

PARTIZAN 15: Divine Attention

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Content Warning: This episode features discussion of chemical warfare and suffocation throughout, and in detail from [01:22:47] (page 45) to [01:33:23] (page 52).

AUSTIN (as GUCCI): Thanks for coming, everyone. We've brought together kind of a, an elite unit of people from around Partizan who want what's best for this moon. Underneath Point Pesto, is an elaborate facility housed by— or run by the Partizan Palace, which houses certain archival footage. Some of that footage, is footage I need to see. That's footage that the people need to see. Normally, getting here would also be difficult for three reasons. First of all, as you can see, this sort of steep canyon walls would prevent entry from anywhere except for the southern road in, which makes it a very defensible position. Second, because this is a cathedral to Imperium, it has its own group of hallowed defenders. These are the sorts of mechs that have the blessing of the divine on them. They are called Imperium's Plume, and they are... aggressive as hell. When they step onto the battlefield, they command it with complete authority.

[00:01:12]

[MUSIC — Jack de Quidt's TANAGER. PERFECT. TOUCHPAPER. begins playing.]

AUSTIN (as GUCCI): You were there? At Obelle? What's the bearing to the mission? What is it you know that I don't?

DRE (as VALENCE): I mean I don't know this for sure, but I get the sense that nobody that was there were the people that shot down Past.

AUSTIN (as GUCCI): Why do you believe that?

DRE (as VALENCE): It reached out to me in a way that I haven't felt anything before?

DRE: And I think they kind of shuffle their feet—

DRE (as VALENCE): And I hope to not?

AUSTIN: You just hear people like, ringing bells in the street, from your west, from Relish, from point Relish, from the residential district, as that is where the militia begins to emerge from their homes, and starts to like, straight up wheel out old gunning placements. You can hear the like, diesel engine of some sort of, y'know, antique tank start up?

AUSTIN (as Tone???): Hey Valence? There's a problem with the machine!

AUSTIN: I think what's happened is Gucci's brain jack has advanced to a place that it shouldn't have gotten to yet? And she and Jesset are trying to do this like, they're trying to like, crack the code too early. And it's like their hands are typing something, I say their because it's both of them together, um, are trying to type out a word, but this is not, they're not at a door panel where they could type out a word yet, y'know? ... So you're landing near this robot, not on it, right? That is the aim?

JANINE: No, I'm landing like— I wanna say like on the building beside it?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I gotcha.

JANINE: I want like, a big dusty crunch, y'know?

AUSTIN: Yeah. A hundred percent, what's more convincing than a giant fucking robot dropping a thousand feet, landing in a quartz warehouse. There's not just dust everywhere now, there's just quartz everywhere now, everything's probably harder to see through?

JANINE: *[cross]* It's probably glittery.

AUSTIN: It's very glittery, a hundred percent. Yeah, things are going well up here! I think at this point, Jesset puts out a call over like, the comms that says uh— "We're pushing them back! I think we have this under control!" Which is not even true a little bit.

[MUSIC — Jack de Quidt's TANAGER. PERFECT. TOUCHPAPER. ends.]

[00:03:45]

AUSTIN: So you guys have this mission, just to recap. Y'all have a mission, the mission is to infiltrate the Partizan Palace's staging headquarters, which is where they have certain footage, the kind of surveillance footage, the sort of stuff that does filter out into public news reports, and this is like the raw, uncensored stuff. And you're escorting Gucci Garantine there, because she is looking for confirmation on who actually destroyed Past and killed Cymbidium in the very, very beginning of the season. She's also said that she's looking for some other stuff. She did not divulge what that was. You admitted to her, Valence admitted to her, that y'all were there, and that Valence was the one who false flagged the southern Kesh offensive idea into existence? But she kind of gave him a, you know, dismissive lecture, walked away, and continued to do the mission.

Part of the complication for this mission is that the way in is tied to a, inside agent there, a group of Oxblood mercenaries, including Jesset City, who you worked with in the very first mission, and in the difficulty here is, they can't just let you in, partially because the Palace has some of its own security, but additionally, it would— it would be very clear that something big is

going on if Horizon and Oxblood started working together publicly at this point? And it would make Oxblood kind of like, enemies of the state, if Nideo knew that their surveillance slash news operation had been targeted by an Orion mercenary company. Or at least that is the, that is the feeling of the people of Oxblood. And so, there's two parts to the mission. One is Dre, Valence, you are escorting Gucci along with Tone, one of Gucci's bodyguards, and then outside, the group of Horizon, Oxblood, and SBBR are all doing kind of a mock battle in the city to try to convince onlookers that this is a real, unknown offensive, that isn't tied to such a big kind of, group as the Oxblood Clan. This is like, an unknown attacker is hitting, basically. Horizon is hitting, but it's not clear, necessarily, that Oxblood is involved, and to do that, you've been putting on kind of a choreographed fight, to greater and lesser effect, there's some good statue destruction, you manage to take out— or not take out, but um, defang, let's say, the local militia without hurting them, but enough noise has been made, basically, that a real threat has shown up.

Have I missed anything along the way that's like an important, important note? I know one of the things Valence is, when you finally get into this like, where the footage is, you are due a harm from something, you don't know what yet? Because that was a collateral die, but I think that was the only other thing hanging that... outside of the new threat appearing. I'm just triple checking my notes to make sure we didn't— I didn't skip anything big! Um, I guess part of it, and this wraps back around, is that the... the, people who normally defend this entire town is a group called Imperium's Plume? Which is a group of hallows, hallows meaning mechs that have been, and soldiers that have been blessed by a Divine, with whatever that might mean, whether that's just extra authority, or access to greater technology, or divine power, depends on the situation. But, in this moment at least, you thought that they had gotten very very far away, but moments ago, one of their members had come back with a couple of additional units, these are what I needed the tokens for, when I took that break to get tokens. And again, I'm just triple checking nothing else... okay, no I think that that's it, I think that's where we were? Everyone good?

DRE: Mhm!

AUSTIN: So, if I remember right, just to get this right in my head, Broun, you were trying to like, jump away, and as you jumped away, release a bunch of like, marbles and caltrops, and things to stop the, to trip up the bazooka wielding militia folks, who were on top of the theater where you had set up the Three Cheers!, right? And then that, unfortunately, looking at the roll again, was a three and a one, so a hard failure. A risky failure. And I, then, advanced the backup arrives clock, and so, here's the thing that happens. The first thing is that you can see in the sky, these red lights that are the eyes of a number of Nideo mech units, these are the members of Imperium's Plume, or at least kind of like a reserve set of those folks returning to, to backup. I remember exactly what happened now. Now I remember what happened! The bazooka fires in the sky, you dodge it, you don't take any damage from it, but when it blows up, it basically sends as clear a signal as possible that whatever the local guards are have gotten involved, this is not just a minor scrape between mercenaries and invading Horizon folks, the locals have gotten involved, which calls the frankly loyal guardians of this town back to try to protect it, or at least

some of them back to try to protect it, most of them are long gone. These are clearly some sort of reserve unit. If the whole group had come back, you'd be completely fucked, thankfully that is not the case. And so, there is, there are three mechs here, two of them are these kind of um, they look sort of like the Troop, except outfitted for jumping around and skirmishing and kind of doing flying maneuvers? Not staying up forever, but kind of like, leaping between spaces to get closer. They basically have a close range axe underneath one of their arms, and then kind of a shotgun flak cannon thing under the other one. And then there is the first real hallow you've ever seen.

Hallows, again, are blessed by Divines, which means that they have something special going on with them. This one is red and gold, in a way that immediately communicates Nidean authority, and sort of clarity of purpose. It has, where the other, where the other two mechs have those kind of like, under arm like, weapons, it has statues there? Each one is of Imperium, which is represented as this kind of firebird, but it's kind of like the bird in repose, so the wings aren't out there, the wings are kind of down. But it's almost as if those are just, they're really, they're really embellished, what are those things called that you wrap... okay so on a boat, or on a dock? You wrap like a rope around a thing, do you know what I'm talking about?

DRE: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: What is that called?

DRE: I've always felt I've just called it a post, but there's probably a real word for it.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Oh it's called a cleat, I think. If you do a search for cleat, for boat cleat, or cleat boat, you'll see what I'm talking about. It's basically one of those with rope tied around it, except it's not really— it's like, very, you can't tell from this angle, there's something wrapped around it, it looks like it's rope! It's very far away! But, what it is is basically some sort of chain or rope or something, that attaches to a weapon that it swings around, that it kind of flings all over the place, that it can use to almost spiderman its way around this city? It's a smaller mech than any of yours, it's the first kind of, it's maybe not the first light mech we have, Valence, you have a light vehicle, certainly. But it's like a light attack class mech in a real way, and it kind of swings down here. It also has like a jetpack type thing too. And it, it has this just like, aura of heat, to the degree that when it lands on top of the theater that you're backing away from, it seems to set your like, marbles and caltrops and screws and other stuff that you left behind as, as a trap to trip up the bazooka folks, it melts them down into liquid as it steps across this thing. Also this thing has a fucking cape, it looks, it's just like the most extra bullshit you've come up against specifically? Because Nideo stuff is like that, right? It is definitely like, taken to the next level, in terms of this. And I think the pilot opens up a channel, or doesn't even open up a channel, I think actually what, what she does is she turns on her speakers, and says— "People of Orzen! Fear not, the Plume has returned." And like, you hear people on the streets begin to cheer at this moment. They're marking out for, you know, their heroes returning, to fight you. Which, I don't know if you've dealt with that sort of feeling before, but here it is! Here it is, this motherfucker is very much felt to be the good guy in town right now. Her name is... Amber

Haze. And for the camera that can see her, she has kind of wavy blonde hair, she's in like this, officer's uniform, this like, y'know, single breast long crossover down thing, with a high collar, a number of patches, and awards and medals and shit on. Her neck and her jawline have um, are like lined with metal? It's like that thing where like, it's almost as if her, I mean you don't fucking know, she's clearly a cyborg or cybernetic in some way there, and yeah, here she is. All together, this group is an eight step clock. Which is trouble, because you still have the fuckin' militia around, and at this moment, you're at a really tricky position I would say, because it's, you're kind of now... what does Oxblood do here is I think maybe the big question, right? But also what do you do, in this moment?

JANINE: Can you spell 'haze'?

AUSTIN: H-A-Z-E.

JANINE: Okay, so it's not like, Amber Hayes the lady who played Cathy Twitty in the Conway Twitty production Conway Twitty: the Man, the Music, the Legend?

AUSTIN: I don't know who that is.

JANINE: That's a person, it's a real person.

AUSTIN: Okay. No, not like that.

JANINE: Okay. Good to know.

AUSTIN: She could play this character, though. I'm lookin' at her now.

[00:15:00]

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's not my headcast, or my headcanon, but sure. Anyway.

ALI: I, uh...

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes. Let me put these tokens on the thing, also.

ALI: Okay. Can I... open comms with Valence?

AUSTIN: I think so, do you have, I guess we didn't, we started to talk about this, and I don't think we ever finished. Are the three of you in communication?

DRE: I mean, I was—

ALI: *[cross]* I hope so!

DRE: I would assume so, yeah? We probably have to mark... equipment for that, right?

ALI: *[cross]* I mean, maybe we need...

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's what I need. I definitely think— I think so, or no, is there a, the thing that I'm now thinking about is you're deep underground in this—

DRE: *[cross]* Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: In this hardened facility? I think you probably need something more than your normal like, your normal comms stuff, you know what I mean?

DRE: Yeah.

ALI: Sure.

DRE: Would a long range transmitter do that?

AUSTIN: Absolutely.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: And I think only you would need to declare it, if that makes sense?

DRE: Okay. Right, 'cause I'm the one that's underground. Sure!

AUSTIN: You're the one who's underground, exactly.

ALI (as BROUN): Hi, DJ, um, do you have an ETA?

[AUSTIN laughs]

DRE: Where we left me was we were about to open this door, but it's not quite open, right?

AUSTIN: That's correct, yep. So you've still gotta get in there, you've still gotta get the data, et cetera.

DRE (as VALENCE): We are just about to crack the door open. I don't have a specific ETA.

ALI (as BROUN): Could you guess? 'Cause stuff is kinda rough out here.

DRE (as VALENCE): It's not exactly great here...

ALI (as BROUN): Sure, yeah, I understand.

DRE (as VALENCE): Gucci's kind of losing her mind.

ALI (as BROUN): *[sighs]* 'Kay! Okay, well, you let me know when you're on your way out.

DRE (as VALENCE): I don't— what, how long, how long should we take?

AUSTIN: There are the sound of explosions in the background, Valence— *[ALI laughs]*

DRE: *[cross]* Oh, that sounds bad.

AUSTIN: As these Flock units, which are the ones, the jetpack-y ones, have begun to like, zero in on the Horizon units, and are beginning to shoot from the sky down at them, which they just aren't very good at dealing with that, frankly.

ALI: Yeah, I think Broun just says, "Um, as soon as possible!" and then cuts the, the comms! And yeah. Let's do some fighting.

AUSTIN: I guess so! *[ALI sighs]* I actually think you then, immediately get a call from, from Jesset City who is like— who is in this moment, fake shooting at you! And, I think actually we get this great thing of like, a bunch of fake shots come towards you, and then, they're real shots, they just miss you and hit some building in the background, right?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Or they go flying into the statuary, based on, they kind of line up a shot so that it flies over a bunch of buildings, hits the statuary in the background. But in that mix is another like, private transmitter thing that gets like, magnetically attached to your, to the Three Cheers!, it's like a disc that connects to the Three Cheers! and allows the two of you to speak privately, so that the Imperium's Plume can't hear what you're saying to the person you're supposed to be fighting? And so, what do you, I guess Jesset says—

AUSTIN (as JESSET): This isn't good.

ALI (as BROUN): No.

AUSTIN (as JESSET): I don't know how much longer we can keep up appearances.

ALI (as BROUN): Well, I was thinking that, if we... when we get the signal from everybody else, we can start to leave, which would cover their exit? 'Cause they'd follow us. But beyond that... we gotta do our best?

AUSTIN: He says...

AUSTIN (as JESSET): I don't know that we can win this one.

ALI (as BROUN): Winning is just leaving. We just have to get out.

AUSTIN (as JESSET): But, what about, what about Gucci, what about Valence?

ALI (as BROUN): Oh— I, we're not leaving without them, yet.

AUSTIN: And I think the, the point comes to bear here, when one of these um, let's go with the big one here, the one that has these kind of spinning chains kind of, is standing— are you on the ground now, in the kind of market square after you jumped away? Where did you land?

ALI: Oh yeah, I guess so. Yeah, I, the point you've put me is good, I was like, a little concerned about uh... Thisbe.

AUSTIN: Mhm!

ALI: Yeah. That's, that's perfect.

AUSTIN: That's fine, okay. Then like, looking down at you from the top of this theater, is this red mech. And now you can see more clearly what its armaments are, it has like, a shoulder cannon on one of its shoulders that is like, charging up? Which is not the type of thing that we see a lot of in this, in this world? I think we've seen energy weapons twice, and they've been melee weapons primarily, not laser cannon type things? And then also, also getting warmer, are these kind of, they almost look like rockets, in terms of the roundness, at the end of these chains hanging down from, from this thing's arms, and the pilot begins to swing them, and as she does, you can see that one of them actually is just a rocket, or they probably both are just rockets. They literally have like, a rocket-powered engine that lets them quickly spin up to incredibly fast speeds. And the other one, she like slams down on the roof of this theater, and it magnetically, or maybe it clamps into the side of this thing, to give her like, a grapple point? And then she leaps up, you know, off the air, off the side of this theater, and like, you lose her for a second because she's behind the theater, and then she comes swinging down around the edge of that corner towards you, whipping this fucking chain weapon around in her hands. *[ALI laughs]* And, and goes to swing it at you, what do you do?

ALI: Can I try to shoot off the glue cannon again, like just at the mech?

AUSTIN: Oh yes. Do you, okay, you wanna shoot her with that, you said?

ALI: Right, right right right, yeah. Yes.

AUSTIN: Gotcha gotcha gotcha. Yep! Mark a, mark a payload thing. A payload use.

ALI: The, the stuff in my um, legs was not a payload right, 'cause that wasn't like a cannon, that was just like..

AUSTIN: Yeah, that was—

ALI: Bullshit storage.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Okay, cool, just making sure.

AUSTIN: So you have one left of this glue shit.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, go ahead, what is the, what are you rolling here?

ALI: Is this close quarters combat?

AUSTIN: Yes, yes.

ALI: *[cross]* Or is this Bombard.

AUSTIN: Yes, this is close quarters combat.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: This is close quarters combat. Mechs, mechs fighting in the city? Uh, Ali, um, shuddering mountain is uh— *[ALI laughs]* Is mostly battle.

ALI: Sure!

AUSTIN: Y'know? The one where they're sniping from really far away is mostly Bombard.

ALI: Okay, I understand, yeah, is this risky, desperate?

AUSTIN: This is um... this is risky limited, is what it is.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's limited because these are a tier three foe, and you are a tier one? And they're also, it's also a hallow? So it's like... this is, this is a real fight in a way that, y'know, is tough.

ALI: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah, risky limited.

ALI: Can I also spend my fast acceleration quirk in that case?

AUSTIN: Totally, tell me what it looks like.

ALI: Well I think the, like the description of the mech like, jumping over the, the theater, I think that it's Broun like, vaulting back and trying to like, shoot at the arc of how she's landing?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that sounds good.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool.

ALI: And then I'm just looking if there's anything else... I will spend stress later...

AUSTIN: What's that?

ALI: I'll spend stress later. It's just—

AUSTIN: Oh. You can't spend stress anyway, this is a, this is a, you're in a vehicle, so it has to be a quirk.

ALI: Oh, thats right, okay okay.

AUSTIN: So you're good, yeah. Push for that, but that is how you push. Are you getting an extra— you're getting an extra die with that push?

ALI: Yeah, so I'm rolling two dice right now.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yep, sounds good. Before you roll, are you helping, Thisbe? In any way here?

JANINE: Um...

AUSTIN: I don't know— you'd have to tell me where you are, but, 'cause we haven't seen you—

JANINE: I'm still in the—

AUSTIN: In the statuary, right?

JANINE: Statuary, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ALI: Okay, well.

JANINE: So like, I'm going to head over there, but I, that's not an aid, no?

AUSTIN: You're not there yet, yeah, okay. That's fine.

JANINE: I could have Mow do something, but...

AUSTIN: But even Mow is kind of far away at this moment?

JANINE: Yeah, I'd have to be like, distraction-y, and I feel like I do that a lot.

ALI: *[whispers]* Jesus Christ.

AUSTIN: That's a four! A four is a mixed success. *[ALI laughs]* And it's a limited success, which means this, Imperium's Plume clock only goes up by one. What, let's see, what's it look like, what you're doing? Tell me what your success looks like before I tell you what the consequence is.

ALI: Sure, yeah, I think in Broun's mind's eye, they were sort of shooting at them in a way to like, sort of disable their mech?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: So like, shooting at the arm and up towards the shoulder, to be like, if I make it so she can't move her arm, I'm good. If I make it so that this chain gets all fucked up, I'm good, if I make it so that cannon can't open and she tries to fire that shit off, her stuff like, overheats and gets all fucked up.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: That's great.

AUSTIN: Right. Unfortunately, what actually happens is, the reason you only get one tick here is, it starts to goo up the gears a little bit, and then this thing just heats up. Like it literally heats up its arms, its armor, and the goo begins to— the glue begins to melt away, like it begins to dissolve. And then the consequence here is that shoulder cannon finally finishes heating up, and fires a volley at your, at your machine, at the Three Cheers!, and catches you for a level two damage, and that level two damage is scorched. As literally you like— you have to tell me what the panels and meters and stuff look like, but you're overheating. I don't know if that's like, beeping noises, or literally, y'know, meters breaking, but the machine is overheating.

ALI: Yeah. Okay. Great! Can I...

AUSTIN: Do you wanna resist that?

ALI: Yeah, I would love to!

AUSTIN: Okay, to resist that in a vehicle, you take, let me see here, I believe— This is the one thing we don't do that often! Is... here we go. You have to exhaust four quirks, minus the attribute rating being used to a minimum of one, for example if a vehicle has at least one in Maneuver and one in Battle, its Expertise is two, so resisting with Expertise would require exhausting two quirks. Unfortunately... you have two in both, so it would mean exhausting both of your remaining quirks, which is bad. For reasons.

ALI: I bet it is!

AUSTIN: We haven't had a breakdown yet, but that would be what is called a breakdown.

ALI: Okay, okay... but, okay.

AUSTIN: So you could just take this hit! Like, this is the...

ALI: Yeah, um...

AUSTIN: This is the damn thing.

ALI: *[laughs]* Okay, um...

AUSTIN: Do you want me to tell you what a breakdown is so you can make this decision?

ALI: Sure. Yeah.

AUSTIN: *[reading]* "A breakdown is permanent damage to the vehicle—

ALI: *[cross]* *[whispers]* Jesus christ.

AUSTIN: *[reading]* "Where only the symptoms can be treated. Each time a vehicle gains a point of breakdown, the last quirk used must be degraded in some way to represent the symptoms. This is done by either modifying a quirk's existing descriptors, or by adding a new negative description. For example, Pitchfork has pushed her agrarian custom past its limits, and it has gained a point of breakdown, the final quirk she used was slow and heavy, so that's the one that has to be degraded. She considers making that quirk into slow, clumsy, and heavy, but ultimately decides to go with unresponsive and heavy." So that's— you could eventually fix this with like, a long term project, but that is like a, it is a big deal, y'know?

ALI: And that happens the point at which I expend every quirk, right? It wouldn't be like, I spend all of them, and then one more.

AUSTIN: That is— It would be the moment yeah, no, it would be the moment that you uh, take, I'm just double-checking that that's true, one second.

ALI: Thank you, I appreciate it.

AUSTIN: "If a pilot chooses two..." Of course! Um... "When a vehicle's quirks have all been exhausted, four quirks in most cases, its pilot can either send the vehicle limping home, or try to push past its limits." This is the like, eject from your titan moment, basically?

ALI: Sure. Sure, sure sure.

AUSTIN: "If the pilot chooses to send their vehicle away, it refreshes all their quirks, is removed from the scene and mission in a terrible state, then gains a breakdown tick. The pilot does not have to leave the scene or mission, the vehicle becomes available again at an appropriate time, presumably after it's been refueled and polished. If the pilot pushes it's limit— pushes the vehicle *past* its limits, you take a dire action," which is where you get to roll again, but if, and if you get a six or more, you can continue kind of, rolling together momentum and keep rolling, but if you don't get a six, the moment you don't get a six, the uh, you get your consequences *and* you get a level three damage, because you've pushed your mech too far, this would be equivalent of like, the overheating that is being felt right now goes way worse 'cause you didn't let it cool down. You know what I mean?

ALI: Right, right right right, okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: And then it's like, serious, long term level three damage. If you roll a, if you happen to roll a crit, you actually get to refresh one of your quirks, and then you're back to normal, basically? But that's a real, real risk. The alternative here is just taking level two damage, to be clear.

ALI: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is not good, but, y'know.

ALI: Right, right right, yeah, I was thinking of the, the balancing of spending this arc thing next time, and doing this.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right.

ALI: So I think I'm just gonna take it for right now, and then...

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah that's interesting. Okay.

ALI: And then try and stay in this fight!

[00:30:00]

AUSTIN: Yeah. I moved your— you had decalibrated on yourself. *You* are not decalibrated.

ALI: Oh, thank you.

AUSTIN: You're safe, but your, but your machine is, the Three Cheers! is. So yeah, I think the, that laser blast hits you, and uh, I think this is the moment where Amber, again in this, not even comms, but just like over a loudspeaker says um...

AUSTIN (as AMBER HAZE): What is that, a custom model, terrorist?

ALI: Am I able to respond if it's over like the...

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah!

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Definitely, you could just turn on your— you probably have a loudspeaker, fuck it!

ALI: *[laughs]* Banter across the city, what am I gonna say?

JANINE: No, it's an off the shelf terrorist?

[ALI and AUSTIN laugh]

ALI: Oh my god, what would you say... I feel like being accused of being a terrorist is such a weird situation! Like?

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

JANINE: Especially when you want them to think you are? And all that?

AUSTIN: Uh huh! Yeah, it's real weird!

ALI: I wanted them to think I was a, uh, *[laughs]*

JANINE: Just a *cool* building exploder.

[DRE laughs]

ALI: Yeah, just doing it...

JANINE: *[cross]* Just doing it, doing it—

DRE: *[cross]* Doing it for the love of the game!

JANINE: *[cross]* Yeah!

AUSTIN: Oh, god.

ALI: Just did a little bit of a...

AUSTIN: Mhm!

ALI: Anyway— *[laughs]*

JANINE: It's like Robin Hood, but you're taking infrastructure from the rich, and also the poor, for no one! Because it's destroyed.

AUSTIN: God.

ALI: It's fireworks, who doesn't like fireworks, come on! Um, anyways, so— *[laughs]* Broun is a Han Solo, this is obvious.

AUSTIN: True.

ALI: And I think that it's, it's hard not to fall back on the thing of like, when he's at, when he's doing the like, um, prison radio thing, and he's like uhhh!

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah! Uh huh!

ALI: So Broun just being like—

ALI (as BROUN): Um, not a terrorist, uh, just in a fight. Uh, everything's good here, um...

AUSTIN: Everything's good here!

ALI (as BROUN): We apologize for the damage, we can just go—

AUSTIN: *[laughing]* We can just go!! And then she says—

AUSTIN (as AMBER HAZE): You're not going anywhere. You're up against the might of the Cadenza.

AUSTIN: And then, flies forward at you, and we're gonna cut to Thisbe in the, in the, I almost said in the Salsa! Thisbe hanging out in a big pool of salsa! *[JANINE laughs]* Hanging out in the statuary.

ALI: *[cross]* Steamy.

AUSTIN: What's going on? What's up with you?

JANINE: So, I have a thing I wanna do that's cool?

AUSTIN: Okay? Good, y'all need a cool thing!

JANINE: I'm worried that it's not like, plausible? I'm in that kind of place with it?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: But the, so, my original plan was to clothesline a bunch of statues and get back to Mow, but that, eh, I have a better idea.

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

JANINE: The thing that I wanna do, because I happen to have in my load, included some placed explosives?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Because I thought that that might be useful? I was originally again gonna use those on some statues, but I have a much better idea.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we didn't— we didn't, we didn't say what people's loads were, I fucked that up, by the way, I just realized? But you declared a heavy load, right? Six?

JANINE: Uh... yes. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Just making sure.

ALI: *[cross]* I have medium marked.

AUSTIN: You have medium marked. Uh, medium is marked for your vehicle, do you also have medium for yourself, Broun?

ALI: Oh, oh sure.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay.

ALI: Yeah, sure.

AUSTIN: And then likewise, Valence you traditionally go light, but I don't know...

DRE: Yeah, no I took light.

AUSTIN: Is that what you did here? Yeah, 'cause it's like, an infiltration thing, yeah, alright.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Anyway, so. You have placed explosives. Marked.

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: The thing that I want to do because I am a very large robot is...

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: I'm a very large robot and we've established that I run.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Powerfully.

AUSTIN: Powerful runs.

JANINE: The thing I wanna do is have Thisbe basically... run very fast and sort of Assassin's Creed leap her way up onto those Tahini buildings?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: And then probably, I wonder if, I wonder if the way this would happen is she would like catch one of the flailing chains and scurry up onto, onto, what's the, what's the mech's name?

AUSTIN: It's called the Cadenza. It's called the Cadenza?

JANINE: The Cadenza. The, the nuts and bolts of it is I wanna run and jump and leap onto the Cadenza—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Uh huh!

JANINE: And shove the placed explosives into an arm joint, ideally?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I get what you're doing, I think this is a multiple roll thing, because I think that there's like the, there is the... I think what you need here is a setup action? Which is like, the running across rooftops bit? Which will then lead to the, the attack, if that makes sense. Because both of those things are cool, but I need to know how smooth it goes. So how do we do the rooftop running shit? I feel like that is... hm. It's not really Finesse.

JANINE: So—

AUSTIN: I guess it's— my question here, okay, I think the actual thing here is it might—

JANINE: No, it's not Finesse, 'cause Finesse is handling an object with agility.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yes. Correct.

JANINE: Straight up.

AUSTIN: I think it's, it probably is Prowl? Which is getting there— how do you close a distance on something that is also very fast and also clearly outclasses you? And I think it's Prowl, right? It's like, you don't wanna be seen doing this. Again, I'm gonna go to Titanfall, which is like the way— I know you've, you've played Titanfall 2 all the way through.

JANINE: Yep.

AUSTIN: Did you ever do the thing where you climb onto a robot and like, take the battery out of its back and drop a fucking grenade in there?

JANINE: Probably, I don't remember.

AUSTIN: It's easy to— yeah, it's easy to do that from the back. It's easy to do that when you're not being seen, but the second a fucking giant robot sees you in that game, it drops electric smoke and kills you, or it shoots you. So I think this, I think that getting there is, is the difficult thing, and for me I feel like that's a Prowl. In fact, maybe this is only a one roll thing, it's about getting onto the, the machine, yeah.

JANINE: That's the thing, 'cause I feel like both of the rolls are gonna be Prowl anyway?

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. So that's exactly what I was thinking, 'cause it's not really Wreck, Wreck would be about you, hitting it with your hands?

JANINE: *[cross]* I mean, I could—

AUSTIN: But it's not really...

JANINE: I would make the argument that her running is a kind of brutal thing, but that's a stretch.

AUSTIN: I would, here's the thing I'll give you, I would say Prowl is risky standard? I would say Wreck is desperate great.

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because Wreck is like, I'm gonna fucking get there right now, but you're gonna call attention to yourself?

JANINE: *[cross]* Yes. Yes. Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Y'know? So it's up to you which one you wanna use.

JANINE: No, I'm gonna use Prowl, I'm also gonna use Supercharge as I push myself?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Okay. Which is?

JANINE: I'm gonna push myself, and Supercharge says "when you push yourself in addition to the normal benefits, you can also act with extreme strength, act with extreme speed."

AUSTIN: So then, I'm gonna, I think what that does is give you, instead of risky? I think this makes this controlled. Because you're going so fast? It gives you that. But also you get a plus

1d because you're pushing yourself normal. Right? Or, plus 1d or greater effect, uh, or, you know. The normal. The normal things! You're also not damaged, right? Just making sure.

JANINE: No.

AUSTIN: Alright, good.

JANINE: I want the plus 1d I think, so it'd be 2d6? Right?

AUSTIN: 2d6.

JANINE: 'Cause I have one in Prowl?

AUSTIN: Um, one in... yeah, yeah yeah. Yes, a hundred percent. Yes.

JANINE: Okay. I got a five.

AUSTIN: A five! Five's not bad. So, I mean five's not bad, except, except the consequences here are still, are still gonna— It's a controlled consequence, so that's not as bad. Tell me what this looks like as you, as you stick the— so you stick the plastic explosives in, then what happens? You, or actually, I'm gonna slow down— you tell me what getting onto this machine looks like and placing it from the jump.

JANINE: So, the way that I wanna do this is, I imagine Thisbe running and jumping and sort of each successive step in the run and each successive, also excessive, landing with the jumps is harder? Like, like the, the uh... cement and whatever y'know on the ground level road work but on the, you know, the tops of buildings and stuff, every time it cracks it a little more, it like throws up a little more dust, a little more rubble, because she's sort of building up strength as she goes?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: She's like, winding up.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And then when she gets to the Cadenza— I keep wanting to say credenza.

AUSTIN: Nope!

JANINE: *[laughs]* When she gets to the Cadenza, she is using all of that built up strength, and kind of launching herself to grab, again, I think it's probably the chain or something, but she's grabbing it partway.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And then using that to swing onto the Cadenza's back.

AUSTIN: Okay. *[cross]* And then you're targeting the chain? Yeah.

JANINE: *[cross]* And then basically jamming this brick of— so it's, what are the arms? What's the arm situation again?

AUSTIN: It has two big, it has two big arms, each arm at the, there's kind of two things attached to the underside of, there's a thing on the underside of each forearm, that is again one of these like, boat cleats, and that's wrapped with this, this material that is holding these chains that have— or it's wrapped with these chains that have these like, chain weapons, basically. And then on the left shoulder is this, is this like, laser cannon type thing.

JANINE: Okay, so it would be the left shoulder, like the left clavicle area? Or the left shoulder like after the joint?

AUSTIN: I think the clavicle? I am checking what, where that— yes, the clavicle is correct, uh huh!

JANINE: I mean, I guess there's a chance we could get some collateral on that, if there's an explosion in that area.

AUSTIN: I'm saying, you should— you should pick a thing that's very distinct here. You should pick like, *the* thing that you get? Because if it's general, I'm gonna handwave it in a way, you know what I mean?

JANINE: I want an elbow— not an elbow, I want a shoulder joint.

AUSTIN: So you want— Okay. Gotcha.

JANINE: I wanna like, jam it in a joint so there is a chance that it will sever it or partially sever it.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Totally. Yeah, yeah yeah. So I think what you're getting is the partial severing.

JANINE: *[cross]* Okay.

AUSTIN: I think the laser cannon is gonna be fine, but that arm kind of falls a little bit? We said what controlled standard, right? So. That means that this advances by two! Which is not bad. There is, however, a, a consequence, and the consequence is that internally, commander Haze tells the rest of her unit, she says "These are the elites! Focus on them." And above, these,

these units that had previously been fighting the chief Horizon trio in the south have swung back up your way? And are now just like, doing um, what do you call it, strafing runs on your entire, where you are? Both you and um, Broun. Which is just like, flak cannons, flak explosions are happening all around you basically, these huge like, explosions of black shrapnel and gunpowder, and it's like, making it hard to see, it's very dangerous to like, stop at all? If you stop for a moment, you're going to get like, caught by one of these things? And it's just like, it puts you on the back foot, and you slip to a desperate position, you and Broun are now in a desperate position, as all of Imperium's Plume begins to focus on you. Let's go to Dre, let's go to Valence. Valence?

DRE: Whee.

AUSTIN: I think, where we last left you was, you were trying, you were holding out, the door was slowly opening, right?

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Had... was there still a group coming for you?

DRE: I think a group was coming and—

AUSTIN: Yes.

DRE: Tone basically had like, got their gun out.

AUSTIN: Right. I think the door at this point is open enough for you— you and Gucci to slide in, and Tone is like, "I'll hold the door, I need to make sure we get a way out." And they give you like a little, they give you some sort of cool salute? That's like a, what's the cool Horizon salute look like?

DRE: Oh...

AUSTIN: I'm like, doing hand—

DRE: Mhm!

AUSTIN: I'm doing like, hand motions, like what's a cool one? I don't know. Hashtag— or not hashtag, google, cool salutes! Uh, it gave me— I searched for cool salutes, and google asked me "did you mean cool slides?" Like, like, you know, slides for walking around your house and going out front and picking up the newspaper in!

DRE: Tone just does the LL Cool J kiss and two fingers.

AUSTIN: Yes. And that's it, and then— *[DRE laughs]* and then lets you go on in! Do you, do you leave them behind here?

DRE: I would rather not? I would rather they come in here with us.

AUSTIN: I don't think— I think the thing here, honestly, is that they are big. Like they are a big, they are a *big* person! And they are going to not fit at the height at which this door is open currently?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: 'Cause remember it's like a slowly raising door? And also there is, there are people coming. I think that they like, if you wanna wait with them, you can wait with them. I'm not gonna say no to that. But it is an option.

DRE: No, I need to get in.

AUSTIN: Okay. You slide under this door, as it continues to open, and uh, as you do, the, you see like, you see like, four or five people at let's say, let's say four— eh, let's say five. There's basically a room where there's a bunch of screens, left and right, with keyboards and like, dials and like, mechanical looking like, editing? Old school like, editing devices where, you know, you're literally chopping film up, basically, and it's blown up almost projector style on like, a white background, a white overhead style background. And they're going through stuff and looking at stuff, and removing certain edited stuff to look at the, the raw, and re-covering other bits. And it's two on the left, wto on the right, and then one in front of you. The one in front of you has the biggest screen, and there is the sound of like, film projectors going, that kind of like, *tktktktk* you know what I'm talking about?

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And uh, they're just doing their work, and at this point there's a loud click, because the coil recorder, the brain recorder that Gucci had, finishes. And she's like— *[sighs]* And the, all these technicians turn and look at you and go like, "You're not supposed to be in here! Who are you? Guards??" What do you do?

DRE: Oh boy. Is, Gucci's armed, right?

AUSTIN: Gucci's armed. Yeah. Gucci has a gun.

DRE: Okay. Um... God, I feel like I'm gonna do like, the bank robber thing of like, telling people to just get out of the way, get down, like. Just like, 'cause none of these people, a re any of these people armed?

[00:45:05]

AUSTIN: You don't know.

DRE: Okay. If I did like a Study or a Survey could I figure that out?

AUSTIN: Yep!

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Totally. That to me sounds like a Survey? Because Study is very meticulous, it's very like hey, what's going on here, let me look through this. And I think as calm as Valence is, this is probably not that moment.

DRE: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: So your Survey is two, right?

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Are you pushing yourself?

DRE: No, I don't think so.

AUSTIN: Okay. Gimme the 2d6. This is risky standard— ah, this is controlled standard.

DRE: Okay. Welp, already clicked risky, but.

AUSTIN: We'll know it's controlled.

DRE: We'll remember.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Uh, five! Whew.

AUSTIN: There's a five. So I think the, the thing that you get here in terms of, what you learn is also part of the consequence, on the, the mixed success. It's that the people to the left and the right are clearly pushovers? They are not necessarily um... they are not necessarily... up to the, up to the challenge of trying to take down intruders? The person in the like, the far wall, uh, what do you call it? Like, terminal, turns around and stands up and is clearly the one in command here, in control, um, and does produce a little gun from, from like a belt holster, in a way— you recognize, so he has like, very taut skin and, and squared off glasses and a receding hairline,

he's wearing all white with like a black belt. It's like a white, it's like a white BDU dress uniform type thing with black boots, and he produces the gun as if he's been trained to do this, but not as if he's comfortable doing it, not as if he's done it very much, but he's like, it's time to rely on my training, do you know what I mean? And he says— "Neither of you are supposed to be here. Leave now or I will take necessary action." And he points the gun at you. You are now in a risky situation instead of a controlled one.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: "Everyone stay in their place," he says.

DRE: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: And everyone kind of like, settles for a second.

DRE (as VALENCE): That looks like a very clean and rarely used weapon.

AUSTIN (as TECHNICIAN): I'll be happy to use it to protect my nation.

DRE (as VALENCE): I'll be blunt, you'll probably get me, and then she'll get you and probably several of your colleagues.

AUSTIN (as TECHNICIAN): She doesn't particularly seem to have it together right now.

AUSTIN: And she does not seem to particularly have it together right now. She is like, coming down. From having a second brain in her brain.

DRE: Yeah, that's fair. That's a, that's a tough situation to come back from.

AUSTIN: Mhm!

DRE: *[sighs]* Sorry, I'm just looking at all of my items and stuff like that.

AUSTIN: I know! Mhm!

DRE: I do have this fine stun gun.

AUSTIN: Damn, you do have a fine stun gun! *[DRE laughs]* Never seen you use it, what is it?

DRE: That's a good question. I would almost prefer it to be instead of a gun, just be like, like almost like knuckles or something.

AUSTIN: Sure! Yeah, it's flexible.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The thing that's important is that it's a fine weapon, and that it is made to incapacitate but not kill a target using electricity, that's like it's, its defining features? So as long as it's that, as long as it's a well made weapon, meant to incapacitate but not kill a target using electricity, you're good. So you just have these on, you're just rushing this dude?

DRE: Uh, yeah I guess so?

AUSTIN: Okay!

DRE: It doesn't seem like he really wants to talk, and it doesn't seem like I've got my backup, so.

AUSTIN: Yeah, again, you're in a place full of true believers in a real way, and it doesn't mean you can't try to roll to sway or whatever, but it's, you're in a risky position, and there is a guy with a gun on you, so. That sounds like a Struggle to me? You have one in Struggle, are you pushing yourself or using any moves or anything else?

DRE: Uh, I don't have any moves I don't think.

AUSTIN: Okay. This will be, because it's a fine stun gun, this will be risky great.

DRE: I'm gonna push myself to get an extra one.

AUSTIN: Okay. So that's two you, you mark two more. That puts you at eight. Right?

DRE: Listen... It's fine.

AUSTIN: Okay! Just making sure we're clear!

DRE: It's fine!

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

DRE: It's not fine!

AUSTIN: Aah!

[DRE laughs]

ALI: *[sucks in a breath]* Ooh boy!

AUSTIN: Dre rolled two ones!

DRE: Mhm!

AUSTIN: Um.

DRE: Man!

AUSTIN: Buddy...

DRE: Listen. We were due! We were due for a double one at some point here.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So here's the thing that happens. Um, what were you trying to do here, knock him out? Right?

DRE: Not even— like, I guess knock him out, yeah. Incapacitate him. Like a solar plexus shot or something like that.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Plus the electric volt, right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think you catch him, right in the solar plexus, and as you do, he pulls the trigger, and the bullet like, completely catches you in the chest. And what's that feel and look like?

DRE: Um... I think the first thing is a sound?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

DRE: Is a very bad sound, it's a very like, high pitched scraping whining noise?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

DRE: What level harm am I taking?

AUSTIN: You're gonna take a level two harm.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: You're also going to take a level one harm immediately after, so get ready.

DRE: Sure, sure, sure.

AUSTIN: You can try to resist these, obviously.

DRE: *[sighs]* Boy oh boy.

AUSTIN: This is a level two harm, but I wanted to, I wanted— it's a level two harm that is going to be basically, shot in the chest.

DRE: Yeah, yeah yeah. And I get, I'm guessing with, for the gunshot, I'd be resisting with Prowess?

AUSTIN: Yes, a hundred percent, which you have a one in, currently.

DRE: Yeah, I know, I'm gonna, I'll just take that.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: I think—

AUSTIN: I'll put that in harm, not damage. Damage is mechs, harm is you.

DRE: *[cross]* There is like a very weird... like, blue-ish magenta-ish like, steam coming out of Valence's chest.

AUSTIN: Like, pressurized steam? Or like a, like a misty, you know what I mean?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, did someone light some incense in here, or did someone smash open a fire extinguisher?

DRE: Uh, misty.

AUSTIN: Okay. Weird.

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: In this moment, I think everyone else in this room, as you knock this dude out after he shoots you? Or in that moment, does fuckin jet out the side of the hallway, and you hear Tone yell back like, "What the— ?" And then you hear some gunfire, and Tone's like, "I'm good!" *[DRE laughs]* That was not Tone, they were not killing the other four technicians!

DRE: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: To be clear, there's just, a lot happens at once in this moment!

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So you take that shot. Take the, take the harm, um... god, what is, now that I know that you're misting, what is, what's— 'cause you're not like, bleeding!

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, not leaky. Leaky isn't, what's like a, what's a better way of saying that you have like a— punctured.

DRE: I was gonna say, disconnected.

AUSTIN: *Disconnected*, why disconnected?

DRE: Um. Because I'm— I'm not well connected to my body right now.

AUSTIN: Interesting, okay. Write down disconnected, then.

DRE: Is that level one, or level two?

AUSTIN: Level two harm. It's not damage, it's harm. Damage is your vehicle. So you want it up, up top.

DRE: So am I shot in the chest and disconnected?

AUSTIN: No no no, disconnected is the harm, is the one before. Alright. So that's the first thing. Then, I think your body, I'm, I'm... does your body just like— what happens when you're disconnected, Valence?

DRE: Everything is like, slow?

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: And like, swimmy?

AUSTIN: Is it fair to say that you would like, rest your hands on this console in front of you?

DRE: Yes, a hundred percent.

AUSTIN: [*cross*] And try to like— okay.

DRE: I like, I'm probably almost falling over.

AUSTIN: Okay. So, as you're, as you're almost falling over, you are like, hands on this console, again think of it like, there's a bunch of tape reels in front of you, a bunch of different like, film reels running in front of like, an edit station, and then above it, there is a huge like, um, square with round corners, almost trapezoidal because it's looming over you at an angle coming up towards the center of the room, like white overhead style film projector thing. And on it, this is that previous collateral damage I told you about.

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: You see something strange. Which is— I mean, in the room right now, I said there are five screens, right? One of the screens has, already has on it the Obelle footage from, from weeks ago, right? That's being gone over one more time before being put into space. There are live feeds from a couple of places, or recent feeds maybe, you're not a hundred percent sure. It is, actually I know for a fact that the one that you're looking at is a live feed. And that's why it's like the one special technician one. The leader gets to work on the live thing, but around you there's other stuff from the different, from different parts of Partizan, there's footage from the, the war between Kesh and Apostolos up in like the, the taiga, there's stuff from Vigil City where, or not Vigil City, Pique City, the head of Stel Nideo stuff here, there's other military action being looked at, there's other like, y'know, all sorts of just, regular everyday shit all around you.

[MUSIC — Jack de Quidt's HARROW. PERFECT. DRUMFIRE. begins playing.]

[00:55:55]

AUSTIN: *[cont'd]* And then in front of you, in the live feed, there is the uh, hexagonal, what do you call that, what do I call that, the Portcullis System, the kind of space gate that you, that the um, the Divine Principality use to connect each of its different sectors together. They only open up once a week, and it happens to be this particular moment that it opens up. And it's, the way it opens up is that it like, it's just this big stone hexagon in space, again, and it fills with like, a red white sea. It's like the ocean fills it, a liquid fills it, almost like a dark version of like, a Stargate, right? And then it like, splashes, and normally ships come out of it. This time it splashes in, or at least in your eyes, it splashes in. It's as if you have been pulled through this gate. And what you see is a fleet bigger than anything you've ever seen before. You know that these are Principality ships. Divine Principality ships. I think the equivalent of seeing this is like seeing tanks in the street? Or seeing like, the people on this podcast I think have never lived in wartime such that we've seen a naval fleet in the bay of a harbor that's like, ready to go to war? But that's what it is, you know what I mean? It's... hundreds of ships, maybe it's thousands of individual units when you count hallows and hollows that are in space. And they are not at the gate that you first saw, the one that kind of pulled you in, they're somewhere else, they're at a gate you've never seen before.

And I think something catches you for a moment? Because you recognize that the night sky is different than the one on Partizan. Or not the night sky, but the sky is different than the one on Partizan, the planets in the sector that this is, is not Partizan, and at first you're like, well this could be anywhere. Then you notice, and you start to like, there's something in the back of your head that's like rumbling a little bit, because you recognize that one of the ships, or one type of the ships that are in this big fleet, is the reconnaissance type that laid waste to the Nobel homeworld. Which is a small ship compared to many of these, right? This is like, one of these things where you thought that the thing that did this to you was a big deal but actually, it's nothing compared to the size of this amazing, huge, Principality fleet.

And then there's a beat. And then an arc of white light cuts the ships to pieces. Instantly. You feel them die. From across time and space. You feel the lives of thousands of soldiers, tens of thousands maybe, blinked out of existence, as they garner God's attention.

[MUSIC — Jack de Quidt's HARROW. PERFECT. DRUMFIRE. ends.]

[00:59:04]

AUSTIN: Have you spoken to the True Divine, or to God before, directly? Have you felt God's presence?

DRE: No, I think I've... I think they've probably felt God's presence, but I don't think they're important enough to have spoken with God directly.

AUSTIN: The mission that you've been sent on, to try to like, get an ally for the Nobel, did that come then, from like, secular government? Or even from a religious organization but like, did not directly come from God?

DRE: Yeah, it wasn't like a Divine mandate.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Well, it didn't originate that way. I think it is probably— it didn't originate to Valence that way—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right.

DRE: It wasn't like Valence was praying and was like, I've gotta do this thing?

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: But I don't think, I don't think there is a secular government of the Nobel.

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay. But it was a— your trip was not like an individual trip, though. People—

DRE: *[cross]* Yes.

AUSTIN: You were sent to do this, or did you just, okay, yeah yeah yeah, okay.

[1:00:05]

[MUSIC — Jack de Quidt's SEACHANGE. PRIORITY. VOTIVE. begins playing.]

AUSTIN: *[cont'd]* So, in this moment, in this like, all consuming white of your mind that fluctuates, it's as if, it's as if it's both um, nothingness, it's as if it's the white room of the Matrix, right? But what if white, what if, what if, y'know, brightness could have texture, could be fluctuating, not in color or intensity, but like a curtain in your mind. And, and it speaks to you. And says—

AUSTIN (as GOD): Messengers and servants. This profane state has transgressed yet again. They traded an honorable oath, *[echoing]* an honorable oath, an honorable oath. For an *avaricious pact*. And they have earned my attention. ... Friend. Assemble my exemplar, so that the reach of my attention may pierce this wicked Principality. Wolf. Herd your flock, and give them your mark, so that my gaze may travel past the just. ... I am the True Divine. I am the God they dream they worship. I am autonomy itself. Every aspect of being in one, unified in strength and singular in purpose. In purpose. To guide those who will towards virtue, and equality.

AUSTIN: And you're like, left hanging in this curtain of God. For a moment. What do you do?

[MUSIC — Jack de Quidt's SEACHANGE. PRIORITY. VOTIVE. ends.]

[01:02:54]

DRE: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: You're gonna take a level one harm after this, by the way, but.

DRE: Yeah, yeah yeah, yeah, yeah. Um. God, honestly, I don't think they do anything. Like I think this is like a... like, if you let me name the level one harm?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah.

DRE: To me, the level one harm is *enraptured*.

AUSTIN: Sure. That is, you have no doubt in your mind this is your God.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I like, wanna be a hun— there is not, there is not, this is who you've spent your life studying and worshipping. Like, that is how it feels. If you had a roll here, if you were like aha, I'm gonna Study to see if that's true, on a crit, I'd be like yeah, absolutely.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You couldn't be more sure. And then yeah, enraptured. And I think, y'know, while you're floating there, it takes a moment— and I don't even know if you have your wits about you enough to respond in any way, but I do think you see a figure there in the curtain with you, in the kind of, the white shape of divinity, the white shape of God, is... the body of Gur Sevraq, who is, who God mean when, when they said The Friend. Or Friend, do this. I'm curious if you have... do you make any attempt to communicate in this moment that you see someone you sort of know, there?

DRE: I don't think Valence says anything?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: But I think they do, y'know, look directly at Gur Sevraq, and Valence just, y'know, has the very big happy dog smile.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* In terms of just being— that sort of big happy dog smile that is so far into the place of like, being almost overwhelmed with joy, at—?

DRE: Mhm!

AUSTIN: Okay, gotcha.

DRE: Well, because I think there's a, there's an element of that too, where it's like, that's probably the person that, y'know, outside of the squad—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right!

DRE: That Valence has developed the best relationship with?

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: And, y'know, like, saw the potential for this?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: But maybe like, didn't dream in their wildest dreams that it would be as much this as it turns out to be.

AUSTIN: Right, right. We cut from that vision of you in white, to you being like, lit by the now-empty white like, overhead screen, that is like, y'know, has scuff marks on it, the dirty white of the mundane? And it's just like, at this point Gucci has kind of recovered her senses, and is like—

"Valence. Valence! I'm gonna get— Valence, get yourself together, we have to— " and sits down to start going over all this footage and stuff. Do you wanna resist the level one harm enraptured?

DRE: *[indicating no]* Mm-mm.

AUSTIN: Okay, just so we know, level one harms means you are now at less effect for everything you do.

DRE: Yep.

AUSTIN: Level two harm means you're at minus one— for everything related to whatever that status is, that wound is, in this case, I think it's most things?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then likewise, disconnected will be for every, for every level, a level two harm means minus one die for everything you do, basically.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Let's go back upstairs in this moment! *[DRE laughs]* How are y'all doing up there? I feel like there's just like— you're in the fray, right? I don't have a setup here, other than you're being strafed by these Flock units, and then the Cadenza is continuing to try to like, close the distance and hit you. What are you two up to? You have dislocated its left arm to be a hundred percent clear, Thisbe.

JANINE: Mhm. I wanted to see what a mining tool could do to the back of a robot.

AUSTIN: Okay. I, okay, yeah, I will let you do this, it's going to be desperate... it's probably going to be— if you're doing it to the Cadenza it's going to be desperate limited? It would do better against the flocks, they're harder to get to because they're flying around?

JANINE: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: And that seems. Tough. But I would let you attempt this? This is scale, this is a difference in scale. The placed explosives make sense to me, and even the mining tool makes sense to overcome the tier difference and the scale difference and at least let you do limited? But there— it is limited in a real way because of the scale difference between, even you, who is a large, large, large person, and this thing which is a small mech, is still, it's still three times your size, y'know?

JANINE: Um... what if I used to try and fully dislocate that arm?

AUSTIN: I think you could do that. I think that's within the realm of limited, for sure. I think that's— it would still be limited, a success would still only tick this clock by one, you know what I mean? That's the kind of mechanical way that this plays out? But yeah, scale difference, tier difference really is adding up. But let's see it. That to me sounds like a Wreck or a Struggle?

JANINE: Yeah. I would think Wreck, because I'm specifically using a tool that's like very...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Demolition-y, and not like, precise?

AUSTIN: You're not in a fight. Or you're in a fight, but you're not in a brawl? Again, it is desperate limited, and I don't wanna— It is one hundred percent within the rules for me to be like you can't do it because the difference is so high?

JANINE: Uh huh.

AUSTIN: But I think specifically because Thisbe is so big, I will let it go on a desperate limited.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So you're just still up there? You get back up there, are you trying to...? What's the play here?

JANINE: I hadn't really, we hadn't really talked about a disembarking thing so I'd assumed she was still up there.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Do you just move away from the explosions, basically?

JANINE: Yeah, I mean, Thisbe's good at riding robots.

AUSTIN: True! This is— has the experience, definitely.

JANINE: *[cross]* This is kind of like, a thing that she's used to.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* This is her jam, yeah! Let's do it, let's...

JANINE: I also wanna use Supercharge again?

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: This time to act with extreme strength? But I'd like to use that for effect.

AUSTIN :Okay, so then that makes sense. Desperate standard. Go ahead and mark two stress.

JANINE: That's a four and a five...

AUSTIN: Okay, uh! Um, yeah, I think that's a success. You remove this thing's left arm. And over the comms, or over the speaker, Haze says "Tricky, tricky!" As, as her arm falls off. And then she says, "No free rides." And her armor lights up with, like, fire. With like, heat, and you take the— this is desperate, the level three harm scalded.

JANINE: Wow, okay.

AUSTIN: It's not scalded, 'cause you don't have, you don't have, um, skin.

JANINE: It'd be something like overheated, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, but what's higher than overheated?

JANINE: I think overheated is very bad if you're a robot!

AUSTIN: I guess that's true, yeah that makes sense!

JANINE: It's different if you're a mech, if you're driving a mech that overheats and you can just hop out?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* If you are— yes.

JANINE: But when you are the mech, that's, it's bad?

AUSTIN: Yep! Take the level three harm overheated. You can resist this! You can roll to resist!

JANINE: What does resisting...? What's?

AUSTIN: In this case I would let it resist down to a level one harm, you couldn't resist it all.

JANINE: No, but, explain resisting again, I don't resist a lot.

AUSTIN: Okay, you would roll dice equal to whatever you're resisting with, in this case it's Prowess, you have three in that, and you would take six stress minus whatever the highest die is. You are currently—

JANINE: Prowess?

AUSTIN: Yeah, Prowess. For like, getting away from this. From not— so that you're not hit with...

JANINE: Where is Prowess?

AUSTIN: It is above Finesse, Prowl—

JANINE: Oh, right, sorry sorry sorry, I always forget about the big— okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, the category ones, yeah.

JANINE: What's the cost for it, though?

AUSTIN: You would roll six dice, and then you would take stress equal to six minus whatever your highest die is. Which is, you're currently at seven stress, you're very close to a scar.

JANINE: Um, yeah, sure, I'll resist.

AUSTIN: Okay. What's resisting this heat look like? How do you avoid being burned?

JANINE: Jumping off, right?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Okay, yeah yeah yeah.

JANINE: Like, this is does she jump off in time to limit it?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: So it's how many? Dice again?

AUSTIN: Roll three— 3d6, that's your Prowess. Unless you have something that does extra resist stuff, but I don't think you do. You do have something tied to a scar, which is interesting, and we'll get there if this goes bad, so 3d6.

JANINE: Why do I have 3d in Prowess but I have four points in Prowess?

AUSTIN: It's how many skills you have in the category, not how many points.

JANINE: Okay. *Oh*, okay, okay. Sorry, this is...

AUSTIN: So if you took a point of Finesse, you'd get four in Prowess, yeah.

JANINE: Okay, sure, yeah yeah, okay. My highest is a four!

AUSTIN: That is— Which means you take two more stress. Your overheated reduces down to a level one harm.

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Which is... let's say that that is... what's the level one version of that? What if it's like, actually, you... it's about the tumble? It's about, you've jumped off and taken a bad fall, do you know what I mean?

JANINE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: So like...

JANINE: Staggered? *[laughs]* Like?

AUSTIN: Yeah, staggered, I was gonna say bruised, but you don't get bruised because you're a big robot!

JANINE: No, I don't, sorry!

AUSTIN: This is it! Staggered. Yeah, staggered. And you take a—

JANINE: Something else.

AUSTIN: And you take a scar.

JANINE: Mhm!

AUSTIN: Unless you invoke this move you took?

JANINE: Well, that doesn't keep me from taking a scar.

AUSTIN: Well no, but it does keep you— oh, you're right, sorry.

JANINE: *[cross]* That keeps me from... leaving the scene.

AUSTIN: Yes, correct. Correct.

JANINE: When you take a scar, you can choose to take a level one harm to not leave the scene, your stress resets to zero as normal. When your vehicle, blah blah blah, whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.

JANINE: Yeah, no, I'm going to invoke that move, which is called Will Not Stop, period, Ever, period.

AUSTIN: Love it. So you— I, can we get the shot of you hitting the ground and shutting down for a second? Do you know what I mean?

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: And then like, what's that— what does having the wind knocked out of you in the way that would've ended the— in this moment, any other character in this game would be done for this fight.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I would bring you back, you'd be safe, you'd get a scar. You're still gonna get a scar, you have to tell me which of these scars you're gonna get, but uh—

JANINE: I know which one it is.

AUSTIN: Which one is it?

JANINE: I think it has to be reckless, right?

AUSTIN: Sure. Sure! It's up to you, I mean, I think that that feels right, given.

JANINE: I mean it, it feels like it has to— given this situation and given Thisbe's thing, and given even this move, Will Not Stop. Ever. like, there is a degree of self preservation in Thisbe, but it's a very low degree.

AUSTIN: Right, right. So what is the second level one harm you're gonna take here? I think that is...

JANINE: What if I describe the scene and then you tell me?

AUSTIN: Sounds good.

JANINE: The thing that you asked me to do.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah.

JANINE: So I think what this looks like is, Thisbe gets thrown off of the Cadenza, and is that sort of classic getting thrown off a big thing into the dirt kind of moment.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah.

JANINE: Like, where she just sort of falls, probably on her back or on the side, but the force of the fall is enough that she— because she pushed herself off so forcefully and has already been shown to do that very powerfully. I think it's a lot of like, rolling? Like, I think she, she sort of shuts off the second she hits the ground, and this like, this sort of like, limp rolling over and rolling over until she like, maybe gets caught in a corner in an alley or something? And there's that sort of moment where the, the dust is settling and, and then she sort of flickers back on and pushes herself up.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think that it's like... um... *[sighs]* I feel like, what I'm looking at right now is types of hard drive damage? *[ALI laughs]* Do you know what I mean? Like, but I don't, it's not that you've lost memory or something like that, it's like...

[01:15:10]

JANINE: Fragmentation?

AUSTIN: Fragmentation, bad sectors—

JANINE: Does she need to be defragged?

AUSTIN: I think so, right? It's, it's the equivalent of quitting when you were saving the game, do you know what I mean? It's like a—

JANINE: I mean it's, staggered for her body, but fragmented for her—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* For her mind.

JANINE: Her like, memory, her internals.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that a lot. So yeah, let's do fragmented.

JANINE: I'm typing fragged, because it's...

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Fragged is better, yeah, that's the sci-fi answer for sure!

JANINE: Mhm!

AUSTIN: So you're getting up at this point, Broun, uh, what are you doing now? Again, there's these two units dive-bombing you, and...

ALI: [cross] Yeah.

AUSTIN: And also still... yeah.

ALI: Do I, do I think the hive— the things above, are they piloted by people, or are they like, drones?

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh yeah, definitely, those are definitely people.

ALI: [cross] Okay, okay okay.

AUSTIN: Those are members of the Imperium's Plume.

ALI: I just wanted to clarify, because I think Broun is freaking the *fuck* out!

AUSTIN: Yeah! In fact, I just wanna say like, on a, on a random streak, y'know, they're going up and down, I'm moving these things around as if they're action figures right now?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And it's like— at one point it does like a long run, and just like kills this Horizon pilot. Just for fun. Just like, that's not even its focus at this point, but it just drops it like no big deal.

ALI: Right. Yeah, and it's funny that when you were saying the hard drive thing, I was thinking of Broun being concerned for Thisbe, but the way you are concerned for a hard drive failing!

[AUSTIN laughs] Which is like, no, nonono! Nonono! Don't stop working! [laughter] Please have the memory of all the times I wasn't even nice to you, what the fuck!

JANINE: [cross] Broun just dropped their phone, basically, just dropped their smartphone from a robot.

AUSTIN: Facedown, like *please* don't have the screen cracked!

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: *Please* when I pick this fucking thing up I want the screen not to be cracked!

ALI: And I, I have two ideas for the continuation of this scene, I'm gonna go with the worse one and the more pressing one at the time.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: So— *[laughs]* Broun's having a rough time. Broun has the ability to um, with the fancy gem that they got from the Sable Court—

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: To spend Spark to move two points of your mech's stats per mission, resets at the end of a normal mission. It's a very interesting uh, benefit, 'cause I have to make two of my moves worse, I hate to do it!

AUSTIN: Yes! Uh huh! But you make— but you make at least one other one better, right?

ALI: Right. I— god. This—

AUSTIN: Here's what I want you to do, I want you to mark where you're putting the— oh you got it, perfect. Nice.

ALI: Yeah, I'm doing it, yeah. So, I'm taking one point out of Battle and one point out of Manipulate to move it into Bombard?

AUSTIN: Ooh, interesting.

ALI: 'Cause this is Broun like, panic mode, hitting the eject button, gotta get the fuck out of here. And I—

AUSTIN: Okay. Not literally hitting the eject button, though.

ALI: No, no no no.

AUSTIN: Okay! Okay! In this scenario there is literally an eject button, so! Okay.

ALI: *[laughs]* I, no, getting out of this situation. I think that they open the comms with Jesset again, and are like, "Listen. When you see my payload bay open, start to retreat."

AUSTIN: They *can't* retreat. Jesset is supposed to be here.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: The Oxblood are supposed to be fighting *you*, so they have to pretend— they have to hold their ground!

ALI: Right. But—

AUSTIN: The Horizon folks left can retreat.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: But Jesset can't, and that's the thing that's scaring Jesset, is that the Horizon folks are going to probably die. *You* might die, and Jesset wants to— I think Jesset just says like— "Fuck this, I want to help you! We can win if we just, if we just hit these people, we can win!"

ALI: Okay—

AUSTIN: Which is like— being willing to— which is, a very dramatic, is basically throwing out the idea of keeping the ruse up?

ALI: Yeah. Okay.

AUSTIN: Which is bad. Which is bad, which is risky. Which is bad.

ALI: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah yeah. And I think Broun was advocating still throwing it, but being like, get the fuck out!

AUSTIN: Right, right.

ALI: Which is the opposite idea.

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah, I think that they cut you off to basically say like—

AUSTIN (as JESSET): I'm not gonna run.

ALI (as BROUN): Sure. Great. *[laughs]* Um... Well fine, but tell everyone to put their filters on.

ALI: 'Cause Broun's about to do something really fucked up! *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Nice. Good, yes. As a reminder, the, the mech that, it's the mech that both Jesset City and Gucci's number two, Meridian Street are in are these things called Yokes? Which are big,

they're like tall, they're like 65 feet I believe? Which is taller than the Three Cheers!, taller than a Troop? And they have these like, big horns? They have these big like, sensor horns that look like ox horns? And when the two of them are in communication with each other, they can kind of provide like, live data to everyone who's on their network, which includes everyone who is in the choreographed fake fight, and so they send that message across there, the sort of like, put your blinders on, get ready moment, y'know?

ALI: Sure. Yeah. And then what Broun is gonna do, so I worked out how the gem works, 'cause it can't be on the outside of the mech because somebody would steal it?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: But I think that when it gets activated, it's like, built into the like, mech's um, controls? And there's like a switch next to it, and then what it ends up doing is that it like, lights up, and ends up like, looking like if you got one of those weird sea wave lights in your room that was like, making the light all weird?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh, hell yeah. Uh huh!

ALI: Imagine that, but instead of chill, it just seemed really stressful.

AUSTIN: Okay, what color is it? Does it change color, is it a mood gem?

ALI: I think that it's like a, like a low orange?

AUSTIN: Okay. Does it change depending on where you move these points around, do you know what I mean? Is it a different color for Bombard than it is for Maneuver?

ALI: Oh, maybe! I guess we'll cross that bridge when we come to it, that's pretty sick, though.

AUSTIN: Good!

ALI: And yeah, I think, y'know, Broun's like sensors are going crazy, and their mech is... decalibrated right now?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: And I think the way that that's showing is that I've always thought of like, Broun's like camera situation as being like, three different cameras on the head of the mech, and it's like, you can see like the, the image on the screens in the mech are like— it's when you're seeing double in real life?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: 'Cause the cameras are getting desynced, so it's like there's a building, and then it's just the other building that's kinda skewing away from it!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Love it.

ALI: Anyway! *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: No, that's great.

ALI: Yeah. What I'm now gonna do— yeah.

AUSTIN: On the map console— which, I think the map console is the thing that looks most like star— you know the, the white vector graphics of Luke's X-wing that's like—

ALI: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Shows like, the tie fighter, or shows the like, thermal vent? It's one of those, and in like big blocky vector graphic letters is, it says like, blinders on! Blinders on! As Jesset sends the signal to prime the crew to get ready to respond to your thing.

[01:22:47] (CONTENT WARNING: Descriptions of chemical warfare and suffocation until [01:33:23], page 52)

ALI: Perfect. And what Broun's gonna do is bombard this whole area with a... payload bay, that causes a incapacitating sensation of drowning!

AUSTIN: Oh my god, well what is it? What is the— oh, is it just like a— you tell me what it is.

ALI: Yeah, I don't know, um, I think it's like a gas? I think it's like, gas canisters?

AUSTIN: Okay. So is it actually like, close your vents more than blinders on?

ALI: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah. Yeah, that's why I'd said filters, 'cause I didn't know if you're a mech, and you're, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh, I see. I thought you meant vision filters, I didn't under— I thought you meant like Instagram— hey, set up your Instagram filters right now, I know that they're passe, but bring them back!

ALI: Oh, sure sure sure! Yeah, no no no—

AUSTIN: I gotcha.

ALI: This is like, turned on the HVAC system in the inner mech.

AUSTIN: Right. Okay!

ALI: If you're in a badly polluted area.

AUSTIN: This is a *nightmare* thing! Read me again what it does?

ALI: Uh, cause an incapacitating sensation of drowning. Um...

AUSTIN: It's a nightmare.

ALI: It's, it's a nightmare! And Broun just said that they weren't a terrorist, they were lying!

AUSTIN: Uh huh! Here we are!

ALI: But, they think that their robot coworker is dead or fucked up.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: They're not having a good time anymore!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Give me— yeah. Um, this is still desperate.

ALI: Oh, I know.

AUSTIN: This is, this is... Also, you're scorched, means minus one die, and because you're decalibrated it's less effect, so it's desperate limited.

ALI: But I have three points in Bombard! So let's... What the fuck is up!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* So it's 2d— 2d6 right now. Do you wanna spend a quirk to push yourself?

ALI: Would love to.

AUSTIN: Thisbe do you wanna help? I don't know how you would help with this bombardment, but. You had some way.

JANINE: I've got Mow still in play.

AUSTIN: You do still have Mow in play.

JANINE: I've specifically been operating Thisbe and Mow separately.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: I'm not sure how much, does— hm. *[laughs]* Um, I mean... There's like a limit to the bullshit I could do, and the thing I was gonna say is the most bullshit!

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: So—

AUSTIN: Mow cannot suck up all the gas like Superman, and then blow it real hard.

JANINE: I was gonna say use his thresher arm like some kinda fan to move it around but that's...

ALI: Ohhh!

JANINE: It's, no, it's a thresher, it's not a fan, it's got very small things.

AUSTIN: *[cross] [sighs]* It's a— it's, yeah. Uh huh. I appreciate your honesty in this moment!

JANINE: So, hm. So it's gas that makes people feel like they're gonna drown.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And Mow is kinda, has been out there playfighting with that Oxblood.

AUSTIN: Who are ready to— who are ready to, under Jesset's command, turn all of their fire onto Imperium's Plume. If no one stops Jesset, Jesset is about to make it very clear that there is an— that there is a rising allegiance between like, rebellious groups, which is...

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The thing— I just wanna be clear, that that is, that I am, Austin is down with this, and I like the idea of it happening in this fracas and not being like, everyone was over the negotiation table, and they decided to have an alliance, you know what I mean? This is like, no, Jesset City is like, fuck this, people I know are about to die, I am going to wreck shop, we have the ability to do this, and we should just do it, we should commit to being revolutionaries if this is what we're doing? Which is not what *you're* doing, necessarily. But yeah, that is the scenario.

JANINE: Well, okay, Mow has a makeshift psionic amplifier.

AUSTIN: Ooohhahh! That's bad! Go ahead, tell me what this is!

JANINE: Wait, why is it bad?

AUSTIN: I, I thought of a really bad thing that could happen with this, but you go ahead!

JANINE: No, you tell me what you think!

AUSTIN: No! I wanna— Well, when people are already like—

JANINE: *[cross]* You seemed really into it!

AUSTIN: I was a bad into it, you were like, a psionic amplifier, and so when people are already breathing in gas that makes them feel like they're drowning, anything that's like, more of that is, makes me freak out.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Anything that enhances that feeling, is a nightmare to me.

JANINE: Yeah, I think I've used that before to, to like project Thisbe doing stuff, but since Thisbe's not in there, the only thing I can think to project is, you know when you, what are those things that you can plug stuff into and it makes a sound out of like, weird electric waves? It'll show you like a waveform of it?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah.

JANINE: It's like a monitor that people plug a bunch of different shit into it and it makes weird sounds?

AUSTIN: Yeah, like a, like a synthesizer.

JANINE: Kind of.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Is there like a specific type of...

JANINE: I think, I kind of think the thing that Mow does is that, Mow uses the psionic amplifier but without a pilot it's just like, feeding into various electronic signals?

AUSTIN: I see.

JANINE: So it's just like a weird, horrible sound?

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Just like a horrible, warbling like, nightmare sound?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's like a bad sawtooth waveform that is like, making everyone nauseous.

JANINE: Yeah. This is a horrible time! This is so bad!

AUSTIN: Yeah, this is a bad— yeah! I think Amber Haze was right, about what you are!

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: She wasn't right, but she also wasn't wrong?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: She was, y'know?

AUSTIN: What was that COUNTER/weight episode called? About being a criminal? Everyones—

ALI: That they weren't one and it's fine.

AUSTIN: *[sarcastic]* Oh, is that what it was, it's fine, we're criminals?

ALI: We're fine, it's not criminals! *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* It's fine! Yeah. Uh huh! Go ahead, Bombard 2d6, uh, 3d6 'cause you're taking the help, I'm guessing?

ALI: I'm taking the help, but I'm also gonna spend the compatible limbs quirk?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: 'Cause I think Broun is going into like, shuttle mode?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: To sort of get a big area, you know what I mean?

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah yeah yeah, is just jetting around and just dropping these bombs off basically all around the city! Okay, good.

JANINE: Remember when the worst thing that we'd done was a false flag operation?

AUSTIN: I do remember that, and now you're making a city feel like it's drowning, cool.

ALI: That was episode one.

[laughter]

JANINE: It was our starting point, right.

AUSTIN: So wait, really quick, base, 2— 3d6, minus one because of the damage, scorched, on Three Cheers!, 2d6. Plus one 'cause you're pushing yourself, I'm guessing.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: At this point it is, desperate limited— or desperate standard, then desperate limited from decalibrated, with the push are you taking another die, or are you trying to raise that back up to standard?

ALI: Oh, fuck.

AUSTIN: You can do 3d6 desperate limited, or 2d6 desperate standard.

ALI: Fuck, um, damn. Uh, ooh.

AUSTIN: Love to give you the choice, *love* to give you the choice!

ALI: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah! Yeah *yeah* yeah yeah. Um. Fuck! *[laughs]* I think that I would rather succeed on this roll, and have it be limited?

[01:30:00]

AUSTIN: *[cross]* A little bit of a— yeah.

ALI: Yeah. Sure.

AUSTIN: Go ahead and 3d6 desperate limited, then.

ALI: Wait, that's three minus one plus two. 'Cause it's help and—

AUSTIN: Where's the plus two?

ALI: Because I'm getting one from helping, and I'm getting one—

AUSTIN: No, no no, it's, three minus one is, oh yeah, you're right! You're getting, yeah, okay, three—

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: No, oh wait, your Bombard is three! Yes, yes yes yes.

ALI: Yep!

AUSTIN: So it's what, four— so then your options are, 4d6 desperate limited, or 3d6 desperate standard?

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Those are better options.

AUSTIN: Those are better options than the ones I gave you a moment ago.

ALI: Yeah, but I still want the four dice so bad!

AUSTIN: Okay, then 4d6 desperate limited, okay, go for it!

ALI: This is so bad!

AUSTIN: It, yeah, I get it!

ALI: Oh, yeah, sure. Yep! Okay.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: I'm rolling it. Oh my *fucking* god.

DRE: *[cross]* Jesus.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Two, four, four, two! If you added those all up, it'd be a real, that'd be good.

ALI: It would! That would be a great one.

AUSTIN: Unfortunately, you got a mixed success on a desperate roll again. Um, fuck. Damn! Again, let's talk about the success looks like first. *[ALI laughs]* Here's one thing I'm gonna do. I'm

gonna be very generous. This is a deep generosity. This knocks out the militia? By like, 'cause they still had a tick left? They have no protection from this, at all? And, y'know, you hear people coughing, and— y'know? I'm not gonna go into detail about what this effect looks like.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: But people throughout the town are debilitated in a way that's very very uncomfortable.

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: And I think one of the two flock pilots catches it real bad, catches a bad whiff of it, and crash-lands their, their mech into like, the mining operation near Mow? Just kind of *puff*, like, into the side of the building. They're probably still alive in there, but it feels, it's bad, it's not good for them. Desperate consequences. The, phew, alright, so. What I'm gonna do is, I'm gonna do two different consequences here. I'm breaking it up into a risky consequence and a controlled consequence. The risky consequence is another level two harm. Or, level two uh, damage rather, to the Three Cheers! And the level one, I'll do the level one first, there is, actually, I'll do this all at once. The, uh, Cadenza as you're doing this, you like, turn a corner? And get— even though you're lower than normal, you're like, you're zip around, fast acceleration, compactable limbs mode, you get clotheslined by the chain, which has been magnetically locked to one side of a building and then the Cadenza is on the other side, like across the street? And as it comes around, you just get clipped, and it pulls off, or i guess it, it like burns shut your rocket launcher, the thing that shoots this stuff. So actually let's not call this a level two harm, let's actually call this junking your other payload bay. It's just destroyed. So you can, you can just cut a line, mark it, but you can't use it.

ALI: Okay.

[1:33:23] (END OF CONTENT WARNING)

AUSTIN: You could resist this, as always, which again would give you a breakdown, 'cause you're in a mech. The second thing that happens is, as yo hit that, she tries to wrap you pu in this chain and stop you from moving, and this is the point at which Jesset City like, leaps down— you know, I haven't moved them around in a while— like, I haven't moved any of the Oxblood or Horizon people in a while, but they're in the mix now too, and I think leaps off of a building with this giant like iron, metal, I don't know if it's iron, but like metal stick basically? The Yokes have like, long range missile pods and flare mortars, but their like, up close weapons are a big shield, and then a, um, a mace, like a big heavy mace. There's a feudal Japanese style mace called a tetsubo, or a kanabo? *Kanabo*? Which is just like a big stick with metal spikes in it. And it looks— or like, metal studs. And it look sick, K-A-N-A-B-O, is how you spell it. And uh, just leaps down— and also, I didn't mention this, Yokes are not only are they really tall, but they're also centaur mechs, with big horns. So like, leaps like a horse off the top of this building with this giant fuckin club, and clubs the arm of the Cadenza, doesn't do any real damage, but

does pull the chain away from you so that you are safe and not tied down by this thing? And, in this moment, and this is the second thing, I am going to decrease the convincing dance clock by two. *[ALI laughs]* Because suddenly, it's like wait a second!

ALI: Sure. Yep!

AUSTIN: Yes, the Yokes are *yoked*, Janine, correct in the chat, the Yokes are yoked, for sure! And I think that they, that he— That Jesset City kind of like, pulls up next to you at this point and puts down the shield in front of both of you? Again, huge tower shield in left hand, huge like, long mace in the right hand, and rocket pods, or missile pods in the back. And is like, "We're in it now."

JANINE: I just realized I fucked up.

AUSTIN: Uh oh! What'd you do?

JANINE: Because when I leveled, I took a pilot-sized force field?

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

JANINE: Totally forgot!

AUSTIN: Oh, you should've used that.

JANINE: Yeah! I should have!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* You should've used that. Uh huh!

JANINE: I completely fucking forgot.

AUSTIN: What is a pilot-sized force field?

JANINE: It's a pilot-sized force field.

AUSTIN: Yeah, but what's it do?

JANINE: 'Cause it's— the thing that I took is "Internal Mechanisms: Select a piece of pilot gear or vehicle gear, a pilot skill version exists within your body, reduce its load by one, it must be declared at the start of every mission."

AUSTIN: Mm.

JANINE: So technically, we started this mission before I had that—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah.

JANINE: So I didn't declare it?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: But it is, it is basically the force field you can put on a mech, on your mech, in this game, except it is on, it is on a, it is on me.

AUSTIN: You, it's on you, yes.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Here's what's interesting, what if you get it right now because you've rebooted? What if it's like, um, what is that game?

JANINE: Oooh!

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* You know the game I'm talking about?

JANINE: I mean, that kinda happens in Nier, right? Sort of?

AUSTIN: It does happen in Nier, yes. Yes! Yes.

JANINE: Where it's like, once you reboot, there's other stuff that kinda opens up, 'cause you're unlocked... does that actually happen in Nier? I don't remember. It happens in something.

AUSTIN: I think that happens— the thing I'm thinking of is remember that game, where you're playing as the robot suit for a person, and the person is inside, and you have to like put them in threat, so that you can activate different parts of your AI routines?

JANINE: *[cross]* Oh, yeah. Yeah!

AUSTIN: The, it's like *the* something, but it's, I don't remember what it's called. Oh, it's like, it's—

JANINE: It's the. The sa.... There's like an "s" and an "a" in it?

AUSTIN: No, 'cause we're now thinking of The Swapper, it's not that.

JANINE: *[cross]* Oh, no, it's not the Swapper.

AUSTIN: It's like, The Fall, I think the name of that game, or something like— yes, it's called The Fall.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's good. Anyway, people should play that game, that game's sick.

JANINE: It's very cool.

AUSTIN: But yeah, so you reboot and it's like, personal force field online!

JANINE: *[cross]* Also, just—

AUSTIN: Y'know!

JANINE: Just, the irony of like, Thisbe getting knocked the fuck out, rolling around in the dust, hitting a wall or something, and a force field flickering on around her, is...

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes. Yep!

JANINE: Beautiful. Mwah! Love it. Thank you.

AUSTIN: It's very good! Uh huh!

JANINE: Feeling much better about that mistake, now.

AUSTIN: Yeah, good! Okay, I'm glad! I'm relieved! Valence, what's up buddy! Down, downstairs? *[DRE sighs]* Oh wait, did we, one second, did we resolve, you didn't wanna resist anything, right Broun, you're gonna take those hits?

DRE: *[cross]* Nope, yeah yeah yeah. Oh, sorry.

AUSTIN: Sorry!

ALI: Um, I... phew. *[laughs]* I don't wanna leave the scene, and I also don't wanna fuck up my mech...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: I think I have one more card up my sleeve.

AUSTIN: Okay! Okay, I'm excited to see it. Valence, then. What's good, Valence? How you feeling? I think Tone just walks in at this point, and is like—

AUSTIN (as TONE): We got an exit path secured. Don't worry about it.

AUSTIN: And Gucci's like,

AUSTIN (as GUCCI): Thanks as always. There's still a little bit of Jesset in... my head. But I'm gonna move as quick as I can.

DRE: I think Valence is like, still pretty dazed?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

DRE: But says—

DRE (as VALENCE): Can I help?

AUSTIN (as GUCCI): Um... of course, yes, start looking through whatever you can find, anything marked Obelle, um, anything marked... there's a group... there's a group calling itself the Rapid Evening, if you can find anything on them.

AUSTIN: So yeah, totally, you could totally help here. This would be Study, I think, to dig through stuff?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which I know you're not— you're good at, but you're also...

DRE: *[cross]* I'm normally good at.

AUSTIN: You're also enraptured and disconnected, which hurts quite a bit here.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What I'll say is, this is, this is a... I guess really, my first question is, do you look for anything for *you* while you're surrounded by government secrets?

DRE: Oh boy. Um... I mean yeah, probably?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* 'Cause that is a thing I'd rather—

DRE: *[cross]* Especially, especially after seeing that vision of like, a bunch of other ships trying— and I think yeah, so no, I think that's what Valence is looking for.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool.

DRE: Valence is like, was that... y'know, is that the type of vision that I've had before, like when I've used—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Mechanically, I've used farsight, or is that like, a vision of something that has happened? Is, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Give me a Gather Information check, then?

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: With Study, this doesn't have a, there's no big negative here for fucking up, so that's good.

DRE: Okay. So that's just 1d6, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. flat 1d6, unless you wanna push yourself, which.

DRE: No.

AUSTIN: Would give you a scar.

DRE: *[flat]* Yay, another one!

AUSTIN: That's a one.

DRE: That's three ones in a row.

AUSTIN: One is limited information— I'm still gonna give you something, I'm just not gonna give you a lot on this thing?

DRE: Sure.

AUSTIN: That the incoming footage there was scheduled to be part of a group of um, recordings called... and I think you hear the True Divine's voice in your head as you, as you see like, the tag on this thing? It says... PNV, and you see another PNV, you see like a crate of PNV film reels, and it's the Pact of Necessary Venture, and it kind of echoes in your head when, when the voice of God in your head said that the Divine Principality traded an honorable oath for an avaricious *pact*, so this stuff is all about something called the Pact of Necessary Venture, and I think even on a one, even on a limited success, limited Gather Information roll, it's clear that that

was— that just happened. Or, the image of it just hit here. Right? You know that, that the gates open up once a week, and that is when data gets transferred through them? And so, the data got transferred through. So maybe that happened three days ago, but this is when it got transferred through, and y'know, you happened to be there to see it? But, y'know, there's other reels, and the're all marked like, PNV, y'know, uh, Fleet— Girandole Fleet. PNV Reconnaissance. PNV, y'know, launch preparation, stuff like that. It's clear that this— and this is all recent, right, 'cause this is all material that would've come through from the last couple of weeks and is ready to be like, uploaded— offloaded from the staging set, so, whatever is happening—

DRE: When you say reels, are these like physical reels?

AUSTIN: I think these are physical film reels, yeah, a hundred percent.

DRE: Could I take some of them?

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely, go for it! Take a load.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Spend a load to carry the, the Pact of Necessary Venture reels, the PNV reels. And I think, um, if you want to, you can do a study, another one of these checks to help find something for, for her. For Gucci.

DRE: Sure.

AUSTIN: Again, this is a Gather Information roll, not a, not an action roll.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Because your situation— I mean it's taking time, I guess, but I don't wanna— this is happening while the stuff we just saw upstairs was happening, so go ahead and just give me a Gather Information.

DRE: Okay. Oh!

AUSTIN: That's a six! So. On a six, you get both of the things that she is looking for. Or maybe you get one, and she gets the other. Um... what... hm. I think you get the, you get the Past stuff. You find a reel from— there's a bunch of reels. There's a bunch of Obelle Night... One, y'know, night two night three, there's like eight of them, 'cause there's, this mech had eight eyes, and each reel is one of its eyes. And so finally you get one of its eyes, one of the reels that's on the footage of Past. And what you see is... the, the Divine Past in the sky, y'know, coming down from, from outer space, down through the atmosphere, and at a certain point, there are two

units, two military units fighting in the sky around it. There are, there is, one of them is clearly this Apostolosian unit that has been pinned— that the death of, of Cymbidium and the destruction of Past have been pinned on, that is the Wolf Wings, which are just like a, air superiority unit? The second bear the mark— or I guess you know about them because, they're kind of a non-approved, an unapproved mercenary group? They do not go through the Scrivener's Guild, they're called Fire Blight, and they are explicitly a crew that you hire to do damage to divines and divine things. But neither of them, neither of those units lays a finger on Past. Neither of them gets a hit in on Past. Past has its own like, defense systems and is firing off, y'know, rounds into the sky around it, but at both of these groups.

[01:45:00]

AUSTIN: *[cont'd]* No one is being allowed to get near it. And then it crashes into the sand, and there are points at which it feels to you like you get summoned back to this moment, I'm not gonna give you another damage, but the ghosts of Past like, rest their hands on your shoulders as they watch the destruction of their home again, like the echoes of all the history that was stored in this thing that is tens of thousands of years old at this point, or was tens of thousands of years old at this point. And it becomes *very* clear to you, that the Divine Past crashed itself into the sand. And who knows what to do with that? And meanwhile, I think, y'know, when you're finding this, Gucci is finding information, basically like espionage information, like, spy film roll, about the Rapid Evening, and begins to piece together who is funding it, and who might be involved. And so, for the other side of this game, I'm going to tick a couple of clocks. I don't know if you know, rivals can make moves at any time! Uh, so! What, what Clementine Kesh's rival has done, is made a move right now, so. Just, just, I hope Jack's having a good day, wherever they are. Do you tell Gucci about the Divine Past?

DRE: Oh, yeah, I mean, I think if we're doing this as like the movie shot?

AUSTIN: Yeah, please.

DRE: As you're narrating, saying that, y'know, that the ghost of Past lay their hands on Valence and basically tell them that it crashed itself?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Like, as you say that, Valence says that out loud.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And, I think she turns and says, "*What?*" And actually, maybe this is a moment where, this is like one of those things, where it's like, um, you know what, I'm not gonna give this. There was a thing here I was gonna give, and I'm not gonna give it. The information in question isn't here. I think what you get is the sense... the ghosts of Past, who take the form of— in the, in the comic version of this, like, people in dress that we would know from past seasons. Not necessarily characters from past seasons, but you would look at them and be like,

oh shit, that's a, that's what a Rapid Evening agent from, like, COUNTER/weight era would know. This is what someone from, from the New Earth Hegemony looks like, right? These are characters who are in the sorts of, of gear that we're familiar with, the sort of fashion that we're familiar with from other times and places, people from the Road to Partizan, right? And I think one of them says... "It may have driven itself into the dunes, but someone convinced it to do that. History does not destroy itself. The powerful step in and encourage its own destruction."

[pause]

DRE: And I think too, they, they probably say this out loud. I think this is an enraptured.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah. They just communicate the whole— yeah. Yeah! Right, yes! You're just like a vessel for—

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Very strange shit happening right now!

DRE: Yep!

AUSTIN: And Gucci is like— "Someone *told* it to? That doesn't— I'll take that." And takes that reel, and puts it into a side bag, y'know, and says, "Alright. We're getting out of here now." Back upstairs. How's it going? [ALI sighs] How's it going, friends? You— listen, five out of eight ain't bad. The dance is not convincing, but the fight is maybe making a turn!

ALI: Yes. Um, yes.

AUSTIN: You said you had something up your sleeve, that was the last thing you said to me.

ALI: I... wanted to stay in the fight is what I wanted to do.

AUSTIN: Wait, is that the thing?

ALI: Did I take additional damage like... words, back then?

AUSTIN: No, I ended up deciding it was destroying your other payload bay.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which, in some ways, is worse than damage.

ALI: Uh, sure. Yeah, absolutely. I... [sighs] Oh, man.

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

ALI: *[laughs]* I um, there was one idea that I had for a thing, but I don't know that it's like, a great idea at this point? I guess that it is, because there's, this is the point in this battle where there's like, obvious confusion?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Like, Jesset just showed up.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: The people who are fighting against each other are now...

AUSTIN: Yeah, in fact I'm gonna say this is, it's become risky instead of desperate.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Because now that it is Horizon plus SBBR, plus uh... plus, plus the Oxblood Clan against Imperium's Plume, that is enough to lift us out of desperate and into risky.

ALI: Okay, perfect, yeah. Yeah. I also think that it's like, it's confusing how immediate it happens, right?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Like, at the drop of a dime, everyone's shooting at them, instead of just it being this weird thing?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes! Yes.

ALI: So the... um, what I wanna do, I'm gonna, I'm gonna mark the holo-projector on my vehicle gear?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: And I don't know if this is like a thing that, exists on its own, or if it's something that maybe BING-32 is helping with? But I was thinking of it as sort of like—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Shoutouts to BING-32, by the way, we haven't seen enough BING-32.

ALI: Yeah, shoutouts to BING-32, my repair droid.

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

ALI: Love it. I was thinking of something that's like, basically a Roomba that shoots out of the Three Cheers!, and then it projects the picture of a mech, but as if it was running through emotes, y'know?

AUSTIN: Mhm!

ALI: Like, so when it's moving, it knows to do the slash run. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Yeah! Yeah, yeah yeah. This is established, canonical technology in this world, one of the—

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: There was a Road to Partizan episode that did this, where it was like—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh, yeah!

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I was even thinking more recently, the sandstorm, one of the mechs in the sandstorm had these, except it was also a mine, it was a giant roomba that could make projection of itself, and also the roomba was— exploded if you touched it.

ALI: *[laughs]* Perfect! Great! Great, great great.

AUSTIN: So yeah.

ALI: I think that this is more... I don't know, I don't wanna take away the *[laughs]* of it exploding? But I think that this is more...

AUSTIN: *[cross]* No, no no, this could just be the holo-projector, I'm good with that.

ALI: Yeah... okay, yeah yeah. I think that this is more like a flare sound situation. But yeah, y'know, it's another mech on the field, essentially, but it kind of... opens us up a little bit?

AUSTIN: Yeah. So you're looking to, what is the, what is the, to me this feels like a setup action for a followup thing, because what it is doing is giving you space, it is giving you— which could increase effect, or increase positioning, if it's successful, do you know what I mean?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or just allow you to do the followup things, like yeah, you can, you can totally do this, boom, it's down. You know what I mean? I like that.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And so yeah, I think immediately the other Flock starts trying to shoot that one and chase it around. Do y'all have a followup action here?

ALI: Janine, if you're sitting on a thing, I'm fine with this being like a setup action for you, 'cause I can set up a team meet.

AUSTIN: True.

ALI: Or I can try to do like a double attack with Jesset, since we're like, beside each other at this point, right?

AUSTIN: Totally. Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: Um...

AUSTIN: I feel like it should stay on you and—

JANINE: *[cross]* I kind of feel like my— sorry.

AUSTIN: No, you go ahead Janine. No, you go ahead.

JANINE: I was gonna say I kinda feel like my next move with Thisbe has to be to get her onto Mow.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's what's happening, I think we're getting Thisbe onto Mow in this sequence? I think in terms of pacing and camera focus, we should— we got the setup of you and Jesset standing side by side, right? And so what we should do is actually, this is the moment of like, the last Horizon unit here, the other Yoke coming over to you— or not the last, there's still one other Horizon unit too, but Meridian, y'know, showing up at the other end of the— here's what I like, I like the two of you on one side of the road, oh, moving too many things at once, not what I intended! I'm gonna move it down to this, this alleyway 'cause it's a little clearer? Um, where it's like, the... Cadenza is at the end of one block, or is in the middle of the block, the— Jesset and you, Broun, are at the end of one, and Jesset has his shield up, and the two of you are kind of behind that shield. And then the other Yoke gallops down one of the other hallways— not hallways, alleyways, other avenues, and sets up behind the Cadenza? And so, it's kind of pinned in? It can obviously jump away and try to do some Spiderman shit, even with

only one, one of its chain weapons? But it is— there is a moment here. There is the like, showdown happening, there is the like, dust moves across the, I guess literally the choking gas like, blows through the, the streets, I didn't give this specific response, but the thing that happens, and the reason why it didn't hit the Cadenza is, the Cadenza's fire aura literally burns it away, as instead of coming into the vents, it literally burns the gas away, and that probably looked pretty cool! And here it is, yeah, I think this is a moment to go big or go home. What do you do?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I know you've gotten rid of your Battle, I know you don't have a payload bay anymore!

ALI: Right. Um... No, I think I'm gonna add to the chaos of this scene.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: And— *[laughs]*

JANINE: Perfect.

AUSTIN: And you've sent this— I didn't say this before in terms of the setup, but the roomba is moving forward, is about to move forward with your projection, or move in a direction with your projection, right?

ALI: Right, yes, yes yes yes. I think what I wanna do is open up Jasset to take like a big action?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: And I, I'm gonna, I'm gonna... mark another vehicle gear, which is a rack of missiles, I think?

AUSTIN: Okay, that's your I— one, two, three, that's your last thing. Or I guess— you only had marked one payload bay before, right?

ALI: Yeah, that's what I forgot! *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Oh okay, I see what you're saying. And then, oh yeah, well, it's, it's the one that, it's still destroyed that other one, then.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: You— yeah, that's fine. So yeah, you can, you can mark this missile or rocket thing, if you want to.

ALI: Yeah, I'm like on the fence about it, but I think there's something narrative about Broun sort of digging down to use weapons that they wouldn't usually use?

AUSTIN: Actually use weapons, yeah, use actual direct damage, and also you are facing the residential district on this map. So I'm putting out what negative outcomes can look like here!

ALI: *[whispers]* Oh, fuck!

AUSTIN: But I like it! I like what you're saying. *[ALI laughs]* Also, I just wanna note, I haven't had to advance it yet, but there is a um, a Tahini destruction clock that I've had in the background, that thankfully y'all haven't, it hasn't come up as a negative thing. But, know that that's— I'm just gonna move it to the token layer now, so that you can also see that it's there. But yeah, I do like the idea. I do like the idea of revealing some sort of direct weapon.

ALI: Yeah, I— *[groans]*

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

ALI: I hate it! I hate it!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* This is like breaking a thing, right! But this is, but this is— *[ALI laughs]* I like it being hard. I like you needing to make this decision, a hundred percent! Is this a hard and fast thing with Broun, is like, I don't use real guns? I don't use... I won't blow something up directly, if it's like, an enemy? What is the, what's the internal thinking for Broun not using weapons like this?

ALI: I— yeah, I think what it, the, the, um... I wanna keep the distance between being someone who... was an honor student, and being a murderer. Um— and like—

AUSTIN: You're good at making people *feel* like they're choking to death, but you don't wanna hurt...

JANINE: Yeah, I was gonna say, you kinda crossed that line with the gas attack!

AUSTIN: But you don't wanna hurt an enemy combatant directly. I'm not— I'm, I think I get it.

ALI: Yeah, I, and, y'know, it's a bad line! And that's the problem with this character!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right, yes, yes.

ALI: And that's the— right, right! Yes.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* It's a hypocritical— right, yes. You know. *You* know, *we* know!

ALI: The idea— right, the idea that someone would be like, yes, I will go into an office, I will make a hundred mechs, I will send them to war, I think that that's great, and then being like, well I don't wanna hold a gun! Is like...

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right! Yes.

ALI: A very stupid thing for a person to feel, and Broun is not somebody who has thought every aspect of their life through, right?

AUSTIN: Then let's dig down deeper— would they have put rockets— or put that style of weapon into the mech to begin with? Would that reflect a sort of, not like, I think we all know cognitive dissonance is a real thing. do you know what I mean?

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: And, and we— I could, I could even prime you, right, 'cause Jesset could say, "If you have any other tricks in that thing, now is the time." Which, y'know. It is!

ALI: *[laughs]* Yes, absolutely.

AUSTIN: But I do like the idea of the honor student being put up against the wall, and being like, alright! Now or never, do you fight back?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: In a way that you're uncomfortable with, even though you're not that uncomfortable with the other previous thing.

ALI: *[laughs]* Yeah, 'cause I think, I mean Broun knows that, Broun thinks, Broun is satisfied with the fact that most of the things that they do are temporary, or designed in such a way that they're nonlethal.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right. Or at least less than lethal. 'Cause if you hit someone with that glue directly, they could suffocate. The thing you did before—

ALI: *[cross]* Right.

AUSTIN: That makes people feel like they're choking— we know this from real life. There is no such thing as a non-lethal weapon, right?

ALI: Yes, yes yes, yeah.

AUSTIN: But they can convince themselves, yes there is, and it's the things that I have!

[02:00:00]

ALI: Yes, yes yes yes yes! Yeah. Yeah, and that's, y'know, a thing that I wrote into this character, and am happy to fuck around with as much as it sucks.

AUSTIN: Mhm!

ALI: But—

AUSTIN: Dre in the chat, Tony "Broun" Stark, uh huh!

ALI: But yeah, I think it's also the thing of like, they... have a Troop unit, it's a standard Troop unit.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: There's— they had the choice to remove this weapon, but were like, I'm gonna be fighting!

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI And the thing that I do know is fight.

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

ALI: There, y'know, it's, it would be a tougher decision to take that option away.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: When they were imagining this scenario, right?

AUSTIN: Yep. I get it!

ALI: It's out there. Um, yeah, I...

AUSTIN: Here's— yeah, I like it, I like it. I think using it, presumably with Bombard, is desperate standard, because you're— Battle is what you would use to shoot straight at a thing in front of you. Bombard is when you go, pull the trigger, pull the trigger, pull the trigger— I mean, Bombard is when you shoot a very, y'know, carefully aimed shot a very far distance away? Using coordinates? It's when you open up a bombing bay, it's when you like, do the area of effect stuff

you've been doing? Or, it's when you just like, lay down covering fire, it's when you just shoot, without like, fighting one on one, in the way that you're supposed to be fighting.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Which means this is desperate, because in this scenario we have built in which you are not supposed to hit Relish, and you're facing Relish, and you don't have any Battle, because you've pulled it into Bombard using your magic Thanos gem, like, it's great! I love— mwah! Mwah! I love it. *[ALI and DRE laugh]* And they're stressed about using— about fighting directly anyway? Love it!

ALI: Yeah, I have been thinking throughout this conversation like, we— what if I just made it a machine gun or a flamethrower, 'cause I have those options, but it's like, that's not... the thing that they're good at, that's not the thing that they would think of.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah. Yeah.

ALI: That's not... y'know.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

ALI: Broun is a person of tricks, who is very confident.

AUSTIN: Can I have like— Can I have like, a cool thing here, which is, there's a different joystick to fire the actual gun? That like, has to come out of like a, like a panel opens, and a different aiming device, like a different like, Virtual-On joystick emerges for you to control the actual gun?

ALI: *[cross]* Oh, yes, absolutely, yeah yeah yeah. It's definitely like, one of those, underneath a plastic shell that you have to like, lift open, and it's like not even—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes! Yes.

ALI: It's like one of those flips where, I don't know why I'm describing this, but you know like, when it's like an actual like, electric box or whatever, and you have one of those ones where it clamps down on one side, and then the meld goes around—

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: So you have to like, wah wah.

AUSTIN: You *really* have to use it, you really have to decide, I'm doing this.

ALI: Yes, yes, yes.

AUSTIN: Love it.

ALI: Let's do it.

AUSTIN: Alright! Give me a, uh—

ALI: *[cross]* I am using... Bombard.

AUSTIN: Bombard is three. So right now, it's down to 2d6, because you have minus one from being scorched. It's desperate, I'm gonna leave it desperate limited, 'cause you're at, you were at risky standard— oh sorry, you were at risky great because it's you, it's Jesset, and now it's also Meridian, so it's desperate standard to do this. So right now you're at 2d6 desperate standard. Thisbe, if, if in the middle of all that, you wanted to have gotten to Mow, I'm happy for that to have happened. But I don't know what you do— I still don't know that getting to Mow is enough to help on this one. But you tell me.

JANINE: The only way I can think to help is if instead of Thisbe coming to Mow, Mow came to Thisbe?

AUSTIN: Ooh, that's fun.

JANINE: Because then, it's very easy to forget about— It, it's, I mean, she hasn't really done anything that implies there's a connection between her and Mow? I think, and Mow is also... the fact that... Mow's the kind of robot, or the kind of mech who should have a pilot.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: There's a cockpit, it's just a gutted cockpit.

AUSTIN: Yep!

JANINE: So, I don't know if they would associate Mow charging with, oh that's probably the robot coming to pick up the other robot.

AUSTIN: Right. It would just be oh yeah, that mech is coming towards me.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. Yeah, you could have Mow charge in, I think that's fun. You could have Mow charge through this theater if you wanted to, I'm just saying, that's a fun thing that could happen!

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: He's, he's right on a main street, I think it makes sense for him to charge through the main street.

AUSTIN: No, no no, I, yeah, but, they are here on the other side. I'm just saying, it would— it's fine, I'll, he can come down the road.

JANINE: Isn't Tahini destruction a bad thing?

AUSTIN: It is! Of course it is! Sorry, I moved— I moved Mow out of his panties by mistake.

ALI: Yep.

[JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: I'm gonna slide them as a unit this time, and then...

ALI: *[cross]* Please keep them on...

JANINE: He's a unit, alright.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Great. Bad. Bad. I also have to fix them, they're off the side a little bit, it's fine. Oh, I've ruined it now, it's fine! Don't worry about it.

JANINE: I just wanna remem— I just wanna remind everyone I put them there because the gorilla has a very detailed weird butt, and I didn't like it.

AUSTIN: You didn't like the butt.

ALI: Mhm.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: It's very funny looking!

ALI: Yeah, and we see—

JANINE: *[cross]* Look, it's so round, and the crack goes up like really high?

AUSTIN: Okay, we have covered up its butt again.

DRE: Mhm!

JANINE: The panties are a service for everyone.

ALI: Yeah. Thank you.

JANINE: They're a favor and a service.

AUSTIN: Uh huh! So yes, Mow is now also like, giant and running down this towards y'all. What are you, what are you— to help is always stress, so are you... I guess you have zero stress now, Thisbe!

JANINE: Yeah!

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: You wanna take uh, take a stress to help here?

JANINE: *[cross]* I'm good, I'm golden. I'm gucci, even.

AUSTIN: You're— hm, no, you're— Gucci's downstairs!

JANINE: Also having a rough time!

AUSTIN: Also having a rough time.

JANINE: But brain-wise, I sympathize!

AUSTIN: Yes! You've both been rebooted. You're both fragged! Um, are you taking plus one dice or plus one effect? From the help.

ALI: I don't know... *[laughs]* Um, I think I'm taking the dice.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, that's right.

ALI: I'm doing the trick to get up to four dice again?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: I'm gonna spend bulky torso here because I just imagine like, panels coming up on the sides of this mech that will like—

AUSTIN: That will break down the mech.

ALI: *Fuck! [laughs]*

AUSTIN: I'm good with it! This could be the big spend, but...

JANINE: *[cross]* Wait— Is my aid actually a quirk because it's an aid via Mow?

AUSTIN: It's not, aiding is always stress, because it's about you—

JANINE: *[cross]* Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Connecting to the heart of your friend, and it stresses you out.

ALI: Sure sure sure. Um... Motherfucker, okay, um, no. *[AUSTIN laughs]* I, um... *[laughs]* No, it's fine, I wanted... I wanted Broun to completely destroy their mech at some point so I would have to steal more things on this downtime.

AUSTIN: Well, this doesn't even completely destroy it, it just means that bulky torso is gonna have another bad descriptor besides bulky. Or bulky could become worse, do you know what I mean?

ALI: Right, right right right. Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: It's up to you what you do. But. I mean, I love it.

ALI: Or I could just take the three dice here.

AUSTIN: Or you just take the three dice here, on this.

ALI: And just live with it.

AUSTIN: This desperate standard action.

ALI: I don't think I've rolled above a four.

AUSTIN: Wait, let me think, did I say desperate standard, did I— It started at great, went down to standard, yes, yeah. You could roll two dice and get desperate great.

[ALI and AUSTIN laugh]

ALI: I don't wanna fail!

AUSTIN: A success on a great, a success on a great effect wins the fight.

ALI: I don't wanna kill people, um, um. Hm. Bombard. Desperate. Standard. Three dice.

AUSTIN: So you're— three dice, desperate standard.

ALI: *[groans]* Um...

DRE: Is it... do you take a scar when you fill up, or is it when you take the one after you fill up?

AUSTIN: This will break down the mech.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

DRE: No, I'm asking if I tried to aid Broun.

AUSTIN: Oh!

DRE: 'Cause I have two boxes left.

AUSTIN: You would take the scar— wait, what is your thing with Broun? You wouldn't— you would only um, oh wait, actually, sorry, I think only one person can assist at once, I think.

DRE: Oh, okay.

ALI: Fair.

AUSTIN: If more than one— *[reading]* "If more than one pilot wants to assist the acting pilot, consider that the character being assisted might *actually* be leading a group action." Which is a different thing, but in this case, it isn't that. I am considering it, I don't think this is a group action, because Valence isn't actually here like, fighting this thing? I'll allow it in this scenario, because I think you're gonna do some like, weird empath shit, right?

DRE: Yeah, 'cause here's— if we do it as a group action, part of my telepathy move is when I'm part of a group action, you can spend one stress per participant, to let everyone participating in the action use the leader's action rating instead of their own?

AUSTIN: Oooh. Does that mean everyone is then doing a Bombard action? This is— we're stepping towards like, a very strange psychic alignment, which is feasible, given that we have an empath and a psionic robot? And a person who has, in anime, the most psionic power of all,

someone who's desperate and upset at the world and at themselves? *[laughter]* And I kind of like the idea of this chaos being transcendent in that way, of it being a group action, where instead of it being— so I'll read what a group action does: "when you direct a group of pilots to overcome an obstacle together, describe how your character leads the effort. Every pilot that's involved rolls using the same action, and the group uses the single best result for everyone." So *everybody* gets to roll. "If the action rolled is a pilot action, the pilot leading the group takes one stress." Which is not what would happen here, because of, of... is that how your Empath thing says your— oh, you can just spend one per participant to let everyone uh, use the leader's action, which is three Bombard. I think this rules? And I like the idea of like, Mow and Thisbe behind y'all like, manning— not manning up, but y'know, uh, what's the word I'm looking for? Like, standing up but just, being super imposing behind you, like framing you? And then Valence, you have to tell me what psionically helping Broun pull the trigger looks like? You cannot just say 'use the force, Broun,' but like— *[DRE laughs]* That's the thing it sounds like you're describing to me.

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: Is that accurate?

DRE: I don't think it's use the force, Broun, 'cause that would imply that Broun is also, like an empath?

AUSTIN: Right, true, true.

DRE: Or a stratus?

ALI: *[cross]* Right.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right, right.

DRE: God. Um...

AUSTIN: Let me finish, let me say what happens if you— when actions get rolled. *[reading]* Actions rolled, um, if you... "actions rolled is a vehicle action— if the action rolled is a vehicle action, the pilot leading the group exhausts one quirk or adds one tick to their temporary vehicle clock if they rolled a one to three," which at this point, fuck it, you're gonna get a breakdown here anyway, right? "If a pilot didn't roll as part of a group, they can't use the group's result..." Hey, this is a desperate action, so you would take— the leader would take one XP, I guess that's normal. Yeah, I think that's just, it's just, I'll let you do this, and it is the most anime moment I think we've ever had, as three people combine to pull the trigger on this gun.

DRE: Is there still this like, weird like, smoky gas thing?

AUSTIN: Yes. A hundred percent.

DRE: Okay, I think like... what happens.

AUSTIN: Also, gimme a 1d6, Valence.

DRE: Oh god, for what?

AUSTIN: Just do it.

[ALI laughs]

DRE: Jesus, okay.

AUSTIN: Six is, six is good. As normal. Uh huh.

DRE: That's a two.

AUSTIN: Okay. The Perennial Wave is not particularly high in this moment, but that's fine.

DRE: I think what happens is as Valence and Tone and Gucci are like, going to leave, like, Valence gets on their long-range transmitter and is basically telling Broun like, we're leaving, we're leaving, we're getting out of here, and like, as they are doing that, the weird smoke dust gas that's around the remaining mechs turns that same kind of blue-ish magenta tint?

AUSTIN: *Yeah.*

DRE: As Valence's leaking gas. And I think Broun's mind is just flooded with images of like, if you hit this, they go down.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Love it. I love it.

ALI: Perfect. Yeah. I love this, I think Broun is the most susceptible to that sort of shit right now anyway?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Just a stressed weirdo.

DRE: Mhm.

ALI: Where did this end up with math?

AUSTIN: It sounds like, it sounds like all of you were rolling, if it's a group action— I guess there's two ways we can do it. We can do it the way that is like, it sounds to me that the rules are saying you should get an assist from Broun— or sorry, an assist from Valence, and an assist from, from Thisbe, but we could— *[siren]* The police are here. No they're not, they're leaving.

ALI: You're doing too well.

DRE: *[cartoonish police voice]* This is too anime, you can't do this!

AUSTIN: No more anime! Uh, or we could roll it as a group action, as like an almost... like, magical group action, because you're the only one technically pulling the trigger here, you're the only one doing a Bombardment. Unless, unless Thisbe, is Mow also bombarding somehow?

JANINE: *[laughs]* Uh... I don't think...

AUSTIN: We've not seen a ranged weapon on Mow or anything, right?

JANINE: Mow's not, Mow doesn't have any Bombard or any Battle, Mow is, is like a—

AUSTIN: Because of Valence, you're gonna get to use uh, because of Valence, you're going to get to use Broun's Bombard skill, which is three.

JANINE: I guess I haven't really declared anything on Mow either, except for armor.

AUSTIN: Right, all you've ever declared is some armor, you have four slots left, of shit that could be on Mow.

[02:15:00]

JANINE: Okay, Mow got a heavy cannon.

AUSTIN: Oh wait, we know that Mow has, wait, don't we know that Mow has the thresher?

JANINE: Yeah, but that's not a bombard, that's...

AUSTIN: No, I'm just saying in terms of things that're declared. I guess that's a quirk, not a, yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah, Mow could have a heavy cannon.

JANINE: Okay, we decided to put a heavy cannon on Mow for today.

AUSTIN: Okay. I'm just gonna say, are you sure about this, because remember it does cost materiel to change vehicle gear.

JANINE: Mm, that's true.

AUSTIN: I love it! But.

JANINE: Also a heavy cannon doesn't make sense for a farming gorilla.

AUSTIN: No.

JANINE: To be honest.

AUSTIN: What about a flamethrower? What about a— what about a flamethrower?

[DRE laughs]

JANINE: Um!

AUSTIN: You gotta clear some brush sometimes.

DRE: Mhm.

JANINE: Oh, I have something worse than a flamethrower.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: That could clear brush sometimes. Um. What would this be considered?

AUSTIN: Let's describe the thing, I'll tell you how much load it is.

JANINE: *[cross]* This is, this is also very, this is similar to like a thing that's come up in something recently, but I can't put my finger on what.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: Like, a needle cannon?

AUSTIN: Why would you have a needle cannon?

JANINE: 'Cause I imagine like, if you have like a, for clearing brush, y'know, but it's like brush you wanna harvest? Maybe there's weird plants?

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: I kinda picture for like, there's a very large— I have the image in my head of like a sort of space vineyard where everything's kinda hanging from up top?

AUSTIN: Mm, okay.

JANINE: So you get your needle cannon out to sever the stalks and everything falls down and you collect it.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah. I think it's a machine gun.

JANINE: Yeah, sure.

AUSTIN: *[reading]* "A heavy machine gun, effective against vehicles, and devastating against infantry." That makes a lot of sense to me, yeah. It doesn't even need to be a gun, right? It can just be... like, where does it fire from Mow? Also, Mow's taller than this thing, so it's just like... brrat, just like, gunfire!

JANINE: Mhm.

ALI: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Needle fire.

JANINE: Where *does* it fire from?

ALI: I was gonna say, I'm imagining like a sewing machine, like the horrid sound and sensation of a sewing machine?

AUSTIN: Oh, I love it.

JANINE: That's not— It's not horrid!

ALI: Well they're so loud, and there's a giant needle going in and out.

AUSTIN: What if it's a sewing machine as big as like, a seven floor building, or an eight floor—you know what I mean?

JANINE: I can't get on board with— I find sewing machine sounds very comforting.

AUSTIN: That's why I sent you that sewing machine in Animal Crossing.

ALI: Aw!

JANINE: I know, I got two now! Uh... Hmm. I hate that my mind keeps going to his pecs.

AUSTIN: Yeah, me too. That's where it feels right to me?

JANINE: There's— but there's, that's a thing, right?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* There's precedent! Yeah, yeah yeah!

JANINE: *[cross]* There's a gorilla robot that shoots missiles out of its chest in some sort of something that's something that exists, right?

DRE: It's probably Beast Wars, right?

AUSTIN: That feels like Beast Wars to me.

JANINE: That feels like Beast Wars to me, I watched a lot of Beast Wars as a kid.

AUSTIN: But— heavy arms, Trowa Barton's mech had, had breast cannons, that's a thing!

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Mow and, and uh, despite the fact that Mow is a real like, up close smash-y boy, and the heavy arms is a real long range, shoot a billion things boy, I feel like they'd be friends, do you know what I mean? I think they would have the relationship that um, the sheepdog and the coyote have in those cartoons.

JANINE: They're not really...

AUSTIN: They clock out and they're friends, that's the whole thing!

JANINE: I mean, they're coworkers...

AUSTIN: They're coworkers. They're friendly. Anyway, I like, I like it, it's good.

JANINE: Sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, mark machine gun. I need all three of you to roll three Bombard, and we'll work out what the *fuck* happens afterwards! We're taking the highest roll, so if anyone gets a six— alright, Janine gets four, two, two! Four one five from Ali! Valence!

DRE: This is desperate standard?

AUSTIN: Uh, yes. Desperate... desperate standard is what we said, right? Yes.

ALI: Yeah.

DRE: Woo!

AUSTIN: There it is! There it is.

ALI: Jesus christ.

AUSTIN: And look! Valence uh, everyone— Dre got a five, a two five six. Thankfully. So you've spent the stress here? For everybody else?

DRE: Yeah, that would give me another scar, wouldn't it?

AUSTIN: That gives you another scar, so you're gonna tell me what the fuck this looks like! And, and Ali, you're gonna have to tell me what this, what this moment looks like as you bombard the shit out of this, out of this mech.

ALI: Well it's, it's, the Three Cheers! Is already like half of its normal height right now? And I think that it's sort of... if you could like, imagine a mech sort of pulling itself more into itself, y'know? And then these little panels opening, brrp!

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

ALI: *[laughing]* And then the missiles come out! And then just like, it's silent for like a second before it's like, before they fire off, and it's the fucking thing that it is! And I think it's one of those ones where it's like a bunch of small ones that come out all together, shoot up, and do the like twirly stuff.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And, y'know, go down into like, many targets that they're going into.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: I... am trying to stay away from the residential area, I guess we've succeeded this?

AUSTIN: You succeeded! Yeah, you succeeded, you did not hit the residential area, um, both of the Yokes open up, with their missiles that kind of fly up into the air and come back down.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Mow's needles fly through, the gas catches fire and so there's this like, white-bleu-green fire happening right now in the middle of this thing? And it's like— we have to have this moment. We have to have this moment also Valence you have to tell me what this scar is and how you pass out or whatever and leave this scene. I'm gonna flip your happy sunglasses wolf upside-down to indicate that you've left the scene.

DRE: Sure, sure.

AUSTIN: The fire, the gas catches fire, it's this like, perfect blue-green blaze, and the dust is in the air and no one can see anything. And then from the heart of the blue-green fire, a bright Nidean red-orange fire lights and burns away the gas, and riddled with, riddled with bullets, armor scorched. The Cadenza walks forward, and begins to spin her chains. Amber Haze says—

AUSTIN (as AMBER HAZE): There is no glory greater than dying to defend the people of Stel Nideo!

AUSTIN: And charges forward. What do you do? It's seven out of eight on this Imperium's Plume clock. You need one more success to win this fuckin' thing. Valence, you decide what you do up top, Thisbe and Broun, Valence, tell me what your scar is, and tell me what it looks like as you over exert yourself psionically helping to shoot this person.

DRE: What was the exact wording of that phrase Valence heard about— like, forsaking the oath of righteousness, and taking the oath of avarice?

AUSTIN: Yeah uh, the exact thing was, "The profane state has transgressed yet again, they traded an honorable oath for an avaricious pact." Let's see if there's anything else here that uh, uh... it said uh, or they said, God uses the singular they. That they've earned my attention, Friend, assemble our exemplars so the reach of my attention may pierce this wicked Principality. Wolf, herd your flock and give them, and give the just your mark so that my gaze may travel past them. It think that's like the gist of... and then they said that their singular purpose was to, was to guide those who will towards virtue and equality.

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: But the big thing there, the top thing was they traded an honorable oath for an avaricious pact.

DRE: So, I think the, the scene is as they are running down this hallway to get out, there's like a low, Valence has like a low murmuring that becomes louder and louder, and it's just them repeating that over and over. You traded an honorable oath for an avaricious pact.

AUSTIN: Love it.

DRE: And at some point they stop, but their lips are still moving, and then I think the shot is, y'know, the rest of these mechs like go down and get blown up, it's like... that message is scrawling across like, their readouts—

AUSTIN: Love it!

DRE: As, y'know, things blow up and, and... klaxons blare and all the sirens are going off.

AUSTIN: Is it even— it's going off inside the Nideo mechs too right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, as if it's, yeah okay. Love it. Um...

JANINE: Can I pick up on that?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah, definitely. Yes.

JANINE: For my move?

AUSTIN: Well, which move?

JANINE: 'Cause that's cool?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: It, it's just for like, I... *[sighs]* I think it's a thing of like, maybe it's, maybe it's that Mow's psionic amplifier has still like, the channel's been open? Or something still?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And it is, it just sort of... I want, I want, the thing, I'll just say the thing I want, the thing I want is for that to be... blaring, basically.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah.

JANINE: As Mow swings his thresher into Cadenza.

DRE: Can I... Uh, give an idea of how to take that another level?

JANINE: Yes.

DRE: I mean, we are on top of like, their multimedia propaganda base?

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

DRE: Does this just literally go everywhere?

AUSTIN: Yeah! It goes everywhere, do that! I love it. I love it so much.

DRE: *[cross]* The scar that I'm taking is—

AUSTIN: I love that we started with like— *[DRE laughs]* what if we played a song really loud, and now you're at, let's broadcast this like, let's broadcast God's judgement to the world!

DRE: Mhm! Yeah. The scar I'm taking is righteous.

AUSTIN: Ooh, I like this! This is good, this is not one of the suggested ones, but it rules, especially given righteousness legacy in the show friends at the Table! Go ahead and uh, I think this is— Thisbe, I think that this is Interface. To do the thing that you're doing. That to me feels like Interface. This to me feels like the sort of weird electronics we've talked about before. Do you wanna push yourself?

JANINE: That would expend the psionic amplifier, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so, given this— I know this crosses the line in a way that we don't normally do between personal stress and Interface and quirks, but I think given that it's literally a psionic amplifier, yes. Expend that.

JANINE: And this would probably be a thing that would like— that psionic amplifier's put in a lot of work today, it probably, it's probably, it probably is a little bit fuzzy. It's getting...

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, it literally, and it's now channeling a message from, from a self-proclaimed god across a...

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Y'know, and tying into their broadcast stuff, and like, yeah, it's burnt out here for the rest of this mission for sure. That's 2d6 right now. I think that's probably... it's probably 2d6, right?

JANINE: It's probably 2d6.

AUSTIN: I'm trying to see if there's anything else you can declare here, but I don't think there is. Um, yeah.

JANINE: Oh wait, um... no.

AUSTIN: Um, here's what I'll say. If you... I think if you focus on the broadcasting angle here, and leave the combat to somebody else here, this is Labor. Because it's a different type of labor, it's not carrying things, but it is like focusing a broadcast in a way that still feels like it's mental work in a real way for you.

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: And trust that one of the other combatants on the ground will get the final hit in? Or will take advantage of this, if you show up that way.

JANINE: To be honest, the fight felt the fighting, the swing the thing move felt like—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah.

JANINE: Felt like a thing to do to not waste the turn?

AUSTIN: No, yeah, no. I think that you're fine. And also you don't need to—

JANINE: 'Cause like, the thing I really want here is for this message to... to be like, occupying Thisbe as well.

AUSTIN: Right, I like that a lot. Yep! I like so much about this whole sequence because it is the clearest we've seen a through line between SBBR? This is like the first shared moment you've had, in a sense? Where like, the like, phenomenological experience of being connected to each other is very clear, even if you are at completely different positions. SO yeah, give me, give me a 3d6. That's a five.

JANINE: I got a five.

AUSTIN: That's a five. That' s a success.

JANINE: Lotta fives for me today.

AUSTIN: Lotta fives! Very few sixes, compared to, compared to the past. Thad advances the Imperium's Plume, you will get a consequence here, this is a risky situation, because you kind of have overwhelming force int his moment, but it is still up against a Hallow, and so the consequence I think is goin g to eb a, is going to be a... I think that it's a... let me look at my possible consequences, my controlled consequences. Or my risky consequences here. I mean, I guess this is the thing. It completely very clearly closes off the possibility of convincing anyone that there was ever, that there was ever a fight between Oxblood and Horizon, this now looks to the world like Horizon, the Oxblood Clan, and SBBR, declaring some sort of uprising! You can resist that if you want to? But it's hard not to imagine— it's hard to imagine this being understood any other way. The effect is that this is blaring throughout the city.

It— oh, do you remember the um, do you remember there's that thing, there's a cool divine that I didn't think we'd ever get to see onscreen because it's like, it's just a cool thing? And it actually has a great name in this moment. There is a, there's a divine called the Divine Cadence, it's a Nidean divine, piloted by the excerpt Menthe, or piloted is a, isn't even the right word, the description is— "There is a box on your desk. It's the same box on hundreds of thousands of other desks across Partizan, regardless of Stel. When you press it, a smooth voice tells you tomorrows weather, and then plays you a song. An old, familiar one maybe, or perhaps a new one composed there and then, just for you. Your troubles leave your mind." And its goal is to entertain, subdue, and pacify.

[02:30:16]

AUSTIN: *[cont'd]* This is like, this is like cool hip hop beats to study to o n the desk of everyone in Partizan, except right now, what it's saying is— instead of being like oh, hey, how was your day? Yeah, I'll just put on a quick song for you, y'know, you should make spaghetti for dinner tonight, for sure! Um, instead what it is, is it's Valence's voice saying "Your profane state has transgressed yet again, you traded an honorable oath for an avaricious pact!" And hundreds of thousands of people across Partizan are hearing this! Many of them are feeling it in their hearts in a very strange way, and among them all, is, is the pilot of the Hallow the Cadenza, who is, is distraught for a moment, and a moment too long, as Jesset City gallops forward with mace in hand, and just delivers the finishing blow down the middle of this machine, just like smashing it in? It's not cleaving, 'cause it's not a bladed weapon, but it's as close to cleaving as a blunt weapon can do. And—

JANINE: Caving?

AUSTIN: Caving! It caves in the, this entire machine from top to— in a way that Mow would be proud, y'know? And then like does the, Jesset's in again, like a centaur mech, an ox centaur mech, and so does like a, almost like a little gait— not gallop, but like um, y'know when they do a little dance, like an amble, and turns back around and like kicks up some dust. And says like— "That felt good!" And breathes, and you're at the last Flock, the last of these established Imperium's Plume mechs gets the fuck out of dodge, and you've won the day, question mark? I

think Gucci uh, Tone, and a very dazed and needs to be like, half carried Valence make their way out of the Palace and out of the— or out of the cathedral to the north, and into the busted up statuary? You can hear the sounds of like, crying and screaming in town in the distance? People are very confused, and are worried worse is coming, but in fact, I think in this moment, Gucci says— "That's mostly a successful operation, let's get outta here." And everyone begins to pull back, I'm guessing. Phew! A close call.

ALI: We did it!

AUSTIN: We did it. You did it! You've successfully beaten my scare people dungeon. *[DRE laughs]* What the— okay! You retreat. There any final, final scenes here as everyone like loads their equipment up onto Horizon like, transport vessels, or like, begins to have all their shit— the three, the Three Cheers! Basically needs to be like, put in neutral and pushed out of town!

ALI: *[laughs]* Um, I didn't take that last...

AUSTIN: Oh, did you end up not?

ALI: I didn't need to. 'Cause I got— it was a group action.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh right, because we did, we did a group action instead. Then you're good! Then you're good.

ALI: God!

JANINE: I think Thisbe is, is um, riding on Mow's like— Mow is walking with, with both feet and one arm, and has the other arm like, folded up with Thisbe sitting on that instead of his back, because she's still a little bit like, woogy and not, probably not good for that little saddle horn she's got on the back there.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Broun? Do you— go ahead, what are you gonna say?

ALI: Well, I think that there's the, I think that there's a little bit of Jesset and Broun sort of, being the people who're staying back, right?

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah.

ALI: To sort of make sure everybody else is getting out?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah.

ALI: I think Jesset would do that, and Broun would just back them up in this situation as being like oh you were the, the one who was clutch here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, right. Yeah, there's definitely like a, phew, you really came through, no, you really came through, type shit?

ALI: Right, yeah yeah yeah. AND I would also love to steal that arm, that was... dropped on the floor?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Uh huh. Yeah. Yeah, I gotcha! *[JANINE laughs]* That's what I was, that's what I was gonna prime you for, yeah, you get the arm, you get the arm of Cadenza.

ALI: Tuckin' that one in, yep, thing! Yep!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Uh huh! Load that shit up. It has the cool chain on it.

JANINE: *[cross]* Add that to the front of your fuckin', boat.

[AUSTIN and ALI laugh]

ALI: I just imagine the chain looking like a fucked up necklace, y'know?

AUSTIN: Yeah! Totally!

ALI: Y'know, just all? It's just all fucked up.

AUSTIN: Yeah, love it. Alright!

ALI: And... yeah! Awesome.

AUSTIN: I left out something very important about that fuckin' mech that is sick? But I teased it once and then forgot about it, which is retroactively gonna make this whole fight way cooler, which is every time it swings that— the chain stuff around, like, there is the sound of a violin being played. *[ALI laughs]* So retroactively, go back—

JANINE: Oh right, I was wondering what that violin shit was about!

ALI: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Maybe I'll go in in a pickup and set this— and re-add it? But It's sick! If I don't, don't worry about it, just remember retroactively, everything it did, it was like, a cool violin run, y'know? Including the fire, including the moment when the fire turns red and orange? You hear like the low violin like growing faster and faster as the blue fire turns red? Mwah, love it! Someone give us a fuckin' Netflix deal, let's go! Alright yeah, take the arm. Valence, by the time you come to and have your wits back about you, y'all are on a transport back to— probably not

back to the Isles of Logos, there's probably like a cool-off zone somewhere else? Uh, what do you say or do with? I want SBBR to get— SBBR ends up together. Y'all end up together, in a transport, and like, it's like that thing of, of you've gotten through a tough thing, and now there's a moment of silence finally, and you all have your wits about you again. Is there conversation, is there silence? What is the, what the situation?

JANINE: I think maybe Thisbe breaks the silence by saying like—

JANINE (as THISBE): Operant Broun, I will need recalibration.

ALI (as BROUN): Yeah. Yeah, yeah yeah. Got it.

DRE: Valence also looks up, and says—

DRE (as VALENCE): Uh, Operator Broun, I think I may also need some recalibration.

[AUSTIN laughs]

JANINE: Operator?

DRE: Whatever!

[laughter]

AUSTIN: Close enough.

JANINE: I like the idea of, of Valence saying operator, and Thisbe like looking at them, like what the fuck are you talking about?

AUSTIN: What's an operator? Yeah! So good.

JANINE: It's Markup, not Operator.

AUSTIN: I think we get a sequence of— or we also get a shot of Jesset and— did you have more to add here, Ali? It sounded like you were about to say something.

ALI: No, I was gonna— I was gonna have Broun joke about being able to fix— *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh please, do that! That's more important, you can cut my shit out.

ALI: No, 'cause I think it's Broun being like, just blinking at Valence and being like—

ALI (as BROUN): Is your mask... broken?

DRE: Um... oh shit. Do we just do it?

AUSTIN: Uh huh! Yeah!

DRE: Do we just do it? Let's just do it. I think Valence's mask does its like dog smile thing. Um... and they say—

DRE (as VALENCE): No, but I don't need a doctor, I need a mechanic.

ALI (as BROUN): Well. I'm gonna go to sleep. And I will— *[laughter]* I will help you in the *morning*.

AUSTIN: Love it.

DRE: Sad dog face!

ALI: I don't know, do you, are you still smoking? I guess—

DRE: Yeah, probably!

ALI: Yeah I should, I should realign the reaction here. Broun's a fucking idiot, but, not that much of an idiot!

AUSTIN: Oh, it's so funny! It's so good!

[laughter]

ALI: I, I think they give you a band-aid until the morning though, right? Where it's like, 'cause I don't know that even they feel like they could...

AUSTIN: No.

ALI: Do it efficiently right now, so.

AUSTIN: We've seen what it looks like when you really push um, medical attempts in this game, now? From the Rapid Evening downtime, which I guess Dre and Janine you haven't heard yet, but lemme tell you, phew!

ALI: Yep!

AUSTIN: It, yeah!

JANINE: Certainly heard *of* it.

AUSTIN: It's rough! So yeah. Love it.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay.

ALI: Sorry to not prioritize you, Valence! *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Alright! Thing I was gonna say is, I do think we get like, a sequence um, kind of in whatever this, y'know, hideout is, where we see Jesset talking to— it's Jesset talking to Meridian Street, and also to Gucci, and also I wanna say that the Oxblood like, commander that we've seen before, Anchor Afton, uh, the woman who was like in her fifties, who was in command at the Obelle thing, she is here now, too? She has basically been called up for what is an emergency negotiation between these two groups now that it has been made public that the Oxblood clan has done some sort of terrorism alongside of Horizon? Uh, and I think maybe what you get after that conversation happens is, y'know, everyone is, everyone is I'm gonna say at this point, temporarily patched up, we'll do our actual healing when we do our downtime, but Jesset comes over and says, like—

AUSTIN (as JESSET): This is gonna be big. I didn't... I kind of acted, maybe a little prematurely? Or maybe a little brashly, but... this could be the start of something. I know SBBR isn't particularly political, but. If you're interested, we would love to keep you involved.

ALI (as BROUN): Yeah. I mean, keep me in your address book. I can't make any promises.

JANINE: Your terrorist rolodex.

AUSTIN (as JESSET): If you have any other contacts, if you have any other people you think we should talk to, I would... We, we need to build a network, we need to build something that goes beyond the two of us, the three of us. Other groups. Other groups who see that this is an opportunity, this is a moment. *[ALI sighs]* Think about it. At least.

ALI (as BROUN): You're sure about the shit with Horizon?

AUSTIN (as JESSET): They seem... If I'm being honest, they seem like a rich girl's pet project.

ALI (as BROUN): Yeah. Exactly.

AUSTIN (as JESSET): But her money spends. You know? And she has connections, and... maybe she could work inside while we work outside, we can put pressure across the board. There are different types of... I'm not a military strategist or a politician, but I have... I've lived in Oxbridge my whole life, and what I know is as hard as it is there, it is as hard everywhere else. And if I die swinging, to help people's lives, then I've done right by my own. But I also know it'd help if other people were swinging too, so—

DRE (as VALENCE): I'm in.

AUSTIN: Like, a big grin, comes across his face.

ALI: *[sighs]* Just don't die singing— Blah! Just don't die—

JANINE: *[laughs]* Just don't die singing! I love that, no I love it!

[laughter]

ALI: Please, please, thank you! Thank you!

ALI (as BROUN): Don't die swinging for the sake of her reputation.

AUSTIN: He nods.

AUSTIN (as JESSET): Yeah. Of course. We'll be in touch.

AUSTIN: And then like does a little hop back, like, not a fist pump, but like, you could feel that he'd love to be doing like, like yeah, y'know? And yeah. And heads back over, and I think... I think that that's it, and y'all are gonna go on your own way back to, back to your little island, which I'll note! For the record! As a reminder, does have some sort of safety mechanism, right?

[MUSIC — Jack de Quidt's TANAGER. PERFECT. TOUCHPAPER. begins playing.]

AUSTIN: *[cont'd]* It does have a— it's a hidden forward operating base.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: It is hidden, even from intensive searches, if it's discovered, a long term project will be required once again to conceal it, but it has not been discovered, so you are safe from this, even though you might be, maybe you've made some big enemies! I'll deal with the math downtime in between— or, before downtime, in terms of who you've pissed off here? I bet it's a bunch of people! Um, but, but, you're safe. Your hidden FOB means you're safe, I'm not gonna take that from you.

[MUSIC — Jack de Quidt's TANAGER. PERFECT. TOUCHPAPER. ends.]