person has to put something in the pot, and then someone else has to put a little something in the pot. It's called the big blind and the little blind? The small blind?

Keith: Woah. [laughs]

Art: Yeah, but I think both are...

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: So, wait, why do you have to put a big or a little thing?

Austin: Because there has to be a pot in every turn around—every go around. Right?

Keith: Oh, and you're choosing the beginning, it's either gonna be big or little.

Austin: No, no, no, someone has to do the big, and then someone else has to do the small, and that rotates across the entire table. Right?

Art: [cross] No, the two people—

Keith: Oh, okay, so it will eventually be turned to both.

Art: [cross] Yeah, the two people—

Austin: It will eventually be your time to put something in the pot to get the pot ready for this round.

Keith: Sure.

Austin: Then, as—then, when it's your turn, you can decide "Yeah, you know what? I'll play these cards that have been given to me. I'll check—I'll put in enough to—" actually, that's calling, I guess, right?

Art: That would be calling.

Austin: That's calling. "Check" is when it comes back around, and after you've already called up to that stage of the thing, you go: [tapping sound] "I'm—" That's when you tap on the table. And you go, like, I'm not putting anything extra in here, but if we want to just compare cards, we can compare cards.

Keith: Okay. So—

Austin: We can go to the next phase. We can—

Art: Yeah, check and call are sort of the same action, and it's saying that you want to just go ahead, [**Austin:** Yes.] and to call is to essentially check when money is on the board, and you're gonna match it.

Austin: Yes.

Keith: Right, so you're at a deficit, you need the raise to get up to a check.

Austin: [cross] You need to get up to where the—exactly. Exactly. So—

Art: Right, whereas—

Keith: And if you've checked, that means for some reason you're already good?

Austin: Correct.

Keith: So can—

Art: Yeah, after the first round, there is no money, additional money for you to match, but if you were, like, first to add—

Austin: [cross] Unless someone raises, in which case you have to then call that raise.

Art: Right.

Keith: Okay. So the person who initially—the person who last raised is the first person who can check.

Art: No.

Keith: Oh.

Art: It goes in order—it goes clockwise from the dealer.

Austin: Right, but what Keith is saying is that like, if I raise, then we go around the table, and everyone else calls—

Art: You're gonna lose, you would—

Austin: —then it comes back around to me and I can check at that point.

Art: No, no, if everyone calls—if you raise and everyone calls—

Austin: That's it. We go forward.

Art: You—it—

Austin: Yeah, it advances. Because no one raised on my—

Keith: Oh. Then where do you fit a check in? How do you—how can you choose to not call?

Art: Okay, so after the first round of betting, where there is a forced bet and you have to match it—

Austin: Right.

Keith: Okay.

Art: In future rounds, it's—

Austin: You can just check.

Art: The first person to act would—yeah, you can just check. You can just not...

Austin: We could go all the way around the table, 'cause then what happens if we all have checked, we go, "Alright, let's keep on going forward," we see what the next card is. And then, you go "Ooh, maybe that card makes me—helps me get closer to having a cool hand, right?"

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: And so—

Keith: But if me raising—if me raising doesn't force everyone else to bet more, why would I raise?

Austin: It does. It does force everybody else to—

Art: If you raise, anyone who does not call your raise has to fold.

Keith: Okay. Gotcha.

Austin: Yeah. You got it. That's it. Easy.

Keith: Okay, now I think I understand. I really still don't understand when a check gets to happen, but I do understand now why it happens.

Austin: Ali's gonna yell at us if we don't continue.

Ali: And I am the one in this scene. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, but now we're giving color to it.

Keith: Well, now you know all that stuff.

Austin: This is all what's—this is what's being explained to Aria, okay? And if you don't like it, then neither does Aria.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Aria's like, "I don't care. Check." And everyone's like, "No, you have to call." "I don't care. I'm tapping the table, that means I check."

Keith: Maybe you want to try the video poker.

Austin: Mhm.

Keith: It does all that for you.

Austin: Yeah, but you can't overhear murder conversations at the video poker as easily. Anyway, you're doing this.

Art: You gotta be a real degenerate to plan your murders at the video poker.

[Ali and Keith laugh]

Austin: You—

Keith: Talking to Leonardo from Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. "Okay, so there's this guy..." [laughs]

Austin: You, you know, I think the conversation as the game continues, it's—I've already characterized this as being kind of midday, late afternoon vibes, so maybe these folks are actually not—this is not one of the late night all-nighters. This is like, "I'll play a couple games before dinner. I like being in the casino, it's the thing that I do." But they're probably regulars. They know each other, and they're just playing cards while like, bullshitting. Right? And they're talking sports, they're talking weather, they say "Oh, you think we're gonna get a little snowstorm soon?" You know? They're talking all that stuff. Do you try to introduce the idea of "Oh, I heard someone got arrested, or got killed," or do you just hope it comes up? Also, Cass and Mako, what are you doing while this happens? Are you just nearby? Are you playing video poker? Are you...

Art: [laughing] Yeah, we're seeing what happens at the video poker.

Austin: Yeah.

[**Keith** laughs]

Keith: Um... Well, I guess there's a couple—could—no, I... It seems risky. It seems very risky, so, nevermind.

[**Austin** scoffs]

Art: No, we can do something risky. I'm up for something risky.

Keith: Well, I was thinking that maybe we could try and cheat a little bit at cards or at video poker.

Austin: You do that, we're gonna come back around. I was just looking for, like, where are you in the background of this shot, and maybe it's debating this. Aria, back to you. Are you trying to raise this, or are you just hoping it comes up in convo?

Ali (as **Aria**): Do you guys live in the area, or are you visiting?

Austin (as **Gambler**): We—I live in the area.

Ali (as **Aria**): Oh. You know, I've been thinking about, uh, relocating, as they say. But, you know, I heard recently that there's been some crime?

Ali: Aria's racist in this one too, I guess. [laughs]

Austin: [laughing] Oh my god.

[**Art** and **Keith** laugh]

Ali (as **Aria**): I just don't know if it's a bad area.

Austin: [laughs dryly] Call.

Austin (as **Gambler**): You know, there's been some crime lately. You know. People sniffin' into things, probably, or you know, gettin' up to no good.

Ali (as **Aria**): Sniffing into things?

Austin (as **Gambler**): What are you talking about? Are you talking about those kids? You talking about—what type of crime?

Ali (as **Aria**): Well, I heard someone was, like, murdered.

Austin (as **Gambler**): [incredulous] In the Sill?

Ali (as **Aria**): Like, dead.

Austin (as **Gambler**): No.

Austin: Someone leans—one of the other players leans over to you and says, like,

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): Don't—don't let him break your balls. There's a lot of crime here in the Sill, and we all deal with it.

Ali (as **Aria**): [quietly] Was he saying that because people die a lot?

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): People die every day, honey.

Ali (as **Aria**): Mm. I—**[Ali laughing]** you know, that reminds me of a song that I once sang.

[Art laughs]

Ali (as **Aria**): People die every day for Earth.

Austin (as **Gambler**): That was you. They play that one in here, sometimes. Little war tune.

Art: [mock falsetto] “People die every day!”

Austin: “For Earth!”

Art: “For Earth!”

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Keith: Does anybody else here have a Grammy?

[Austin, Ali, and Art laugh]

Austin: They gave Aria Joie a Grammy? Whew.

Art: Yeah, for every “people die every day for Earth.”

Austin: God damn. You know someone was tight over that. You know someone was not happy.

[Ali laughs]

Ali: They didn’t give Aria the Grammy, they gave all the producers on it—they gave the EarthHome [laughing] CEO a grammy.

Austin: Right, right, right. That’s actually it, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. It was the production credit, and the songwriting credit, but you didn’t get shit, yeah.

Art: You didn't get to take home your own Grammy?

Austin: [scoffs] No.

Keith: Did you at least get to accept it?

Austin: Oh, yeah.

Ali: Probably, yeah.

Keith: 'Cause they're like, who's—who are these 9 guys?

[**Ali** laughs]

Austin: Uh-huh. The one who's leaned over to you, who has big sunglasses, and a reverse cowboy hat, says,

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): You know, there's the Revenants and the Ithikos in the streets, they get up to it sometimes. And then there's fights in the bars, and you know, any time there's a lot of money there's an excuse to draw a knife, so. Like they say.

Ali (as **Aria**): Hm...

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): But it's nice, if you know where to live, and you know who to talk to, it's a nice place to live, I think you'd do fine here. You gotta, you know, I wouldn't sit the way you sit, you know? You're kinda sitting wallet out right now, and I would sit wallet in.

[**Ali** laughs]

Ali (as **Aria**): Oh, I, um...

Ali: And she's like, looking down at her legs that are like, crossed and have this fucking huge...

Austin: Uh-huh.

Ali: Remember how stiff that skirt was [laughing] that I sent you guys before?

Austin: I do remember, uh-huh. Yeah.

Jack: Poor Aria.

Ali (as **Aria**): Well—

Keith: Wait, I thought it wasn't—I thought it was weirdly not stiff.

Ali: Oh, well.

Austin: But it looked stiff, but it moved more than it—

Keith: It did look stiff, it looked stiff.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Anyway.

Keith: Yours is stiff.

Ali (as **Aria**): I—well—how do I... Is this better?

Ali: And she, like, straightens her back, I guess.

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): Yeah, that's better. Sure. We're gonna go back to playing the game. You know? I fold on this one.

Ali (as **Aria**): I call.

Austin: [scoffs] You don't have a hand.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Detail there, you know, I'm just adding it because I said it, the Ithikos family and some group called the Revenants seem to be in some sort of gang war, question marks.

Jack: Yeah, we—we heard about the Revenants, briefly. They are—what did I write down for them?

Austin: Oh, good.

Jack: They're Apostolosian war orphans.

Austin: Yeah. But yeah, you're gonna have to roll some dice if you're trying to get particular information about Coffee and Cameron.

Ali: Mhm, yeah. What's the relationship between Carmen and—

Austin: Or Cameron.

Ali: I mean, Coffee and the Cerulean besides this line that says "wanted"?

Austin: Coffee has been described as being a card player, sometimes, right?

Ali: Oh.

Austin: Coffee has been described as taking in the sights, right? Taking in the—all of the benefits that come with living in and around a big casino and being an important person and getting preferential treatment. Right? So, Coffee goes and sees the shows, Coffee comes and spends money, Coffee comes and takes money, you know, imagine corrupt cop in casino town. You know?

[Ali hums]

Austin: Coffee isn't quite a cop, but Coffee is closer to cop than not. You know?

Ali (as **Aria**): Well, I just thought living here would be like fashionable, you know? I've been seeing all those internet posts about Coffee at the casino, and that's why I had to come here and learn the game for myself.

Austin (as **Gambler**): Hahaha! Coffee. You're not talking about the drink, are you?

Ali (as **Aria**): [chuckling] No.

Austin (as **Gambler**): Well, I don't know how much longer that guy's gonna be around.

Jack: Woah.

Ali (as **Aria**): Is he moving?

Austin (as **Gambler**): Something like that.

[**Keith** and **Ali** laugh]

Keith: Movin' to the bottom of the ocean!

Austin: Ha ha. Playing cards. Like, not—no more details. You're gonna have to roll some dice if you want more here.

Ali: Uh-huh, yes. Yes. [laughs] I just read Keith's, uh... "Murder, what murder?"

Austin: [laughing] Yeah.

Keith: "He was the greatest guy around!"

Austin: I've moved us back over to dice. Oh, Jack, you took this—this die is just discharged now, right?

Jack: Yep.

Austin: Okay, boom. I moved it there.

Jack: 'Cause I did not spend it.

Austin: Yes, exactly. Mhm.

Ali: Yeah, I was like, trying to figure out a way to bring that conversation into a roll, but then it's still just a conversation.

Austin: Yeah. Also, wait, Mako, wasn't one of these discharged? Did you not dis—you discharged one of these, right? Or did you make it something sticky? I forget.

Keith: I made something—I spent that one and made it sticky, so you took it.

Austin: Okay, so I took that, got it, got it, got it. So yeah, what are you doing? What is your—what is the vector here to try to learn more and get information?

Ali: [wavering] Um...

Austin: Do you just come out and ask, are you still dancing around it, do you... are you like, leaning in conspiratorially, are you...

Ali: I think so, yeah, but it's—I mean, it's—sorry, I'm looking at the thing—it's like a Coax here, but I'm—

Austin: Yeah, it's a Coax.

Ali: —still curious of, like, how the—not curious, I'm thinking.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Um...

Ali (as **Aria**): Well, well, well. Um, when you say—when you say “he’s not coming back”...

Ali: [chuckles] I was gonna say something about, like, “Will that make the games better?” Or something like, trying to, like... you know, the like, jovial tone [**Austin:** Uh-huh.] of this, the way that they’re speaking about this person who I know was arrested, is like, “What are you gonna get out of this?” I think is the, like, way that she is trying to frame this—

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Ali: Like, “Why is this a good thing for you?” I’m just not getting the words.

Austin: I getcha. Alright, so that’s three dice to start with. Is that your Coax? Your Coax is 3, I believe.

Ali: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

Austin: Are you using any adjectives or tags or abilities or items or anything like that?

Ali: I have the “alluring” adjective. Is that something that could, like...

Austin: I think that works. I think any of your adjectives could work, and the way you’ve been playing is—I guess I could read it as alluring.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: I could imagine savvy here, too, with like, you’re playing dumb, kind of, but are playing close attention, you know?

Ali: Mhm.

Austin: You could use both, right? You can use as many push dice as you want in the roll with the same caveats I gave everybody else.

Ali: Right, if I have to do defense later, I’ll...

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Let me do two because this seems...

Austin: Sure. So, savvy and alluring?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Yep. Go ahead and drag those two up to where the dice rolling spot is in the top right. Uh-huh. And then you’re gonna select all those dice, you’re gonna right click it, and then do random side.

Ali: Random side.

Austin: You got it. That is a 6 again. That is a 2, 4, 5, 5, 6. 6 is the highest.

Keith: We’re rolling great.

Austin: You're rolling great. I mean, no one has any hurt dice yet, right? Ain't this the way.

Keith: Right.

Austin: So yeah, what are you applying to this group of card players?

Ali: Um... I guess—I'm struggling with how this is a vector for information.

Austin: Well, I'll tell you what they're gonna say, but talk to me about what you're like, are they like, letting down their guard, are they bragging, like, what's the thing that you've made them do? How have they slipped up? Is maybe one way to think about it.

Ali: Oh, okay, what are you applying. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, what adjective are you applying on them?

Ali: I would say that it is, uh... boasting?

Austin: Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think that there is like—and you're not making it sticky, is my guess. You're gonna keep it loose here? This isn't—they're not spending the rest of their lives boasting? They're not spending, like—

Ali: Yes, yeah.

[**Keith** laughs]

Austin: Okay, so go ahead and move those push dice back down to the discharged part of your thing.

Keith: They'll be boasting until they get to a hospital.

[**Ali** and **Art** laugh]

Austin: That's right. Basically true. That's how that would work. I think the one who'd been leaning over—

Art: “Hey, doc, I’m spilling too many secrets over here!”

Austin: “Stitch me up, why don’tcha?” The one with the reverse cowboy hat leans back over and goes,

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): Coffee talked a big game, and, you know, made some wins here or there. Coffee kept saying that he was gonna win the big one, the jackpot.

Ali (as **Aria**): [laughs] The big one.

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): He ain’t gonna win nothin’ anymore.

Ali (as **Aria**): I love your hat, by the way.

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): Thank you. I got it from my grandma.

Austin: So yeah. Coffee claimed—Coffee—and the point being here is like, “We’re all better gamblers than Coffee. Here’s a time I beat Coffee, here’s a time I beat Coffee.”

Ali: Mhm.

Austin: And someone eventually hits with like, you know, in fact, until recently, Coffee couldn’t win a game to save his life. You know? Coffee came in here and lost money week after week. Coffee’s the sort of person who plays for the company, not for the winnings. And then suddenly, he got a hot streak going. And claimed that he was gonna win the jackpot. This must be some sort of, you know, tournament coming up, and was gonna like, go home with the big prize. Supposedly, you know, win enough to retire on.

Ali (as **Aria**): Well, if Coffee wasn’t the bigshot that I thought that I was, then who...

Austin: A little Freudian slip there from Aria.

[**Keith** laughs]

Austin: You said “that I thought that I was”.

[**Ali**, **Keith**, and **Art** laugh]

Austin: Whew.

Ali: Aria's in a tough time in her life.

Austin: Yeah. Mhm, mhm.

[**Ali** laughs]

Ali (as **Aria**): Then who's the real bigshot?

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): You're lookin' at him.

Ali (as **Aria**): But no, really?

Keith: Woah.

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): Hey, come on. You ain't gonna squeeze someone for information and then not even let them flex a little bit?

Ali (as **Aria**): I'm sorry, we were just talking, and, well... This isn't exactly prime time.

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): [softly] This isn't exactly prime time, she says... Unbelievable.

Keith: It is 1 P.M.

[**Ali**, **Austin** and **Jack** laugh]

Ali (as **Aria**): No, no, I mean, it's important to get your practice in, don't get me wrong.

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): We're playing with real money, sweetheart! It ain't practice if it's real money! This is the game!

Ali (as **Aria**): Well, it's practice if it's not the big pot, right?

Ali: Elbow, elbow.

Austin (as **Other Gambler**): The big pot! It's called the jackpot. If you're gonna take it seriously, you gotta get the terminology right.

[Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Aria**): Mm, mhm. I fold, thank you.

Austin (as **Dealer**): [sighs] Very good, ma'am.

Austin: Takes the chips, I guess?

[Ali laughs]

Keith: How is her hand?

Austin: Great. Incredible.

[Ali and **Jack** laugh]

Austin: Cass and Mako, have you decided whether or not you're robbing this place?

Art: We're robbing this place? I thought we were just also—[laughs] I thought we were pursuing a different—

Keith: I just thought we could win real quick at some cards.

Austin: Get a little money.

Art: Are you good at cards?

Keith: Say again?

Art: Are you good at cards?

Keith: No, I'm good at winning.

[music outro - "[The Long Way Around](#)" by Jack de Quidt]