

## Twilight Mirage 27: The Miracle of the Mirage: The Siege

Transcriber: Cy @vlasdygoth

*[MUSIC — The Twilight Mirage]*

AUSTIN: One week before the Miracle, Commander Pure Cascara looks out onto the Mirage from the bridge of the Beloved ship, watching as red and orange and pink slosh and blot and coalesce all across the Quire system. Of all the threats in play, it is the most mundane that brings furrow to brow. However theatrical the debut of Sui Juris, she knows that her agents are more than ready to play their parts in bringing that curtain down. However inscrutable the iconoclasts, however mystifying their machine-god Volition, she knows that all existential threats carry their own undoing; she's read the Assemblage, after all. However frightening the stories that Demani Dusk shared with her about the Rapid Evening, Cascara recognizes in the former agent the honest look of determined love. And she ran the numbers too, they would live through that particular challenge. No, it was simple logistics that frightened Cascara. Millions of people in the Fleet, the New Earth Hegemony closing fast and not enough vessels to carry them to the surface of Quire. It's like an old riddle, she thought, the wolf, the goat, the cabbage, is that how it went? But this wasn't a riddle. It was lives. She reported to the Cadent, yes, but she worked for the people of the Fleet, people who she's protected for her entire adult life. And now she could not protect them herself. She needed help.

*[MUSIC — The Twilight Mirage ends]*

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends, I am your host Austin Walker, you can follow me on twitter @austin\_walker, joining me for today's session of Follow, a game by Ben Robbins, are Sylvia<sup>1</sup> Clare.

SYLVIA: Hi, I'm Sylvia, you can find me on twitter @captaintrash, and you can find some work over at videogamechoochoo.com.

AUSTIN: And Keith Carberry.

KEITH: Hi, my name is Keith Carberry, you can find me on twitter @keithjcarberry and you can find the let's plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton.

AUSTIN: As always, you can support the show by going to friendsatthetable.cash. If at this point you're hearing this, it is probably the end of the, the holiday special or nearing it, and so you know, you've seen what the work we've put into this is, you've seen what the work we've all done as roleplayers, as, as co-collaborative storytellers, as Ali is on the editing side, Jack on, on

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

music production like, definitely would, would welcome any support for shows like this so thank you so much if you're already supporting us, and if you're not, consider it. You know? Couple bucks, couple bucks a month goes a, goes a long way, believe it or not, so.

Friendsatthetable.cash

KEITH: *[cross]* "Shows like this" is very tactful.

AUSTIN: I do my best. I do my best to, you know? You know? People like us.

KEITH: If you're listening this, support shows *like* this one.

AUSTIN: Support shows like this one on the Friends at the Table network.

KEITH: Can I— I'll be, I'll be more specific, there's no show like this one.

AUSTIN: Wow! Wow, shots. Shots fired. Keith J. Carberry. Today we are gonna continue playing Follow, like I mentioned, it's what we've been playing for all of this holiday special, so at this point you probably know it already. So the first thing we do is pick a quest, I've kind of already done that. There, oddly, is not a quest for "I'm trying to evacuate hundreds of thousands of people from a spaceship down to— down to a planet that is rapidly changing in shape and size and, and number?" But! There is the Siege, and the Siege says:

"Our city is under Siege. Hold off the attackers long enough, and they'll quit and go home. We are soldiers, citizens, and unlikely refugees in a Medieval city." Now, we are not in a Medieval city, but as you see at the bottom of the thing, alternate setting, alright none of those actually says spaceships, but it says zombies, and samurai, and prisoners, and defending embassies, we're close enough, we're one of those, basically, so we're gonna use the Siege to sort of... simulate the notion of kind of the long process of bringing hundreds of thousands of people onto the surface of Quire.

Because it's, you know, it's kind of, it's kind of similar, especially once we define this next part, which is "What makes our quest difficult? As a group, brainstorm two things that make our quest difficult, take examples from the quest sheet or make up your own. Difficulties get everyone on the same page about what stands in our way. They may inspire the challenges we confront later on, or just tell us more about the world and the situation we're in. Write your difficulties in on an index card, you can put the title..." blah blah blah.

In this case it's like, the thing to think about with difficulties is that they're not necessarily things we'll overcome, they're not like. They are things that are between us and success, but they are not the challenges we need to specifically overcome in order to succeed. They might end up being that as we play, but. They aren't like, necessarily things that we could ever overcome, right? Like, one of the ones for the game, at this point just to let y'all know, the Volition game happened, which was Signet, Even, and, and Grand going to confront and stop Independence before it could merge with the weird, this weird sphere called Volition. That is like, a thing that makes... it makes divines that don't need people and don't care about people and aren't built to help or, or necessarily even hurt people, but of course they hurt people because

when you build something without any intention to, for what it would do to a person it tends to, you know, crush people in its wake? Intentionally or otherwise. So they went and dealt with that.

At this point, the, the team of Fourteen Fifteen, oh also with that group was, Blooming, the excerpt of Emphyrean, the... other group was Fourteen Fifteen, Jack's character, and Ali's Tender Sky, along with Sho Salon, who is like a rad... very faithful lady with a katana, and some other characters went to rescue the Cadent from a group called Sui Juris who are like, separatists, secessionists, who had also been infiltrated by the Earth— by people from the Earth. Which is bad. And they, they successfully dealt with that. Or, successful I guess, is in the eye of the beholder. They learned some stuff that was kind of depressing, but, you know. The Cadent's alive.

And I think this game is going to take place from the breadth of the beginning of those adventures to the end. Like, so, or until after them, right? We're gonna end on what happens in this game, but it's gonna start, probably, like simultaneously in the narrative as everything else. And then, but it's gonna happen at a slower, more stretched out rate. All of that so that I could say what one of the difficulties was on Volition. Which was, Volition is this weird like... you know. Not man-made, but person-made, space station that's moon-sized, that it had the difficulty, the— or like, Volition is hostile and volatile as a planet, and that meant that in any scene, a player could be like, 'Oh, and also the ground is now made of sharp glass' or made out of liquid, or like, now there are suddenly we're in the middle of a canyon, because it was just constantly changing. And there's nothing in that quest where they were gonna overcome that and make it so that all of Volition was suddenly stable, that was beyond their reach, but it was one of those things that could come up and you could overcome an individual instance of it without having to be like, oh, that's gone now, so. Keep that in mind when picking difficulties.

My, their suggestions on difficulties are: Many citizens share a race or religion of the, of the attackers and those are people who we cannot trust because they have split allegiances, factions in the city are divided, wealthy landowners, nobles, trade guilds and theocrats each look after their own interests. Morale is low, many in the city would rather surrender. The city is too sprawling to defend, we can't guard everywhere, there is disease in the city, and supplies are low. I think many of those are, are applicable here, but I also think we can make our own. And I think one of them should be kind of similar to the Volition one. Which is that space is changing. The Twilight Mirage is becoming unpredictable, it's compressing, it's making how ships act weird, sometimes ships go way too fast, sometimes they go way too slow, sometimes they seem to teleport in space. It's, it is one of those things that's hard to predict for us. And, and apparently for, you know, everybody else. So I think one of them should be that. If, if that sounds okay.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I'm fine with that.

KEITH: That sounds okay.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* The unpredictability of the Mirage. Does anyone have a second one?

SYLVIA: We could... I was looking at the ones that they have listed here.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And I was think of maybe we could do a take on the second one, the factions being divided?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's interesting for sure.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* But in more of a like, it's hard... it kind of ties into the other challenge of like, with the Mirage being unreliable, it's hard to organize these ships that are all separate?

AUSTIN: Totally. Is that actually more like four, the city is too sprawling to defend, we can't guard everywhere?

SYLVIA: Oh, true. Yeah, that might actually be it.

AUSTIN: Because it's like, but, but sprawling means multiple things, like it doesn't just mean in sp— I mean it is sprawling because it's like, it's a collection of eight ships. But, it is also the fact that it is, it is the Mirage makes it hard to communicate and organize and I think we can roll that, I think we can roll both of those together, right? Which is like, you know. The Fleet is sprawling and divided on, and divided is actually really good, 'cause that way it's both. And we could bring those in, because I definitely think it's the case that different ships have different desires at this point. Alright, so that's what makes it difficult. At this point we need to decide who our main and minor characters are. Let's start with main, because you need to actually come up with more stuff and for now, don't fill out any of this sheet stuff at the top because it's gonna have to reflect something that we're gonna need a little more info on in a second. But, to begin with, who are your main characters? It's, it's Echo and Gig, right, we're not switching that up?

SYLVIA: Yeah, it's.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, it's Echo and Gig. Yup.

AUSTIN: Alright, so the first thing we need to know is what *you* want as individuals from this quest. We all want the quest to succeed. Everyone who's part of the fellowship, that means all six of our characters, all of our major characters all of our minor characters, the start of the quest, everyone wants the quest to succeed. That is like, you cannot go against that here. But, on top of that, everyone wants something for themselves, too. Their example is like, you know, if your quest is to cure a disease, one character might want fame. They want the credit, to have the breakthrough so they can have a career afterwards. But another character might want a, a cure that's free for everyone. Free and available. And that will help direct one, what they do in scenes, and then two, whether or not they're happy with the direction the fellowship is going, because that's kind of what it comes down to at the end of each set of scenes you kind of go

like, alright, is my character happy with this right now? So. So what's, what do Echo and Gig want? For themselves.

Their examples here are, unity, keep the city unified, protect everyone equally. Purge, get rid of the disloyal, you're with us or against us. Purge, get rid of the wealthy, nobles, priests, foreigners or rabble, remember this is a Medieval setting, by default, this is not, I am not writing this stuff. Protection, guard the wealthy, nobles, priests, foreigners, poor, or my family. Authority, I should lead the city, or command the defense, or Victory, crush the besiegers, do not just outlast them. But again, you can make up your own shit entirely here.

SYLVIA: I think for Echo, it could be sort of a turn on pay my debt, in that like, after this, Echo's free? That, that type of thing.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Free— That's a good one. I actually think that's a gr— I think like, freedom is totally a good one.

SYLVIA: Yeah..

AUSTIN: Not gonna write that down yet because, because we don't know. I'm just gonna write it over here. So Echo wants... freedom. I think is totally fine. Gig, what about you?

KEITH: This is tough. I'm trying to decide, I'm trying to feel out like, I'm trying to feel out like, what about Gig's sort of self-identified role as an observer can lend to wanting something other than to just see the thing that is supposed to happen happen?

AUSTIN: Right, I guess the question there ends up being for me is very similar to the place we left Gig, right, which was, the last thing that we saw from Gig was that he sent the signal of like, the like, the brochure?

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah, I pretended that it was like a fucking travel episode instead of a, the world's about to explode episode.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes. Yes. So like, I'm curious if that's a thing that Gig wants to overcome internally, or if Gig is committed to like, I want people to be happy, or if Gig wants to overcome it and have it be like, I want people to know the truth. However hard it is, or, or you know, something else entirely, you know?

KEITH: Yeah... I think that, I can't imagine Gig feels very good about sending the wrong like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Thing?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Like, especially now that people are on their way. Like, immediately?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah. *[laughs]* Yeah. I mean, I actually when we were first talking about evacuation, I thought you were talking about evacuating the planet. And I was like, and to me that made sense, because it was like, some shit's gonna go down on this planet. And then I realized that oh no, we're talking about evacuating *to* the planet.

AUSTIN: *To* the planet. Yup!

KEITH: *To* the planet.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's bad up here.

KEITH: Yeah. It's bad all— It's bad both places. It's bad all over.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* It's bad everywhere! Yes, uh huh! Yes, yes.

KEITH: I think that... let's see how I can phrase this. I think I know what I want out of it, let me see if I can put a button on it. I think... I think that what Gig wants is to keep people calm with the reality of this situation.

AUSTIN: So like, honesty but, but like. Still a sort of controlled response?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, you're not looking to terrify people.

KEITH: Right, yeah. Like, I don't wanna, I don't wanna like rip a band-aid off of anybody.

AUSTIN: Yeah. You're not like, I'm edgy! Like. I'm gonna tell you the *truth!*

*[Sylvia laughs]*

KEITH: *[cross]* Right, yeah. Like hey welcome to the planet, and guess what— it's fucked!

AUSTIN: It suuucks!

KEITH: *[laughing]* It sucks down here! There's a— there's a whole city that's a big bug monster.

AUSTIN: So like, what about like, wants to keep people calm but well-informed? Or something like that. That way it's like, it's more explicit than just honest? It's like, you still wanna tell them something.

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: That way there's like a little bit of, of an extra, or do you not wanna go all the way to informed?

KEITH: Yeah. I, no, I don't mind going all the way to informed, I guess the, I guess my only hesitation is that I wouldn't, I want it to be like a cleaner want.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I got you, I...

KEITH: You know what I mean?

AUSTIN: I, yeah. Yeah. I think this is—

KEITH: *[cross]* But I, I don't know how to phrase it. You're right, it's probably good.

AUSTIN: I mean, the thing you want is to be like, Walter Cronkite, right, you want to be a calming, but trustworthy presence. Right?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah. Fun— Walter Fun-kite. Walter Cron—

AUSTIN: Walter— Right. Mm.

KEITH: Fun-ter Cronkite.

AUSTIN: Walter, it's Walter Cronkite, but it's like, hyphen kite, like oh we're gonna go play with a kite outside!

KEITH: Yeah, flying a kite outside, on a beach.

AUSTIN: Like flying a kite. Walter Fly-kite. *[Keith laughs]* Wants to be Walter Fly-kite, got it. Okay! I am playing Declan's—

KEITH: Want to Fly-kite it's just Want to Fly-kite.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Want's there— Thank you!

SYLVIA: Jesus!

*[laughter]*

AUSTIN: I am playing Declan's Corrective, who is a character who has only been in the ship side of the game, and who your characters don't know yet, which is interesting. And because of the way Contrition's Figure, the rehabilitation facility where he was works, his, the reason that he

was that he was, detained there is private and like, that is not a thing, according to like, the rules and mores of the Divine Fleet, no one gets to just ask him like— or you *could* ask him but he has no, no... There's, he's under no obligation to admit it, and there isn't like a place you could go to find out. Like, he served his time and was like, I mean, he *really*— He fuckin served hundreds of years. And, and is now like, has a clean record. And is out and about. What he wants is a degree of authority, enough authority to help people with what comes next. He wants to like leave with authority. Wants to survive this with... authority. Gaining authority.

SYLVIA: Yeah, 'cause survive this with authority sounds like he wants to do a really good job of surviving.

AUSTIN: *Yeah!* Hell yeah!

KEITH: I think, I think the way that I would, I wanna phrase my want is to redemonstrate my integrity.

AUSTIN: Okay, that's fair, I think that that's actually way cleaner. Good job.

KEITH: Thank you.

AUSTIN: Alright, so here's the tricky bit is that we all need wants from each other, I'll just read from the book. "Your main character starts off with a difficult relationship with the character to your left. Pick something you want from them that is important to you but that, but which they are unwilling to give you. Choose from the examples on the quest sheet or make up your own. Discuss with the other player to flesh out the details, why do they refuse? Is there history between your characters? What do you think of each other? Your choice tells the other player what kind of tension you want to have between your characters." This is probably the hardest thing of figuring out what you want from somebody? I have a really good one from Declan's Corrective for Gig, but I'm happy to go in any direction, and I think the heart of this should be either, Echo wants something from, from Gig, or Gig wants something from Echo, because those are the characters who kind of matter the most in terms of like, who's, who the show is focused on as player characters.

KEITH: I have an okay one for, that, that Gig would want from Echo.

SYLVIA: Okay.

KEITH: Which is so, from the beginning one of my beliefs was that Echo values life on this planet as it already is and I will back up their instincts. But, but it also, but it hasn't come up, so I think something that I want is for like, Echo to, to redemonstrate what it is that I... thought that they felt about the planet.

AUSTIN: So it's like, you haven't seen that in them, basically, since—



KEITH: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: — since the? And like, my question is, the question there is like, Echo why aren't you giving that to him? Why wouldn't you, why wouldn't you at the start of the game, and again this can change over the course of play, but if that's it, is there a reason why Echo wouldn't give Gig this kind of recommitment to making sure Quire is good?

SYLVIA: I think... The way we can do that is that it kind of showed up a little bit in our last planet game that Echo's sort of been dealing with this trauma of what happened back at...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: I'm completely blanking on the name of the place. But back when they rescued Grand. And—

AUSTIN: Right, right.

SYLVIA: I think maybe because of that, they've been sort of shut off and haven't been as proactive in things?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: And maybe that's why?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's totally fine, like this can totally just be like, hey can you open up and give a fuck a little bit, like?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Not give a fuck, like not as harsh as that, I don't think Gig would ever be as, as harsh as that, but like.

KEITH: No.

AUSTIN: Yeah, can you—

KEITH: *[cross]* I like, it's almost for, I don't wanna say shallow, like, but it's almost as basic as, as like. Like, hey I was following your lead, what's my, what am I doing? Like what—

AUSTIN: That's totally fine. Yeah, one of the ones that comes up a lot in these is like, I want your leadership or I want your example, I want you to teach me, I want power—

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: I want you to teach me how to have power, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So yeah I think in this case a good one would just be... What you just said, which is like, you should be guiding by example.

KEITH: Cue me in how to do good on the planet.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah totally.

SYLVIA: Yeah, cause like, if we think about that belief, it was set back when Echo was super confident—

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: Could handle everything, and now they're... not that.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Yeah. And you know, we spent a long time in the Crown of Glass, where there wasn't anything to do, like there was like, they're like, they seem set, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

KEITH: Like, they're, they were like immediately willing to play ball with the weird like, yeah we're just gonna come down and live on your planet. And they were like sure, but we have to show you a commercial for our shit every time you wanna go on the internet.

AUSTIN: Right. I will say the one thing to note here is that I think most of this game will happen in space, so I think it should be a slightly broader thing of like, not just, not just like, your respect for the planet, but like.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You could expand it to be about the evacuation. What it sounds like you want is like for Echo to be a moral leader, right?

KEITH: *[cross]* It says in my thing, it says specifically about the planet but it is says like, yeah I'll back up their instincts. So I think that I, like—

AUSTIN: Right, okay.

KEITH: Cause that, Gig's job, right, is to like watch other people do their job and to follow suit, right?

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

KEITH: And so, and so for, for Gig is like, like oh, well so I decided that Echo was the one that knew how to, how to do the stuff that I wanted to do.

AUSTIN: Right. I've written down to demonstrate moral leadership, is that too—

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Is that too severe?

SYLVIA: No.

KEITH: It's— It maybe is, but I can just keep in mind that maybe is a little bit.

AUSTIN: Okay, and you'll be fine, alright. So... Declan's Corrective again wants to gain authority. And then, and again, does, does want to succeed. And then wants from Gig... like, to be shown as a... hero is strong, but as a... As a member of the Fleet. Or as a, maybe not a member of the Fleet, but as like someone who genuinely— I'm gonna keep member of the fleet, I think that's firm. Declan's Corrective, as you can tell by, his name is from Earth. And, out of character, I don't know if you're caught up, but Declan's Corrective killed a bunch of divines hundreds of years ago? He killed twenty seven divines.

KEITH: That's so many!

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's a lot. He was very good at what he did. And he has since had a bunch of scenes like, not— his first scene was like, eh you know, I'm in here, I'm imprisoned basically. And he read a poem that was really creepy. But, but then showed up in the last, in the last ship game and talked to Ali's character—

KEITH: Was this the guy that was introduced like relatively early on?

AUSTIN: Yes, he was in the— yes, he was in the prison, he was in like their second game.

KEITH: And he said, it was like, I think you described him as having peach fuzz, was that this guy?

AUSTIN: No no no no no, that's, that's Morning's Observation.

KEITH: *[cross]* No? Okay.

AUSTIN: Who has since totally joined on and is like, a good dude. You should listen to his—once his, the last arc of him has been very fucking good. This guy is, this guy is a very specific picture of Antonio Banderas.

SYLVIA: Oh hell yeah.

*[Keith laughs]*

AUSTIN: Nope! That's wrong, that's wrong, not Antonio Banderas, not Antonio Banderas that's a lie. It is... it is fuck, what is his name.

KEITH: No Country for Old Men? That's the closest I can get to.

AUSTIN: Nope, it's fucking.... Agh! I can picture his face, oh it's uh—

SYLVIA: It's—

AUSTIN: Benicio Del Toro.

SYLVIA: I was gonna say, Benicio Del Toro. If you're thinking of, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes. But there's a very specific picture of Benicio Del Toro with a beard. I need to find it cause it's extremely good and it's, this is, I got it, I got it.

KEITH: *[cross]* Is it this one?

AUSTIN: One second.

SYLVIA: Is it this one where he looks really grumpy?

KEITH: That's my guess. Oh that, did that copy wrong?

AUSTIN: That did, that copied wrong. I'm gonna click through though, I bet it'll work. It's not that one, that's like him younger, that's him when he was a hot young ace pilot. It's this one.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Right here. Which is still like, it's like, a little disheveled?

KEITH: *[cross]* Oh, okay. That does, that does look like, I think it's probably like a year later but it looks like ten years later.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Exactly. That's one hundred percent the case.

KEITH: Cause he's frowning and the hair's shorter.

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly, exactly. But that's who, that's who it is. So yeah, out of character—

KEITH: *[cross]* He definitely looks like he killed two hundred— or twenty seven divines.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Twenty seven. Twenty— If he killed, if he killed two hundred, I don't think I could even *joke* about having any sort of redemption arc for this fucking guy.

SYLVIA: I was really hoping it was gonna be this picture of him.

*[laughter]*

AUSTIN: That's a good picture! That's him! That's him if— that's him in a different version of the story.

KEITH: Yeah, that looks like him when they, what is it called when like they let you out of prison for a day to like walk around?

AUSTIN: I don't know. But yes.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Oh, I don't know, but I know what you mean.

AUSTIN: So yeah, his thing, is he came to Ali, to Tender and was like, hey. Reports and my weird near-psychic senses have sensed something terrible is coming. And like, brought her to a weird psychic space to show— basically to show Volition eating everything in the galaxy. And was like, I, like, whatever my problems are with the Divine Fleet like, this is so much bigger. That's him. That's him right there, that's the guy. Alright. Declan's Corrective wants to gain authority and wants you, Gig, to show him as like, a contributing member of the fleet.

KEITH: Kay.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Kep hyphen hart?

KEITH: And not a divine killer.

AUSTIN: Right, but you don't know that anyway. Right? Like.

KEITH: Right, yeah, I don't know that.

AUSTIN: You don't know that, Echo doesn't know that.

KEITH: But, but he knows it.

AUSTIN: Right, totally, he knows it, a hundred percent.

KEITH: *[cross]* He knows it.

AUSTIN: But that is what he wants. The thing that you do know is, he's from Earth. You don't know why he's here, but he is from Earth.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So then, Echo. What would you want from someone like Declan's Corrective?

SYLVIA: That's what I've been— I'm trying to, I'm kinda struggling... to figure that out.

AUSTIN: I can give you more on him in terms of like, what he's like to help decide that?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: The long and short is he's very capable, he is, he is like a very outspoken leader, he is a poet. He is... *[sigh]* He is someone who is very conflicted about his own past but has a very specific vision of the future that he wants to achieve. He has a cool spaceship that I think we'll see shortly. He hasn't gotten it yet, I think like one of our earliest scenes is gonna be him going to go pick up his cool spaceship. Trying to think of other things like, about him. He's, *[Corrective's voice]* he he's like down here, he talks like this.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* So— oh.

AUSTIN: *[Corrective's voice]* He's very, he's a little gravelly. When he speaks, every sentence ends with a little bit of extra... like that.

SYLVIA: So, just trying to kind of, thinking of him wanting to have like, authority when he... gets on Quire has me thinking like, kinda not trusting him that much? So I think it'd be interesting, I'm looking at the list that, down at the bottom of the needs.

AUSTIN: Yeah, what are there, what are their examples on needs.

SYLVIA: So...

AUSTIN: Or, the ones like—

SYLVIA: The ones specifically for this setting, or just their general ones.

AUSTIN: Let's do both. Let's look at them both, why not.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Support is, is, so for their specific setting ones, Support as in support my authority or my plan, or support my, my belonging here in a sense that's also what, what Declan wants from Gig? Special treatment, more wealth, more food, more protection, more status for my people. Revenge, for injuring me, for harming my people or taking my beloved. Forgiveness for past crimes, for ruining you or taking your beloved. Protection, watch my back, keep me out of the fighting or give me shelter, *or*, let me protect you. Or love, return my affection, or forget me. And then yeah, the ones for like, the general things is like, I want from you, but you won't give me your respect, your trust, your love, your forgiveness, your revenge— or revenge on you, the truth, your protection, or for you to protect something. Again to protect you, your loyalty, your support, a promotion! Your training, or your power.

SYLVIA: Um, I'm wondering if an interesting one might be like, not in the traditional sense of loyalty, but like. The sense of give me a reason to trust you type thing?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's totally fine. Yeah. And, and the reason that Declan won't do that is cause he's too busy trying to do the thing that he wants to be doing.

SYLVIA: Yeah, exactly.

AUSTIN: As like, I am not here to make friends, again, you know?

SYLVIA: I'm here to win.

**[30:00]**

AUSTIN: Type shit, yeah, exactly. Alright. So then, let's, let's add those in. So you want a, oh come on let me click, there we go. A reason to trust you. Alright. So that is, that's all done there. So now the second thing is minor character. Each player picks their minor character who is also part of the fellowship. Pick a concept, a name, give a brief description. We already, we're just picking from our set of characters already. Our minor characters are supporting cast, and some of them will almost certainly be lost if our quest takes difficult turns. Lost is understood broadly here, it might mean dies. But it also might mean, you know, betrays the group. It might mean, is, you know, put into a position where they are no longer capable of aiding. Or that they may not be able to, to, you know, muster the strength to fight or something. But whatever— If someone gets lost, there will be long term consequences regardless of what that thing is.

A good choice is to make a character who is connected to one of the main characters across the table from you, or, or who would mostly interact with them. Avoid making a minor character who would primarily interact with your own main character so you don't wind up

needing to talk to yourself. Mine is Commander Pure Cascara who is the leader of the Beloved and also the person who helped arrest Echo Reverie. *[Keith laughs]* How about y'all?

KEITH: My minor character is... Waltz Tango Cache.

AUSTIN: Yup, got it. Who is a person—

KEITH: The award winning bounty hunter?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's true, that's accurate! Did I write that somewhere, or did you just come up with award winning?

KEITH: I remember that you described him as having an, having an impossible success record, so I just said award winning.

AUSTIN: I think that that's right, one of my favorite bits I've done in an episode description was in the, as of this recording, the most recent one? Which is this whole long thing about the Beloved Ivy, which is the group that is like the rival group to the Beloved Dust? And it's like, all about who gets in it, what the history of recruiting is, and the final, the final line is, "The current configuration of the Beloved Ivy includes" and it's a redacted, a long redacted name, another redacted name, and Waltz Tango Cache. And it's like, no one even tries to fucking deny that this dude is part of this group like, he's— The first time he showed up I described him as what if Canderous Ordo decided to have a robot body one day? And slowly began to replace it.

KEITH: Oh boy. Oh man, I don't think, I don't remember that at all, that's great.

AUSTIN: Yeah. He also like—

SYLVIA: Hold one one second I'm just googling Canderous Ordo.

AUSTIN: Oh, do you not know Canderous Ordo?

SYLVIA: No.

AUSTIN: Oh, buddy.

KEITH: Canderous Ordo is a—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* AKA—

KEITH: Is a Mandalorian from the Kotor games.

AUSTIN: Yes.



SYLVIA: Yeah.

KEITH: In the first one he's just a bounty hunter that joins your main character, in the second one he is the leader of the Mandalorians.

AUSTIN: AKA Mandalore.

KEITH: The first new, the new Mandalore.

AUSTIN: And what's great about that fucking game, Kotor 2 is so good!

KEITH: Kotor 2 is so good, it's my favorite.

AUSTIN: They like— It shows up eventually that he's Canderous Ordo, but for *hours* you just—

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah. Well they never say it.

AUSTIN: Right, well they just have him in your party, he's the same voice actor.

KEITH: Same voice, obviously the same voice, like—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Has the same stories.

KEITH: *Nobody* has that same voice, has all the same stories, he just want to talk about dropping on a Basilisk Wardrone.

AUSTIN: It's so good! Oh, what a good game, okay. Fuck, yeah, by the way, touchstones for the rest of this season, Kotor 2, motherfucker!

KEITH: *[cross]* By the way, by the way, just my favorite fucking—

SYLVIA: *[cross]* I should probably play the rest of that game, then.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* You should.

KEITH: My favorite thing that Canderous ever says is that they have these, these they have these big, these enormous uh, droids that like, swoop in from the sky and land on the ground, but Canderous tells the story that all the jetpacks were broken, so we just like, we just like ODS'T'ed in them, they just got on them and fell— plummeted to the Earth on them.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* And fell!

KEITH: And fell.

AUSTIN: Oh, it's so good. It's so good.

KEITH: Well they weren't working right, so we just had to just fall instead of fly.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* The other note I have for him is I played him previously, there's a little bit of Christian Slater in his voice, and his cadence at least? So—

KEITH: *[cross]* Okay. I heard like a, almost like a twang. Like if a cowboy was from New Jersey.

AUSTIN: There's a little— Yes, it's like what if a cow— what if Christian Slater was playing a cowboy from New Jersey, and also was Canderous Ordo. And also he eats through his hands. That's the other important note about Waltz Tango Cache, he has a like little—

KEITH: Sorry, he eats *through* or he eats with?

AUSTIN: Yeah, he has— through. He has a little tube in the, in the palm of his hand that he feeds things into, and that's how he eats.

KEITH: Oh man.

SYLVIA: Finally, Christian Slater really is Mr. Robot.

*[laughter]*

AUSTIN: Oh, fuck, okay. Speaking of robots, Echo. Who are you playing?

SYLVIA: I'm gonna be playing as Myriad,

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: The ship and AI that brought us to Quire.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes, who has many forms and, but also is mostly this rad retro-futuristic spaceship and also a big robot person who has like, has like spider legs sometimes, or extra limbs. She's good.

SYLVIA: And I just wanted to clarify. Myriad uses she/her pronouns, right?

AUSTIN: I've been using she/her for like the last three arcs and I'm— I have definitely wondered in my own mind if I started with they/them? But I'm pretty sure I decided she/her early on.

SYLVIA: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna double check, because I have this written down.

SYLVIA: I've, I remember it being she/her and I just wanted to make sure so I don't...

KEITH: *[cross]* I also remember that.

SYLVIA: Fuck it up.

AUSTIN: My first description of her does not have any— agh! Somewhere along the lines of switching from Google Docs to, to... To the other thing I've been using means I lost her pronouns— nope, there it is there it is.

KEITH: *[cross]* What's the other thing?

AUSTIN: I found it. Scrivener has been what I've been using, but I think I'm done with it, I'm gonna switch off. I, yes, it is because "the living vessel Myriad carries six, including herself, individuals." So yes, we're good.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Okay.

AUSTIN: She/her. Because Myriad is about like, the myriad of configurations she can take, not like she is multiple. She isn't they/them because she has twelve different, you know, AI cores or something like that, you know?

KEITH: She doesn't have multiple verbo-brains?

AUSTIN: Zero— she only has one verbo-brain. Alright, so, let me just give it from the top. Keith, you'll be playing Gig Kephart, who wants to redemonstrate your integrity, by way of kind of showing the truth but also keeping people calm as a, as a sort of voice of, of, you know, reason and confidence, as a broadcaster. And what you want from Echo Reverie is to demonstrate moral, is for Echo to demonstrate moral leadership and kind of... show that, that they will do the right thing for Quire and for the Fleet. You'll also be playing, Keith, Waltz Tango Cache, the cyborg bounty hunter. Sorry, award-winning cyborg bounty hunter. Sylvia, you'll be playing Echo Reverie, who wants your freedom. You kind of want to be done with having to do things for other people. And what you want from Declan's Corrective is a reason to trust him. And as a minor character you'll be playing Myriad, or Myriad. And I will be playing Declan's Corrective, who wants to gain authority from the quest, and what I want from Gig is for Gig to show me as a, as a contributing member of the fleet. I'm also playing Commander Cascara as my minor character.

Okay. So. For each of three round, we're gonna follow the same steps here. We need to go through three challenges. We won't know what the challenges are right now, we'll pick them as we go around. Each challenge is something we need to do to get closer to our goal. If we fail

a challenge, then it, it's okay, but we keep moving forward. In the long run it'll be bad, it'll make the last challenge that much harder to succeed. You have to pick your challenges from the quest sheet. There is a list of a bunch of them. Which is, which is good. And then... We'll, the... we will go through the first two and then the third one will be the one that determines whether or not we succeed or fail in the big, in the big picture. I'm summarizing a lot here, but I think we'll be fine.

KEITH: I remember most of this from last time.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So the way this works is, and I'm gonna talk through this stuff in maybe a little bit more detail. One player picks the next challenge. They pick it from the quest sheet. And then they pick the player, the character, the main character, the major character that they think would first step up to address the problem. Of the group that we have here. Not minor characters, just major characters. And they might work with other characters, et cetera. That player then frames a scene. And to frame a scene, you describe what you're doing, who is there, where it's happening, what pace it's happening with. The person who picks the challenge also decides why it's difficult, so an example there is like, if your quest is to get your candidate elected, then there's one challenge is like, accusations of personal misconduct and so the person who picked that challenge says like, "oh it's difficult because of the stacks of pictures showing our candidate on a romantic dinner with the husband of her campaign manager, and also there's hotel receipts and text messages." Like, that's how you kind of do like the, here's why it is difficult. And again, then you decide okay, and I think that Jim is the person who can first try to tackle this. Welcome Jim to Friends at the Table, it's a new player— no. And then you set the—

KEITH: *[weird voice]* Hey.

*[Sylvia laughs]*

AUSTIN: Oh hey, that's Jim, Jim is here! Hi Jim.

KEITH: *[Jim voice]* Hey guys. Welcome to be a part of the team.

AUSTIN: Did you say welcome to be a part of the team? You're welcome?

KEITH: *[Jim voice]* Welcome to be a part of the team.

AUSTIN: Thank you, I guess, I guess that's what you're supposed to say if someone says welcome. It's backwards a little bit.

KEITH: *[Jim voice]* Just, just happy to be here.

AUSTIN: I've, I'm really— I'm really happy we got to bring on another, another voice, you know, to the show. I'm glad we've figured out how to, how to do that.

KEITH: *[Jim voice]* There weren't enough voices already.

AUSTIN: Yeah we thought maybe a ninth voice would be good. Tenth would be great, actually, if you have like seven more friends, you just invite 'em all and we'll just do a second, Friends at the Tables. Will be the name of the show— alright we've gotta keep moving because it's late.

KEITH: *[Jim voice]* Okay.

AUSTIN: Oh, fucking— the person chosen by the player who picked the challenge makes the first scene, again, the way you do that is you decide who, what, and where. And then we, we play through, through like kind of open roleplay. We play to find out what happens, we say what our characters do, say, and think. You never describe succeeding or failing at the overall challenge in a scene, you only describe what your scene is doing and how you're working towards overall success? But you can't say like, and then I did it! And if you do, then somebody else on another round has to be like, except here's the extra thing. Here's an important one, which is that at any point, anybody can add a consequence to something, or suggest a consequence to what is happening. You can say like, how the thing that you're doing is putting another player's character or your own character in danger or difficulty. So I could say like, okay yeah you can do that, *but*, if you do it's gonna put, you know, Cascara in danger, and she might, she might get hurt and hold it against you, or something like that. And that is, that is one of the ways that we kind of keep it honest, otherwise it's very easy to be like, oh and then we beat 'em up, and then we win, the end. And so we should just be looking for more interesting consequences as we play, and you can even suggest them for your own thing, and say like, okay I wanna do this, but as a cost of that, my minor character is gonna get upset, or like, or, you know, we can do this, but this ship is gonna get left behind, you know? We're gonna trade off these four for this one, or whatever.

And then at any point, the person who is— any point they feel like it makes sense, the person who is running the scene, whoever's scene it is, and again, if you're setting the scene, it's *your* main character, it's a scene about your main character and then other characters are in it. But at the end of the scene or when it's time for— when you believe it's ready to be ended, you end the scene. When in doubt end your scene earlier than later, shorter scenes are better than longer scenes. The player making the scene has final say over when to end the scene but anyone can suggest that it's time to cut. Every scene should advance the story, but that doesn't mean you have to wrap up all the questions you raised to end your scene. If you've shown some decision being made, or revealed something about a character or the situation, that is a good scene. In fact, it's often more dramatic to leave new problems hanging and resolve them later. Sometime you can also do the thing of just like, if you need to take some action to put what you talked about into effect, don't try to expand the scene and encompass that new situation. Either save it for later or just summarize it, or summarize doing it. So their example is "after we finish the meeting, I go the bridge, sneak past the guards, and plant the demolition charges, end scene." And like, yep, sometimes the drama is do, should I, you know, what

should we do and one person is like, I wanna go and try to plant the demolition charges, and somebody else says it's too dangerous. And that's the drama, more than the like, how you do it.

So that's the, those are the basics of how scenes are set. And then you finish the challenge and we'll get to that part when it's time to finish challenges. But until then, anybody have questions about how this works? ... Okay. So let's look at the list of challenges to pick from. One is feed the starving populace. There's deal with spreading disease, deal with looting, deal with low morale, deal with witch hunts for traitors, foreigners, or actual witches, question mark? You know, just witch hunts in general tend to be bad for keeping a, surviving a siege. Root out traitors in our midst, aka perform a witch hunt. *[Keith laughs]* Unify rival city factions, which ones? Stop citizens from accepting terms of surrender. Prevent people from leaving slash abandoning the city. Draft civilians to fight. Get reinforcements from outside. Deal with a weak point in our city's defenses, we may reinforce it or sacrifice part of the city. Repel invaders storming the walls, or take the fight to the invaders.

I realize that like, there's something here that is not encompassed and I'm just gonna tag it onto the unpredictability of the Mirage to kind of explain it, which is... maybe one of the things that should make our quest difficult... it's not just the unpredictability of the Mirage, it's also the creatures from Volition and the invading Earth Fleet. So I'm just putting the unpredictability of all of those as part of, as part of the big negative here. Also have to make it a smaller font. There we go. There... too. Okay. Because otherwise it's like, who are the seigers, who are the invaders in this case? And the answer is, it is the Twilight Mirage itself, which is changing and fucking things up, but it's also a huge ship coming in from Earth that, that Cascara talked about in the, in the kind of the briefing. And it is these strange creatures that are coming from Volition.

I kind of, in my mind, there's kind of a three phase thing happening here, and so I kind of think we should start like, at the very beg— not the very beginning but kind of like, imagine that the conversation with Cascara just ended and with the rest of the kind of people briefing. We are now like, we know the siege is coming, we know that evacuation is necessary, and so I feel like there should be one of these that is like, a preparatory challenge. And like, we need to get supplies basically. We have to prep by like, making sure that we have enough— I kind of want it to be feed the starving populace, but understood in a very broad way. I'm trying to think if there's another one here that's similar.

KEITH: I, the, another one that I think could be understood broadly is draft civilians to fight, which is like, getting together the people that would not just to fight, but getting together the people—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah. Yes.

KEITH: —that we need to accomplish things like, oh we need someone that knows how to—

AUSTIN: Yes, I actually like that a lot. Do you wanna take that? Do you, do you know who would start that, or do you wanna.

KEITH: Yeah. Oh, well—

AUSTIN: So let's start with you then you set the first challenge and then we'll do that?

KEITH: Okay. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright.

KEITH: Can— this is a good question. Is the person most likely to do something yourself?

AUSTIN: You cannot choose yourself for the first, for the first scene in a challenge. Because otherwise, I mean, the thing that you end up— the thing that you end up not being able to— it's complicated into why you can't do that, but the answer is no, you cannot choose yourself for a thing.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: In which case, if you really want, I can choose this quest and say that Gig starts it? Which is—

KEITH: Yeah, well I was thinking specifically cause I know all the people that do all the jobs, the dangerous jobs?

AUSTIN: Right. That's actually, yeah, let's do that. Let me, I'll take this first one, and then I'll set it as a...

KEITH: And then if you wanna frame it even more broadly to include like, supplies and stuff, then that's...

AUSTIN: I think it is just like, no I think that that's part of it, right, is like... What was it actually, it was draft civilians to fight, quote unquote?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I'm gonna put fight in quotes. Prepare, et cetera. Okay. So there we go, that is our first challenge. So, Gig Kephart. You now tell us— and so the reason that it's difficult. Cause now I do get to decide those. I think this part of the quest, or that this challenge is difficult because people are at this point mostly concerned with leaving. Like, everyone is just like, I wanna get out of here. They're like, going to evacuation— they're going to their evacuation pods and the refugee ships and the colony ships instead of like, doing their jobs. So like, I think, low morale is one, and the second reason is the... I think that there is, I think this is where we see our first axiom? I think that there is a strange creature in space that came from Volition and people don't know, people like, it is literally a problem in terms of like, getting around it and dealing with it. It is harassing ships and it is preventing us from actually organizing into, into a

situation where like... we can communicate well, and share supplies, like it's stopping ships that are sharing supplies from going back and forth.

Axioms are the new thing. Axiom— Volition makes axioms. If a divine is this kind of idealized version of... of what something like for instance, grace or righteousness might be, this notion of like how, how can this ideal version of what we imagine this, this human, you know... what's the word I'm looking for kind of... superlative or like, this human emotion or this, this human, I almost said ambition but that is one of these things, right? But like, if that is—

KEITH: Characteristic?

AUSTIN: Characteristic, yeah, these, and laudable characteristic, right? For the most part, anyway.

KEITH: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: And then like, it's imagining that taken material form in its most ideal version and that has a place for people in it, and has a sort of like, people first vibe. Axioms don't give a fuck about the human perspective, they don't give a fuck about— there's no pilot, there is no need for, for human or synthetic like, mortal being. It has nothing to do with person-scale problems. So for instance, the, the group that went on Volition encountered one that was the axiom Ebullience, which is just kind of like, this thing that was constantly changing forms and kind of bouncing all over the place. And was like, complete weird space fantasy monster. They beat it in a really, really interesting way.

So in this case, I think it is, it is the axiom Bountiful is the other reason that this is hard. There is just this like... I think it's just metal unfolding across space. Like, at some point Volition just kind of spat out a, a, almost, it looks like a cloud of ink but instead of ink, it's metal. And it's just unfolding indefinitely in space like a huge— like what if Akira, what if at the end of Akira when Tetsuo turns into a weird flesh monster? It was that but various types of metal, just like bubbling all over the place throughout space, and I don't know how you deal with that! But suddenly in the middle of the Mirage there is just this, this ink splatter, this, this gaseous, you know, spread of metal.

SYLVIA: Tetsuo the Iron Man with less dick shapes.

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly like that, thank you! So, those are the reasons it's difficult. So what I need from you, Gig, is who, what, where. Who, who is in the scene with Gig, what are you doing, and where are you?

KEITH: I think that I've got, and I can do, I can do non-character right, I can do...

AUSTIN: What do you mean non-characters?

KEITH: Like I don't, I don't need a major or minor character, like I can—



AUSTIN: You need— You need...

KEITH: Sorry, it can be myself and like, other major or minor characters, can it also be—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, new NPCs, totally. That one of us will play.

KEITH: *[cross]* New NPCs, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: In general, what I'd say is as a rule, try to keep two player, two major— two player characters from the sheets in every scene, because that's how you get like, that good relationship shit?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So it should be Gig and Cascara, or Gig and Myriad or Echo, and then also if you wanna have like a cool NPC in the background, like absolutely. Like, we just finished again, the Cadent rescue, and well somebody had to play the Cadent, somebody had to play the people who were kidnapping the Cadent, so like yes, you could hand off other NPCs in that way for sure.

KEITH: So I think it should be me, and... Cascara.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: And... the guy that patches holes in the side of ships.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: Is that, is he— where is he at?

KEITH: I think that, I that we're at like, I think we're... I think we're at a meeting for volunteers that, it hasn't started yet and he's just the first one to show up.

AUSTIN: So is it like a big like, convention hall type— not even a convention hall but like a gymnasium?

KEITH: *[cross]* I think it's like a—

AUSTIN: *[laughing]* Where it's like—

KEITH: Or like a warehouse or like a basement.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, with like tables out for various groups that need to recruit, like, fast recruit extra people?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah for sure. Yeah, that's it.

AUSTIN: Good. Do you, does he have a name?

KEITH: *[cross]* Actually, I wanna cha— I wanna switch specifically, I wanna go back to a, a... did, when you guys were in like elementary school or middle school or whatever, did you have a gymnasium that was also had like a theater stage?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah yeah yeah, that's exactly, yes. Totally.

KEITH: It's that, that's what it is.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's exactly what I have in mind. That's literally what my grade school gym looked like. Perfect. So where are you and, and where is Cascara, like are you, are y'all on the stage? Or are you just like, down on the floor.

KEITH: No, we're down, we're down below. No one's here yet except for the metal, the metallurgy guy. Metal— how do you say that word?

AUSTIN: You said it right, metallurgy.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: What's, what's the guy's name. Unless Sylvia, do you have a name for this metallurgy?

KEITH: *[cross]* Do you have a name? This can be anybody, as long as they can do, patch ships.

SYLVIA: For some reason the name that came into my mind is Marble Ruckus?

*[Keith laughs]*

AUSTIN: Good name! Hell yeah, welcome to Friends at the Table! Marble Ruckus! Boom. Added. NPC list.

SYLVIA: I have like this list of nouns in my head where I'm like, that could be a good name! And then I'm just like mashin' them together.

AUSTIN: It could be. Good name. Alright. So, so what're we doing, Gig? When we, when the screen comes on, what are we doing?

KEITH: I think... I think I wanna get, I think I wanna get people, like before we've even started our pitch, I think I want us to be like, like, going up to people that are, as they're walking in and being like, well you're coming.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Well you're on, you're on board.

AUSTIN: You're on board already. So Marble Ruckus shows up, what's Marble Ruckus look like?

SYLVIA: Um... I think he's like... Immediately I'm thinking like he's an older guy.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: I think... I think he's an older Black guy, he's a little chubby but like, he's still, his arms are still pretty toned cause he does a lot of manual labor?

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: But he's in his like, mid-fifties?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Got like a, a decent beard going on, bald head, you know.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Gig, do you know, you know this guy, you said you're gonna know a lot of the people who come in.

KEITH as Gig: Yeah, yeah I know, yeah. I know this guy. This guy we did, we done, I've done episodes with him like a bunch of times. Like, ten times.

SYLVIA: Marble like, sighs a little when he sees Gig, like ugh.

KEITH as Gig: Hey Marble!

SYLVIA as Marble: Hey Gig.

AUSTIN: I imagine we're seated at like a fold out like, plywood table with that brown—

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, or like I was thinking the grey ones with the foam top that like, the legs fold out?

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah.

*[Sylvia laughs]*

KEITH: Like a card table.

AUSTIN: Yes, good, a card table, perfect.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cascara kind of wheels around to the, the other side of the table to like, offer her hand.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Mr. Marble?

SYLVIA as Marble: Marble Ruckus, pleasure to meet you.

AUSTIN as Cascara: *[cross]* Marble Ruckus.

SYLVIA as Marble: Gig. We, we're not doing any more safety things are we, it's not really the time.

KEITH as Gig: No, no no, we, you know. We thought, you know.

SYLVIA as Marble: *[under their breath]* Oh thank God.

KEITH as Gig: I've seen you— yeah, no, I've seen you, you know. We've, you know, we've done work together and I've seen you working a bunch of times. And I was like, well Marble Ruckus, that's a guy that'll come onto the ship, make sure everything's shape on the ship, patch holes, you know. Fix, you know, something happens, you know, you take point on repairs.

AUSTIN as Cascara: *[cross]* Gig, I don't— Mr. Ruckus. I don't doubt your capability. But you're one man. We have a lot—

SYLVIA as Marble: I mean I'm one man, but I know people. I have people who work with me. I just, what's this, what's this all about?

KEITH as Gig: This is for the evacuation.

SYLVIA: Cause I kind of feel like specifically what happened here, and tell me if I'm taking the scene in my own direction too much is like, Gig was just like 'Hey can you show up to this place?' and Marble is just like, 'sure. Alright.'

*[Keith and Austin laugh]*

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: Cause like—

KEITH: Yeah, no, that makes, that sounds right.

SYLVIA: They've worked together a bunch, like.

KEITH: Yeah, well I just assumed automatically you'd be on board.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right, well I think—

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Gig did you not tell the people you invited to this— *[deep breath]*

KEITH as Gig: I all, they're all, they're all all ready to go.

AUSTIN as Cascara: *Kephart...*

KEITH as Gig: You know. I invited all my, all my buddies where I was like, oh they're ready to go.

AUSTIN as Cascara: *[cross]* Mr.-- Mr. Ruckus. You understand that the fleet is in the middle of an evacuation?

SYLVIA as Marble: Yeah, trust me, we've been working overtime. It's hard enough keeping the Gambit together, nevermind having to get everything ready to get people off of these ships.

AUSTIN as Cascara: *[sigh]* I—

KEITH as Gig: *[cross]* Well what would you say to also working on, on the way.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Gig, you're supposed to be a people person.

KEITH as Gig: This is what I'm— this is what I do right here! This is it.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Mr. Ruckus, he's not wrong. We need people to keep these ships together.

KEITH as Gig: Yeah. And you're the guy.

SYLVIA as Marble: I mean I don't doubt that, but it's not a question of if I want to or not, it's a question of manpower at this point.

KEITH as Gig: Well, you're the guy.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Can you—

SYLVIA as Marble: *[cross]* Yes, Gig, and I'm *one* guy. I have—

AUSTIN as Cascara: That's what I said.

KEITH as Gig: Well you just said you've got, you know, you've got people that work with you.

SYLVIA as Marble: I've got like, fifty guy— fifty other people who answer directly to me, and work with me who I've trained, basically.

KEITH as Gig: *[cross]* Well, you know, there's other, there's other people coming, like you do ship stuff, there's someone coming who does electric stuff, you're just the first one here. This is a big space, it can accommodate a lot of people.

AUSTIN as Cascara: *[cross]* Let me ask you—

KEITH as Gig: *[cross]* I've been doing my show for a long time.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Mr. Ruckus, what is it that we could offer not just you, but more people like you to get them to sign on? What do you need? What do you need us to promise?

SYLVIA as Marble: I mean... I know a lot of us got families. And it's kinda up in the air who's getting on evacuation ships when.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Yeah.

SYLVIA as Marble: So if you could guarantee at least some sort of priority there, we would be able to, I don't know, I could start a program to train up more people, and I could get my crew on board.

AUSTIN: Cascara starts nodding and like, looking down at the floor, like kind of like, these are the trades we have to make, I guess.

KEITH: Can I—

KEITH as Gig: Ruckus, can you do me a real quick favor? Earmuffs please?

SYLVIA as Marble: Really?

AUSTIN as Cascara: *[cross]* We could just go, we could just go in the corner. Like, just back up to the stage.

KEITH as Gig: Okay fine we'll just, you don't have to do earmuffs, we'll just roll to the corner.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Alright.

KEITH as Gig: We can do that, right?

AUSTIN as Cascara: I can see what I can do.

KEITH as Gig: I mean it's not like, he's right, it's only fair. Like if they're gonna be on there doing the thing, they can't just come without their families.

AUSTIN as Cascara: I believe that it's fair. I'll see what I can do.

KEITH as Gig: Deal.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Deal.

AUSTIN: That might be scene, I don't know that we need more than like— yeah.

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah, scene.

AUSTIN: I don't wanna, I don't wanna confirm or deny if we get the priority stuff yet because that would be a good way for this to fail if it turns out to be a failure, so we'll see.

KEITH: Yeah. *[laughs]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: We'll see!

KEITH: I mean, the other, the other thing is that we could promise it and then it doesn't come through.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly, totally, so yeah, I think she promises it.

KEITH: *[cross]* Right.

AUSTIN: I do think that she, they go back and say yep, we promise, and we'll see how that happens, right? Yeah, totally. Alright. Echo. Who, what, where?

SYLVIA: Oh, okay. Let me look at the challenges here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, let's look again. Or no, no no, it's same, same challenge. We're still on the same challenge which is draft civilians to fight.

KEITH: Yeah we do a full round of same challenge.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, sorry, I should've been more clear about that.

KEITH: That's okay.

AUSTIN: Gig, we each do, we each frame a scene towards working towards understanding, or trying to overcome this challenge.

**[1:00:00]**

SYLVIA: Hm, okay. I'm trying to think of... *[sigh]* And I'm, I'm posing this *to* someone, right?

AUSTIN: No, this is you, this is a scene with you in it. You are framing a scene with Echo and some other characters.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: That is what you're doing, yeah.

SYLVIA: So it's just the first scene where you frame it for someone else.

KEITH: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: And you don't even frame the scene, you just pick a character who you think would be the first person to act and then they frame a scene.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Okay.

AUSTIN: In this case, it's the second scene so it's your scene. Who, what are you doing, who is with you, and where is it?

SYLVIA: Okay... So this thing, what was it called.

AUSTIN: The axiom Bountiful.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Bountiful, yeah.

SYLVIA: So that's just ever-expanding and trying to— what's our military force like, I was thinking maybe like a more straight up like, do we have pilots we can go recruit type thing?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think, I mean. It's hard to say, right? Like for a long time, the military was, was the, the divines. At this point, all of the divines are on Volition. Like, Belgard is there, Emphyrean is there. That is all of them. So, I think it's a little ragtag right? Like I suspect that there is some defense force stuff but like we don't, I don't think there are other big fleets.

SYLVIA: I think I have an idea.

AUSTIN: Yeah?

SYLVIA: It's not so much drafting them to fight, I think, so I think the, do I wanna frame the scene first or say who's in it first?

AUSTIN: It's all at once, before we even start, so yeah.

SYLVIA: Okay, so I think this scene would be me and Declan's Corrective. And we're trying to get people not to sign up to fight, like to fly fighters, but people who can pilot the escape ships.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Cause that's sorta like, priority one is that logistic stuff, and then we can also maybe fold it into trying to find people to be fighters.

AUSTIN: Right. Where is it? Where is this scene happening? Is this on Seance, is this like, where like there's— so as a, again as a setting moment, the By and By is currently under siege in this moment of our story. Also I imagine all of this is playing out over like, days basically right, or maybe over hours, this is the first day, right? Of the, of the, the week that follows, basically.



And so I think all of this is probably happening a couple hours after Gig and Cascara did that other thing. But yeah, where is it?

SYLVIA: I think Seance would work cause it's sort of a more, that's the most, that's Emphyrean's ship, right?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* It's the second most— It's the yeah, it's Emphyrean's ship, it's the second most populous ship on the fleet at this point.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is, which is you know, a few hundred thousand people.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think that'd be a good place to start.

AUSTIN: Okay. Where, or like, how are we doing it, what are we doing?

SYLVIA: Oh man...

AUSTIN: Like are we handing out flyers? Are we—

SYLVIA: I think it's more like.

AUSTIN: Are we Dunkirk-ing it, are we just waiting by the docks and like, getting people who have private ships to like try to...

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think maybe it's not so much that, it's more like... maybe through like, connections from like, both Echo and Declan have, they know that there's like this, maybe there's a bar somewhere where there's pilots of things.

AUSTIN: That's a good one. Yeah.

SYLVIA: And they're trying to find people there who are capable. And then Keith can play one of the pilots.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. So yeah, what's the bar like, is it like a, like a Irish pub, is it all wood and like brass, or is it like, a fancy like, drink bar or is it like...

SYLVIA: I think it's a little fancy because I feel like to have your own ship—

AUSTIN: Oh, so it's like a yacht club. Like it's not like, or like a—

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Yeah, almost!

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's not a, it's not like, we used to be fighter pilots and now we hang out and play cards.

SYLVIA: No.

AUSTIN: It's literally, I own boats.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* It's like— It's like a mix of like, hotshit kid, like, pilots like Diego was in Counter/Weight, and—

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes.

SYLVIA: And fuckin rich guys who, like to go out on their rockets on the weekend, you know?

AUSTIN: Oh good, okay.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Reverie, I know a few people who hang around places like this. And I don't trust them, but I think that they could work for us.

SYLVIA as Echo: I mean, at this point what other options do we have?

AUSTIN as Corrective: Hm.

SYLVIA as Echo: Cause as much as I like my ship, I don't think I can pilot the entire fleet back and forth.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, uh. Who do we find? Let's see. They open the door and walk in. Is it, what time of day is it, is it like 2 pm? Is it like a little too early?

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think it's a little sparse in there. Like it's like, they haven't gotten the after dinner rush or anything but it's, I'd say like two or three, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Where it's like, the people who are like, not— people either like who don't really need to be anywhere else, or people who don't have anywhere else to be are there.

AUSTIN: Who do we find?

SYLVIA: I mean, is that for me or Keith to decide?

AUSTIN: Either of you, I think.

SYLVIA: Okay. Keith, do you have any ideas?

KEITH: Yeah, well, when you said that these were, this was sort of like a rich person club, I sort of immediately wanted to be someone that piloted a sort of weird ship that they insisted was called a sloop.

AUSTIN: Good. Uh huh! Is it the Sloop John B, or is it a different sloop?

KEITH: It's, it's not, I don't think it's the Sloop John B.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: That's a *very* expensive sloop that is on Earth, probably.

AUSTIN: That's like, actually yeah, is on Earth, yeah.

KEITH: Yeah. Was unclear— is that the name of the sloop from that song?

AUSTIN: That's the name of the sloop. I think?

KEITH: Okay, I wasn't— I think, right? They don't ever—

AUSTIN: Maybe it isn't?

SYLVIA: It is, cause I googled what a sloop was, and Sloop John B was one of the results.

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah. That's the best Beach Boys song I think.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* That's a good song.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Did you know there's a thing called a sloop of war?

AUSTIN: It's a fucking good song, that whole album's great.

KEITH: It's a good ass song. That song, I— my favorite line in that song is when one of the guys, talking about, I fucking am having such a bad time on this trip, one of the other guys ate all my creamed corn.

*[laughter]*

AUSTIN: It's such a fucking— oh, God, okay.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* I cut out for a sec so I missed that.

KEITH: It is... I, I, I guess my name could be John B.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, yes, absolutely, I—

KEITH: John B, and I— yeah.

AUSTIN: Is that, how you sound?

KEITH: Hold on, I got a, I have to say this. “The poor cook he caught the fits and threw away all my grits, and then he took and he ate up all of my corn, let me go home.”

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Good! Great.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: I feel like we’ve had a lot of dudes, could you be Joan B instead?

KEITH: I could be Joan B, yeah.

AUSTIN: Be Joan B. Also, we don’t know if it’s Joan space B or if it’s Joan-bee.

KEITH: Joan-bee?

AUSTIN: Like, does the B roll in, I don’t know?

KEITH: Yeah, it think it’s Joan-bee, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. What’s she look like?

KEITH: *[cross]* Maybe B Joan is a title.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Great.

KEITH: *[laughs]* I’m thinking... sort of like. Like, shoulder-length brown hair, sort of like in a, I don’t even know what the name of this haircut is, but it’s just like, you know, clean from end to end, and it just goes around, like if it went all the way around it would look like a super long bowl cut, but it’s—

AUSTIN: Gotcha. But it doesn’t go all the way around.

KEITH: But it doesn’t go all the way around, it stops with bangs.

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay. What’s she doing when we get to the bar?

KEITH: Fiddling with really ostentatious glasses.

AUSTIN: Is she— how old is she, is she older and rich, or is she like a young like, rich girl.

KEITH: Older and rich. I'm gonna say like fifty-five, sixty.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Okay. Alright, lots of fifty year olds. I'm glad that we're all, yes, hell yes Divine Fleet! Fifty year olds don't retire. You don't get to retire early, even in this utopia! I mean, she might be retired, actually.

KEITH: Yeah.

KEITH as Joan-bee: I'm retired.

SYLVIA: *[laughs]* Fuck.

*[Austin sighs]*

AUSTIN as Corrective: Do you wanna take the lead?

KEITH as Joan-bee: *[cross]* I only take the sloop out on the weekends now.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Of— of course, Joan-bee, but...

SYLVIA as Echo: So, so what if instead of taking it out on the weekends you took it out on a... evacuation mission so a bunch of people on these ships don't die, eh?

KEITH as Joan-bee: Oh, I guess I could, I thought that I'd just be tucked away in the ship with the rest of you.

AUSTIN as Corrective: How many people can fit in your ship? Are we talking—

KEITH as Joan-bee: It's a sloop, so it's not, you know.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Apologies, on your sloop. How many people can you fit on your sloop?

KEITH: How many people fit in a sloop...

AUSTIN: She googles.

*[laughter]*

KEITH: A sloop is not very big.

AUSTIN: Okay, good!

KEITH: But—

SYLVIA: Could be a sloop of war.

KEITH: No, you know what, yeah, sloops look like they go, it's the, it's the shape of the sails not the size of the boat, so it can—

AUSTIN: Ah.

KEITH: Yeah. That's what it looks like to me, cause some of these look like personal sailboats, and one of these is enormous.

AUSTIN: Yes. Right.

KEITH: So, I'm gonna say...

KEITH as Joan-bee: Oh, my sloop can fit at least thirty-five. Comfortably. Very comfortably.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Comfort isn't a major issue.

KEITH as Joan-bee: Then, forty-five.

SYLVIA as Echo: How many could you fit uncomfortably?

KEITH as Joan-bee: Forty-five uncomfortably, seventy very uncomfortably.

SYLVIA as Echo: Okay so seventy, good, that's— It's better than nothing.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Are you a... faithful member of the Fleet, Joan-bee?

KEITH as Joan-bee: Faith— faithful to the Fleet or faithful to other things in the Fleet?

AUSTIN as Corrective: I think I have my answer. How many friends do you have with the sloops and other sorts of ships. Corvettes?

KEITH as Joan-bee: *[cross]* Comfortable friends or uncomfortable friends?

AUSTIN as Corrective: Either.

KEITH as Joan-bee: Thirty-five comfortable, seventy very uncomfortable. *[Austin laughs]*

AUSTIN as Corrective: If ever there was a time to call in favors and get over your personal... probably—

KEITH as Joan-bee: Seventy, then.

AUSTIN as Corrective: What'll it take to get them to contribute?

KEITH as Joan-bee: I have a mailing list.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Are we talking— you have a, you want? You have a mailing... list.

KEITH as Joan-bee: Yeah. If I sent out a mailing list I'm sure we'd get a majority. Many owe me favors, many I owe favors to, and wouldn't mind doubling up.

AUSTIN as Corrective: How long— how long is a response normally to this... mailing list?

KEITH as Joan-bee: Thirty-two hours.

AUSTIN as Corrective: *[sighs]* Can you make it, can you put—

KEITH as Joan-bee: Thirty-two hours tops.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Can you put "urgent" in the subject line.

KEITH as Joan-bee: Oh. Yes.

AUSTIN as Corrective: So that people see it and click on it quicker.

KEITH as Joan-bee: Mhm. Yes.

AUSTIN as Corrective: That might help a bit.

KEITH as Joan-bee: I can do that. Then... twelve.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Can you do it where you make it so it sends it and it goes right to the person's name and you use the name in the subject, that way she thinks it's a personal letter from you, and not just a mass mail.

KEITH as Joan-bee: I delete those straight away. I delete all those, I can tell, so I wouldn't do that. They can tell, this is my mailing list, I always... I get read receipts on those, and they are always read.

SYLVIA as Echo: I have no idea what the fuck you two are talking about right now.

KEITH as Joan-bee: Email. Email!

AUSTIN as Corrective: Negotiation. And you'll do this for us? For the Fleet?

KEITH as Joan-bee: When we get there, can you, you know. Soup up my sloop? Can you soup the sloop?

AUSTIN as Corrective: You want a souped sloop.

SYLVIA as Echo: I do know a very capable mechanic down on the planet.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Oh?

KEITH as Joan-bee: If you soup my sloop, if I have the fastest sloop on our new home, I will help you.

SYLVIA as Echo: Yeah, I think I can see what I can do there.

KEITH as Joan-bee: Then you have a deal.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Promises are a thing, Echo. They are a big thing.

SYLVIA as Echo: Yeah...

AUSTIN: I think, as we're walking away, like, we shook hands and are closing the door behind us, Declan's Corrective takes out a cigarette, just starts smoking.

AUSTIN as Corrective: You make a lot of promises?

SYLVIA as Echo: Only when it saves people from getting killed.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Huh. Alright. Good to know.

SYLVIA as Echo: Besides. The guy I know is really talented.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Does he work on boats?

SYLVIA as Echo: That I'm gonna have to ask him. *[Austin laughs]* But I think Gig knows a boat guy, so we can... They can figure it out.

AUSTIN: Alright, I think that's scene.

SYLVIA: Just, an email to Surge, being like 'hey what do you know about boats?'

AUSTIN: Can you do boats?

KEITH: Can you do boats?

AUSTIN: And then so like I think we see, just a hard cut from that to this new scene, which is that opens just like, Declan stepping on a cigarette on the, on the bow of the either the Myriad— Maybe he had Echo take y'all there. But I think it's Declan's Corrective, Echo Reverie, and Gig Kephart. Oh, you know what? I actually want it to be Waltz. I want it to be like, Gig and Waltz can both be there, you just don't talk to each other, obviously?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: But I want the, the notion here is—

KEITH: Unless I did talk to each other.

AUSTIN: You should not talk to each other. You should not.

SYLVIA: *[cross] [laughing]* Please don't.

AUSTIN: The book explicitly says not to do it. And this is—

KEITH: To be fair, the book— the book implies that the reason not to do it is because people can't handle it.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. The people in this case might be the listeners. Or me. *[laughter]* The deal that Declan's Corrective has made with Cascara is he's like, I wanna take people somewhere, I wanna take all of you somewhere. I think in general this has been the promise, the reason he's able to contribute to this group at all is he said like, by the end of the first day, I'll make my, my presence worth your while, I promise. And at some point he gets a— and in fact maybe the end of the last scene is while he's smoking, his like, he looks at his watch and he has like, a Dick Tracy watch? Not like an iwatch, not an Apple watch, not a Motorola smartwatch. He just has a Dick Tracy thing and it just *[beeping]*.

KEITH: So he has the old school idea of a future watch.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly.

KEITH: Got it.

AUSTIN as Corrective: It's time.

AUSTIN: And he drops the cigarette and steps on it. And then when we, it like, when it zooms in or it cuts to the close up of him stepping on a cigarette, it is then revealed that now the cigarette is on the side of an asteroid that he is stepping out a butt of a cigarette on an asteroid and then



it goes to a wide shot of the three of us in space suits walking down an asteroid somewhere in the Twilight Mirage. We just get a really good wide shot of the three silhouetted figures against the like, purple and blue mirage.

AUSTIN as Corrective: This way. You're gonna like what you see.

AUSTIN: Don't ask how he was smoking on this asteroid, but he was doing it. And he leads you a little bit further.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Mr. Kephart, is that eye on?

KEITH as Gig: Eye's always on.

AUSTIN as Corrective: You have any questions for your show?

KEITH as Gig: Um. Why are we on a asteroid?

AUSTIN as Corrective: Cause I wanna contribute to the evacuation effort. And I have something to help.

KEITH as Gig: What do you got?

AUSTIN as Corrective: A big old boat.

AUSTIN: And like he turns the corner, and there like, the asteroid ducks into like a, an alcove or like, there's like a divot inside the asteroid, almost like a, not a cavern but a... canyon in the middle of the asteroid. And there, buried in the middle of the canyon is what just looked like a castle at first? It is like, in fact I'll just draw it very quickly in terms of shape. It's sort of like a big diamond, with like a very, the bottom half of the diamond is way longer than the top half. I fucked up the very end of that, one sec let me try this again. There we go. Like that, basically.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: So it's like a long diamond where the top is much like, wider than the bottom. The bottom is long and thin.

KEITH: So sort of like Duck. This is like a Duck diamond.

AUSTIN: *[sighs]* Oh my God. I guess, yeah. And then it's like, a courtyard. There's like a courtyard of stonework and, and like. It looks like a castle. It looks like a courtyard and a castle on the bottom half with like, stones that you can walk around. And then the top part of it is like, all like, grey masonry with like, vines and stuff crawling all over it. In fact, I think the whole thing is kind of covered in vines at this point. And there are two huge wooden doors. And also two huge cannons just kind of like, poking out the kind of, at the top of the courtyard pointing forwards, down the bottom towards the nose of the ship. The nose is like the long half of the diamond. You know, there are parapets and stuff on the castle walls that also have like, cannons and stuff pointed out of them. And the whole backside of it is covered in this ivy. And *then* at the very back, like, it kind of goes up a level and then up another level, and at the very very back

there is an unblossomed bud. Like a, a flower bud that's like popping off of the top, basically. And he says...

AUSTIN as Corrective: That's an old ship. The Lord in the Bramble. It's my ship.

AUSTIN: And, and like. Begins to just walk across this long courtyard towards these big double doors.

KEITH as Gig: Wait, is it a ship or a boat?

AUSTIN as Corrective: A boat is a ship, it's military term.

KEITH as Gig: But is it like a spaceship?

AUSTIN as Corrective: Come inside.

AUSTIN: And he takes you inside the Lord in the Bramble. And it is, on the inside, I don't think it's just a castle inside. I think that it's like... God, what's it look like on the inside? I imagine like, it's still— should feel like the world has... what's a spaceship look like in Dick Tracy? Is that just like retrofuturist or is it like?

KEITH: I think it's like, I think it's flying saucer is what it looks like.

AUSTIN: Oh no, cause there are flying cars and shit in Dick Tracy.

KEITH: Yeah, oh yeah.

AUSTIN: There's a space coupe here. I think it's, I think it's like. I think in my mind it looks like, like a 1970s like, piece of technology inside?

KEITH: Does it look like my old car the Buick Reatta?

AUSTIN: What is, what? The Buick what?

KEITH: On the inside. Remember that was the touchscreen car, the Buick Reatta?

AUSTIN: How do you spell Reatta? Oh, yes yes yes.

KEITH: *[cross]* R-e-a-t-t-a.

AUSTIN: But is the touchscreen in that car?

KEITH: There's a touchscreen in the car that is from 1989, and it is just like a green monochromatic— I'll give you, I'll send you a picture.

AUSTIN: Oh yes. Yes, it absolutely is.

KEITH: It's that.

AUSTIN: Yes, I see it. Yeah. I think that that's, like you open the doors and then it's just like, green touchscreen inside. You know what? Not a touchscreen, I wanna get away from touchscreens. This has been like my whole thing.

KEITH: Well it doesn't have to be a touchscreen but like, just the green monochromatic like, flickery CRT.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, yeah. What if it's not monochrom— what if it's monochromatic but not like, not LCD or LED or not, whatever this is, not CRT but if its like—

KEITH: CRT?

AUSTIN: Yeah, what if it's not even a CRT, what if it's like, not e-ink but—

KEITH: Hologram monochromatic?

AUSTIN: No, like, calculator monochromatic. Like, black on grey on the inside?

KEITH: Oh, okay. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Where it's not even giving up any, any light. It's just, or like it's black on grey like an ebook is, it's like e-ink inside. I still wanna know what the furnishing is like, though. I feel like it's... what's a space castle look like that isn't just a corny castle on the inside. You know? It's not just Game of Thrones in there.

KEITH: No. Red leather?

AUSTIN: It could be red leather.

KEITH: Red like plush, like chairs like recliners?

AUSTIN: I could see that. What are the, what are the walls like?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Murals or something?

AUSTIN: You know what it's actually like inside? It's like a nice hotel.

SYLVIA: Oh, okay.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's like a hotel lobby, like the front room is like, it's so it does have the sort of vibe of like, a castle in the sense that like, oh it's nice, it's plush carpeting, there's a reception desk. There is just like, there are people in here, also. He opens the door and there are dozens of people in here. It's a wooden door, it looks like a wooden door, and it opens up and it's an airlock and the door seals behind us and there's like a plush red carpet on the ground. And you open up, and then it closes and like, it pressurizes and he opens the second pair of doors and inside are a couple dozen people. And like, someone comes over and is like, "Welcome, Mr. Corrective, come right this way." And it's just like a group of people who he has been working with to prepare this ship from behind bars effectively, for years.

AUSTIN as Corrective: It's not much, but it can hold more than seventy comfortably.

KEITH: Just quick out of character, I do wanna say that seventy times seventy is 4,900, so.

AUSTIN: That's pretty good. Except—

KEITH: That's pretty good.

AUSTIN: We did talk about hundreds of thousands of people. So...

KEITH: I guess in my defense for that then is, I, I heard Sylvia say fighter pilots so I was, yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh, right right right.

SYLVIA: Yeah. I think some sub group of that will be fighter pilots, right? But the...

KEITH: Oh, okay, So I wasn't expecting to have, when I was answering the question I wasn't expecting to like, be helping carry people.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. No, I think that was the honest answer, though, I think that's a better answer than oh yeah we can all carry seven thousand people, like no you can't!

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Why would you have a boat— why would you have a ship that could carry seven thousand people? Of course you would have a ship that could carry seventy people.

KEITH: All of this lady and her sloop buddies can carry about five thousand.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right, right, but like, we'll see what happens here, but maybe this is how you solve the question of priority, right? Is, again, we'll have to see, but I think again that's basically the scene, right is like, alright so between, now we have, what we know we have is we have

Declan's group of people, the kind of like sleeper cell that he's been building. We have Echo Reverie and... connection to the rich people who have their own private boats, and we have Gig Kephart's connection to Marble Ruckus and, and Marble Ruckus' whole... collection of engineers.

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah. And other builders and fixers of junk.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. Alright.

SYLVIA: Let me tell you, when we started this campaign I didn't expect "Echo Reverie's connection to the rich people" to be a thing that ever got said.

*[Keith laughs]*

AUSTIN: No, it's actually a question like, does Echo know them because you, when you do dirt, when you do criminal shit, like you get to know some rich people?

SYLVIA: Yeah, for sure. Like.

AUSTIN: Okay. Like you've run parcels here?

SYLVIA: Also a thing too where like, we haven't, like I always make vague references to it, but Echo's family isn't necessarily like, like poor or anything.

AUSTIN: True.

SYLVIA: It's just that Echo is not connected to that.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Alright, so, we've successfully done this. I still think e-ink, also, I think hotel lobby and it's a hotel inside basically? But there are still like, instead of paintings it's e-ink paintings that do shuffle and change from one thing to the next thing? Or even they just like refresh at a really slow rate and slowly transform from one painting to another, basically? Alright, so. It is time for our first challenge draw. We begin—the way this works is that we're gonna put a bunch of stones into a cup and then we're gonna draw stones out. Again, it's gonna be white stones which are good, red stones which are bad. We start with no stones in the pool.

So. We're putting a bunch of stones in a cup, if we draw red, bad, if we draw white, good. We draw two stones, the order that they come out is important so like, if you draw a white stone and a red stone one thing happens, if you draw a red stone and a white stone something different happens. The way this works is the first thing we do is we put one white stone and one red stone in the cup. So imagine we've done that. I'm gonna do this with dice, but you'll see how this works in second. Then, each player takes two red dice into their hands. If your main character, so Gig, Echo, Declan's Corrective, is unhappy about the path the fellowship has taken, hold one red stone. If your main character actually wants the quest to fail, hold two red

stones, otherwise hold no red stones. At this point type what we're gonna do, but don't send it. Just type it. Maximum two stones, even if the answer is yes to both, you decide secretly—

SYLVIA: Should we put a number, or?

AUSTIN: Uh, write like, 'one red stone', 'two red stone', 'zero red stones', or 'one red' 'two red' 'zero red' or something like that.

SYLVIA: Okay, thank you.

AUSTIN: Then, decide secretly, reveal simultaneously. If your character put in stone explain why. So on three, ready to reveal? One, two, three. No red from anybody. So far so good.

SYLVIA: Ay!

AUSTIN: Nice work. Alright. Then, second. As a player, do you think the fellowship did what was necessary to succeed at the challenge. Hold white if yes, red if no. So again, the challenge was to draft civilians to quote unquote fight, prepare, et cetera. If yes add white, if no hold red. And again, this is as a player, not as a character.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Your character can be like "Yeah, we did it!" But as a player, honestly, do you think that we did what was necessary to draft civilians needed to fight. Tell me when you're ready.

KEITH: Ready.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think I'm ready.

AUSTIN: Three, two, one, go. Keith said no, so does that mean red or is it nothing?

KEITH: No, that means red, yeah.

AUSTIN: It means yes red?

KEITH: Yes red.

AUSTIN: No we did not prepare. Alright, so that's one red.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Alright, so you think that we needed to do more than this, for sure.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, alright. So then one, two red, one the default red, two the red that you just added. And then three white. Because one white from, from me just now, Sylvia you also revealed white.

SYLVIA: Yes.

AUSTIN: And then the default white so that means that there are two red, and three white. So that means that I'm gonna roll a 1d5 and the way this works is one and two are gonna be red, three four five are going to be white. Gonna make sure the math is right, I think it is, one two, yep, that looks right to me. So. We're gonna hit, roll 1d5 and then the one and the two are red, the three four five are white. It's gonna take forever even though I just hit enter. Three four five, white, okay, so that means first one is a white, and then the second one, now I'm gonna roll again, but now I'm only gonna roll 1d4 because we've pulled one of the white out, right? We've pulled a white token out.

KEITH: *[cross]* Right, so it's—

AUSTIN: So one two red—

KEITH: So it's one and two are red, three and four are white?

AUSTIN: Correct.

KEITH: Got it.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a red. One and two, that's a two. Alright, so we got a white and a red. That's interesting. Alright, this is our first, this might be our first failed challenge in the entire thing so far. Alright.

SYLVIA: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: So white and red... you lose one character and you lose the challenge. Which is bad.

KEITH: That's really bad for white and then red!

AUSTIN: Red red is way worse. Red red is, somebody—

KEITH: What's red and then white?

AUSTIN: Red and then white is you lose a character but you win the challenge. So you want it that way instead, that would be ideal. That would be better.

KEITH: That's bizarre. That's— I feel like white, starting with the white would be the better one.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* It's character, then challenge, you know?

KEITH: Okay, that's fair.

AUSTIN: That's just the way it goes. Red red is a character betrays or is betrayed by the challenge, or the fellowship. Alright so that is no, I'm gonna mark an X next to this first one, this is bad, this is a bad setup. Alright. There we go. So what happens here, describe the outcome of your challenge to match the result of your draw. If this was the third challenge you describe how the end of the entire quest goes obviously. If characters were lost, agree as a group who it is that, who it is and what had happened. It can be a main or a minor character, but the player losing the character has final say over what happened to them. If the group absolutely cannot agree who is lost, it defaults to one of the characters of the player who picked the challenge. It should be a minor character probably at this point?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because we haven't gotten to dig into any of our wants from each other yet. My gut says Myriad or... Waltz is lost in some sequence that follows this, like maybe trying to, like okay, here's my thought is the scene that unfurls here is, alright, in order to get these people, in order to get the engineers on board, we need to get the families down onto the planet. Right? And maybe the sloops aren't enough, like.

KEITH: That's why I— that's why I picked red anyway.

**[1:30:00]**

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, definitely, right? And like, the sloops, the sloop crew like just can't pull it together. And I think, you know, one of two things happen here. One, we could do, so the thing that failed is we did not successfully draft civilians to fight, slash prepare. Which means, it sounds to me like we don't get, either the rich people don't show up, or the the Marble Ruckus and crew are disappointed, we're not able to fulfill the promise we made, so they don't end up working for us. It is Twilight Mirage, so I don't really like the notion of like, and then seven thousand people died, necessarily?

KEITH: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: But it might be a thing where—

KEITH: I think, my idea was that the failure was that like, less people fit.



AUSTIN: They're just the, rich people were all over exaggerating?

KEITH: Or the, some of them don't show up, or some of them like, had promises that were like, I bet some of the other people were like, I'll only do it if I can have the fastest sloop, and it's like, okay we already promised someone else the fastest sloop.

AUSTIN: Right, right. The other thing that's interesting is like, we're... we've started talking about them as rich people which means based on what we've already described how the fleet works is if they're rich, then they're people who're doing business outside of the fleet, right? They are making money somewhere else in the galaxy and using it to be rich inside the fleet where all of their needs are already taken care of, so fuck 'em.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What were you gonna say, Sylvia?

SYLVIA: I was gonna say, we could tie it into that, if we wanna lose Myriad, we could basically make it so she has to take on duties as a passenger vessel.

AUSTIN:[*cross*] Right, right. I think that's totally fine.

SYLVIA: [*cross*] For us. And that's why she's not available.

AUSTIN: Yeah that like, she, she ends up like, needing to go off to go do that. It might be her *and* the Beloved ship, even, you know? We have to devote all of these other ships that we had that we thought were good military vessels to go do this. That means Cascara doesn't have a ship, so I'm not gonna do that, I've changed my mind.

SYLVIA: I was about to volunteer my ship too, but.

AUSTIN: No, I kind of want us all to be able to point ships at things, you know?

SYLVIA: Yeah, no, for sure.

KEITH: Very selfishly, I haven't done my Christian Slater cowboy yet, so.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we shouldn't get rid of Waltz Tango yet, a hundred percent. I think Myriad is the one here who like.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What's that like, like what's she say, Sylvia?

SYLVIA: I think it's sort of one of those things where it's like, she knows that this is kind of like her duty to the Fleet, type of thing?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Where it's like, she trusts her team being like, Gig, Echo, Grand and Even to get the job done that she is confident enough, she's confident saving the people that AI may have inadvertently caused to get hurt.

AUSTIN: Fair.

SYLVIA: As a way to sort of make up for that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that that's fair.

SYLVIA: That's AI, right, AI is his name?

AUSTIN: Yep. Alokine, yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. But that means that like, we are now all doing double duty with all that stuff, and like the, the civilians don't join up and that, the takeaway is that we don't have that extra repair stuff, so keep that in mind as we go into the final, the final challenge here. Also I don't think this stopped the, the axiom Bountiful. Like, I think, you know, there's probably a conflict here, I bet you some sloops do get destroyed by that thing, like Bountiful just keeps growing and smashes into them. And we're just getting this weird blossoming, you know, metal disaster in space. Disaster is wrong because disaster is another one of the axioms I've written down as a potential axiom? So.

KEITH: *[laughs]* Great.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's fun. I don't know what that even looks like yet, we'll figure it out, but. So again, we just have this rad blossoming, in my mind, some of the, some of the metal is cubed and some of it is circular, and some of it is just like a lattice that is completely chaotic. In any case, I framed the first, the first challenge. Gig, it is now your turn to pick another second challenge from this list.

KEITH: Second challenge... Let's see.

AUSTIN: I think at this point, it's probably like the next day or something, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I think like, Earth has arrived is probably a good way to end that last— like, that's the end of that sequence is like, some of the sloops have been destroyed, the others just didn't show up, and Myriad has signed on to like, begin ferrying people and, and then like, we get the arrival of the giant Earth ship. And its escorts. And it just immediately starts opening fire on, on Bountiful. Like a hundred percent just starts shooting missiles at it right, like. Off in the distance we just see like the *[explosion sounds]* puff of like, circular explosions off in the distance as it tries to go to war with this thing that just keeps unfolding itself. So that's like, the scene, that's setting the broader scene, so what is our next challenge?

KEITH: Okay. I've got, so I've got a few that I think could be good. Just going down the list, not in any particular order, deal with low morale.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: That would be a good one. Prevent people from leaving slash abandoning the city.

AUSTIN: The only thing there is that I don't know what the— I guess they would—

KEITH: How they would get out?

AUSTIN: Yeah, like the problem is the city at this point is...

KEITH: Is, yeah.

AUSTIN: I mean maybe it's the opposite which is like, they don't wanna get on their evacuation ships. They just wanna stay in place and won't leave the ships behind.

KEITH: Okay, yeah. That's— that could be one of them, yeah people just that refuse to evacuate?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Um... A possibility, though I don't have any details worked out for it would be get reinforcements from outside the city? I don't wanna do the last, the the one that I had in mind that I don't want to do right now would be repel invaders storming the walls?

AUSTIN: Or fighting. Like this is, the fight hasn't happened yet at this point, right?

KEITH: Right. Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Sylvia, do you feel strong about—

KEITH: *[cross]* I'm open to—

AUSTIN: Morale, or. Or Keith, if you feel strongest about one of those, it's your job, you could totally say this is our challenge and this is why it's difficult.

KEITH:*[cross]* You know, that's the thing, these are sort of equal to me, I kind of feel strongest about morale?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Alright.

KEITH: But then Gig's, Gig's perspective on it wouldn't be like, it wouldn't be like deal with low morale as in we've gotta cheer people up, it would kinda be like swap out their low morale about this for low morale about, hey, just trust me, this is like, this is all going the way— this is all within what we thought was gonna happen. Like, you've still gotta get ready for how hard it's gonna be when we get there. Which, I don't think is a big help!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: But that's my take on it. That would be Gig's take on that. So, if anybody has any strong feelings about deal with morale versus...

AUSTIN: Stop people from leaving, abandoning the city, basically?

KEITH: Stop people from abandoning the city would be, those are my two. Yeah, so if anybody has a pick on that, I'm willing to go either way.

AUSTIN: We could do it the other way, right, where I could maybe add a thing here because it could also be, it could also be stop citizens from accepting terms of surrender, which is the other thing that could happen at the very end of it, those missiles start hitting Bountiful, and then like, across all comms units in the vicinity, we get a message from the New Earth Hegemony that is like, alright everybody come under our fold, you'll be protected. And we have to deal with that.

KEITH: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: Because that's like, similar to, stop them from, prevent them from leaving abandoning the city, it just gives them a reason for it, which is like, stay in your homes. The New Earth Hegemony is arriving. Does that sound interesting? Because I can paint that— I can paint what that looks like because I know who it is.

KEITH: Yeah, I like that.

AUSTIN: Alright, so. After Myriad— as Myriad is like, you know, bringing down the first group of people towards the, the... maybe not even the first, it's been going for a day now. Myriad has gone non-stop, she like has run twelve missions down, and each time like, she's not that big of a ship, she *can't* hold seventy people uncomfortably. She can probably hold forty uncomfortably, maybe. And so like, she's doing these over and over again, and then like we, we see behind again, she's this kind of like, retro aesthetic like silver, chromed out, very curved like, retro-futurist spaceship. Behind her, the huge unfolding blossom of Bountiful and then, missiles start hitting it as the mirage kind of shivers and shakes and like, opens up a space for this gigantic spacecraft that in my mind looks like... like, almost like a very thick desk? Like it is... it has like, huge legs basically? It looks like, you know what it looks like? What are those things in Tron? Operators, I think?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Is that what those are called? You know what I mean? Just like, like a... almost like a C folded down on its side so that the edges are facing downwards.

SYLVIA: Yeah, yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: And the way it works is it just has like, row, like stacks and stacks and stacks of automatons and mechs and, and fighters and stuff on the inside? Like the entire inside is basically a flight deck. And then the, the like top is like, there's a big window, which is like the... the you know, the bridge or whatever. And then it's long too, so it's not just, not only is it, is it tall and thick on the legs, but it is also a very long vessel. And it arrives with, it's not that many people, but it's a lot of automated military units, they're called Torch units. Or at least the ones that the ship game has encountered so far have been called Torch units.

And the commander who calls in is a, is a person, it's a guy named Templeton's Faire, f-a-i-r-e, and his, his half-Apostolosian, half-human second in command Oksana. Who... she uses she/her pronouns even though she is half-Apostolosian, but she is, she is from Earth and has decided that maybe very depressingly that she should use she/her pronouns because that's what people call her, and she wants to get through the hierarchy and it fucking sucks, but let me tell you, Earth is no Divine Fleet. Eh, you know what that's not even true, I think she probably does just identify as she/her because she's from a culture that, even you know, I think even in the New Earth Hegemony like, we are not in 2017 gender terms, we're not like— things have gotten better, but my suspicion is it's really fucking hard to overturn millennia and millennia and millennia of shitty gender essentialism and so... I think she probably still comes to identify as she/her and that's, that's fine. You know? I'd rather it be that than the kind of like, more negative like, she's cynical about it. I don't think she's— I don't think she privately uses Apostolosian pronouns and then publicly— I think she just uses she/her. Tron Recognizer, is that what it's called?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Is that what it's called, it's called a Recognizer?

KEITH: It's called a Recognizer, yeah.

AUSTIN: Huh, okay, sure, yes. Yes.

KEITH: The things that look like little, yeah. The UFO catcher?

AUSTIN: Mhm. But it's long, and instead of just being one layer, it's like a bunch of those back to back to back to back. Templeton's Faire has like, uh, high grey hair like it's like a, almost like a pompadour basically? And Oksana is, has tan skin, has like the fish scales, and has like... I think she has matching hair? I think she also rocks a pomp? And is very much like the keener like, second in command who wants to have her own ship one day. I don't have a name for this, but I think the, I think it's definitely like, the H.S.S. like, the Hegemonic Service Ship, something? And I don't know what the thing is, what's a good... I don't have a good ship name in my back pocket. I'm gonna call it the... H.S.S. Season's Juniper. The Juniper, for short.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: And so Templeton's Faire shows up on the screen for everybody with, which shouldn't happen. Again, the Mirage should not let anybody do this except for, as far as we know, Gig and Open Metal, who has the same device that Gig has? But for whatever reason, these broadcasters are totally able to do it. And Templeton's Faire, who is a fair-skinned man with a tall grey pompadour shows up and he says like...

AUSTIN as Templeton's Faire: I am Commander Templeton's Faire of the New Earth Hegemony. People of the Mirage, listen carefully. Submit to the protection of the Hegemony, and you will be protected.

AUSTIN: And Oksana is "is that what you wanted to... okay, sir." He's very like, he's very... not just bombastic, what's the word I'm looking for? Someone just, just linked me a thing...

SYLVIA: What?

KEITH: It's Templeton the rat! From Charlotte's Web.

AUSTIN: Yeah, good, exactly. Templeton the rat from Charlotte's Web, yes, absolutely.

AUSTIN as Templeton's Faire: We are here to establish a protectorate under which you will live full and happy lives as territorial citizens of Earth.

AUSTIN: This dude fuckin sucks...

KEITH: Is his name Templeton Faire because Templeton goes to the fair to eat all the candy?

AUSTIN: It's Templeton's Faire, like, Templeton apostrophe S Faire.

KEITH: *[cross]* Templeton's...

AUSTIN: His first name is Faire.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* He's named after the fair that Templeton goes to. It's Templeton's Faire.

AUSTIN: It could be. It could be. I, I think his father, or his, one of his parents' names was Templeton, probably? Or he's from the town of Templeton? Or, or who knows what, you know? But that is the, the effectively the... ultimatum given to the people. And maybe it's actually better if they do blast the shit out of Bountiful. Maybe they send out missiles and Bountiful recoils, like, again, imagine this... In my mind it's almost like squid ink? Like a cloud of squid ink but made of metal. And maybe they shoot missiles at it that explode and like, it recoils. Like literally goes like, there's this loud, crunchy, like creaking metal sound as the axiom Bountiful recoils from their missile discharges and like, literally then retracts all the way back down to Volition. Or not all the way back down, but like, starts to head back down because I think a show of force is what would make people have that low morale that would make them consider surrender here. And like oh, well these people showed up and took care of shit, maybe we should listen to them. So yeah, I think that's the stage that's set. So, given that, Gig, who do you think between Echo and Declan, Declan's Corrective, would make the first, would take the first step towards addressing this new issue?

KEITH: Declan's Corrective.

AUSTIN: Okay. So what I would love is a scene with Echo, with... With Echo and with Waltz Tango, on Declan's ship in a... In a, it's like a conference room? You know how hotels have like, conference rooms you can rent out, or administration rooms, basically?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's like one of those, and I think what we're doing is Declan has a plan, which is we need to show that they are weak to keep people's, or not weak, that they, they can bleed too. And his whole thing is like, he's like.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Tango. Reverie. I trust Kephart and Cascara to keep everyone, everyone's morale up, let them know that the fleet is a safe place to be. But what they'll need to see is that the Hegemony is not as strong as they say they are. One of you, or both should head in. And crack the goddamn Juniper in half. At least wound it. Any ideas?

KEITH as Waltz: We could try to blow it up.

*[Sylvia laughs, muffled]*

AUSTIN as Corrective: I'm not sure we have the firepower for a direct on assault, even with... even with the Lord in the Bramble, even with the... what's your ship called again, Reverie? Holiday Gambit?

SYLVIA: Yes? Yes.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Does that thing have weapons?

SYLVIA: Actually, Austin, I don't remember if we....

AUSTIN: I don't know either, I don't know if we, it was like a pirate vessel?

SYLVIA: Me not knowing the name was in character, me knowing this is out of character— not knowing this is very out of character.

AUSTIN: I think out of character, we never decided?

SYLVIA: Okay. I think—

AUSTIN: It was a pirate vessel, so probably something, but not a lot, right?

SYLVIA: It's not like a warship, but it's like... It's got like a few guns on it.

AUSTIN: Right, totally.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

SYLVIA as Echo: I think the advantage of my ship though is that it's not exactly huge, I might be able to get past some security that way.

KEITH as Waltz: Yeah, we could blow it up from the inside.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Are you... yeah. I wish I knew more. *[sighs]* I don't—

SYLVIA as Echo: I have an idea. I have a... I have a mech that I got from planetside that we could, I could transport myself over— I couldn't fly there in it, it's not made for space travel, but if we can get me on it on that ship? I could probably do some damage.

AUSTIN as Corrective: It has to be visible, that's the problem. It's not worth it to go inside and tear things up. Or it is, but only if the Fleet can see it. We have to send a message.

SYLVIA as Echo: Bring Gig's eye with me. What? We broadcast it.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Let's see what Gig thinks.

AUSTIN: And I think Declan like, leans over, or Corrective leans over and hits a button. And Gig, where is Gig right now?

KEITH: Um..



AUSTIN: *[cross]* What is Gig working on in this moment?

KEITH: I think he's doing something— I think he's doing something like, that looks helpful but is maybe unnecessary, like ladling soup or something?

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah.

KEITH: Like, no one here can't ladle their own soup.

AUSTIN: Right, we have robots, we have, people have hands. People can ladle their own soup. So yeah, you get a buzz, Gig.

KEITH as Gig: Hey.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Reverie, I'll let you do the ask.

KEITH as Gig: Sorry, what's that? *[laughs]*

SYLVIA as Echo: Gig, first question.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna— hm.

KEITH as Gig: Yeah, what's up?

SYLVIA as Echo: First important thing is, what's the range on your eye camera like?

KEITH as Gig: I don't know, like fuckin' wicked good?

SYLVIA as Echo: Okay, cool. So how would you feel— hm?

AUSTIN as Corrective: Wait, wait, wait. Like, wicked good, hm. Like, wicked good in ground terms or in space terms? Space is very big.

KEITH as Gig: It's like, literally a part of my body that also is autonomous? So I would assume that as long as it's literally working, it works.

SYLVIA as Echo: Okay. So, how would you feel about sending your eye to come broadcast a covert mission where I go tear up the Earth Hegemony's ship?

KEITH as Gig: Oh, that sounds like, super cool.

SYLVIA: Echo just kind of like gestures at Declan, like, "See?"

*[Keith laughs]*

AUSTIN as Corrective: So it would just be you. I'm not sure that sounds safe.

SYLVIA as Echo: I mean— I, we could bring backup?

AUSTIN as Corrective: Waltz?

KEITH as Waltz: Oh, I'm in. I'm into it.

SYLVIA as Echo: We could either do it where I bring my mech, we could even send a, we could send a small strike force in to try and sabotage it, but either way I think we go in, we try and destroy it from the inside out.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Tell me about your— go ahead.

KEITH as Waltz: What if— what if I blast a hole on the outside and that's how we get in, and that'll be killing one bird with one stone, and then we can both go inside and kill the other bird with the other stone. Two birds, two stones, not bad.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Hm.

AUSTIN: Corrective is like, very clearly like hand over mouth.

KEITH as Waltz: Visible damage plus recording of the interior.

AUSTIN as Corrective: And Gig, you're good with this?

KEITH as Gig: Yeah, I'm, yeah.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Alright. Glad to be of service.

KEITH as Gig: I get to see it before anyone else does, that's the best part. Like, I'm here ladling soup, I can watch.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Let's find out how this goes.

KEITH as Gig: *[cross]* Dinner and a show!

AUSTIN as Corrective: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. I— we can either have that sequence, I think we should have that sequence as a different scene, maybe?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or, we can just say it happens and wrap up how it goes, right? My actual question is like, should there be a consequence here. Do we think it's possible to do this safely, or do we lose something?

KEITH: I... I think that Bountiful is such a issue that like, that's what they're focused on. We can do things, we can do this safely because in the grand scale, it is not a huge problem for them, and I think they would rather focus on...

AUSTIN: Bountiful. My, my thing is like, I feel like you don't, we already set them up as being like a proper threat, like they are not not a threat.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think if we're going to do the fast forward version of it, the like, and then I go set bombs on the bridge and that's it version, we should at least sketch out... I don't know that you get out with, what's the name of your mech, Echo?

SYLVIA: The Overture.

AUSTIN: The Overture in working condition. Like maybe—

SYLVIA: I'm fine with that.

AUSTIN: I think maybe what we get then is an action sequence that we can just like, skip past here because its more interesting to just narrate and then move on? Of like, we literally fling Waltz Tango through space? Like, I think we run the Holiday Gambit headfirst at the, at the H.S.S. Season's Juniper and then like, hard stop on the ship and then like, Waltz Tango keeps momentum going forward.

SYLVIA: Is he like, surfing on the ship?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, absolutely, right?

SYLVIA: Okay, awesome.

AUSTIN: And then he like, headfirst with mines and shit like, blows a hole in the side of the ship the way that you talked about. And then the Holiday Gambit like, does like a quick dock to drop the ship in, or drop the mech in, and then we pilot the, the ship away and then like, what happens inside, very briefly? What's it look like, what's the Overture look like in action, also I'm guessing, my guess is like, it's on one of the flight decks down here. It's almost all automated stuff.

SYLVIA: So, just like, it's automated— it's robots and shit?

AUSTIN: It's lots of robots. Yeah, so the New Earth Hegemony has a bunch of robots that I guess I haven't described these to you they have things called Torch units, which are, they're... it's like one line of mechs from the New Earth Hegemony that have big spot— like, old fashioned like, Hollywood, like golden age of Hollywood spotlights or stage lights, basically? The kind that have like the big spotlight in the middle and the kind of like wings on the top and bottom, do you know what I'm talking about?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's like those as the head, and then, and then like, big bulky bodies that have exposed wiring and big, big chest plating. Vaguely like the Geth, but more humanoid? They don't have the curvature, it's like, more hard angles. Lots of like, extra armor that comes up off the shoulder so like, past the actual shoulder joint, the metal keeps coming straight up. And those come in like, all sorts of sizes. There are really tiny things that are just sort of floating drones, up to like, mechs that are twice the size of the Overture. Also they're all named after... they all have names based on the various levels of the— the food pyramid.

*[laughter]*

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So like, you get just, dozens, hundreds? Of those. Right, like, this ship has three hundred people on it. Not that many, but for each person there is probably five hundred Torch units.

SYLVIA: So I think the way the combat starts is it's... we have the upper hand from the surprise, right? And like, we get this shot of... like, the debris framed behind Echo's mech, like the debris from the explosion framed behind Echo's mech as these things start coming into action. And it cuts to outside and there's just like, strings of like... Either sometimes it's just like whole models of these things fling out of the ship, or like, just like parts that have been cut off. And then it cuts back inside, and the way the Overture moves is still something Echo's getting used to, so Echo's trying to move like they fight, and it's not responding quite as well. So I think the way that it gets overtaken is it's up against a larger one, and it... I've described the way it fights as having like, this sort of like needle-like sword and then a shield on one hand with the third arm on the back. I think what happens is it's being engaged by one of the larger ones, and Echo has like, impaled it, but then like, the smaller ones have grabbed the third arm on the back, and tear it off.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: Which leaves this big fucking gash in the back.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: And Echo tries to like, spin around and like, does this really dope thing of when they spin around they like, backfist something with the shield?

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: But at the same time, while they're doing that, they take another hit and their armor is just like, fucked and they have to get out of there.

AUSTIN: And, this place is not vacuum-sealed, right like, it is... you're probably losing air very rapidly, and whatever the defenses are on this mech, are not built for the vacuum of space, like you mentioned. Like it's an open-air flight deck cause people don't need to come down here.

SYLVIA: Mhm.

AUSTIN: So how do you get out?

SYLVIA: I think it's like... You know how in Titanfall 2 in the campaign, when BT, there's part when BT's like really fucked up and like, moves in that sort of like trundley way?

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah. Yeah.

KEITH: *[cross]* Wait, parts in what?

SYLVIA: I think that's how the Overture's moving. What?

KEITH: Parts in what? There's, where is this?

AUSTIN: Titanfall 2, Titanfall 2.

SYLVIA: Titanfall 2.

KEITH: Oh, okay, okay, yeah.

SYLVIA: Where it just sort of like, it's like the sprint, but it's like oh this could fall over at any moment.

AUSTIN: Yes, a hundred percent.

SYLVIA: And it basically collapses into the... collapses into the ship and they have to get out of there.

AUSTIN: So do you leave it behind, or do you, are you able to get the wreckage of it out? So that we can repair it, or is it just gone?

SYLVIA: I think like, I lose like, parts of it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: But I get the like, I get the like torso and head at the very least.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: I think maybe I get the shield too.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: But like, the sword's gone, the legs are mangled, and the back is torn open.

AUSTIN: Alright, so you're in some sort of zero g suit and there are like, literally ripping off parts of it to toss into the Holiday Gambit as you fly away.

SYLVIA: Yeah, basically.

AUSTIN: Alright, cool. So yeah, we get away and, but we've done damage. My question then actually is Gig, like, how do you frame this? What's just happened is that Declan's Corrective is like, oh what we should do is attack first, and then we all did that.

KEITH: Yeah. Mhm.

AUSTIN: How does Gig frame that. I mean, they did make an ultimatum, so it's not like they didn't make a threat of violence, but Declan's Corrective— who is *from* Earth— was like, oh what we should do is bloody their nose. And we did, so how does Gig show that in a positive light. Or is it even a positive— like what's he show?

KEITH: I think that it... I think I show it in sequence, right. So first what I have is an audio clip of their fleet with the missiles flying off of the fleet towards Bountiful while it plays the ultimatum.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right.

KEITH: And then I have the recording of the phone call being explained what I'm going to do with my eye?

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Okay!

KEITH: And then it's the sort of, the impact of, you know, creating the opening, then getting inside the ship, and then showing what happens inside the ship. I feel like that's probably the best way to show it.

AUSTIN: Do you have a message? Does Echo have a— does, who addresses the fleet? Like, is there a— Is there a message besides the violence that they see?

KEITH: Yeah, I think I'll let, I think that I'll let Declan's Corrective\* say, to give a pitch and I think I tell, I think I tell him like:

KEITH as Gig: And you're a little intimidating so go easy on that, like back off that you're kind of an—

AUSTIN as Corrective: I'll dial it down a little bit.

KEITH as Gig: Dial it down a little bit but like, give a pitch on why them being here is already really bad.

**[2:00:00]**

AUSTIN: He has on like, a grey suit with like a peach dress shirt, nice cufflinks.

KEITH: Okay. The peach is a nice touch. It's not as—

AUSTIN: He unbuttons the top button also so you can see he's like a, he's a regular guy like you, type of thing.

KEITH: Yeah, you're just a regular guy. And as far as I know, that's true.

AUSTIN: He slicks his hair back but leaves a couple pieces out of place, you know.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: He's been busy, he's not like a slacker. *[Corrective's voice]* Can you get like a shot of the ship— my, also my ship? The, the Lord in the Bustle. The Lord in Bustle.

KEITH: The Lord in Thistle?

AUSTIN: Bustle, bustle. Not bustle, thistle, no, uh. Bramble. The Lord in the Bramble.

KEITH: *[cross]* Bramble, Lord in the Bramble. The Thistle in...

AUSTIN: Thistle and Bone. The Lord in the Bramble. And again, like this is, it's shot in the lobby of a hotel room, or or like— the lobby of a hotel I mean, in front of, it's in front of a seal that says like TLTB, and like the ampersand and the Bramble as if it were a hotel like, icon? You know like the Hilton style big H?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN as Corrective: People of the Flee— Hm, no, it's not...

KEITH as Gig: Can you do a smile? You don't even have to smile during the thing, but just get yourself in that mood, you know?

AUSTIN as Corrective: I see. Yeah, I'll think about—

KEITH as Gig: They say that getting, when you smile it tricks your brain into thinking that you're happy.

AUSTIN: He practices a smile. It's bad. It's a bad smile, it doesn't work.

KEITH: It's bad, it's a bad smile.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Citi— hm.

KEITH as Gig: Are you ticklish? We could try that.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Do not touch me.

KEITH as Gig: Okay!

AUSTIN as Corrective: Mr. Kephart. I just have to think about what we want. That's all.

AUSTIN: And he like closes his eyes and like, thinks for a few moments. And then he says... He like opens his eyes and is like, ready to go.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Besieged citizens of the Divine Fleet. Do not let your faith falter. I am from where these people are from. I have seen the world that they would create. You would not like it. This is an opportunity. We cannot put the genie back in the bottle. The New Earth Hegemony is here, and they will demand that you cede something. Do not let it be your dignity or your capacity for autonomous action. You decide the fate of this Fleet. Not the soldiers in their ships. Not the diplomats in the boardroom. The citizens, the faithful. Stick with us. We will find you a home. I think that's it, I think that's... that's it.

KEITH as Gig: The faith thing was a little heavy but otherwise I think that you did as good as you can do.

AUSTIN as Corrective: I'm not even a believer, I'm, but they do, and I understand that it's important to them.

KEITH as Gig: Yeah.

AUSTIN as Corrective: I'm not from here, so.

AUSTIN: I think that's the scene for sure, right?

KEITH: I think that's scene, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, so last scene in this challenge, Gig.

KEITH: Hello.

AUSTIN: Who, what, where?

KEITH: Wait, I thought I started.

AUSTIN: Oh, was that your whole— that was your sequence? Or no, did you start? You picked it. Echo st—

KEITH: I did the one be—

AUSTIN: What did you do?

KEITH: Oh, you're right. Yeah, I picked it, that's why I haven't done mine, you're right.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Echo started, then me, so yeah, now you. So what is the end of this sequence?

KEITH: Okay. Um... and...

AUSTIN: And again the challenge is to stop citizens from accepting terms of surrender.



KEITH: Yeah, I think... I think that what we have to do, I think that what Gig wants to do is like, go to as many places as possible and like, make like... when we were loading people up, the prerequisite was like, okay, well how many people can this fit uncomfortably, and that's what we've gotta do.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right.

KEITH: And I think that right now, Gig wants to go and make things comfortable for people.

AUSTIN: Oh, interesting.

KEITH: To be like, no it's not, you're not cramped in this place, look, we've got, I put up a curtain, I got you this like, I found this cushion stuff, let's get it, let's get the people that are on the floor, get them some cushions to sleep on.

AUSTIN: So is this like, you're walking through—

KEITH: I've got your favorite snack!

AUSTIN: One of the bigger ships with, with, who's there with you? Is this Cascara?

KEITH: I think... yeah I think it's gotta be Cascara...

AUSTIN: It can be a new character that we have Sylvia play as like a, as a third, because Myriad is out at this point, but.

KEITH: Yeah, Myriad's out, I... It could be, it could be, yeah I think it's Cascara.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Cause Cascara's in like a leadership role, and people like her.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah. Yeah. I think that that, maybe what if it's also this, you've been doing this, you're at whatever the biggest one of these ships is, right, like? This big ship can hold a thousand people but like, the, you know. You've filled it to five thousand so it's very tight.

KEITH: Very tight.

AUSTIN: And Cascara has been like busy. What she's doing is like, operating the logistic side of this, making sure there are defenses in place in case the Earth strikes back. Making sure that there is like, a clear line between the space and Quire's like, the land. And making sure that like, like sending scouts to make sure that the space itself isn't folding around in weird ways? Which

has been the threat the whole time that hasn't quite happened yet. But like, she needs to be doing that stuff, and, but what you've said smartly is like, hey we need you to help morale, just do a walkthrough, people know who you are, they trust you, you're from here.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, it's the— having a blanket and being handed a blanket by Cascara are two different things.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Sylvia could you play someone who's like, not having a good time?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: I can do that very easily.

*[Keith laughs]*

AUSTIN: Damn. Owned.

SYLVIA: That's half, that's what I do half the time.

KEITH: *[cross]* Harsh, yeah.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Alright, Gig.

SYLVIA: I'm a very curmudgeonly person!

AUSTIN: So what's this place look like, so where are we, Gig?

KEITH: So yeah, I, so we're in, we're in a big ship. It's not a sloop, we're in a— I don't know, we're in a personnel frigate I guess is what we're in.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: And which, it looks very industrial. And there's a lot of, there's a lot of rooms, which is great, but they're storage closets, basically? And so what you've got is you've got like some people who have it okay, they've got a storage closet and you've got some people who are a family who have a storage closet. And, and then like, you know, you've got like a rec room that's just, you know, people on the floor, like sleeping on the floors or couches of a rec room, and that'll be like, you don't have a room, you're just on the floor with a hundred people.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Or, you know, like three hundred people. And other rooms like that. So small rooms with cramped spaces, and big rooms with too many people.

AUSTIN: Right. I think in this sequence—

KEITH: Cold steel. Cold steel walls and floors.

AUSTIN: Right. I think like, one of the difficulties here is that and like, I'm not, this is not about, I think this is like, a thing that's important to note is that Cascara is in a wheelchair? And that doesn't make her a less capable leader or tactician, that doesn't make her less capable as a contributing member to the society, but I do think that it is a thing to think about the like... how is she, this place is filled to the brim. I suspect that the Divine Fleet is... does have regulations for, to make sure that there is like disability access, even though there are very few members who would not just go get the free surgery to get new cyber legs or whatever?

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: We've talked about that Cascara comes from the same culture as, as Echo where the faith is such that you're supposed to just like... I guess Echo you can speak to this more right, but like the whole thing was you can't get interfaced, right?

SYLVIA: It's, it's not that you can't it's that it's like, frowned upon by the more faithful elements of it, right? Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right, right right right. That was actually it. Because the whole thing is that she is part of that more faithful element, right, we haven't had that scene with Echo yet, but I think that she very much takes that seriously and does believe that the day will come that the nanites will come back and like, she will not let that faith falter. And so, I don't think it's like a big scene about the difficulty of her getting through this space, but I do think that visually it is, it is important to be like, and she's here, and the reason she's here in her wheelchair is that she like, believes strongly in, in you know, in her faith and is like, sticking this out. And, you know, Belgard just came back online, so it's not like divines haven't come back. Gumption, it turns out there's a whole backup plan. So Gig, what, what happens here?

KEITH: Sylvia, who do you want to play for this? Besides just someone that is curmudgeonly and having a bad time.

SYLVIA: I think the, what I was kinda thinking is maybe I'm playing like, a doctor of sorts, who's kind of dealing with like...

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh, that's good.

KEITH: Oh, so you've gotta do your own thing and take care of other people.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And that's part of why you are like, curmudgeonly?

SYLVIA: Yeah. Like, it, the character I have in my mind is actually he's not even, they're not even human, they're a robot?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: They're like a robot doctor who is both, basically operates on robotic people and can perform like, medical services for humans as well, so they're just like, in overtime here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Do you have a name for them?

SYLVIA: Yeah, they just go by Czar? C-z-a-r.

AUSTIN: Okay, yep.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN as Cascara: It's good to see you, Czar.

AUSTIN: So are we in like, a makeshift like, operating room, basically?

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think it's like... It's kinda like a back room?

KEITH: *[cross]* Maybe they, they turned their little closet into, their little living space into a place to just, do, do medical things for people?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Like, this is clearly their apartment, but now like, the furniture's been moved and like, there are people— there is like...

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Gurneys—

SYLVIA: Their bedroom is now like, their office, and their living room is the waiting room.

AUSTIN: Right, right, okay.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Gig, what are we, what do you need from, from me to, with Czar?  
KEITH as Gig: Um... you know, I don't know them, you seem like you know them. They have been doing like, a ton of shit without like, we didn't give them a job, they just started, they were like "I've gotta help people."  
AUSTIN as Cascara: Right.

SYLVIA: While you two are talking, Czar who is like this very like, almost spindly robot kind of is just like, walking around, writing on like, they've got like clipboards and shit, they're still working while you guys are talking, and they're glancing over at you every few seconds to see if you're getting the point.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Apologies, Czar. We just wanted to check in. We know that things are stretched right now, and that—  
SYLVIA as Czar: Stretched— stretched is a um, stretched is a very, I think that'd be an understatement is how you'd put that.  
AUSTIN as Cascara: Overstretched.  
KEITH as Gig: Superstretched.

SYLVIA: *[laughs]* They pull out like... like, the you know the thing that they measure your blood pressure with?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

SYLVIA: The like, cord on it? They pull it like as tight as they can and they are a robot, so they pull it very tight, like:

SYLVIA as Czar: Yeah, it's a lot like this, except, stretched *more*.

SYLVIA: And then they let it go, and it like snaps into their other hand and they put it down.

KEITH as Gig: See, that's what we're here to prevent is that snap. We don't want—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Cascara like— yeah, go ahead.

KEITH as Gig: We just don't, we wanna help.

AUSTIN: Cascara holds up her hands, is like:

AUSTIN as Cascara: This is Gig Kephart, you've probably seen his broadcasts, he's...  
SYLVIA as Czar: He's been, yeah he filmed at my old clinic a while back, actually.  
AUSTIN as Cascara: I see.

KEITH as Gig: Oh, I remember that! That was great.

SYLVIA as Czar: Mhm, we had more than one doctor back then, but you know.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Better times for everyone involved, I'm sure. Czar—

SYLVIA as Czar: That's an understatement.

AUSTIN as Cascara: I want to know what we can do to help you and to make your, your patients feel better. Isn't that right, Gig?

KEITH as Gig: That's exactly right.

SYLVIA as Czar: I need proper facilities for this. I can't keep doing patchwork for people who are getting hurt either from these invaders or from that weird metal thing in space or just— everyday things that happen! I need, I need a proper like, doctor's office to keep these people—

KEITH as Gig: Okay, I have an idea if I could bounce it off you and I could bounce it off Cascara and maybe we can do something with that. There's not a lot of openly free space. What I can do, I can, I can broadcast a little bit of what the work that you've been doing here, and then put out a call to see if someone has more space so that you'll have somewhere to sleep and then somewhere else with more resources and people to take care of them.

AUSTIN as Cascara: *[cross] [sighs]* We can't, Gig.

KEITH as Gig: Yeah?

AUSTIN as Cascara: We can't keep spinning plates, we can't keep juggling. This is what I'm— I... you wanna talk about stretched thin, I've run the numbers. There isn't enough space on any of our auxiliary vessels. We don't *have* auxiliary vessels, everyone lives in giant spaceships, Gig! We don't *have* the numbers. We can't just— you wanna know where there's space for a doctor's office? In the hospital. But the hospital's on a big ship and we don't— *[exhale]*

AUSTIN: And she like, shakes her head.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Unless we bring the ships to Quire.

AUSTIN: And then is like.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Could we bring the ships to Quire? What if— If we could bring the ships to Quire, no one has to leave. Everyone gets to stay in their home.

KEITH as Gig: I think we could...

AUSTIN as Cascara: Do you have any sketching tools, Doc?

SYLVIA as Czar: Yeah. One sec.

SYLVIA: And they do this thing where... so their sketching tool typically is their finger.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh, right.

SYLVIA: So a little pen comes out of their index finger and they sigh, which, cause they're a robot their sigh sounds kinda like a, an accordion deflating almost?

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Yep! Perfect.

SYLVIA: They snap it off. And hand it to her.

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

SYLVIA as Czar: I can weld that back on later, it's... I do it all the time.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Thank you. Paper?

KEITH as Gig: I've got some paper.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* I— give her one of the clipboards.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Gig would have paper. A journalist, right? Technically.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then like, starts sketching out the ships and then like I think what we get is the montage scene of Cascara trying to come up with this notion of like, what if we just land the ships. What if we run defenses and we moved the ships to Quire? And like, we have to get the people on the right ships, not every ship is ready to do this, like I think Thyrsus, which is like all of these loose like, balls that are entangled with very long connecting things like, probably not as good as like, Seance, which is, has like a shape and like, alright we're gonna get everyone onto the top side of Seance and we're just gonna fucking land it into Quire. And like, she sketches this out for all of the different ships. And like, the ways to do it. They spend that afternoon doing that. How would you pitch that to the people on the ship, Gig? Or on the Fleet?

KEITH: Are we gonna get people back on the ships or are we just gonna all empty ships, like skeleton crew ships—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* I mean at this point, I mean at this point I think the vast majority of people are still on the home, their home ships, right? Like, the Divine Fleet, even like, escape pods, it's the sloops, you know, it's like private ships.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But even if this is a big personnel carrier, that's thousands? Let's say that that's ten thousand people, between like, we're talking about 700,000 or something, right? 300,000 on Seance and 400,000 on the By and By.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: At this point I'd say the Cadent has been rescued and is on a private ship, and like, she'll be fine on that ship, but like, the vast majority of people, we *just* don't have the ships to evacuate everyone person by person. So, it's like a lot of, if you're waiting on a, on a home ship, we figured out how to try to crash land you into Quire. Maybe not crash land—

AUSTIN as Cascara: Don't use "crash land," Gig. Don't say crash land.

KEITH as Gig: *[cross]* Don't say—I won't say crash land.

SYLVIA as Czar: Please don't do a crash landing either, because that again makes my job very difficult.

KEITH as Gig: Right, we won't crash land them. If anything, we'll emergency land them.

AUSTIN as Cascara: Don't show them the sketches, either, can you gen up some sort of like, visuals of like... 3D so that people see what the landing might look like?

KEITH as Gig: Yeah, I can do that. Yeah. I can do that.

AUSTIN as Cascara: They trust you, Gig. I need you to... please, tell them something.

KEITH as Gig: Okay. Yeah, I can do it. I'll do it, do you want me to just do it?

AUSTIN as Cascara: Do it. Do it.

KEITH as Gig: Okay. Hey guys, quick live update, thanks for joining in, I'll give a second so that, you know. People can tune in.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* 'Filter in...' Good, yeah!

SYLVIA: *[laughs]* 'Is the sound okay...'

KEITH as Gig: Is the sound okay?

AUSTIN: 'Are the levels alright, is the gameplay too high?'

*[Sylvia laughs]*

KEITH as Gig: Cascara too loud? Okay, it sounds like we're good, we've got a lot of people watching, and this'll be archived anyway so if you miss it, you can always catch the archives as soon as the stream's over. But, we just wanted to say, you know, we were brainstorming about this whole evacuation thing, and we're thinking that there's enough space down on the planet for us to just bring the ships down with us. I know a lot of people don't want to leave their home, and then we don't have a ton of evacuation ships, and there's just thousands and thousands of people just waiting to get moved. And we were thinking, what if we moved like, now, with what you're in? And just park it right on, right planetside. So that's what we're thinking. I, you know, I've got, I've got, here just watch this.

KEITH: And I think I sort of just like, I'm just thinking about how it would go?



AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: And I'm thinking of, you know, a best case scenario to smooth landing? I think we're gonna park... shit, who is the, we're gonna park in Rogue Wave territory.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: I think they'd be most interested this?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: And least hostile. *[as Gig]* But anyway, yeah, that's our plan and we, you know. That's what we're thinking.

AUSTIN: Smiley face, smiley face, heart, heart, heart, right? Maybe? I guess we don't know, I think that's the question, maybe it's time to, I think—

KEITH: *[laughs]* Maybe there's like a mad face, like 'we did all this like work and now we're just moving the ships,' but yeah I think we get smiley faces and hearts.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Okay. Let's do the, the dice— not the dice roll, but the stones.

KEITH: The dice choosing. The stone picks.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* The dice choosing, the stone choosing, then we'll take a break. Alright, so. We've made the pitch, we've done all, we've bloodied the noses of the New Earth Hegemony, I don't know if— we'll see if that was a good idea. If, if your main character, alright so the challenge again is stop citizens from accepting terms of surrender. One. Start with the pool with one white, one red. If your main character is unhappy about the path the Fellowship has taken, hold one red, if your main character wants the quest to fail hold two red, otherwise hold no red. Let me know when you're ready.

KEITH: Ready.

AUSTIN: Ready.

SYLVIA: Oh... I gotta think about this one.

AUSTIN: Mhm!

SYLVIA: Alright. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Three, two, one, reveal. One red from, from Echo, why?

SYLVIA: I think it's purely just Echo's demoralized from the way that things went with them?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Like, they got hurt, like really bad.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: And they feel like they failed on their part of the mission.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: So like, while I think they feel positively about what Gig's done, they feel like they didn't do their part and that's...

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's fine, it's about what your character feels about stuff, yeah, totally.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, so. Right now that means that there's two red, one white. Each player takes one white one red, read aloud. As a player, do you think the Fellowship did what was necessary to succeed at the challenge. Hold white if yes, red if no. Ready?

SYLVIA: Yep.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Three, two, one, go. I did red, I think initiating hostilities is like, the worst possible thing you could've done.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, I, I think it's a cool, I think it's an important play in some ways, but I think that like... any sort of truce is now up for, up for grabs or like, is... going to be way harder to establish a peaceable relationship with the New Earth Hegemony, even though it was someone from the New Earth Hegemony who organized the first attack, right? Like, they hit us first will always be something that people from the Hegemony will say when they're here. So. That's what, that's why I as Austin think that, even though I think that Declan one hundred percent, like that was his whole plan to some degree. Not his whole plan, I think he does legitimately think you need to bloody their fucking noses, I know who they are. Alright. So. That is three red and three white. Right?

KEITH: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: One red from the beginning, one red from Sylvia's first choice, one red from my, my second thing. And then one default white, and then two new whites from Keith and Sylvia. So, roll 1d6, one two three is red, four five six is white. Hey, that's a six!

KEITH: Oh, good.

AUSTIN: Alright, roll 1d5. *[laughs]* One two three is red, four five is six. Or four five is white.

KEITH: *[cross]* Oh, this is bad. I don't like this, I don't like this game...

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

KEITH: Oh, again? Come on.

AUSTIN: That's a two. White and a red!

KEITH: I can't...

AUSTIN: Brutal. Brutal! Brutal. Lose a character, lose the challenge.

KEITH: It sucks.

AUSTIN: Man, this is the worst it's been. We've done, we've—

SYLVIA: *[cross]* *[laughs]* Of course it is.

KEITH: *[cross]* Here's the thing, I feel like we've done like, pretty good, but the game is only designed to be like, you either fail or you don't fail.

AUSTIN: No it's not, it's win the challenge, lose one character but win the challenge, lose one character and lose the challenge, or a character betrays or is betrayed by the fellowship and is lost. And lose the challenge. Those are pretty big distinctions, right?

KEITH: I mean, the only thing that can happen to the challenge is that you succeed or you fail.

AUSTIN: Yes, totally, but the... the whole mission is still gonna come down to whatever is next. So you don't, it doesn't stop play, right. So here's what I think happens, you tell me if this works for you. Like, we do it. We start to do the thing, which is we're gonna land these ships, and then this is the unpredictability of the Mirage. I think this is the moment where... and I described this in another game, I described this in the Cadent rescue game, but all of the ships have arrived in the Mirage and, or in the, in Quire's orbit. And strangely, all at once, you know that thing at the

beginning of Mass Effect, or like anything in space in sci-fi things the sun like, comes over the horizon of a planet in orbit and you can see the sun. That happens, and then something starts to block out the sun, and it's a second planet that wasn't there a second ago. And then, behind that one, a third one appears. And each of them are like, strange versions of Quire. And where once there was one Quire, suddenly there are eight.

And the space around, like, so one big thing that happens is that many of the ships that were just fine in space before suddenly lose thrust. They're unable to push through the Twilight Mirage. The Mirage itself like, all of our sensors start going wild because the Mirage has collapsed in on itself. Some— I think there was like a pulse from Volition that we see that causes this or like, it's a combination of a pulse from Volition and the stuff that we talked about before of like, the Mirage is already constricting inwards. Part of the reason that's been happening is that Empyrean has been dead for this whole game. Which came out of the Volition game.

Ali, I don't know what the timing is on this, but I think at this point people will have known that Volition, or that Empyrean, who is the one that made the Mirage originally has been dead since, since Gumption died. Empyrean saw Gumption die and then was like 'Ah fuck' and then transformed from Empyrean into Chthonic, which is this, the weird cloud that invaded one of the other Divines briefly. And now Chthonic is also, is also dead? And so now it all collapses inward on itself. And the, what ends up happening is, the entire Mirage is now completely centered in this one star system. That is eight planets that are all orbiting around Volition, this black— almost like it's a black hole at the center instead of a sun. But the Mirage still has its own innate brightness. So you can still see, it's weird. And I think maybe there is even like ,a sort of strange light coming from Volition, like you can see the surface of Volition, this like weird black orb in the middle.

And the Fleet is just, torn, not torn apart like the, the ships don't shatter, or anything like that. But they're thrown onto different courses, and where once they were all headed towards one Quire, they are pulled off course and are now headed towards eight separate planets, one for each. And the Fleet is sprawling and divided as ever. And I think that is the thing that completely goes wrong here. And so, we did not succeed at stopping the citizens from accepting terms of surrender. Which means that some citizens, let's say half are like, fuck it. The Earth is gonna do better by us. And that is not a good place to be in.

Okay. So, we have one more challenge. Again, I'm just gonna read these.

KEITH: It should be the easiest one, it gets easier.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, definitely. Feed the starving populace, deal with spreading disease, deal with looting, deal with low morale, deal with witch hunts, root out traitors in our midst, unify rival city factions, stop citizens from accepting terms of surrender, prevent people from leaving, draft civilians to fight, get reinforcements from outside the city, deal with a weak point in our defenses, repel invaders or take the fight to the invaders. Does anything speak out to you here?

SYLVIA: So... hm. The ones I'm immediately jumping at are either get reinforcements from outside the city, which I, which would be Quire itself, like trying to reach out to...

AUSTIN: Oh, interesting.

SYLVIA: People down there. Or repel invaders, which is a bit more cut and dry, it's dealing with the Earth Hegemony folks.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's hard for me to imagine us dealing with the invaders after failing that last one because the invaders—

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Now include people who were in the fleet. Do you know what I mean?

SYLVIA: Yeah, a hundred percent, I'm just... grasping at whatever here.

AUSTIN: Actually, let me just look at some notes really quick and make some calls.

SYLVIA: Cause like, I'm just going down them. We did low morale, and we did... stop citizens from accepting terms of surrender already. I don't think root out traitors at this point is very interesting?

AUSTIN: No.

SYLVIA: Feed the starving populace feels like an earlier game thing, same with spreading disease. Like, a lot of this stuff just feels, the reinforcements one feels like something that would come narratively towards the end.

AUSTIN: The thing that I'm curious about there is just like, I, so okay, let's, I'm gonna make a state of the board really quick so we're all on the same page. What was once one planet, called Quire, is now eight. We have not been down there yet. Which is to say, who knows what's on those eight planets? We don't know.

KEITH: Oh so, one of these is not the actual Quire? Or we don't know.

AUSTIN: We have not been down there.

KEITH: Got it.

**[2:30:00]**

AUSTIN: I, you know, no. The answer is no, the answer is none of these is like, oh that's Quire. They're all Quire, I think a week from now we'll all have different names for them. It is the Quire system now. You know, I think that some scientist calls them Quire 1, Quire 2, Quire 3, but no

one wants to live on Quire 7, and instead is gonna call it a different thing, right? Very briefly and broadly, I think the state of play is that Memorius sides with the New Earth Hegemony. I think Potency sides with the New Earth Hegemony. And I think the By and By, which already had been split by the secessionist faction there also sides with the New Earth Hegemony, but only as a protectorate. Like, we're not going to join you, we're gonna be our own thing, but we're going to like... it's gonna be ours. But we're gonna be like, under Earth protection inside of the Twilight Mirage. Then I think Gumption, Seance, and Thyrsus are all part of like, still loyal to the Cadent, still loyal to the Divine Fleet. I think... no one knows where the Sky Reflected in Mirrors is right now?

For Sylvia and Keith, it was revealed on space game, on ship game recently the Sky Reflected in Mirrors was the original city where Sculpture City was. You know how I talked about how there were just like, gashes in the ground all around Sculpture City where it looked like they were just—

KEITH: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Huh.

AUSTIN: It's cause the original Sculpture City made itself into a spaceship and flew away. It was also revealed that the bodies of Fourteen Fifteen were composed using like, synthetic goo and the basic blueprint DNA of people from the Sky Reflected in Mirrors from, from what had previously been the city from the previous Quire civilization. Not clones, not oh I'm taking over their bodies, but like, oh we have this, the whole thing was that people from Quire made a database— it's like the horse thing. It's like the thing that Duck is from, like remember how you were able to like, print Duck?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's the same thing, but with people bodies? And so right now, Fourteen Fifteen is literally like a Quire person with the, with the head spines and the grey skin and the arm nubbins and also is like a, old timey country lawyer? It's very good. So that's the current state of things there. So I think that—

KEITH: Is Duck— where is Duck by the way, now that there's a bunch of...

AUSTIN: Duck is... I don't know, I think Duck was on Myriad, probably?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Duck is fine, I'm not gonna kill Duck offscreen, it's okay, Duck'll be around.

SYLVIA: Duck is immortal.

AUSTIN: Duck, eh, listen. I might kill Duck, but not offscreen. *[laughter]* I'm not a fucking monster.

SYLVIA: God! Austin, I love you dude.

AUSTIN: Uh huh, of course! Thank you. I think that the Sky Reflected in Mirrors has vanished. And I think that the, the... Tides of Harmony, I think we get a shot of them, Sylvia, splitting.

SYLVIA: Ooh.

AUSTIN: And heading to two different planets.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: And neither of them are like, on comms, like, they've already crash landed to two different planets and the... they've already crash landed, the Sky Reflected in Mirrors is disappeared, and I think that that's, is that all of them? Am I missing any of them? That's one two, then By and By, Ever Forward, Memorius, which all went Hegemony. So that's three, four five. And then yeah, six seven eight, Gumption's Gambit, Empyrean's Seance, and Thyrsus, the Belgard planet, or the Belgard ship all remain loyal. And those are the ones that're still like, in space headed towards different planets. So, given that, I don't think like, kick out the Hegemony is, I mean, we could do it. We could pick that as the challenge, it's your challenge to pick, but I am, I am worried about what losing that looks like? And because it would include people who have now sworn allegiance to them, you know?

SYLVIA: Yeah, no, for sure, I think not that one.

AUSTIN: Yeah. My, here's my suggestion. And I don't know if this is, but I kind of like unify rival city factions?

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: In which the city is everyone in the Mirage. It's like, this explodes into the Week Long War, right? Like I think that this is the moment where everything does become this like, free for all in space between, it's a three way war between and we probably just get this in a montage also of like, all these big ships fighting each other, more axioms showing up and fucking up everybody, and it's this three way war between Volition, the New Earth Hegemony, and the Divine Fleet. And like, it's a slow turn, like it's not just like, oh everybody all at once on these ships was like 'oh and now we're with the New Earth Hegemony' it's like, they get captured, or someone gives a rousing speech that turns an entire ship on the other, on the Fleet and you know, they join up with the Hegemony, it happens over the course of days. And I think we're going into day six of what will one day be called the Week Long War. And the thing that I like is like, we have to fucking figure out how to call a truce with, at least with the New Earth

Hegemony and not the, you know, Volition probably will not listen to us because it's a weird post-divine? But, but the New Earth Hegemony might. So I kind of like the notion of unify rival city faction, or... Maybe repel invaders, right, which is like stop the damage, you know? Make sure that we don't lose more?

SYLVIA: I think unify is a little more interesting.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Personally speaking I think it's trying to sort of like, pick up the pieces of what's happened here.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: You know?

AUSTIN: Okay. So who do you think addresses that first? And here's the thing to think about: Whoever addresses it first, the person counter-clockwise to them will get the last scene. So if it's Gig who addresses it first, Declan gets the last scene, if Declan does it first, Echo gets the last scene. Oh, we have to lose another character.

SYLVIA: Yeah, we do.

AUSTIN: Thoughts? I think it's either Waltz or Cascara here.

SYLVIA: Can we have it so maybe Waltz got injured in the...

AUSTIN: In the war, in the fighting?

SYLVIA: In the fight yeah, like he's not dead or anything but we can't have him be active anymore.

AUSTIN: Right. I'm cool with that, I also, I wouldn't mind the notion of Cascara being lost in this sequence? Of like, as everything is going wild, as the ships, or as the planet is splitting into different planets as the Twilight Mirage completely changes, we, we lose Cascara like, the Beloved ship is there one moment, and then what we get is like, there's a shot of the Lord, the Lord in the Bramble that like, flies past it, and then when it flies past, the Beloved ship is just gone. And we don't know where Cascara is. Which also is interesting because then she doesn't get to be a voice of reason in this final sequence?

SYLVIA: Yeah, true. And also that like, sets up a lot of stuff for the campaign going forward, too.



AUSTIN: Yes, a hundred percent, that's kind of what the other thing there is like, I kind of like that notion of like, then what? I don't know.

KEITH: Yeah, if we don't wanna lose Cascara then I think that then, Waltz is the next best choice, but I—

AUSTIN: Yeah. Let's lose Cascara. Yeah, Cascara disappears into the Mirage. No one knows, no one knows where she is, and that is part of why things unfold the way they do. Because I think if Cascara's around, she might end up, we'll see what happens, but I bet she does something different than what this group of people does. Than what, cyborg bounty hunter, Youtube star, angry karate person, and former Earth divine killer decide to do. So who goes first? And also why is it difficult? What makes this difficult? And this is for you Sylvia, that's what I'm asking.

SYLVIA: I think what makes this difficult is just like, *[laughs]* there's no like, hope is hard to come by.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And... it's like, very short supply right now, things have just been going from bad to worse.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Sorry, which challenge did we end up landing on?

AUSTIN: Stops, or sorry, I typed stop citizens that's not what I wanted, I wanted... unify rival city factions.

KEITH: Got it.

AUSTIN: Which is basically in our case it's like, establish a truce. So who acts first here, Echo?

SYLVIA: Um...

AUSTIN: And again, you're also be deciding who acts last.

SYLVIA: Yeah. I don't know if it's the best idea to give the last move to Declan but my gut says Gig should go first here.

AUSTIN: Okay. This is the dilemma is, whoever one you don't choose, that's the person who will get to set the tone— who do you wanna decide to either set the tone, or close it off? You know?

SYLVIA: Yeah. I just feel like in like, character-wise, Gig would be the one who out of these two would jump to try and help first.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Look to the helpers.

SYLVIA: Does that make sense?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that that totally does.

SYLVIA: Keith does that, I don't wanna speak for your character, does that sound right to you, too?

KEITH: Yeah, no that sounds right. I also feel like I have the most immediate way to contact people.

AUSTIN: You totally— that's actually a *huge* point, yes.

SYLVIA: Yeah, true.

AUSTIN: Because they are— this whole place is still in the Mirage, so yes, you do have that ability.

KEITH:*[cross]* Yes, that's what we're defining as rival city factions is that people who still see my broadcasts.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes, a hundred percent, totally. And it's anybody in this Mirage, it's everybody who's here, a hundred percent.

KEITH: It's New Earth Hegemony, it's the ships that left, it's the ships that are still here.

AUSTIN: So what is the scene, who what and where.

KEITH: Oh boy. Um... I think that it is, I think it's gotta be... Man, I don't know, this is hard. We're missing some characters. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean, this is the thing I like about it is like, Gig, you keep looking for other people.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know, I kind of like the notion of it being Gig and Echo.

KEITH: Yeah that was my first, my first choice was Gig and Echo because Declan is... you know. He's rough around the edges.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: And then I was thinking Declan because Declan is from Earth.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: But again, might say some dumb shit.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: Yeah I think it's me, I think it's me and Echo.

AUSTIN: Okay. What are you doing, Where, is it just a broadcast? Like have you set up a set? Where are we, are we on Echo's ship?

KEITH: I think that it's a broadcast *of*... me addressing, me addressing the viewers of the broadcast, but also I have like a full ship full of people like, that are just there watching. Like almost like that same auditorium from before? Except I'm on the stage but also broadcasting out. Like, almost like, a televised town hall thing?

AUSTIN: Right. Where, what's the place that you're sitting in or whatever?

KEITH: I think I'm on a low stage, and I'm standing. Just standing on a low stage with Echo there. But what's the, what... What do you think the crowd is like?

AUSTIN: I don't know, it depends on where that stage is. Is it the same stage that we saw before?

KEITH: Yes, yeah literally the same stage.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* It's like that exact same space?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Was that on Seance, did we decide?

KEITH: I think it was on Seance, yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, so then I think Seance is headed towards one of the, is headed towards one of the Quires, right? And I kind of like the notion of seeing, up on the stage behind you maybe

there is like, projection of the various, of the direction that the ship is headed in, and it's just like, a group of people— it's a group of community leaders on Quire, or on Seance. Are the ones who are gathered in place with you. And you've kind of just stepped up to become a sort of voice here that people are gonna listen to, right, because they already have listened to you, they've been listening to you for months. So I think it's just like, you know. Mercy officers. It's... it is the people who work for like, the fire department, it's local church leaders, it is, it is, you know people from the PTA effectively. It is labor union leaders or whatever, it is—

KEITH: Masonic Lodge.

AUSTIN: Exactly, like seriously, it's people who belong to, you know, it is definitely people who, there's definitely a group of like, the faithful of the long-deceased? For people who worship Divines who died ages ago and are in this moment especially very worried that their divines will be forgotten. Like Seance is, as a reminder, is like, a sort of living you know, mausoleum. It's a world filled, covered in the relics of, of the, of dead divines. Like, you know, a knuckle here. A foot there. A laser cannon that's been turned into a temple. A welding torch. A transistor. And so, there are people here who're like, listen, it's cool that the By and By and the Seance, or that Seance and Thyrsus and the people of Gumption's Gambit are okay but like... all of our history could crash land into this fucking planet and that could be it. So like, maybe this is a thing that Cascara called? Maybe that's the scene, Cascara set up this town hall, basically, and then disappeared and it's like, alright Gig, it'll be you there broadcasting, Echo will be there as a bodyguard, and then like, I'll be the one talking. And then she's gone.

And like, you all show up. And people are like, in little folding chairs. And they have hand fans because the ships are like, diverting power to make sure that they don't fucking crash and so like, the climate control is faltering. We talked before about how remember, on the ships, everything is like this mixed reality, and I think the mixed reality is starting to fail, so like, every once in a while, the like, the room actually is revealed to not be as nice looking as it is, you know? Like maybe it looks like it has really nice curtains, but it actually doesn't have really nice curtains, those are virtual overlay that start to flicker on and off?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So like, that's the setting. It feels like a high school— or a grade school gymnasium. It doesn't feel like a nice town hall meeting. And you're on stage. And like, *[coughs]* someone coughs out in the, out in the distance. Echo Reverie and Gig Kephart, what do you do?

KEITH as Gig: Hi. *[taps on mic]* Can you hear me in the back? *[taps]*

AUSTIN as Audience Member: *[distant]* Yeah!

KEITH as Gig: Okay. So we're on course for... One of the Quires.

AUSTIN as Audience Member: *[distant]* Which one?

KEITH as Gig: I'm gonna say the middle one.

AUSTIN as Audience: *[mumbling]* Oh, the middle, the middle one.

KEITH as Gig: The middle one. It's the, it's the one that's in— the one that's most like, in the spot of the one that we were headed to anyway.

AUSTIN as Audience: Oh it's the good, it's the good Quire.

KEITH as Gig: Yeah, It's the good one.

AUSTIN as Audience: I hear it's the bad one. *[mumbling]*

KEITH as Gig: There, here's the thing, we're gonna operate under the assumption that they're all good ones, for now. I just wanted to say, you know. This is going out to you guys in the audience, it's going out to everyone that's part of, everybody that's in the Mirage currently that includes the New Earth Hegemony, I'm hoping that we can sort of let, let bygones be bygones because we have, you know, some people that decided to join up with them. Hopefully, you know, they're keen on accepting them into their fleet and we can just, you know, scooch along towards a Quire and get ourselves sort of, set up shop down on Quire.

AUSTIN as Audience Member: Are you surrendering? Is this a, it sounds like he's surrendering!

KEITH as Gig: No, no no no, we're not surrendering, we're just going down—

AUSTIN as Audience Member: Who elected you?

SYLVIA: Alright, Echo's gonna push Gig away from the microphone now.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Oh shit!

SYLVIA: Alright, so—

AUSTIN: You have an eyepatch on, what do you— what do you look like? What are you wearing? What's Echo—

SYLVIA: Oh, fuckin' eyepatch on, jacket on, sword on, I'm decked out.

AUSTIN: Okay. You look like a weird space pirate.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: For sure.

AUSTIN: A cool space pirate, not a weird space pirate.

SYLVIA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Cool and weird are interchangeable when it comes to a lot of things in my life.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* True. *[laughs]*

SYLVIA: Just clarifying, Austin, you said a big fear that these guys had is that their history would be lost, right?

AUSTIN: It's definitely a big portion of these people who believe that, yeah.

SYLVIA as Echo: So what's going on right now—

SYLVIA: This is in character.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA as Echo: So what's going on is that a lot of people, a lot of people are scared, and rightfully so. You're scared of losing your homes, you're scared of losing your history, you're scared of losing your culture. And the thing that's gonna happen here regardless of whether... thing that's gonna happen is that if we stay here, no matter what, that is going to go away. As much as the Earth Hegemony has said that they will respect this stuff, I have, I know what it's like to be under someone's thumb and to have your ability to exist freely taken away from you. And whether it's from the...

SYLVIA: I guess I wouldn't know the term 'axiom', would I?

AUSTIN: No that's, I think people have already started calling them axioms, yeah.

SYLVIA as Echo: Whether it's from the axioms or from, it's from them, or something else, the only shot we have of making it through this is landing. I would rather... I don't know about you, but I would rather have a chance at freedom and a change at continuing to be able to be me that also has a chance that it doesn't go a hundred percent right and I mean, what does, here, anyway. But I'd rather have that, and I'd rather try that, than just sit here wringing our hands and being scared. I think we need, we need to *do* something, and we need to do it together, and we need to try and actually be what we say we are and be a united Fleet.

AUSTIN as Audience Member: They're traitors! Why should we work with them?

SYLVIA as Echo: They're *scared*. They're, everyone is scared right now. The, life as we know it is changing. And we have to adapt to that and what we're doing right now is stomping our feet and saying no, like we're little toddlers. We need to ch— we need to adapt and the way to do that, is we need to land. We need to take this to Quire, and we need to make an effort to do it right and to do it so we all make it and our way of life makes it too.

AUSTIN as Audience Member: Why should we share resources with them?

SYLVIA as Echo: Because we don't know what resources we'll have when we land. This is an unknown for us, we, I've been on Quire and I've seen what it's like, but I don't know—

AUSTIN as Audience: *[cross] [whispered]* They've been on Quire?  
SYLVIA as Echo: What parts of Quire, Gig you have footage, could you?  
KEITH as Gig: We, yeah. We, I'll show you guys, look, check it out.  
AUSTIN as Audience Member: What's it like?

KEITH: And I sort of beam out—

AUSTIN: Yeah, what do you show?

KEITH as Gig: Some of it's forest-y, some of it's, some of it's city-ish, and some of it's, you know, plains.  
SYLVIA as Echo: There's fresh air and open skies and—  
KEITH as Gig: There's beaches.  
AUSTIN as Audience: Beaches!  
SYLVIA as Echo: It's like every... archive—  
KEITH as Gig: *[cross]* There's beaches, oh my God there's this juice, you guys, there's this juice that they get it's—  
SYLVIA as Echo: It's really good juice.  
KEITH as Gig: There's some really good juice they get it from jelly that grows in the ground and they make juice out of it?  
AUSTIN as Audience: Juice jelly...  
KEITH as Gig: Yeah.  
SYLVIA as Echo: It's like every archive we've seen of the old days on planets, but it's real and it's here and it's possible for us, and we need to try for this because I don't know about you, but I don't, I'm sick of being stuck on these failing ships with the... albatross that is our trying to cling onto the past hanging around our necks.  
KEITH as Gig: Wait, and they're nice down there, check this out.

KEITH: And then I show the footage of, uh, the captain, what was his name?

AUSTIN: *[cross] [laughs]* Kent?

KEITH: Kent. Yeah.

AUSTIN: What the fuck was his last name... Kent something? Kent... Kent, Kent, Kent... Kent? Kent Brighton, of the Brighton lineage.

KEITH as Gig: Kent Brighton of the Brighton Lineage, they've got hotels and *pens*, they've got these fucking pens!  
SYLVIA as Echo: Show— show them Surge.  
KEITH as Gig: Show, check *this* out!

KEITH: And then I do the, I take out my pen, *[as Gig]* and yeah, Surge is up there, he's a big otter man, he helps us—

*[Austin cheers and claps]*

AUSTIN: Someone just starts clapping as Surge appears!

KEITH as Gig: It's cool down there, it's a new place, it's a new beginning for us and we can take— we can take anything that we want from our past with us but we've gotta go to the planet first, cause otherwise we're gonna get, you know, swallowed up by the metal thing!

AUSTIN: I think people are like, starting to come around. What are we— what do we tell the— someone stands up, I think someone stands up, you know it's, it's Ruckus, it's, it's Marble, Marble Ruckus.

KEITH as Gig: Ruckus come up here, get up here!

AUSTIN: He like, walks to the edge, like the front, and there's someone gives him a microphone and he says:

AUSTIN as Marble: Um, well...

KEITH: I pull him onstage.

KEITH as Gig: Come on, get up here! Come on.

AUSTIN as Marble: Hey everyone, my name Marble Ruckus, my name is Marble Ruckus, I'm a member of the—

KEITH as Gig: *[cross]* Marble Ruckus did a fantastic job keeping things in ship shape on the ships.

AUSTIN as Marble: We did our best. I'm a member of the, you know, Welders 502.

AUSTIN: And someone's like, *[claps, cheers]* "Welders! 502!" And he says like—

*[Keith whistles]*

SYLVIA: The 502 chant.

AUSTIN: Yeah. 502. 502!

AUSTIN as Marble: Y'all have a way with words, it's very impressive, I'm very impressed, but a lot of us, we have families, and we... we're gonna go home and they're gonna say, we're gonna tell them that you think that we should get a truce with the



Hegemony, that we should try to land the whole damn ship, and we don't have... You didn't give us any talking points, like we don't, I'm not gonna have all what you just gave me. How do we bring this home? What do I tell my kids?

KEITH as Gig: Here watch this, we ran up a simulation of how landing the ships will look. This is what we got, it's right up here, boom. Just show 'em the archive.

AUSTIN as Marble: *[cross]* No, I don't need a simulation! I need words. People...

KEITH as Gig: Okay.

AUSTIN as Marble: What do I tell 'em?

KEITH as Gig: There's big open spaces, there's resources planetside, there's people that we met down there that can give us a hand. And we just gotta try our best to get to the safest possible place for you and your families.

AUSTIN: Somebody else like, stands up and moves towards the, I think maybe this is Czar? I think this is a very Czar thing to ask. Czar says like, Czar comes up to the stage, does not ask, just walks straight up to the stage and like, climbs up it? And like, asks for the microphone.

KEITH as Gig: *[quiet]* Yeah, here.

AUSTIN as Czar: Excuse me, excuse me. You're talking about these wide open spaces, you're talking about all the resources. People live on Quire. Other people, other people, I'm a doctor, I have to think about what other people need. We can't just go down there and take things from these people.

KEITH as Gig: Well they're, so here's the thing, before there was only one Quire, and there's definitely people there. Now there's eight, we're not a hundred percent sure if there's people on there anyway, but apart from that, the people that we've met on Quire were very willing to have us come down. We talked to two separate groups who were both like, yeah, you know, bring 'em, bring 'em down.

SYLVIA as Echo: We've also, yeah we've spoken to a couple of the different groups on Quire and... one in particular was confident that they could accommodate the Fleet. Not to mention the fact that there are like, outside of just them, there are plenty of other fully functioning societies existing on Quire. Now, couple that—

AUSTIN as Czar: I'm going on record, I'm, I'm, if the Fleet decides to go forward with this, that's fine, but I'm going on record with a note of, of disagreement. Put it down, someone write it down.

KEITH as Gig: I've got it down.

AUSTIN as Czar: Alright.

AUSTIN: And then like, rolls offstage. Brushes off the, the dust from the floor and like, walks back to, to their seat.

AUSTIN as Marble: Can I go off the stage now, too?

SYLVIA as Echo: Yeah, you can go off the stage.

KEITH as Gig: *[cross]* Yeah, you can go.

SYLVIA as Echo: Thank you.

AUSTIN as Audience: 502!

KEITH as Gig: 502!

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* And then heads off the stage. I think that might be it for that sequence.

SYLVIA: I think so.

KEITH: Yeah, I think that's it.

AUSTIN: Alright, so, that's the, people, okay, we've done that. Echo, your scene. Who, what, where?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Who, what, where indeed.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Remember the challenge is unify rival factions, establish a truce.

SYLVIA: *[sighs]* I'm debating on whether to like, do something that addresses the concerns that they raised at the meeting? Or to do something that unifies in a different way?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think my thing is like, we've now uni— I think that was about unifying the remaining members of our Fleet.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And now the question is like, either extending that or trying to get the truce in place? With the New Earth Hegemony. Or dealing with the shit that like, you know, part of the reason why it's hard to communicate is that this big fucking disaster machine, again it's not Disaster, Disaster is another one, Disaster is a different axiom. Bountiful is still out there, like the New Earth Hegemony pushed it back some, but I think after we fucked up their shit they probably stopped doing that as much and they've been fighting on two fronts? I think both of us have been fighting on two fronts now, right? Like, there's definitely echoes here, there should be echoes here of the Oricon, Diaspora, Apostolosian conflict, right? Where like, everybody doesn't like the axiom and doesn't like Volition, but that doesn't mean that things are good between New Earth Hegemony and the Fleet, the Divine Fleet. So I don't know, I think there's a lot that you could do in that space.

SYLVIA: Yeah... So I think I wanna have a scene with Declan for sure. And yeah, I think Gig could be there too, actually, and I think it's gonna be, or maybe Keith could also, if he wants, play someone from, a representative from the New Earth Hegemony? But I think it's either talking with Declan about getting in contact with them, or just getting in contact with them.

AUSTIN: Let's just be there, let's just have that meeting instead of being like, oh what we should do is we should—

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Like, let's jump to the next.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Yeah, that's what that's what I think too.

KEITH: Yeah, and yes, so I can be, I can be a New Earth Hegemony person and then if Gig needs to do something, Gig can be there.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What if you do, what if you play... Templeton's Faire?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Who you've heard the bad British voice before, that I did.

KEITH: *[bad British voice]* Yes. Yes.

AUSTIN: Good. Uh huh. Perfect. Maybe in fact, let's do a transitional thing, which is like, before getting off the stage, Marble Ruckus is like,

AUSTIN as Marble: So, before, you don't have to say this part into the microphone, do you, y'all talked to the Hegemony about a truce already?

AUSTIN: And then it's like, hard cut from that to like, Echo looks at Gig, and then looks back and is like, what do you say in response, Echo? As the scene—

SYLVIA as Echo: We're working on it.

AUSTIN: Okay! And then hard cut from that to, you're in the, the, the Lord and Bramble's meeting room again, except now there is, it is Declan's Corrective, it is Echo Reverie and it is both Oksana and Templeton's Faire in this same— maybe it's not the conference room, maybe it's the hotel bar, basically.

KEITH: Am I, am I being conference called in, or did I show up?

AUSTIN: No, you're there, I think we were, what we get is—

KEITH: *[cross]* I'm there.

AUSTIN: Yeah. We get the shot of the Lord and Bramble again, this is kind of like, castle-y spaceship diamond thing that's out like, above the Bountiful, above Bountiful, and between a number of the big Divine Fleet like, megaships that are heading to Quire, and then we get like the personal, the personal carrier, or the personal vessel of Templeton's Faire with like, some armed Torch Units, so it's probably like five Torch Units, plus Oksana who are coming here, who have accepted this as neutral territory because they only saw Declan's Corrective's speech? His ship was nowhere involved with that attack, right?

[3:00:00]

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: So I think he's playing it as like, I'm a neutral party? And I'm here to, I'm here to mediate is kind of what he's setting up. That's his play here, for sure.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So Echo, what, what is the, what is the danger to this scene?

SYLVIA: I think the danger is that the New Earth Hegemony is here and things could go bad.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh, okay.

SYLVIA: I think it's pretty cut and dry.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Alright so you're playing Templeton's Faire. And we're just in this like, we're in like, the VIP section of the hotel bar that is the lounge of this spaceship.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Well, Mr—

KEITH as Faire: Well, Mr.'s Collective, I'm here.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Corrective, sir, but thank you, a joy to met you. I've seen your record, it is very impressive.

AUSTIN: He offers a hand.

KEITH: Hmm, I do a sort of like a, super limp fish handshake.

AUSTIN: Right. Here is what I will say Templeton's Faire knows about Declan's Corrective. Was the son of a deeply despotic Hegemon, leader of the, the Hegemony hundreds and hundreds of years ago. Was dispatched here, killed 27 divines, the reason his name is Declan's Corrective is because the Hegemon Declan was one of the worst in a long time, was a warmonger, like did believe in expanding the Earth Hegemony's sphere, and overextended and invested in military

in his lifetime. Declan's Corrective is named that because he's supposed to be a Corrective? And I think Templeton knows that Declan's whole, or Declan's Corrective, Corrective's whole ideology was that you starve a population like the Divine Fleet. You hit them in the, you kill the divines not so that you like, hurt them, but so that you can entice them to join up with Earth. And like, that was what his whole ideology was, and it's why he was such a vicious pilot was because if he could, it's the same, in fact in retrospect, it's literally the same thing he was trying to do by encouraging you to bloody the noses of the Earth, of the New Earth Hegemony which is like, show that these people are, show that weakness and then that'll keep, get people in line, basically? And make them kind of bow to authority. So maybe he hasn't changed as much as he wishes he has. But that's what, that's what Templeton's Faire would know from Corrective's file, basically.

KEITH: Kay.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Have a seat. Would you like a drink? We have...

KEITH as Faire: I'd like two drinks, thank you.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Whatever you'd like. What would it be?

KEITH as Faire: One of water, one of your choice.

AUSTIN as Corrective: I'll be right back. Echo, please begin the conversation, I'll prepare the— would you like anything to drink, Reverie?

SYLVIA as Echo: Just water is fine.

AUSTIN: He nods, and then goes up to hand make the drinks. What would Templeton— I think it's like—

KEITH as Faire: Handmade water, I'm impressed.

*[laughter]*

AUSTIN as Corrective: Only the finest.

SYLVIA as Echo: Alright, so... *[sighs]* The reason I've asked you here is because we're trying to get down planetside and we're interested in a mutual... in an arrangement that gets us both down there safely.

KEITH as Faire: What could you offer to me?

SYLVIA as Echo: We have... mechanics, we have, we have knowledge of the planets below that you don't. We can help you get settled down there.

AUSTIN: Corrective comes back with a... a Manhattan and a gin and tonic and he just lowers the thing, the holder, the drink holder, not the, like the serving tray to see which one Faire takes.

KEITH: I take, I take the gin and tonic.

AUSTIN: Okay. And then he like, places the tray back on the bar and then sits down with the, the Manhattan, and then gives water, the two waters also, of course.

KEITH as Faire: Hm.

AUSTIN as Corrective: You said you had knowledge of the planet. What sort of knowledge? Broadly. I wouldn't want you to show your hand, of course.

KEITH as Faire: *[cross]* Yes.

SYLVIA as Echo: I've been there, I've spent...

SYLVIA: God, how long did we spend down on Quire, a few months?

AUSTIN: Half a year.

SYLVIA: Half a year. I've been down there for six months.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, like a hundred and fifty, a hundred and sixty days, something like that?

SYLVIA as Echo: I spent about six months on Quire as part of a initiative to colonize it for the Fleet and... in doing so learned quite a bit about both the civilizations that are down there, the environment of it, and the hazards that come from trying to make a home on Quire itself.

AUSTIN as Corrective: You have hard data, or do you only have stories?

SYLVIA as Echo: We have footage from Gig, he archived the entire thing, we also have... archives taken by several members of our team including our ship. The ship AI. We have biometrics, stuff like that.

AUSTIN :*[cross]* Corrective— Corrective like does the thing of like, his chair is turned to be more horizontal with Templeton Faire's than with Echo's as if to like, I'm sitting with the New Earth Hegemony, you know what I mean? Like he's very much trying to do that.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Hm. I don't know, Faire.

KEITH as Faire: What don't you know?

AUSTIN as Corrective: It doesn't sound material enough to me. Data is fine, images are fine, mechanics... that's alright. But I've been up here for... hundreds of years and my big fear is, this is just me... I look at a place like the By and By and they've said that they wanna be a protectorate, but. I don't know that if the Fleet doesn't recognize it as such, if the Fleet lets it be run by an outsider, there's just no way they stay. I think you need the Fleet to maybe put someone in charge that can keep it on lock and key. And then maybe you agree to some... cooperative action against the axiom. Something that shows people that the Fleet and the Hegemony can recognize a common foe. We have differences of opinion, people like Reverie and I, but you look at a beast like that, something that has no interest in human life, and it's hard not to want to address it. Huh, Reverie?

SYLVIA as Echo: I agree, actually, I think having someone in charge of the... sort of truce, not in charge of every, like in charge of our side of things that you can directly talk

to would be a good idea, sort of. A leader you choose. I'll make sure you get that. That being said, I do have something I could offer if you would consider...

SYLVIA: And Echo takes a *real* deep breath here.

SYLVIA as Echo: If you consider putting me in charge of this, I can offer you this.

SYLVIA: And Echo motions a little, and I think like they just got someone to bring like, the shield of the Overture?

AUSTIN: Oh shit.

SYLVIA: And it's glass.

AUSTIN: Right. *[cross]* Right.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* And it's made of the glass. And...

AUSTIN as Corrective: What's that trinket? That looks like it's made of— I could smash that with my fist.

SYLVIA as Echo: Try.

AUSTIN: He like looks you right in the eye, Echo, he's like, there's like complete trust eye contact.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then like... throws his right fist as hard as he can at the glass. And breaks his hand. *[shouts]* And just like.

AUSTIN as Corrective: *[grow/s]* What the hell is that made of?

SYLVIA as Echo: This is glass. This is the glass that they have on Quire, and I know people who know how to make this. And I know how to get this for you.

KEITH as Faire: Mr.'s Corrective, if that was ordinary glass your hand wouldn't have fared much better.

AUSTIN as Corrective: My hand has broken more than glass. *[long sigh]*

AUSTIN: And he just like, goes to the bar and gets a bucket of ice.

SYLVIA as Echo: Sorry about that, Declan.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Corrective.

SYLVIA as Echo: Right.

KEITH as Faire: One more handmade water.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Of course.

AUSTIN: Pour.

SYLVIA: *[giggles]* Slower this time, he's got one hand.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Slow water, got it.

KEITH as Faire: Slow water on the rocks.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Let me make *you* an offer, Reverie. You tell us where the glass is. You put us in charge of the By and By. And you recognize— You... you make me governor. Tell them—

KEITH as Faire: Yes, is there space for a burgess?

AUSTIN as Corrective: A *burgess*?

KEITH as Faire: You know, a governor.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Yes. Burgess, Burgess' Governor is a different person. *[laughter]* *[jokingly in character]* It's a friend of mine— no.

SYLVIA as Echo: I'd be willing to accept a partnership with you, but I need to make sure that, and I don't mean any ill will when I say this, but you're not from the Fleet and the people of the Fleet need to know that one of their own is helping to oversee a lot of this.

AUSTIN as Corrective: I'm saying you take control of the military action. The joint action. I'll help you with that, I'll give you my ship for that. Not give it, but I'll lend you my ship for that. But... New Earth Hegemony...

AUSTIN: And he like, looks over at Faire. And is like,

AUSTIN as Corrective: They're— *We* are gonna want one of our own in charge of the, of the one group that hasn't given us complete control.

KEITH as Faire: I have my terms.

AUSTIN as Corrective: What, what are your terms?

KEITH as Faire: The New Earth Hegemony retains control of half of all Quires. The two ships completely under our control remain under our control *and* the By and By has a dual governorship.

SYLVIA as Echo: I can accept the dual governorship and I can accept—

KEITH as Faire: *[cross]* A token to you.

SYLVIA as Echo: I can accept what Corrective is saying. The issue of the planets itself?

KEITH as Faire: Mhm?

SYLVIA as Echo: Is that I do not have control over half of Quire. Half of these new Quires. I only know... I only have the inroads that I've made and the—

AUSTIN as Corrective: *[cross]* Tentative. Tentative, then.

SYLVIA as Echo: The colonization— we can aid you in colonization efforts as we can, we can give you supplies for that.

AUSTIN as Corrective: I see what you're saying, there could be people there already, you can't negotiate for them, that's fair.



SYLVIA as Echo: Exactly.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Sovereignty is an important concept for the Hegemony. How about this, we stay out of each other's way. Whatever happens on four of the Quires, that's up to you, whatever happens on the other four, that's with us.

SYLVIA as Echo: I can accept that.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Faire, those are good, those are *fair* demands I think, that you've made. They've sent the right man.

KEITH as Faire: *[laughs]* A jokester!

AUSTIN as Corrective: That's what they've always called me.

KEITH as Faire: Jokester's Corrective!

AUSTIN as Corrective: Very funny, sir. So. Should we bring it to this goddamn axiom, or what?

SYLVIA as Echo: I think that's the last thing we've gotta do now. Yeah.

AUSTIN as Corrective: I'm gonna get another drink.

KEITH as Faire: We will continue our assault as planned.

SYLVIA as Echo: If you'll excuse me, I have some matters to attend to.

SYLVIA: And then Echo like shakes Corrective's non broken hand and also slides him the card for Czar because he can get—

AUSTIN: Good call!

SYLVIA: Get that fixed up. And then shakes, does Faire shake hands?

AUSTIN: Good question.

KEITH: I do wanna say real quick out of, out of character that I thought there were seven Quires, and so I was trying to get more than half?

AUSTIN: Oh, I see, no, it's eight, it's eight total.

KEITH: That's fine, that could've been—

AUSTIN: That's even better.

KEITH: I mean, we can do that in character, where—

AUSTIN: *[laughing]* Yep! Exactly!

SYLVIA: *[cross]* *[laughing]* Yeah, he doesn't know about the eighth one.

KEITH: *[cross]* Where fuckin, the guy thought that there was a far less, maybe that there was five, and then oh I bartered for four I got a huge deal, and then we agreed and it's oh I got half.

AUSTIN: I got half— Like it's on the ship home and, and he's like bragging to Oksana and is like, mm, I took four of them! And Oksana is like—

KEITH: *[as Faire]* Four of the Quires all to ourselves!

AUSTIN: Yes! *[as Faire]* Seventy five percent! And she's like, Sir, that's half, that's half of them.

*[laughter]*

SYLVIA: *[laughing]* This guy is just shitty Frieza!

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, a *hundred* percent!

KEITH: *[laughs]* Oh man.

AUSTIN: Shitty Frieza...

KEITH: How, does that make, does that make Declan's Corrective a Bardock, is he a Bardock?

AUSTIN: Uh, he's like a, I think he's better than a Bardock. Ah no, he's a Bardock.

KEITH: He's a Bardock.

SYLVIA: I don't know.

AUSTIN: He's definitely better than a Zarbon.

KEITH: Wouldn't he be worse than a Bardock?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* He could be a Vegeta.

AUSTIN: He's better, he's a Vegeta. I think he's a Vegeta.

KEITH: *[cross]* He's a Vegeta?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* I could see him being a Vegeta. Yeah.

AUSTIN: He's a bit of a Vegeta.

KEITH: Okay, that makes sense.

SYLVIA: I will say, just before we move on from this scene, right when Echo steps out of like, the room, they find the nearest trashcan and just... stress barf.

AUSTIN: Yeah, of course. Of course!

SYLVIA: Because they just had to put themselves in charge of this whole fucking thing!

AUSTIN: Uh huh! And just fake their way through it!

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Fake it til you make it! Alright. I think final sequence for me is like, the proof is in the pudding, right? Like there has to be this big counteroffensive like, I think at this point there's a number of planets that literally have... Bountiful has grown between them. And the landing path has to, we have to blow a hole through this thing. And, and I don't know what that looks like, so I think it's, Corrective the, the Lord and Bramble is one of the ships there, my guess is that the Holiday Gambit is there?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: My guess is that the, the... The H.S.S. Season's Juniper is also there and has like, a bunch of shit that it can deploy. And then it's just, you know what it might be—

KEITH: Whose ship is that?

AUSTIN: That is the, that is the NEH ship, the New Earth Hegemony ship, the Juniper.

KEITH: Oh, yes. Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then it— and then like, you know it might be... all of the people from like Seance and stuff who are like, who have their own ships or who have ancient mechs that are like relics from past years, from past you know, eons of the Fleet show up. You know, I think one or two people break out the shell of a divine, like it doesn't have the divine heart, mind or whatever, but is still a mech and like, they're ready to go. And I think Declan's Corrective is at like, so I think this is all of us. I think this is Gig, Echo, Declan for sure. Gig, where are you, because Echo is definitely in the Holiday Gambit. Gig, where are you at, where do you shoot all of this from?

KEITH: Hm. Ships are too fast for me to send my eye out into space. My eye is not as fast as a ship.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: You're always welcome on my ship.

KEITH: Who is in the, who's in the front of the fleet?

AUSTIN: Oh, I think Declan's Corrective is making a whole fucking show of it, right? Like, after that shit he just pulled off like.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Where it's not even— I hope that the, what it came across there was like, he's definitely playing Templeton's Faire, like one hundred percent playing that motherfucker.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: But it's not one hundred percent clear if he was playing along with Echo like, he did punch that glass and knew it would break his fucking hand, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And like, wanted to sell that. But also is he just out for himself? I don't know, it's hard to say.

KEITH: It's hard to say.

AUSTIN: Men like Corrective. So yeah I think he's definitely, I think that the the Lord in Bramble is definitely out front. And then so then, where is the Holiday Gambit?

SYLVIA: I think it's trying to keep up with...

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think it's faster, I think it's a smaller ship, so it's probably, cause space, I think it probably has better engines and shit, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN: Because like, sci-fi bullshit? And then behind that is then like, the, the Juniper.

SYLVIA: Yeah. Also, I imagine it was made for maneuvering, as opposed to combat, right? So...

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, yes, it's a smuggler ship, so yes.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah. So I, I'm gonna, I'll be in one ship and my eye will be in the other ship. I think I'll be in the ship with—

AUSTIN: Oh, cool.

KEITH: With Echo, but then my eye will be with Corrective.

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah. Well then, you get a dope look at this.

SYLVIA: [*cross*] I like that a lot.

AUSTIN: Because I think what opens is like, we see Volition in the background like so it's like, the way I'm imagining this is we get like... let me do this really quick, I can do it real quick, I can do it, let's see, let's see if I can do this. Let's see if I can do a cool sketch. We got Volition right? Is there. Is like, the planet. Then we have like, the weird metal blossom thing that's just like blossoming out like this, like all over the place like a big weird fucking, abstract art piece, and installation sculpture right, it's coming into the foreground. Behind it you can see that there are the like, the, the, oh that's wrong. The... the silhouettes of two other planets, right, so it's like whoop! And then like another one over here, or whatever. This is a *terrible* drawing that you're letting me draw, why would you let me draw this? Oh my God! That last one was bad.

KEITH: It looked great up until just now.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And then there's like, in the foreground is the, is the ships, right, the collection of the various ships are like here, and then like, the little one is there, and then like, in the far, far background like it just comes on screen is this big weird Juniper's whatever, you know? Boom, there we go. That looks alright, I'll take it. So yeah, that's what, that's what we get, this kind of like, deep, almost like parallax shot of the ships moving forward? And then the eye gets this closeup of this, the green blossom from before, the green bud, and it opens up. And inside is the Lord, right? So it's the Lord in the Bramble, the Bramble is the ship, the Lord is this like, knightly mech that's inside of the Bramble? And you know, the knights, the Saints from Quire were like, oh it's, it's like the size of two people, it's like twelve feet tall or something, this is definitely like twenty five feet tall. And it is like, has like one of those, it's a knight, again, and it has a black like, cast-iron lance. It almost looks like the, the railing of like a cast-iron fence, you know what I'm talking about? It has like the kind of fluted arrow top.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: And then it, but its body is like, shining silver with a, even brighter or like, whiter silver on the trim and edges. And it totally has the sort of like, fluted nose, or not even fluted what's

the, what's the thing i'm talking about, like how the medieval knight helmet comes to a point, like a sharp point?

SYLVIA: Yeah I know what you mean, sort of like, almost like a bulb with a point, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly, exactly. And then just has like, a bunch of, it has like a bunch of boosters on various points around its back, basically. And those all look like little roses, of course. And like, on top of the silver and white gold, it has little bits of green like, has like a whole floral theme, because that's his whole fucking ship. And I think he's just like, he addresses everyone and he says from inside of the cockpit of this thing he says...

AUSTIN as Corrective: There is no going back from this. We are being driven forward by gravity and velocity, and our desire to remake the world in an image we find suitable and beautiful. Open fire.

AUSTIN: And like, the ships all start shooting their cannons and like, he takes off and flies forward and like, spear in hand, it's like, spear and then like, I think he also has a big single, single shot cannon like, gun? That he holds like from the top like the, trigger and like the grip go upwards so he's holding it like a tonfa? Like underneath the thing? And then he pulls the trigger, and... it like, it, there's like a brief moment where nothing happens, and then the gun explodes and like flies off into the distance. And what the Fleet discovers in this moment is that again, the unpredictability of the Mirage has made everyone's ranged weapons completely ineffective. And at this point half of the ships are unable to move forward, like the, I think that the, the... the Juniper starts launching its own fighters and stuff, and a lot of those sputter out, as if they're flying through gel or something. The Mirage is so dense and thick that like, anything that doesn't have very strong engines or it's not like perfectly aerodynamic can barely move at all. What's everybody do? How do we overcome this?

SYLVIA: Fuck. I wish my mech wasn't broken, damn!

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean, you have the shield, you have— what else did you have left of it?

SYLVIA: I had the torso and I think I had like, part of the sword.

AUSTIN: The head or something, yeah yeah, the sword.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I definitely had the head still.

AUSTIN as Corrective: Dammit.

AUSTIN: Declan, or Corrective, is just gonna like fly forward full speed with this spear out, right? Nothing's stopping, nothing's stopping his mech from moving, but ranged weapons are just— and the same thing ends up happening with the cannons on the Bramble, like they fire and then

blow up, like, and there's fires on the inside of the hotel interior and all of his staff is like, running around putting out fires on the inside. What is happening throughout the fleet? Let's just describe this from a high level. Who figures out anything to do here? I imagine like, we gets lots of like other mechs failing and other ships like, starting up their laser cannons and then nothing happens.

SYLVIA: I think... I have this idea that like, a little bit after seeing this some of the people from Gumption's Gambit try this thing where they take the guns that are not working cause they explode after you use them...

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah.

SYLVIA: And rigging them so they try to fire on a timer and launching them like they're death charges?

AUSTIN: Oh that's rad as hell.

KEITH: That is rad as hell.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: They're like, actually just firing the guns, they like—

SYLVIA: Yeah!

AUSTIN: They're like, catapulting guns that will then become explosives.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's really cool.

SYLVIA: And they're basically just trying to like, carpet bomb this thing, almost.

AUSTIN: That's extremely a Gumption's Gambit move.

KEITH: *[cross]* That *is* a super Gumption's Gambit move, I love that.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Alright, so that's one thing that they're doing. Keith, what's, what's another thing that's happening on the Fleet to try to address this?

KEITH: Oh boy. Um... Let me think... So in total, how many ships do you think there are, ships that are firing on this thing, or trying to fire?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* You know... A number? I think like at this point, it's these three big ships that we have and then probably a dozen other ships of various sizes that are like being also pretty ineffective?

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then, you know, twenty mechs or something, right? Mechs and fighters and shit like that.

KEITH: Okay. I think.... I think when people in the, in the rear see that the people up front are not able to use their weapons, they...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: They stay at distance and try to *[plink]* it from far back, like stay out of range of what is causing things to malfunction?

AUSTIN: Right. Well the thing that they then discover what you see is like, it's just the Mirage. Like, the Mirage has gotten so dense that traditional projectile weapons are just not able to fire in here. Like the rounds start to move and then they can't get out of the shell— or out of the barrel. And then they explode. And that's true for both—

KEITH: What about—

AUSTIN: For both like, beam weapons, like, everything.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Nothing can pierce through the density of this Mirage at this point. So you get like a lot of the mechs doing what Corrective is doing, which is like, fuck it, we have spears, we have swords. And like, they are just landing on this, this surface of this like, constantly growing collection of metal and are like, scraping away at it.

KEITH: *[cross]* Smashing it?

AUSTIN: Trying to smash at it, planting charges like you did, like they see that that works and are trying to do the same thing. ... I think Corrective is like...

AUSTIN as Corrective: The Mirage is too damn thick.

AUSTIN: I'm trying to think if anybody has like a brilliant idea, like is there any ship... the only people who I could think of is the Rapid Evening crew that we introduced, and they feel like a little *deus ex machina* to bring up?



SYLVIA: Yeah. I do have a question about this, so it's become, the Mirage has become physical, right?

AUSTIN: It's always been physical, it's just denser now.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Like it, it's physical the way air is physical?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* But like, so, I, because I've been disconnected with it, it's not like thinner for me or anything, right?

AUSTIN: No, no.

SYLVIA: I didn't think so, but I wanted to make sure.

AUSTIN: Like, I mean like, in fact, this is a thing that you should notice is like... *[sighs]* The world for Echo is changing in a way that is very unpredictable. They can... there are moments when they can sense radio bands. Right? Where like, you hear Corrective speak into your brain and not into a mic— not from a speaker. The way that people with interfaces heard him speak. Something weird is happening with the Mirage. We've spoken a lot about how, oh, the physical and the virtual, or the physical and the digital overlap and you know, for the people here, those two things are basically identical, like they live their whole lives in a digital space. It is becoming *actually* identical. Something is happening here where the physical world and the digital world are melding... in a way that did not used to be the case.

Like there's a moment where Corrective reaches, is like, slamming this fucking spear again and again and again onto this thing, and then like raises the spear into the air, or into the higher above his head, and it just gets bigger and like, more metal? Like it goes from being like that fluted arrow top to like the, where it wraps back around into little circles, those like become spiked themselves and bring out, it becomes barbed, the whole thing, and it becomes like this massive lance instead of just being a spear. And like, that wasn't— he didn't hit a button to make that happen, something in the Mirage changed his lance.

KEITH: I... I have something that's like way out there and if it's too out there let's not do it.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Sure. Let me know.

KEITH: You're saying that the digital and the physical are changing and like, melding?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Is there a way to like, pump out broadcast that of like, stuff? And have that change things?

AUSTIN: So, what I'll say is like, in a, in a zoomed out meta sense, or in a out of character like, I'm running this show jam sense, going forward this is going to be the state of the world and I'm being very careful about what can affect things in a big dramatic way?

KEITH: Yeah.

**[3:30:00]**

AUSTIN: Because it should feel special. Like, Tender Sky has been doing this slowly over the course of the last like, eight episodes or something, to where like oh, she has this ability now. Declan's Corrective did the weird newtype flash thing before. Morning's Observation has it. Lily Lysander, the research assistant who was doing the weird shit on the ground with her hands to raise the heart out of the clay. They're stratuses? They're strati. They're what Mako Trig was in, in Counter/weight. So I do wanna be careful about like, what I say yes this is a thing that can work forever, because I don't want it to be like, okay, everyone gets to be a newtype now, everyone gets to be a strati. But, I do really like the notion of like, you have a stream suppressor, right, like that's been the thing from the jump is, you have this device lets you broadcast to everybody, but you also have this thing that... suppresses part of your emotion and part of your brain activity so that you can *very* carefully control what goes out there. I kind of like the notion of you doing the Cyclops thing of ripping your visor off.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Of like, fuck it, like I can't live like this all the time! You could never be like, alright I'm just gonna, I'm gonna turn off the suppressor and just go full volume with a huge blast of information because it would just— you couldn't live like that, and you couldn't even, it should make you feel bad to do it, like?

KEITH: Yeah. Well if I ripped it off, I guess I would feel like, like sort of like... knotting up a garden hose and unknotting it and it like, jets forwards.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Of sadness, probably.

AUSTIN: Of sadness, probably, yeah, probably fuckin sucks.

SYLVIA: Also the garden hose is hooked up to like, a geyser.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly, exactly.

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: So what do you send? I kind of like this, but what is it that, what is the image, what is the feeling, what is the, other than your personal sadness at this but like...

KEITH: Yeah, I mean my initial thing was just like... is like probably the most boring possible version which is like, oh your guns are working now, which is I think, not, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I'd rather you address this thing, right, like the whole premise—

KEITH: Yeah, that's what my second idea was, was to...

AUSTIN: So the whole premise of the axioms is that they are like, they are these concepts detached from human perception.

KEITH: Yeah, I would, I would hope.... I would hope if I were Gig and I had this idea to rip off my... to metaphorically rip off my visor—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: That being so unfamiliar with humans that like, being confronted with too much human emotion for someone to regularly handle would at least be flinching for them.

AUSTIN: Right. Would it be— so like the thing that the... the thing the Iconoclasts hate is the notion of like, the centrality of, or, the synthesis between people and divines and people and technology. The things that axioms— the axioms don't hate, they don't have selfness in the same way? They're individuals, but they don't have like... at least they act as if they are free from bias and personal like, desire and things like that.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: As much as possible. They're kind of more forces of nature. They are, they're Aristotelian forms, they are these like.. But I think the notion of confronting it with a very human understanding, or very like, non-theoretical understanding of what bountiful, what bounty looks like. Like what does, what's Gig send as like an image of bountifulness? To overwhelm it. As if to say no, our version of bounty, of bountifulness is the one that matters.

KEITH: Yeah. Well it would be like, it would be like a holiday, right? It would be like a fancy—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: It would be like, a lot of people and a lot of food and like a lot of presents and a lot of like, fun.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Who's there, is it real, is it something from Gig's life? Or is it a hypothetical? Is Gig broadcasting like, his memory of his favorite like, big holiday ever? Or is it—

KEITH: Yeah, at first I was gonna say, at first I was gonna say it'd probably be like an abstracted thing, but I don't think that that would be effective enough. I think it'd have to be like, a real connection to a real thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So what's it like? I mean I, we don't know all of the holidays of the Fleet, you know?

KEITH: Yeah. It's um...

AUSTIN: But is it like a harvest holiday holdover, is it a historical thing?

KEITH: Yeah, let's call it specifically what it is... I'll say, or not specifically the holiday, let's call it like a sort of fall time gift giving holiday. So like a sort of, combo Thanksgiving/Christmas?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Okay. Yeah.

KEITH: But I guess feeling-wise, like... imagine sort of the feeling of being surrounded by like all of your friends and family all having a good time and before you're old enough to have anything but like positive feelings about your friends and family.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Right. Right. How old is Gig in this memory? Like, thirteen, twelve?

KEITH: Let's say eight. Eight or nine.

AUSTIN: Oh, wow. Okay.

KEITH: Younger.

AUSTIN: Did you get a good gift that year?

KEITH: Yeah, I got a little, I got, oh, so you know. So do you guys remember like the robots that would like shoot darts and carry trays that they had in like the nineties?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: It's like that was a fucking like actual robot.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: That was not, like it was like, the hottest toy was hey you get your own little, real-ass robot.

AUSTIN: Right. And can you like, program it and wire hack it or like, what's—?

KEITH: Yeah, and you can like, it's got, it's got like a vocaloid in there you can change its voice.

AUSTIN: Right, right. And like that's the first time that Gig started like, down the road that would be like, oh I love technology! I love tinkering with things, I love seeing how things work!

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's really cool. Alright, and that just blasts into thing. I mean everybody sees it, I mean *everybody* has this moment in the area who just gets like... blasted one with this very beautiful moment, and then also with this deep sadness that Gig has been holding back for years?

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Or for at least six months since you've had this thing? But probably for a long time.

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah. And there's a lot of, innate sadness just in those memories, too.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, definitely.

KEITH: It's a very bittersweet memory all on its own.

AUSTIN: I mean, especially in this context, right, which is like, who knows if that holiday happens a year from now?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You're all gonna be on weird planets that don't match up to the seasons that we simulated on space. And we're gonna have to deal with these Earth people who have different holidays that they're binging in, and the people on Quire, who, many of which have not invited us, and definitely have their own cultures and their own holidays. But also like, it's also just the basic thing of like I'm not a kid anymore. I'm doing this job that I did not necessarily sign up for.

KEITH: Yeah. And then like, after the job is over, the like, the holiday is different now, than it was.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Like, the break is worse.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah. Let's pull dice. Let's pull stones, because then we'll know if this works or doesn't work.

KEITH: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: It's gonna be, it's gonna be a rough one! So the third challenge draw. Start with no stones, add one white, one red. Add one white for each successful challenge and one red for each failed challenge. *[Keith laughs]* So immediately we're at one white, three red.

SYLVIA: Oh, Jesus.

AUSTIN: If your main character is unhappy about the path the Fellowship has taken hold one red stone. If your main character actually wants—

KEITH: Wait, hold on, wait, so wouldn't it just be two red, did we have a successful challenge?

AUSTIN: No, it's three red and one white at this point cause it's one white, one red is the default, then—

KEITH: *Oh*, okay, sorry I understand now, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So one red, right now, or sorry, one white, three red currently. If your main character is unhappy, one red, if your main character wants it to fail, two red, otherwise no stones, let's all type... and then say when we're ready.

SYLVIA: I'm ready.

KEITH: Ready.

AUSTIN: Three, two, one, go. No red! Okay!

SYLVIA: Ayy.

AUSTIN: Each player takes one white one red, read aloud. As a player do you think the Fellowship succeeded at the challenge, and the challenge again is unify rival city factions. Type and let me know when you're ready.

KEITH: Ready.

SYLVIA: Type one white or one red?

AUSTIN: Yep. Ready?

SYLVIA: Alright.

KEITH: Ready.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Ready.

AUSTIN: Three, two, one, reveal— Three white! Okay.

SYLVIA: Hey!

AUSTIN: Now we're gonna roll some fucking dice...

SYLVIA: So what's the totals here?

KEITH: Is it four white, three red?

AUSTIN: It is four white, three red. One two three four, yep, it is three, yep, uh huh!

SYLVIA: These are the best odds we've had, I think.

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

KEITH: No, we've had one more—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* No?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Oh no.

KEITH: We've had one better odd before, but we still lost. On the very first one we had.

AUSTIN: So it's a d7, because it's a default one red, plus the two reds from the failure, so one through three are all failures. Then it's default one white plus three white that we all just gave it.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So that's, one through three is a failure, four five six seven all successes. Rolling 1d7.

SYLVIA: I can't look!

KEITH: Yeah, got it. Four.

AUSTIN: Four! That's a success. We've gotten a lot of—

KEITH: How many times do we gotta roll it?

AUSTIN: One more, 1d6, one two three, fail. Three four, or, one two three fail—

KEITH: *[cross]* Four, five, six, success.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Four, five, six, success.

KEITH: Oh man. It's literally a coin toss, I hate this!

AUSTIN: Six! That's success!

SYLVIA: *[gasps]* Yay!

*[Keith laughs]*

AUSTIN: Holy shit! So yeah.

KEITH: *[distant]* Oh boy.

AUSTIN: That broadcast hits and, like this is the whole thing right, like this is the money gain, this is the whole thing, we succeed at the overall challenge, which is hold our city against the attackers, right? Volition—

KEITH: Well what does it look like when, when Volition or Bountiful like, flinches at this?

AUSTIN: I think it just, It completely— It doesn't recoil right, I think we have a choice here. And I think this is, I wanna put this forward for axioms in general. It retracts, but something is left behind, and I think Echo and Gig get the thing, right? It's a heart, or it's like, basically a divine— It's like a seed, right? I think when an axiom is defeated or when it's overcome with emotion, when it's brought to Earth or brought into the human perspective, either it can become the necessary seed to build a new divine, in this case the divine Bounty, the divine Bountiful. Or it can do what like, the New Earth Hegemony would do, which is like, oh we don't need the divine part of this, we just need a thing that makes food. Turn, flip the switch on this fucking thing and get us all fed. I think that's gonna be a thing that we come back to with these. I don't know that



we need to answer that— I mean we can totally answer that right now if y'all have strong feelings about it?

KEITH: Oh man, I have strong feelings about both— I'm very ambivalent about it.

AUSTIN: Yeah it's a— I like that as an ongoing thing for the rest of the season of like, when you defeat an axiom, when you, or when you confront it and overcome it or whatever, there being a very clear utilitarian like, this thing solves problems immediately and we never have to deal with its consciousness, it is a machine that we put to use. Which is how the New Earth Hegemony believes. And I think that is a utopian dream, like I wanna be clear going forward, I think the Hegemony sucks in a lot of ways, but also... they have historically cared for trillions of people and so I can't deny that that is a valuable thing, even if I think that they're like centrists? And I think that they would take this very like, bureaucratic like, no we can't like, it's cool if you wanna go to church but like, we have the ability to feed everybody, are you *fucking* kidding me?

And the divine would also feed a lot of people. In fact it might also feed everybody, but then it's also a person. It's a person who needs an excerpt and who needs to be written about and becomes key to this faith because we admit that there are technologies that are greater than us, that like, are different than us, that are bigger than us, that last longer. That when, you know, thousands of people lost their lives to build a cathedral, those people are important and are valuable and it sucks that people lost their lives, but for some people that cathedral will last forever. When people built the first agriculture, or the first like... irrigation canals. Like whoever invented irrigation, like their life was super important. Irrigation changed the lives of billions, trillions of people. Everyone who will ever live is different because of the first irrigation canals built. And that is like, what a divine is.

Every divine is the notion that like, this thing is greater than us, and the Fleet, or the Resonant Orbit believes that that should be a relationship that is a two way street, one of faith and one of near worship. But also, one in which personhood, human personhood, or, you know, mortal personhood is, is valued in direct relation and like, it's this symbiotic relationship versus this like, no we're in control of technology. And I think both of them have value, I don't think that either of those things is like, innately wrong. And I think that that's way more interesting? I've spoken a lot about how the second half— internally, I've spoken a lot about how the second half of this show should look like a slightly, a *slightly* more optimistic version of Counter/weight? In which we are again in this cold war between two nations that don't really like each other? But who the big difference between the, the... the starting status quo of Counter/weight and the starting status quo of here is I genuinely think both the New Earth Hegemony and the Divine Free States or whatever we end up calling what's left of the Divine Fleet, the Resonant Orbit in general, both do want to care for their people, they just dramatically have different ideas about what that looks like. So yeah, I think that that's my pitches on both of those sides, you know?

KEITH: My, my one thought on this besides being truly ambivalent is... that for the people of the, from the Divine Fleet...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Landing, and then being told like, by the way we have a new divine, and it's a divine that gives you food.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right, yeah.

KEITH: It would be a big, it would be a boon probably, at least in the short term.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Echo? What do you think?

SYLVIA: I think we need to be cautious of this thing, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I bet Echo thinks that.

SYLVIA: But if it can help people, we need to put it to use helping people, right?

AUSTIN: But which of the ways? Like, the Hegemony way of this thing will give us food. We'll give whoever ends up with it, whichever one planet ends up with it, it can't be everywhere.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

KEITH: But a divine could.

AUSTIN: Well, couldn't be everywhere, but it could travel, it totally could.

KEITH: Sure, yes, it could move around, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally, it totally could. Like that might be a good way of thinking about it too, is like, alright, we can make sure everyone here eats or we can make sure that there is food that is coming. Like, there might be rough patches, like it cannot be everywhere at once, there are eight planets. But, you know.

KEITH: Hey, New Earth Hegemony might not even let a divine onto their half.

AUSTIN: I think Corrective sees what this is and is extremely like, turn it into— Right, that's true, I see what you're saying, you're saying like, it wouldn't, they wouldn't bring it, right, you're right, that's true. That's possible.

SYLVIA: I think, I think that both having a new divine would like help unite the sort of like, refugees from the Fleet.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: As well as, I don't like the idea that someone could lock this thing down and keep it from helping the other Quires, you know?

AUSTIN: Right, sure.

SYLVIA: I don't like the idea of someone having complete control of this.

AUSTIN: Alright. Who's its excerpt?

SYLVIA: Fuck.

AUSTIN: It could be an NPC, it could be someone we've never seen, we could deal with that in a wrap up, like we're gonna do these fifteen minutes like, vignettes recordings?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Where we're all just like, what do we do in the next year? But...

SYLVIA: Not me, cause I already got a new job that I don't want.

*[Keith laughs]*

AUSTIN: Uh huh! Don't worry you probably won't have that job by the end of the year anyway, right?

SYLVIA: Thank God. Um... I don't know, like I don't know who to volunteer for that, you know?

AUSTIN: We'll figure it out. We'll figure it out.

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah, we'll figure it out.

AUSTIN: Maybe it's somebody new completely, you know?

SYLVIA: I think it might be somebody new, or just like an NPC that we have, aren't thinking of right now.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that that's fine, we'll figure it out in the future.

SYLVIA: It's Fourteen Fifteen, congrats on your new job.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* You've got a new job, now you're Bountiful! Which is again, that is definitely the thing, like you'd better hope that that excerpt uses it well, right? This is the dilemma, is like,

do you trust, to you trust the machine to have a mind, do you trust a person to be at the controls?

SYLVIA: I feel like of the NPCs we've seen here today I could make a case for Czar doing it?

AUSTIN: Oh, that'd be kinda dope, actually.

SYLVIA: Because with their background as a doctor, they're...

AUSTIN: Yeah!

SYLVIA: Very interested in taking care of people?

AUSTIN: And also it's kind of interesting to me that the first of these new fourth generation of divines would be a synthetic person, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, I like that a lot. Okay. Deep breaths. I think that that is it. Against all odds, especially with this one, it looks like, it looks like there was a miracle, and starting next week, we are going to find out what happens with all seven of your characters in the wake of all of this. And how y'all are gonna come back together, towards the, the eve of the one year anniversary of this miracle. But... you're not the only players right? Like.... Hidden behind the veil of the Twilight Mirage, other people and forces also move throughout this year.

First and foremost is the Mirage itself. Empyrean's false nebula, which one ran the length of nearly a whole galactic arm, now finds itself constricted tight, dense around this single system. Pulled there by the planet-being Quire. Quire, who, in seeing so many try so hard, no matter their insignificance or helplessness, find again a sense of responsibility, one that it hadn't had since before Independence's arrival scoured its body and decimated its population. In the final moments of the Week Long War, it put into action a plan. The sort that no person, human or synthetic, could dream. Drawing on the remaining sliver of its old ability to shape the material world, it reached out through the newly focused Mirage, using the Gnosis Virus to reach directly into the minds of the Fleet's evacuees and the incoming New Earth Hegemony colonists, and those still living on Quire itself. I don't know if a being like Quire can be bitter or, be spiteful. But I cannot say this any other way. In the face of Volition's indifference to life, Quire sought to show the machine-god what it looked like to bring a person's will into being. And so, wounding itself further in the process, Quire split into eight worlds, each a relief reflecting the mental and emotional contours of those who would one day call the system home. Organic, synthetic, and divine alike. And where Volition's surface boiled threats into being, the long planes of Quire took new shapes, new temperatures, new physics, according to the needs and desires of those who lived there. In time, these echoes of Quire would find new names.

Altar. Home to Seance, a desert world covered in tombs, mausoleums, and cathedrals, all springing from the latent willpower of ancient divine relics.

Brighton, an oceanic world that ostensibly was part of the newly formed Divine Free States, but sovereignty protected by the Rogue Wave, itself, facing an internal crisis.

Skein, where scientists from across every major faction would join in the jungles to study the strange phenomena of the system. And where Earth would build beachside resorts.

Thysus, home to the living divine Belgard, a land of ice and tundra and dedication, the center of the Divine Free States' infrastructure, and a living display of its commitment to service.

Moonlock, where the Sky Reflected in Mirrors came first to rest, then came under control of the Hegemony. But also where the old population of the true natives of Quire rise again, under the leadership of the Awoken Annex Iota Pretense, she who once led Quire in the war on Independence.

Gift-3, a world filled with debris fields and hope, where the Mandati met their cousins from Gumption's Gambit and found commonality in an old saying: The first gift is knowledge, the second is material, the third is being able to combine the two.

Crown, with Doyenne deceased and regal bloodline reestablished by the Hegemony, what could have been a world of artistic praxis is instead consumed with faux nostalgia and commercial product. Long live the boy-king, may he grant us the entertainment we crave.

And Seneschal, a world of forests and lakes and waterfalls but, also of city skylines the size of mountain ranges. Enveloped by the growing arms of the By and By, Seneschal is run in careful collaboration by the Cadent Under Mirage and Declan's Corrective, a precarious pairing made even more so by the outsider status gained in working alongside each other. Yet, in the streets of Seneschal, people from all walks find themselves living joyfully together, celebrating the warmth of their new world.

But good climates alone do not make peace, and Quire has seen what new arrivals can do. The planet wanted best for those from the Fleet, from Earth, and those who already called it home. But that does not mean that Quire trusted them to achieve peace on their own. With shudder and shake, Quire lifted and split the dust like glass from its soil, into its atmosphere across all eight worlds. And in the ether, the Mirage was rendered elastic. And at the first moment of ignition, any cannon would find itself destroyed. That same Mirage stuffed the engines of most vessels, too murky to pilot through, and so each world was given time to develop on its own. Quire could not keep people from killing each other, it knew that. But it could make it harder. And then, it came to rest. And while it rested, others sprang into action.

Months later, Volition, once over-awed by Quire's display of loving reification, became a fountain of its own. It spread axioms throughout the system, tearing down the wall between ideal and material. And beyond all expectations, it found support among some of the residents of the system. It is a terror, a being unlike any other. But it is young, too. Only now finding its legs. Only now learning the shape of its hunger.

The New Earth Hegemony, meanwhile arrived with seemingly impossible speed. Quire's miracle was meant to split space, but it also bent time. In just one month inside the Mirage, the galaxy spun for hundreds of years, and millions of new arrivals from Earth soon came to call the system home, living under uneasy truce with the Divine Free States, unified only in their fear of Volition, with its iconoclasts and axioms. And Earth was not the only new arrival. Treasure hunters, grave robbers, and profiteers. Algorithms, aliens, and erstwhile allies, megacorporations, mysterious cults, and wandering mystics. The Quire system was a jewel and

factions new and old wanted it for themselves. What secrets might you find in a place where time and space bend to whims? What might a piece of this Mirage be worth in a galaxy of the brutal and the mundane?

And on the edge of the system, all across a newly formed ring of asteroids and debris that undulated like tidal shore on the outer rim, a shadow conflict plays out. The Rapid Evening's own civil war lasts for months, with once secret skirmishes spilling out into black markets and underground casinos, and clandestine operations going loud and bright. Those loyal to Demani and Gray are whittled down, bit by bit, but driven all the while deeper and deeper into their devotion. It is a terrible thing. Until finally, Crystal Palace makes the call. The Twilight Mirage has stabilized. It is for now, no longer a threat to the galaxy, or to the Principality citizens on Cycle. Keen Forrester Gloaming is ordered to remain and maintain that stability from the shadows. Supported by a substantial contingent of agents. As for his daughter and her fiancé, once called Satellite and Primary, they find a home together, and a new cause: to be a refuge for other troublemakers and outcasts like themselves. Around Satellite's shell, a station once built to house a bomb and the sensors that would let Dusk know when to set it off, the two collected rock and debris, and built a space station in an artificial asteroid.

Demani climbed down from the ladder, where with, pneumatic hammer she'd hung the sign on the dock. "Welcome to the Brink," it read. "Never forget how close we came." Looking out from the shielded flight deck onto the twisting colors of the mirage, Demani didn't even hear herself sighing, but Satellite did, and deployed into one of her wheeled shells, a round humanoid brown-bronze upper body speckled with gold dust, her cherubic face framed by a synthetic bob, all fixed to a chassis meant for quick motion through the station. She rolled to her partner's side, leaning softly against Demani, tangling their hands together with practice.

As Gray: Hey.

As Demani: Hey.

A squeeze communicated more than words could. Demani might be the one sighing, but Gray was the one who needed encouragement.

As Demani: What's up, Satellite?

As Gray: Demani... it's just... Have you read the latest dispatches? They're calling it the Miracle of the Mirage. Not just here, everywhere.

As Demani: Yeah, I read it, it's amazing, isn't it Gray?

As Gray: Yeah, it's just... is this really what a miracle looks like?

As Demani: One planet turning into eight? Time and space changing entirely? Yeah, yeah that sounds like a miracle to me.

Gray rolled her eyes with her whole body.

As Gray: You know what I mean.

As Demani: Do I? Tell me.

As Gray: Well... everything's fractured. Earth can't decide what it wants from this place. Even the Divine Free States aren't as unified as the Fleet once was, and I've seen what our first batch of incoming vessels looks like. Half of them work for amoral megacorporations from earth, and the other half are...

As Demani: Gray.

Demani moved her hand up to her Satellite's shoulder.

As Demani: This is exactly what a miracle looks like. Miracles are compromised the second they're called miracles. They're grabbed at by political factions, disputed by those left by the wayside, and forgotten the second a new one comes along.

As Gray: I thought you were going to tell me something about how life itself is a miracle or, how statistically speaking all survival is miraculous.

*[MUSIC — An Opportunity]*

As Demani: No. Those things are... amazing. But no one cares, no one pays attention. There's no reason for any of us to be alive, not the way we talk about reasons, but no one really gets excited about the fact that we all go on despite that. And if no one is excited, if no one is yelling or crying or laughing or arguing over what it means that it isn't a miracle, a miracle isn't magic, it isn't the impossible made real. A miracle is an opportunity to revisit who we are, and why we believe the things we do. That's why I'm grateful. If I hadn't listened to you, we'd be gone by now and that's sad enough on its own, but now I look out onto those planets at this mirage and I think about the opportunities we have and...

Demani Dusk was not the first to cry at the overwhelming vastness of possibility. But she, who once had the power to erase this system from existence entirely, cried deeper than anyone else.

And throughout the Quire system, in this brief moment of peace and pause, others were overcome with their own emotions. Sadness and joy. Fear and power. Anger and peace. And these would shape the days of the Twilight Mirage to come. Days of adventure, compassion, struggle, and hope.

*[MUSIC — An Opportunity ends.]*