

The Road to PALISADE 19: Upstairs & Downstairs Pt. 2

Transcriber: vesta#5711

AUSTIN: The Road to PALISADE is a show about war, politics, religion, revolutionary violence, and the many consequences thereof. For a full list of content warnings, please check the episode description.

AUSTIN (as Coughton): We're going to need an activity. Uh, uh, — croquet, or hunting —

Ali (as Eileen): Like a —

Austin (as Coughton): Perhaps a hunt. A hunt? Perhaps a — I — I need to be — I, I must speak with Exanceaster alone, and Exanceaster has an additional guest, and I will need a way, I will need an activity. An activity that would pair us and separate us from the group. I know we did not prepare an activity, but I'm asking you to prepare an activity.

[Music begins: "[Permanent Peace](#)" by Jack de Quidt]

JACK (as Vivian): All right, well, I was talking to the boss, and we need to move them. The hunting units. I know we had them prepped, and it's much easier to get them down the tracks to the forest, but the hunt is going to be taking place in the Latimer Maze today, so —

JANINE (as Martine): You're doing the hunt in the maze?

JACK (as Vivian): I don't know, it's what the boss said.

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): Oh, yes, there is something fascinating about taking something apart and putting it back together. Would you, what would you say to taking on the task of... preserving whatever I manage to hunt today?

SYLVI (as Catrina): Oh my gosh, I mean, I would be honored. It would be lovely to be able to give you a memento of your time here before you go away.

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): Good, good. Then you'll be with us on the hunting party.

JACK (as Vivian): Who's that person who came with the, uh, with March? Like his second or something?

ALI (as Eileen): I'm to understand that she's a, a bodyguard.

Jack (as Vivian): You want to go poke around her stuff? They're going to be busy in there for like an hour, two hours.

AUSTIN: Catrina, blood everywhere. Your father bringing you close —

AUSTIN (as Coughton): If, if I die, you have to save the household. [choking out the words]
You have to — you have to, you have to convince Exanceaster —

SYLVI (as Catrina): Stay with me, father! You're going to be okay!

[ALI giggles, **AUSTIN** laughs]

AUSTIN (as Coughton): You must convince Exanceaster to join... the Bilateral Intercession!

SYLVI (as Catrina): Carvisle, you've killed father!

AUSTIN (as Carvisle): I've done no such thing! You got in my way!

JACK (as Vivian): There is something very bad about to happen. I think that March and co have brought a bomb.

JANINE (as Martine): Okay, well something very bad has already happened, because they've thrown up the purple smoke —

JACK (as Exler): Oh, f —

JANINE (as Martine): During the hunt, which means someone's hurt, and we have to go get them out of the maze.

JACK (as Exler): Not right now, we don't. We have to figure this out first. I'm sure they can wait, it can't be that — I'm sure they can wait.

[Everyone cracks up and laughs]

[music ends]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterisation, and fun interaction between good friends. I'm your host, Austin Walker. Joining me today, Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi there! You can find me on Twitter [@notquitereal](#), and buy any of the music featured on the show at [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](#).

AUSTIN: Ali Acampora.

ALI: Um, hi! You can find the show over [@friends_table](#), and I think that's it!

AUSTIN: Mm, sure! Sylvi Bullet.

SYLVI: Hey, I'm Sylvia, you can follow me on twitter [@GODSNEXTMARTYR](#) and you can listen to my other show Emojidrome 2.0 wherever you get your podcasts.

AUSTIN: And Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: Hi, you can find me @bleatingheart on [Twitch](#) and [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

AUSTIN: As always you can support the show by going to [friendsatthetable.cash](#), [patreon.com/friendsatthetable](#), I don't know how links work, I'm just- I have a bunch of different- I have a bunch of them in my brain, so. Get them confused sometimes: friendsatthetable.cash! If you have been enjoying *The Road to PALISADE*, please come support us. Again, friendsatthetable.cash.

Where were we? I know we were at Somerset House, I know we were on Kalliope. I know that Somerset House's strengths are "Hidden Away" and "Defensible", and the problem is "Dark Past (Rumoured to have captured a Branched many years ago)".

Um, who wants to give us a little bit of a- who wants to give a five sentence summary? Jack, I know you've been on the ball for these [**JACK** chuckles] during the Hallowstreams.

JACK: I can give it a go. Alright. Five-sentence summary. Shout-out, first to Hallowstreams, and then to Cameron and Michael, people who definitely didn't invent the idea of summarizing things in five sentences [**AUSTIN** and **ALI** chuckle].

AUSTIN: But we're- which we're almost readily pulling from.

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah.

SYLVI: But they're our friends, so.

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Somerset House is home to the Solstice family, a fading Kesh dynasty desperate to bring a wealthy, powerful Columnar family over to their side in the ongoing civil war.

Sentence two. Also in the house are a lady's maid, part-time lady's maid/mechanic, and gardener, who are dealing with the difficulties of staging the dinner party at which the Solstice family are going to try and make this maneuver.

Sentence three. All the rich people go on a hunt for strange, leathery birds in a maze, mainly a cover so that the gardener can rob them [wheezes].

Sentence four. During the hunt in the maze, the bratty son of the Solstice family accidentally shoots his father [chuckles].

Sentence five. At the same time, the downstairs staff discover back at the house, that the bodyguard of the visiting Columnar aristocrat has packed zipties, a bomb, and a series of gas masks, with clearly villainous intent.

I think that's about it!

AUSTIN: Yeah! I think that's about it.

JACK: But I mean, exactly where we left it? I think that-

SYLVI: Um did you mention that- oh wait no, yeah you did mention that my brother shot my dad. Yeah.

JACK: Yes. Sylvi's character Catrina is stuck in the maze with her wounded father and brother and most of the Columnar party. The gardener, Exler, is going in to try and get people out of the maze. Martine, the mechanic, is going to try and defuse the bomb in the uh, in the upstairs guestroom. And Eileen, the lady's maid is going to try and delay Guilford, the potential assassin, from returning to the- assassin/kidnapper, from returning to their room.

AUSTIN: Yes. Where do we want to jump- let's go over these characters first, so. Let's go left to right. Ali, you're top left, tell me your character's name, pronouns, role, goal, and relationship to the person to your right.

ALI: Um yeah! So I'm playing Eileen Lilas. Pronouns are she/her. Her um, I've written here maidservant, but as Jack said she's more of a lady's maid. My Descriptor, is cheeky?

AUSTIN: Mmm. Right. [**SYLVI** giggles]

ALI: I don't remember which- Is that-? It's just Descriptor, I don't remember like the game thing, okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's what we have up top- that's what the game calls it.

SYLVI: I think it was Style or something.

AUSTIN: Style, that's right.

ALI: Oh, Style. My Style is cheeky. And my goal is to improve Somerset House's reputation. Did we talk about Somerset House's reputation [chuckling]?

AUSTIN: Yeah we did! [**JACK:** Not-] Sure, oh- then no. Well, I mentioned dark past. Family in, you know, maybe not ill-repute, but in decline, has not been a particularly powerful Kesh household for quite some time. That's part of what the dinner party you know, is supposed to be for, was an attempt for the patriarch of this- it's hard to call Coughton a patriarch, but the father of this family, to kind of woo Exanceaster March, a Columnar magnate, to come over to the Bilateral Intercession and defect from the Pact, and thereby re-earn Somerset House, Somerset family-

JACK: Solstice family,

AUSTIN: Solstice family, Somerset House, right. Solstice family more political power again. And also probably literal wealth. Anyway, what's Eileen's relationship?

ALI: I am close as family to Martine.

AUSTIN: Alright, Martine.

JANINE: Yeah, so I'm playing Martine Spruce, she/her. She's the mech mechanic, which we're using as a sub for a stable-boy kinda thing, slash part-time lady's maid. She's self serious, and her goal is to impress an important guest. And she has a mutual resentment with Jack's character, who is,

JACK: I am playing Vivian Exler, who has she/her pronouns. She is a gardener. She's forward thinking, we've since learned that she is basically an aspiring Millenium Break agent. Her goal is to make off with the Columnar treasure, which she has! She has a weird little tripod that will summon and then launch a Columnar escape pod. And I am a confidante of Sylvi's character.

SYLVI: Yeah, and my character is Catrina Solstice. She is the youngest daughter of the Solstice family. I put foppish/flashy as her style. And my goal is to outshine my siblings, cause fuck them. And my relationship is I am former friends with Ali's character, Eileen.

AUSTIN: Okay. Where do we wanna come in? Do we wanna come in on Ex- Vivian, you getting to the body? Do you wanna come in on trying to treat-

SYLVI: [heavy breathing and chuckling] Is he dead?!

AUSTIN: Sorry, well.

JACK: The mechs-

AUSTIN: He's not dead yet. [SYLVI laughs]

JACK: Unless we want to jump around in time, which we had some fun doing in the last episode? [AUSTIN: Yeah but where were we?] But I think that chronological first thing is Exler going and getting people out of the maze.]

AUSTIN: Okay, so let's start there. Do you know how to traverse the maze?

JACK: Yes, but I also have a device to help me do this in one of the gardening sheds. I have a sort of, this is something that I use to plant the maze? And to get around it, I'm picturing like one of those little Star Wars like chicken leg walker things, almost? [AUSTIN: Oh sure. Yeah yeah yeah.] But imagine one that's smaller than that, that's almost like the size of a lifeguard's chair or something? And it's on two sort of like stalking chicken legs. And it has shears on the front. It's like a very rudimentary mech that is used to plant and deal with mazes.

And the vibe of this I think is big, like 1950s, 1960s American farm machinery? Of like, it feels like a tractor when you start it, like diesel smoke sputters out of the side and it kind of like limps along and shouts in a horrible diesel voice. And this thing lets me navigate the maze and be slightly above the height of the hedges to see where the smoke is and where the people are.

AUSTIN: Well the great thing about this is that means there is at least one moment where you can see exactly how bad the situation is, but still have to take a long roundabout path to actually get there? [**JACK** chuckling: Yes!] And you can see over the hedges, at one point you maybe even pass one- you know, ten feet away from Catrina, Coughton, Exanceaster and Carvisle. But you nevertheless have another five minutes before you get there. But you do, I'm not going to make you roll for it. That's a good way to get around this place. And Coughton is still alive, bleeding from the shoulder, badly injured, in a lot of- I don't know, you know, probably not in a lot of pain so much as in complete shock and like you know, maybe also pain. I don't know enough about anatomy to know how being shot by a big robot bow and arrow, what that does to your nerves. But I bet it's not good.

JACK: I don't think that people love it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I bet you don't love it. I bet it's not a positive feeling. And the chaos and panic has been you know, makes it even worse. I guess Catrina, how do you respond as Exler shows up, as Vivian shows up?

SYLVI (as Catrina): Oh thank god! Someone's here who can help. Oh my gosh! Oh my gosh! Okay, okay. Carvisle almost- Carvisle's killed father. And I need you to keep him from having succeeded in killing father, thank you!

JACK (as Vivian): Stay calm Miss Solstice.

JACK: And I like, behind me I am like, I have to imagine that I've brought in some of the Columnar staff soldiers, [**AUSTIN:** Mmm, mhm. Led people here.] to like help get all the people out? And you know, I check his pulse, and- I'm a gardener you know, there's only so much I can- like basic first aid training, I guess, is part of- on my CV to come and work for this house?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Did they get him in the heart?

SYLVI: Very visibly did not.

JACK (as Vivian): I don't think so, it looks like it got him in the shoulder. I think the suit might've stopped some of the blood. But I'm sure he'll be fine. Can we get a stretcher over here?

AUSTIN: Are you trying to stop the bleeding? Are you doing any sort of surgery?

JACK: I'm not doing any *surgery*, I think I have like a, a bandage or something in my- like an alcohol wipe or something?

AUSTIN: The camera doesn't show the wound, but it shows your face you realize as whatever you brought is ill- is not enough, you know? You're ill-equipped for this situation. You have brought a bandaid to an open, you know. To the hole of a ship that's been breached, you know? The duct tape ain't gonna help.

JACK: I guess I ask the soldiers,

JACK (as Vivian): Are any of you medics?

AUSTIN (as Medic): Yes, yes.

JACK (as Vivian): Quick! Over here!

AUSTIN: Says a robot, and then yeah, kneels down and begins to do preparatory work. I guess the, you know, they're gonna try to get Coughton to a place where it's- he will not bleed out on the way back, which is scary because it's a long walk back, you know?

JACK: Yeah, while they're doing that,

AUSTIN: A long hover- whatever, I think they're gonna walk, I don't think they have a hover stretcher, they're just going have to carry him on a regular one.

JACK: No. So while they're doing that, I would like to head- start heading back with Catrina, if that's okay- I don't think there would be anything untoward about that, they wouldn't think that was suspicious, right?

AUSTIN: As you start to leave, I think Exanceaster says,

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): Now how are we going to get back without our guide?

JACK (as Vivian): Your soldiers followed me, I assume they know the way they came?

AUSTIN: That's a big assumption. [chuckling]

JACK: [in disbelief] They're trained Columnar soldiers! This is a hedge maze!

SYLVI: Do we-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Have you ever been in a hedge maze?

SYLVI: Do we wanna like, we could have like a safety precaution thing where there are like, you know how-

AUSTIN: Right, sure.

SYLVI: Airplanes have like the safety lights?

JACK: Oh yeah, I think we've dropped flares, is what we've done. Have dropped flares on our way into the maze.

AUSTIN: What if it's- god what if it's not flares, what if it's those little like, solar light spikes that people put in their gardens, do you know what I mean?

SYLVI: My god yes I do.

JACK: Oh yeah! I would love that but I think- what if it's the Columnar soldiers that have done this? What if this is military practice as well.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: And you could imagine them on for example, Palisade, moving from building to building or whatever.

AUSTIN: Marking the ones that have been, yeah. A hundred percent. Yeah, okay, then they'll have their way back. Then yeah, you could leave with Catrina, I think- I think Exanceaster is going to say,

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): I should come with you. I'm no use in a medical emergency.

AUSTIN: And immediately just stands up and falls in as if you have no right to say no to this?

SYLVI: I will say, if you're looking for Catrina to speak up here, she is like in too much shock, I think she has like, there's blood on her and stuff right now?

AUSTIN: Guilford is here too, right? The valet and bodyguard is here, right? I think-

JACK: Is she in the maze? Or- she's also come in-

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. She came out with everybody,

JACK: Oh yeah, absolutely.

AUSTIN: And I think would stay with March, if this is the case. And so also falls in.

JACK: Shit.

AUSTIN: If you're looking to get Catrina away to talk, you're gonna have to roll the dice.

JACK: Yeah. That's a, yeah. Alright, yeah I'm gonna try and do that. I'm gonna try and lead them into a- I'm gonna try and get them lost. You know, like take a wrong turn- split the party?

SYLVI: We're nixing the flares idea then? [laughs] Otherwise that's going to be really hard.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Oh yeah, no, you're right. Shit. Well I would like to make this roll to get Catrina on their own to warn them, but, what is a way to do this?

ALI: You do the thing of like, when you're walking with someone, and then you're talking to somebody, and then there's like two different conversations happening, and you like take a step back. Like it ends with them walking in front of you?

JACK: Oh yeah.

ALI: So you can fall back and be like private.

JACK: Yeah.

SYLVI: Classic move.

AUSTIN: That's a classic move. That's a downstairs move if there ever was one. [**ALI** chuckles]

JACK: There's a, yeah, there's an episode I think in the last season of Succession where a bunch of people are trying to have a bunch of different conversations whilst on a walk in the countryside? And there's a lot of this weird manoeuvring of like who is walking in front, who is walking behind, who is trying to engineering the groups. And I think that's it, yeah. It's like Ali said, it's trying to put enough distance between the people that at least I can say something harsh.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Let's see that roll then. I think that's one from regular, just one. And then you're a confidante with Catrina, so I'll give you one for that.

JACK: And I'm trying to roll, this is Downstairs?

AUSTIN: Downstairs, so under your Score, your Score is a five, so you're trying to get these dice to be under. 2D6 you want them low. Hey! That's two successes. That's a three and a one, those are both successes. If two dice succeed, you do it well, with panache, as they say.

SYLVI: It's actually only one- you were rolling plus one-

AUSTIN: Oh fuck.

SYLVI: I mean it still works, but.

AUSTIN: Well, we gotta see what that other roll is.

JACK: Oh shit! I can roll a-

AUSTIN: Jack rolled-

SYLVI: Oh right, cause you might get a Stairs Stare-

AUSTIN: A Stairs Stare. Or you might get a full success, or one success- okay Austin, we got another, you got a four which is under your Score of five, which means you got two successes, letting you do it well without complication.

So yeah, you just naturally separate- this is a thing you've done for a long time as Catrina's confidante. You know exactly the rhythm to take, you know exactly the speed at which to separate where it doesn't seem suspicious. So, yes, you can now speak privately with Catrina.

JACK (as Vivian): Ms. Solstice, I don't mean to alarm you but I believe that we might in danger. Or more specifically, your family.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Is this Carvisle's work again?

JACK (as Vivian): No.

JACK: And just like points at Guilford walking up ahead, like talking quietly with Exanceaster.

SYLVI (as Catrina): [whispering] *Guilford shot my dad?!*

JACK (as Vivian): No. This is something very-

SYLVI: [chuckling] I hope that that came through, I hope it did.

AUSTIN: Oh it did, it came through.

SYLVI: Okay, good.

JACK (as Vivian): We have reason to believe that Guilford means to cause your family harm. A device has been discovered inside the house, in their quarters.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Wh- what?!

JACK (as Vivian): Please stay calm.

SYLVI (as Catrina): But the- that doesn't make any sense? Ms- Admiral Bloom asked me to preserve the bird that they shot for them? You don't ask- you don't ask a girl to stuff a bird if you're going to hurt her family, that just doesn't make-

JACK (as Vivian): Perhaps Exanceaster doesn't know the full extent of Guilford's plan. Perhaps he does and is trying to put you at ease.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Mmmm.

JACK (as Vivian): Here's the situation as it stands.

SYLVI (as Catrina): This is all very- a lot to handle.

JACK (as Vivian): All you need to do is stay calm, stay focused, and continue with the evening as planned. We will handle this. Stay on your guard.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Okay, but- you are just a gardener- thank you, but you are just a gardener. Are you going to be good? Should we get one of the people with a gun?

JACK (as Vivian): Absolutely not.

[**AUSTIN** laughs]

JACK (as Vivian): We can't trust anybody that the Columnar have brought. I'm loathe to trust any of the additional staff, who knows if they've been paid.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Do you think Marceline is in on this?

JACK (as Vivian): Eileen and Martine are-

SYLVI (as Catrina): Is that why she's on vacation?

JACK (as Vivian): Nnnno. I think Marceline is on vacation because uh, the, handling the gameskeeping was extremely stressful.

SYLVI (as Catrina): That doesn't make any sense. You just hang around animals all day, I don't see what's so hard about that. I do that all the time. Sure they're dead, but still.

JACK (as Vivian): [speechless]

AUSTIN: Jesus.

JACK: Holding the bridge of her nose.

JACK (as Vivian): Do not trust Guilford. Do not trust Exanceaster. Stay calm. Try and keep people as entertained at dinner for as long as possible. We will handle this.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Th- thank you.

AUSTIN: Hey Martine, how do you disarm a bomb?

JANINE: So I'm presuming that I've gotten my tools?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so, yes.

JANINE: Okay. That was my original plan was like-

AUSTIN: You probably got some strange stares that maybe once or twice, but you were able to- you were a mechanic, right? There's always things that need fixing.

JANINE: Yeah! It's just going to- I was just getting my stuff, it's one of those you know, the wall console that you tell it, tell it to tell you what the weather is and stuff. It's on the fritz. And the mechanic, the handyperson, what's the thing when they fix stuff?

JANINE: A handy-?

AUSTIN: That's right.

JACK: A job. A handyperson?

JANINE: For a- for a fancy house? I don't remember. Anyway the person who would normally fix it is doing party stuff, [**AUSTIN:** Ah, sure] so I gotta- very simple explanation, very like, get out of my way, gotta you know, business. Do business.

Yeah, so I think in terms of like actually fucking with this bomb, I think it's like sort of applying understanding of vague principles to be like [**AUSTIN** laughs] okay, well, [**JACK** chuckles] is this connected to some kind of like- is this connected to something that's doing some thinking like a computer? [**AUSTIN:** Right, sure.] Or is this just like a pure- is this a direct circuit situation with a timer like, is it safe to, you know, assessing like is it safe to just disconnect this, or is the timer a little more complicated and like is it going to go off if it's, you know. Just trying to figure out what all the wires are doing. Based on like you know, she doesn't know how to do bomb stuff?

[**AUSTIN:** Sure.] But she does know if she pops open a mech's arm, okay, well, how do you find whatever servo, [**AUSTIN:** Right.] this thing and that thing.

AUSTIN: The thing that Jack was just describing, probably fully mechanical, not really a lot of computer stuff going on. [**JANINE:** Mhm.] But when you- one of the daughters wants to go out in their you know, posh super mech, that thing has all sorts of stabilizer AIs running and shit, and so like, [**JANINE:** Yeah.] you gotta like log in. You gotta like look at the computer screen and make sure everything is set right. And I think you know, we get a shot of you doing this with like the nice, the window view from this bedroom looking out into the maze. And you can still see the

group kind of getting closer and closer coming back. And you can even just without a roll, you can tell that it is not a, it is electronic, it is not computerised, you know? [JANINE: Mhm.] It is electrical signals and you know, mechanical gates that will open and stuff. But there isn't a super powerful thinking chip in here, you know?

Is this just a roll? I think this might just be a roll with potential negative consequences, but I'm curious [JANINE: Uh huh.] what Martine- you tell me what this- is this Upstairs, is this Downstairs? What is this? It's hard to know, right?

JANINE: I could see a case for either because there is a degree of like subtlety to it, right? But also it's within the realm of like what has been defined as like more Upstairs for this society. Where it's like this is based on practical education [AUSTIN: Right.] in mechanical stuff, you know?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And like I don't- it's one of those things where it's like, I can think of things that would be a better Downstairs version of this, but I don't know that I can think of a thing that would be a better Upstairs version of it, other than like walking up to someone and being like "there is a bomb in the room!"

AUSTIN: Well here is the- let me maybe frame it this way, which is depending on which you pick, the complications or failure will be different. [JANINE: Yeah.] Because if you go Downstairs, what you're rolling to do is to do this quietly in secret without being seen. If you do it Upstairs you're rolling to get it done efficiently, quickly, and it's over. It won't hang over your head anymore, it won't you know, failing on the Upstairs roll means not someone came in and see you trying to do it, but might mean it starts ticking quicker. [JANINE: Yeah.] It might mean maybe there's a leak, you know? [JANINE: Yeah.] So I think those are the- yeah, I think it also fits in with Upstairs being like direct and to the point, whereas Downstairs is about subtlety, right?

JANINE: And I think that's more Martine's like angle, [AUSTIN: She's all serious] is like, the problem is in front of you, deal with the problem.

AUSTIN: Yup, do the damn thing. So let's go ahead and roll Upstairs. Okay I will again give you an extra one for mechanic so that is 2D6.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Looking for above a two.

JANINE: A two and a four.

AUSTIN: You get a two and a four. So we get a Stairs Stare. [**JANINE:** Mhm.] Who the hell do you make eye contact with here? Is it someone through the window? Does someone come in?

JANINE: Is there anyone-

AUSTIN: What were you going to say?

JANINE: I was trying to think of like who was around.

ALI: I might still be in the room unless I left to-

AUSTIN: You would only now be about to interrupt because your job is to-

JANINE: Wait! I have an idea. Does it have to be a person?

AUSTIN: I don't think so.

JANINE: Like a character?

AUSTIN: Doesn't have to be, if you have a good pitch, let's hear the good pitch.

JANINE: [chuckling] I don't know if it's a good pitch. I just think it's funny if she locked eyes like a rat? Or like a mouse? [**AUSTIN** chuckles] And the information she got was like, you know, something related to is the mouse calm or nervous? What does this tell me about the situation?

[**AUSTIN:** Uh huh] Is it-

AUSTIN: Is it already leaking and the mouse can tell because a mouse has- [**JANINE:** Exactly. -knows] sort of nose situations going on?

JANINE: I don't remember the questions are [**SYLVI** chuckles] that we get to ask specifically, but like-

AUSTIN: You know, nose situations-

SYLVI: [chuckling] Yeah, no, mice has two noses here.

JANINE: Oh yeah this would be “What are they really feeling here!”

AUSTIN: [laughing] “What are they really feeling-!”

JANINE: Yes! Or, I could say, well, what should I be on the lookout for when I’m defusing a bomb?

AUSTIN: The mouse looks up and goes “the red wire!” [**ALI** and **JACK** chuckle] “The red one!”

JANINE: “Mr. J.”

AUSTIN: Mr. J! It’s me!

JANINE: Rat Harley Quinn.

AUSTIN: Gotham Knights is really something- turning Harley Quinn into a big mouse was-

SYLVI: You know what, a lot of people are going to be very happy about that [**AUSTIN** guffaws, **JANINE** chuckles]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I’m happy with this. Give me another roll, 2D6. Or 3D6 now that you’ve made eye contact with this mouse.

JANINE: Oh! It’s like a full reroll, not just rerolling the one?

AUSTIN: Yeah you reroll the whole thing, it can keep happening.

JANINE: Well that’s kinda scary.

AUSTIN: It’s very scary, yeah!

[rolling noise]

[friends disbelief sound]

JANINE: Okay, well.

AUSTIN: It turned out to be worse, huh? Is that right?

JANINE: Yeah, well.

AUSTIN: Or you got another- no no no!

JANINE: That's a five, a one and a six.

AUSTIN: That's still two successes, you're fine.

JANINE: Okay. Good.

AUSTIN: Two successes are a complete success. Your eyes lock with this little mouse, very funny that at the end of the day you still put Guilford Gain in a room with mice. I guess the house has mice, you know, you're gonna get them all over.

SYLVI: It has the least mice.

AUSTIN: I see, yes. Upstairs-

JANINE: The mouse followed me in from the garage.

AUSTIN: It is one of your mice.

JANINE: It was in my toolbox and I didn't notice.

AUSTIN: Ohh, that's very funny. Yeah, I think with the- specifically, I do think that it is moving in a sluggish way that makes you think, oh, this liquid has already begun to like leak through and you find that the part of it has leaked and actually have to like, duct tape it closed? There's like a small crack in it from when the bags got moved up here.

JANINE: Sloppy bomb!

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh. Definitely. And you actually have to patch that, so that it doesn't begin to leak out even if you defuse it. So you managed to do that, then you defuse the bomb, and you put it back into place, and you're able to close everything up and make it seem as though nothing has happened here.

But yes, Eileen. [**JACK:** Oof.] Eileen, you know Guilford is back here with everybody else. The house is in- chaos is probably wrong? Because everyone is trying their best to seem like a dinner party is going to happen in just a matter of hours! It's gonna be fine! But oh my god, the doctor has rushed outside, and Guilford is getting ready to move upstairs. What do you do?

ALI: How- who- what do I say? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Great question.

ALI: What is the-! What is the like, would I say like, Ms. Gain?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so.

ALI: Okay, that's what I-

ALI (as Eileen): Ms. Gain, Ms. Gain, you must be so startled from all of the business!

AUSTIN (as Guilford): I- I'm a professional bodyguard. This is nothing.

ALI (as Eileen): Oh! But you expect a certain amount of comfort in a place like this, I'm so sorry! Can-

AUSTIN: Looking at you.

ALI: [holds back laughter]

ALI (as Eileen): You must come downstairs with me, let me prepare you something.

AUSTIN (as Guilford): Dinner is in a matter of hours, I'm going to go to my room until then.

ALI (as Eileen): Oh, would you- but would you like a drink? Or perhaps a show?

AUSTIN: A show?

ALI: [laughs]

SYLVI: Okay.

JACK: Show?

AUSTIN (as Guilford): What do you-

ALI (as Eileen): We have great- There's great entertainment options downstairs, and-

AUSTIN (as Guilford): You put on shows here for guests?

ALI (as Eileen): Wuh- uh- we have a little projection, you understand there's the- the stories that have come from the- the new shipping lanes, and I think that you might be taken by some of them and it might distract you from the- the wickedness that you've endured today.

JANINE: You're inviting her downstairs to watch a newsreel?

ALI: [laughs] No! To like watch a DVD essentially.

AUSTIN: Yeah, basically like the soaps have arrived, [**JANINE** and **ALI** chuckle] we've gotten the latest week of soap operas, have come on reel to reel, and now we can- give me- give me a roll. Give me a roll. I don't know if this cheeky "come watch the TV" is kind of-

JACK: It's like- [**ALI** laughing] there's also two things going on here, right? If for example, we had, say, caused a big mess in Guilford's room, and Guilford was just an ordinary person who was staying in the house, and we were trying to keep them away from the room in the like sitcom style until we tidied the room up, that's one thing.

Guilford has villainous plans [**ALI** shrieking in delight] and is like, I'm gonna go up to my room where there's a bomb, gas masks and zip ties, and begin to execute on that, and you're like "well, down to the DVD room!"

ALI: [laughing] Okay, two points of defense here. One, I'm cheeky. Two-

[Everyone laughs]

ALI: Guilford is also like, she's a bodyguard, but she's also- [**AUSTIN:** Yeah, yeah.] like the push of being Upstairs, like having to put on- I think social pressure is very-!

AUSTIN: Sure. [**ALI** laughing] I see what you're saying. Yeah, uh huh.

ALI: A good thing, and Guilford having the moment of being like, oh do I have to say yes to this because this is what someone in this position would?

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah, no no I think that's extremely true. 2D6.

ALI: [laughs]

JACK: She's trying to keep her cover.

AUSTIN: Ah you've gotten one success here. A six and a two. So it's a success at a consequence. She says.

AUSTIN (as Guilford): Fine. Let me just go get changed. And then I'll be right there.

JACK: Shit. [laughs] Can you signal Martine?

ALI (as Eileen): Oh, we have robes!

JACK: We have robes!

SYLVI: Oh my god!

ALI: Unless it's like- oh- we- we had new smoking coats sent in, let me-

JACK: My DVD robes!

AUSTIN: Everybody it's Friday night, you know what that means, time to put on my monographed DVD robe-

SYLVI: This is just the guy from Andor, isn't it?

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh. Yeah. God. I think-

ALI: Do I need another roll-

AUSTIN: I mean if you want to push that then that's fine, but-

JACK: Nah, let's play it out like a farce! We've gonna get Martine out of the room temporarily- we've gotta let her know she's coming. Hide in a closet or something! For when Guilford-

AUSTIN: Yeah what is your- how do you try to communicate to Martine that she needs to hide immediately?

ALI: Is it- is it like- I guess it would be like doing the annoying thing of like following Guilford up the hallway and really loudly being like,

ALI (as Eileen): What sort- I'll get everything prepared for you, what sort of liquor would you like? And the last favourite movie that you enjoyed, and I will try to choose something to your liking! And you're going to get dressed very quickly! And-

[**JANINE, JACK, AUSTIN** laugh]

ALI (as Eileen): And be right downstairs to enjoy the comfort of Somerset House.

AUSTIN: Martine? How- how do you try to hide, as Jack said, in this farcical situation?

JANINE: Can you remind me of where the suitcase was found with the bomb?

AUSTIN: It's- it's just in the room, on the- [**JANINE:** Okay.] It's just in the room.

JACK: On the bed or something? She had not unpacked.

AUSTIN: She had not unpacked, exactly.

JANINE: Right. Okay. So I think I- trying to like put that- was I even in the room when that got moved?

AUSTIN: No. I don't think you were!

JANINE: Right.

AUSTIN: You know, I- we didn't explicitly hear Exler say where she found it, but. Boy, good point. I think this is going to be a subtlety roll, Janine. I think this is going to be a "try to get the room back together as best as you can" thing. Eileen, you could help by doing the thing that you just did. Actually Eileen, did you originally move the- no you did not move the case up there, right? She moved- maybe you did, because I remember you feeling that it was heavy.

ALI: Yeah, she was the one who gave it to me and was like can you [AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.] go put your backs- can you put- bring these upstairs for me, because that's where I'm gonna be.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Is it a situation where you try to be like, "I remember I left your bag right next to the- the bed! Right at the foot of the bed!"

ALI: I suppose so. If the lord has given us this gift of me being able to say yes to this.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that opens that possibility, so.

ALI: Yeah, I can be like, I hope [JANINE: The thing is though-] this is to your liking, please let me know.

JANINE: I basically can't succeed at it, at a subtlety roll.

AUSTIN: That's not true. It's hard.

JANINE: I would have to be very lucky.

AUSTIN: Yeah, of course. [ALI laughs].

JANINE: Which-

AUSTIN: So you could handle it in a different way. You could try to handle it with etiquette, authority, politics, or high culture. Or directness, or directly you know, just like, culture and authority. Going through or over an obstacle.

JANINE: So... okay [chuckles], so. Here's my pitch. I hear them coming, I know that where I had the suitcase is not where it was supposed to be. And also I have- would have to like, [exhales] I mean, I have to repack either way. [AUSTIN: Mhm.] So that's not avoidable. But, I also know like- I don't know where to fucking hide in this room where I'm not going to be found,

like. You know, there's closets but like, the fact that she hadn't unpacked yet is like, you know, that might happen. A lot of things might happen.

So I think the thing that Martine does, [chuckles] is that Martine basically gets the suitcase off the bed, throws the linens off the bed onto the suitcase, and climbs on the bed with her toolbox, and opens a ceiling panel in the room to expose, you know, whatever inner working gubbins the house has got going on. [AUSTIN: Uh huh.] This is a science fiction house, I'm sure it's got shit.

AUSTIN: I'm sure it's got gubbins. [ALI giggles]

JANINE: And just like, pulls out a chunk of wires, so it's like hanging down, so she can be visibly tinkering with it when Guilford [ALI: Ohhh.] shows up.

AUSTIN: So your authority play here is like, I'm supposed to be here. I'm doing my job.

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Yes, I'm doing my job, and if I wasn't here, something bad might have happened to you.

AUSTIN: Mmm. Give me a roll.

JANINE: Uh huh.

AUSTIN: 2D6.

JANINE: A two and a six.

AUSTIN: Oh! You lock eyes [SYLVI laughs] with Guilford, who is, you know, as much trying to see through you as you may be trying to understand something through her. What is your question of these questions here? Or any other one, really. Some good ones they suggest, What are you really feeling? Who is behind this? How could I get them to do what I want? What should I be on the lookout for? What's the best way to do this thing? What's really going on here?

JANINE: I'm so torn- well I mean, mmm... I really torn between two of these but I think they kind of get to the same thing? [AUSTIN: Mhm.] "How could I get them to do what I want?" and "What's the best way to do this thing?" in this case feel very similar.

AUSTIN: You get the impression, you know you get the eye contact back and forth, and she blinks first, and you get the sense that she is worried about being caught. And so she is also on the back foot here, right? You know, she's this big, powerful figure, but is very concerned about

having the thing go bad, and has worried that she has just stepped into it. And so if you apply a little pressure and continue to like be the authoritative figure, you should get a leg up here.

And also I think that part of that is, part of what you get here is the sense that, the sense that she's afraid of being found out in maybe a larger way. You know, returning to the question of like, "Who knows what? How many people here are involved? Etc." This is not the face of someone who is going through- this is not the face of someone who's-

JANINE: Who's following orders.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: At least from immediate people.

AUSTIN: Exactly, exactly. There is a feeling- the person who seems most similar in some ways to Guilford, is like the face you saw Vivian make when- when [**JANINE:** Yeah.] you know what I mean? When you came in- why- *there's a bomb*? That's the face in a similar way. More restrained here, but. So go ahead and give me 3D6. Again you're looking for higher than a two.

Unbelievable.

JANINE: Four, one, and one.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. It's still a partial success. And I mean I think this is pretty obvious. In my mind I think, you know, Guilford then kind of snaps back like,

AUSTIN (as Guilford): Get out of my room. Get out now.

AUSTIN: And you get the impression that you- Guilford believes you have been snooping around. But does not get the impression that you are- I guess it's still a success, right? So, does not get the impression that you have broken any, any you know, you haven't like gone into bags. But is suspicious of you going forward. You know, immediately we see that she's going to go- once you leave the room, she's going to go up and check for listening devices and for cameras and she's gonna run a bug sweep, you know?

And the camera is going to linger on the bag, but she is going to be too nervous to dare open it before it's time, you know? The lock is still on it, she checks the lock, the lock is still on it, the lock is still fine, you know. Jack succeeded at that before, didn't break it off or anything like that. So the lock's still there, you put it away, you fundamentally succeeded here, so she doesn't risk opening it.

And two of you can get away. What's the movie- I mean I guess she's told you she likes action movies where the good guys win. [**ALI:** Oh!] And she likes-

JANINE: Yeah, way to dig deep, Guilford, I mean.

AUSTIN: Uh huh, and she likes- like a whiskey sour to drink.

JACK: Huge bodyguard vibes.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Yes. [**ALI** laughs] I guess let's talk Catrina and Vivian, you've gotten back with Carvisle- sorry, with Carvisle, Coughton, Exanceaster, Guilford's gone right upstairs immediately. Exanceaster- when Guilford leaves, the other soldiers have kind of fallen in to be de facto bodyguards while Guilford takes a break. And everyone has moved into a like- has been moved into a sort of- maybe it's like the study, or like the smoking room, or something. Probably more like that where everyone is supposed to just kill time until dinner through polite conversation? Vivian, I don't know- you've just been attached here because you were with them at the time, but I don't- no one's told you to leave, but you're free to leave at the same time. What do you and Catrina getting up to at this point?

SYLVI: At least I can speak for Catrina, so she is [chuckling] probably being a little quiet, kind of distracted by- it's really only processing now that there's a bomb upstairs?

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVI: So she is-

AUSTIN: But now it's like, really upstairs, do you know what I mean? [**SYLVI:** Yeah.] In the house now? And you're like, you do that thing where like "I wonder how many feet away I am from the bomb?"

SYLVI: Oh she's looking at the ceiling. [**AUSTIN:** Yeah. Uh huh.] She keeps like, is that- is it above us right now?

JACK: We don't know where Guilford is, right? Guilford is just gone.

AUSTIN: Guilford's gone.

SYLVI: God. [**AUSTIN:** Guilford's not here-] Wait, Guilford's gone. Guilford's *gone*, so her eyes are like fucking the size of saucers right now. [**AUSTIN** chuckles]

JACK: I think that- yeah, Exler takes a moment when someone is coming around and offering a plate of drinks or something? I don't know if it's Eileen, comes in with a plate of drinks for everybody else, and kind of looks at Catrina and says,

JACK (as Vivian): You need to pull yourself together.

SYLVI (as Catrina): What? Oh. Um. Uh, well. D-d- you know, I don't know about the odds on that one, but I can try!

JACK (as Vivian): The way we are going to get out of this is if you remain focused, and if you remain-

JACK: And Exler does like a big smile.

JACK (as Vivian): -pleasant! Cooperative. Friendly, do you see these people? Be a good hostess! Can you do that? That's the way we're going to get out of this alive. The last thing I want you doing is looking at the ceiling wondering what- I don't know where Guilford is, but we're going to be fine-

SYLVI (as Catrina): Yeah.

JACK (as Vivian): -I'm going to figure that out. Put it to the back of your mind, I need you to have a good party. Can you do that?

SYLVI (as Catrina): T- yes. Yes.

JACK (as Vivian): Yes.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Hey. Hey, Vivian?

JACK (as Vivian): Yeah?

SYLVI (as Catrina): This party's gonna be the bomb.

SYLVI: And then she does a big smile and two thumbs up.

[**ALI** squeals in delight, **JACK** chuckles]

SYLVI (as Catrina): Is- how did that work?

JACK (as Vivian): That's great. That's excellent. Do not say that to Exanceaster.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Okay.

JACK (as Vivian): Exanceaster's over there, you're gonna approach him, what are you gonna say?

AUSTIN: You go to look at him, and as you say "Exanceaster's over there," he's turned and started coming over towards the two of you.

JACK: Claps [**AUSTIN** laughs] Catrina on the shoulder like-

SYLVI (as Catrina): Huh, what?

JACK: You're gonna do great.

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): [clears throat] A close-

SYLVI (as Catrina): [loudly] Hello!

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): -relationship between a gardener and the daughter of the house, it's a rare thing.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Yes well, in the warmer seasons I spend a lot of time in the garden, since then Ms. Exler and I have become quite familiar.

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): Of course.

SYLVI (as Catrina): During those times.

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): It seems like Coughton will recover just fine but, I do have to say I'm disappointed, I was so looking forward to our discussion about our political positions of late. And I could go talk to your sister or your brother,

SYLVI (as Catrina): I... was about to suggest doing the opposite of that, and talking with me about those things instead! If you want, I could also show you the taxidermy collection while we do so.

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): Oh that would be excellent.

SYLVI (as Catrina): It's in the adjoining room.

AUSTIN: Right, and you move into the taxidermy gallery.

SYLVI: There are so many weird mice in here, that's why they're still in the house. [**JACK** chuckles]

AUSTIN: [chuckles] We don't have to zoom in super close here, but I'm curious how you try to fill in for your father and make the plea that Coughton would have. That Exanceaster should stay close to his old family friends and not become a member of the Pact of Necessary Venture- or not a full, you know, member, and maybe even join your side of this war.

SYLVI: Yeah. I think- so I think part of this is she is most- she has been around her dad getting ready for this [**AUSTIN:** Sure.] for the past little while. We have established Coughton as sort of

an anxious pushover. **AUSTIN:** Mhm.] And I think that she mostly just does her best to like go off the notes that she like saw him rehearsing and stuff like that? Very much just speaking from a position of like, from the family's position as opposed to from- they are Kesh, so Kesh would be with the-

AUSTIN: They are Bilateral **[SYLVI:** Bilateral, okay.] Intercession, yeah.

SYLVI: Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: So more traditionalist, more conventional, less **[SYLVI:** Yeah. But I think she-] progressive, you know?

SYLVI: I think she avoids specifically getting into like, mentioning the Bilats as little as possible basically, and trying more to play on the like, our families have been friends for so long, we should you know, make sure that we're still keeping everything close. We're practically family because we've been so close- that type of shit, you know?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI: Real like- she is emotionally manipulating him, it's fine. It's normal when girls do it. **[AUSTIN laughs]**

ALI: Mhm!

AUSTIN: Give me 2D6. I think partly here because you're in your place of power, you're- I almost said tapestry, and that's not true. Your- what is the- what is it called? I just said it.

JACK: God. Tapestry is-

AUSTIN: Taxidermist. Your taxidermy gallery, yes. You've got him in your tapestry.

SYLVI: Damn. *Damn.*

JACK: It's like a Kesh saying.

AUSTIN: Yeah, 2D6.

SYLVI: I fucked that up!

AUSTIN: No no no! This is-

SYLVI: Oh wait, okay. I'm going high?

AUSTIN: This is authority, politics, high culture, right? Etiquette.

SYLVI: Never mind, I did that perfectly.

AUSTIN: I think you're good. Yeah, you crush that, two sixes. You know this doesn't win him over permanently, but I think this conversation is going well. I think that he is impressed by your stunning mice on display, and other taxidermied animals-

SYLVI: Yeah there's other creatures there too, I just wanted to make it be like, she got her practice coming up on the mice at first. Yeah. Sorry for making such a gross character but I love her!

AUSTIN: Then you know, you- I think that like in some ways you maybe, you have that one moment where you're like, "this is going better than if father did it". Because you're a little more confident than he is, and your hope, your goal has been to outshine your siblings, and it seems like you're working towards that goal pretty well in this moment.

It's about the time that you move out the other side of the taxidermy collection that you hear a set of wheels like come to a breaking halt out front of the, the manor? And before anyone can even get to the front door, the front door has been slammed open. Mother's home.

ALI: Mmm.

JACK: Mm.

AUSTIN: And she's dressed in full safari regalia.

SYLVI: Oh great!

AUSTIN: And she has four of her own servants with her bringing in cases of things she's brought back. She has like a clear suitcase, like it's a glass suitcase, and there's just like thirty living butterflies in there? And they like haul that over- they carry that in like it's a casket, and set it on top of some table. She immediately comes in and gives Carvisle and Catalina kisses on the cheeks, and is like.

AUSTIN (as Crevera): Where's Catrina? Catrina!

SYLVI (as Catrina): Mama!

AUSTIN (as Crevera): Ah!

SYLVI: And she like runs out all excited.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Did you kill anything exotic for me?

AUSTIN (as Crevera): Of course I did, dear. We'll have it shipped to you, it's a little big, it couldn't come back on the ship, you understand.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Oh, I'm excited, that sounds like a month-long project at least!

AUSTIN: And gives you kisses on both of your cheeks, and says.

AUSTIN (as Crevera): When's dinner?

AUSTIN: And then realizes there are Columnar soldiers in her house.

AUSTIN (as Crevera): And who are these-? Ah! Exanceaster!

AUSTIN: And goes over to give a big hug to Exanceaster March, who seems overwhelmed by the sudden display of immediate physical affection, but also just the amount of noise she is making?

SYLVI: I think I'm like trying to explain things and being like,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Right! Yeah, it's so good that you've come here tonight because we're having dinner with-

SYLVI: Like, I don't think she has any sense to try to play this off as intentional? Like she just immediately like, oh, my mum's home! I have to tell her what's going on!

AUSTIN: For the people of the house who work here and know things, what's it like when- what's the difference in what you have to do day-in and day-out when Crevera Solstice, the mother of the house, is home, versus when she is not? What's the vibe difference for you?

ALI: I think pretty significant, right? **[AUSTIN: Mhm.]** Like, [laughs], like I- even just like- cause Eileen has been like a little talkback-y to Coughton? In a way that seems like, mutually beneficial, right? **[AUSTIN: Mhm.]** Like I am trying to advise you and not talk down or whatever, but I don't know that that's like, I think it reflects the sort of house that either of them would rule, you know? Where he'll wake up a little later, **[AUSTIN: Mhm.]** and just get an egg and toast or whatever, and just sort of vibe throughout the day? Whereas with her it's a set schedule, a set meal, like, **[AUSTIN: Totally.]** people need to be standing straight and like on their marks, etc. etc.

AUSTIN: How about for Martine and Vivian?

JANINE: I was gonna say from Martine's perspective, I bet Crevera has a mech. And-

AUSTIN: Mmm. Oh yeah, it's definitely outside. They're definitely- or being shipped back or whatever, yeah.

JANINE: Take it with her, and then it comes with her, or a few days later.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And she's not precious about that thing. [**AUSTIN:** Treats it like shit.] So when it comes back, it's just got- it's got filth in places where there are- there's like three layers of gaskets and o-rings and whatever to keep the filth from getting in there and it's still filthy? [**AUSTIN:** Mhm.]

And also I think she's like very, she's not precious about the mech, but she's also very on top of it. So I imagine like, when it is getting cleaned up, she's frequently [**AUSTIN:** Mhm.] just like checking in and checking in and checking in, and doesn't like stay long or anything, but just like, is checking in just often enough, and intrusively enough to like get Martine out of her rhythm? [**AUSTIN:** Yeah.] And then she has to get back into it. So whenever Crevera's home it's just like, a lot of work before she's ready to- I guess from Martine's point of view I wonder if it seems like Crevera only comes home to get her mech detailed.

AUSTIN: I bet that- and honestly, that might be true. [**JANINE** chuckles] You know? [**JANINE:** Yeah.] You're in the position you would-

JANINE: Because almost as soon as she's done [**AUSTIN:** Yep.] it takes her a week or two, maybe three depending on how bad it is. [**AUSTIN:** Mhm.] And as soon as it's done, Crevera's got a new trip planned, and.

AUSTIN: Yep. Yeah, I think that that's a thing- a thing that you come to realize because it's just totally how your schedule works. She shows up and derails your life for three weeks- and I don't know, it might even be fun to work on a big fancy mech like this, in that way, if it wasn't- [**JANINE:** Yeah.] serious time crunch and what it does to the rest of your schedule? [**JANINE:** Yeah.] But, then she's gone, right? And then you go back to whatever your regular schedule was. [**JANINE:** Mhm.] Vivian, do you have much interaction with Crevera?

JACK: Yeah, she carries around a small pair of garden clippers, and when there is a flower or a shrub that she doesn't care for, she just clips it. And leaves it to- doesn't even you know, put it in the bucket or the bag nearby, just goes around and is just like, that's the end of that! Plant something better for next time I'm back.

AUSTIN: Wonderful. Great, great work for the nobility. So yeah, I think- as someone noted in chat, birdlord5000 says "by the way father's been shot". Catrina didn't tell her?

SYLVI: I think none of us brought that up until like, someone is like, it's like, why hasn't your father said hello?

AUSTIN: It's exactly that.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Oh! Carvisle shot him.

AUSTIN (as Crevera): Carvisle did what?! Carvisle.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Crevera): Why would you shoot your father?

AUSTIN (as Carvisle): Well, Catrina got in my way while I was hunting.

SYLVI (as Catrina): I did not! I was successfully hunting and you were failing at it like usual.

AUSTIN (as Carvisle): You don't- you don't know how to hunt! You don't know how to do anything, all you know how to do is-

SYLVI (as Catrina): I killed that bird-!

AUSTIN (as Carvisle): You shot it. Is it dead? I didn't see it dead. It probably got away because you were too busy being a baby.

AUSTIN: And she just lets you do this. There is no, she never does the thing where she's like, alright, cut it out- does not- she's left the room. Leaving you to fight in her wake.

SYLVI: Yeah, nah absolutely.

AUSTIN: Eileen, you have- have you set up the DVD party downstairs? [chuckling]

ALI: Oh, but of course, yes.

AUSTIN: Is there anything else special we need here from this Guilford scene? Is this Guilford kicking it in a smoking jacket and watching Die Hard? Like-

[SYLVI laughs]

ALI: I think so.

SYLVI: Wait, what type of movies does Coughton have? That's what I need to know.

AUSTIN: Ohh that's a great question! [ALI wheezes and laughs] Like what's the collection you know?

JACK: Is it the classic movies, like-? Is it like, you know, **[AUSTIN: Yeah.]** like our equivalent of black and white movies?

SYLVI: [overlapping] I mean they're from Kesh, so I assume-

JANINE: He's like a noir guy? Like one of those guys **[JACK: Ohhhh.] [AUSTIN: Sad.]** who's like really into noir because they kind of see them in it, **[AUSTIN: Yeah.]** they seem themselves in it, even though no one else ever possibly would?

AUSTIN: Ever does? Yeah, yeah. **[ALI and SYLVI chuckling]** A hundred percent. Big hardboiled detective story type of fan. Lots of whatever the contemporary film noir is, and also has like-

SYLVI: He has detective clothes I bet, that he wears sometimes.

AUSTIN: While he watches his movies.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Yeah. There's a second, different DVD room for Crevera that is all documentaries, it's all bad History Channel documentaries, and, you know- **[JACK: Oh, god.]** Discovery Channel, very exploitative, very like pull on the heartstrings you know nature documentaries.

SYLVI: I have a suggestion for just like a thing the kids say **[AUSTIN: Please.]** when Coughton's busy watching movies, is "father's off solving his mysteries again."

AUSTIN: Father's off solving his mysteries! **[JANINE laughs]**

JACK: Ohhh!

AUSTIN: Ohhh, and he's almost like, it's not about the mystery- it's about characters, it's not- I don't watch those sorts of mystery films, I watch the ones that are people getting beat up, and they have romance!

SYLVI: You see in the first scene they show you how the murder happens, and then the schlubby little detective shows up and badgers the murderer until they give up! **[ALI giggles]**

JACK: Oh god!

AUSTIN: Ohhh, miserable household.

JACK: But of course, what he says right now is, "Ow! Oww! My shoulder!"

AUSTIN: Yes, is he in- does the house have some sort of infirmary? Is there just a room that's now dedicated as like the like,

SYLVI: Can I make a suggestion?

AUSTIN: Please.

SYLVI: You know how in these things they have it in like typically, I mean I haven't read a ton of regency fiction and stuff, but they like call for a doctor [**AUSTIN:** Yes.] typically when this sort of stuff happens, I feel like that might be the move? And it's like-

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think like someone being flown in, basically.

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. But probably won't get here until around dinner time, unfortunately. This place is, you may recall, hidden away and defensible.

SYLVI: Yeah. [**JACK** chuckles] But also it's full of like rich people, so there are definitely sedatives in the house.

AUSTIN: Oh, for sure! [**SYLVI** laughs] No, he is on one, he is completely- if not completely out, then doesn't feel a bone in his body, you know? Feels just like living ooze, you know? In a good way.

SYLVI: Good for him.

AUSTIN: But yeah, so, is it dinner time? Can we move the clock forward a little bit at this point to-?

SYLVI: Yeah I'm ready.

AUSTIN: At the very least people have been seated. Who are you sitting next to, Catrina?

SYLVI: Oh, hmm. That's-

AUSTIN: Also is there an empty seat ready for Papa if he feels better? Or have you-

SYLVI: I think that Crevera's taken that seat.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, fair. Yes. Yes. [**SYLVI:** They just were like-] That would have happened anyway-

SYLVI: Yeah, but.

AUSTIN: If he was okay, she takes his seat whenever she comes home.

SYLVI: Yeah, they're saving a plate for him, and someone will get a chair if he's ready, but we're just kind of assuming naw, [**AUSTIN:** Naw.] and it's less work if mum just takes his seat.

AUSTIN: Fair.

SYLVI: I think, so if like Crevera's at the head of the table, I think I'm to her right? And then one of the guests would be on my- to the side of me, I was gonna say left, and I was like that's not how that works.

AUSTIN: I think that to your-

SYLVI: I might have been-

AUSTIN: To your opposite, or to your side, is Guilford Gain. And opposite you is going to be Exanceaster, who's also next to your mother. Downstairs people. None of you are cooks or chefs, but I have to imagine that given how chaotic everything is, this is kind of an all hands on deck moment, and also the fact that there is another extra person to feed, and also just you're the Downstairs people, what's dinner service like on a night like tonight? What's being served, what's the run of house, you know?

ALI: Oh, true.

JANINE: One second.

JACK: We've had-

JACK: What if she brought-

ALI: Sorry. I was just gonna say [**JACK:** Sorry.] I thought we probably had enough time to adjust for the Columnar at this point, right?

AUSTIN: Yes. Probably, yes. Maybe it's not like- you couldn't have flown in any sort of specialty thing? But they will be able to eat, you know?

JANINE: I'm linking something to us in live-shows.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: [chuckling] Okay.

JANINE: It is an [image](#). [**AUSTIN:** Ah.] Of what I would suggest as the menu.

JACK: Ohh, my god.

ALI: Wooooow.

AUSTIN: Can you talk us through this menu here?

JANINE: Alright, so this is- where the fuck did I, what's this called? Julia Bennett on Instagram, Regency dinner party, anyone hashtag Recency era, hashtag something else, I don't know. It was repost on Pinterest and Pinterest doesn't let you click through the things [**AUSTIN:** Yeah, right.] unless you sign in to Pinterest, so fuck it.

So, we've got pig's feet and truffles, which look like [**JACK:** Classic.] bad chocolate chip cookies.

AUSTIN: They do.

JANINE: We've got-

ALI: It looks like potatoes like with olive shoved into them.

JANINE and **AUSTIN:** [chuckling] Yes!

JANINE: Yep. While it's mushrooms, so, is that better or worse? [**ALI** groans] Who knows. Puree of game and rice, this looks like a fancy Jello mold. Lyon sausage- Lyon with a 'y', so it's probably French and not like a lion sausage?

AUSTIN: Right, right.

SYLVI: [french-like] *Lyón*.

JANINE: Pigeon pie, which has little bird feet [**AUSTIN:** Oh my god, the bird-] sticking out of this-! [laughing] [**ALI** gasps]

AUSTIN: The bird feet are bad!

JANINE: [laughing] And it's not a stargaze-y pie. It did- I mean I think, it could be, but-

AUSTIN: Is there anything else on here? Is there-

JANINE: No, but I think there is some distinction here. A calf's heart. Just like, on a plate very grimly?

AUSTIN: A plate, alone!

ALI: Ohhh, yeah.

SYLVI: Looks like the head of an amygdala from Bloodborne.

AUSTIN: It is!

JANINE: Yes. Something that just says “brawn” [laughs]

SYLVI: [laughs] And it looks like a tire!

JANINE: It looks like tire- it does look a tire, with like a pile of raisins on top.

AUSTIN: What the fuck is “brawn”?

JANINE: I don’t know. [ALI laughs] Maybe they mean like, brown? Maybe it’s- I don’t know.

AUSTIN: Oh, it’s head cheese.

JANINE: Ohhhh. Okay.

JACK: No...

AUSTIN: It’s meat jelly, yeah.

JANINE: It’s decorated beautifully.

AUSTIN: It is.

JANINE: Larks and potatoes, this just looks like-

JACK: What a combo!

JANINE: A bunch of big- **AUSTIN:** Are those-?] seashell pastas to me.

AUSTIN: I think that those are little birds, they’re larks, they’re little birds that look like little turkeys. Yes.

JANINE: Oh the larks-! Right! It’s- it’s a pile of mashed potatoes that look like little tiny like cornish-hen style birds around it.

AUSTIN: Around it, yeah. Uh huh.

JANINE: Calf’s tongue, and this looks like a worm with like a, with like a Tudor neck ruff?

[Friends exclaim]

SYLVI: Also a Bloodborne character.

AUSTIN: Also, yeah. Uh huh.

JANINE: Yeah [chuckling]. Lamb chops and potatoes- this is another pile of potatoes but has lamb chops kind of draped around the side?

AUSTIN: That must be so much potatoes!

JANINE: [chuckling] Yes.

AUSTIN: Cause the lamb chops are *dwarfed* by it.

JANINE: Uh huh. We've got Scotch eggs and forcemeat- [wheezes]

AUSTIN: Excuse me?!

[**SYLVI** laughs]

JANINE: Forcemeat?! [**SYLVI** continues laughing]

AUSTIN: That's a mixture of-

JANINE: Star Wars food?!

AUSTIN: It's Star Wars food. It's a mixture of meat and vegetables chopped and seasoned for use in stuffing and garnish!

JACK: Why, why, why call it forcemeat? And for what? Don't!

[**JANINE** chuckles]

AUSTIN: It's French, from *farcir*, to stuff. The French always making things-

JANINE: Ohhh, yeah that's- [**AUSTIN:** Uh huh.] And then the English just being like, we'll just call it the same thing even though those words are very different things.

AUSTIN: Well no you force it in there! [**JANINE:** Very normal.] You stuff it in there, it's fine, don't worry about it.

JANINE: Uh huh [groaning]. Chaud froid of fowl and jelly, which, chaud froid would be "hot cold"? So I don't know- [**AUSTIN** laughs] [chuckling] something? Stuffed tomatoes, which look great. I'm a big fan of stuffed tomatoes.

AUSTIN: Yeah those actually-

ALI: I need-

JANINE: It looks like those pitten cushions that grandma has?

ALI: They look like really big versions of the pumpkin-shaped candy corn [**AUSTIN:** Yes.] you can get?

AUSTIN: That's exactly what they look like.

JANINE: [chuckling] Yeah. Veal cutlets and olives. Very straightforward- the picture doesn't look like either of those things again, but that's what this is.

AUSTIN: No those are black and white cookies, I get those on the- in Europe at two dollars a pop, yeah. [**JANINE:** Yeah, yeah, just arranged like dominoes.] Chaud froid sauce, they're hot cold sauce, because it's made hot and then served cold. [chuckles]

[**JACK** laughs]

ALI: Ew!

AUSTIN: Such a funny thing to say!

SYLVI: Why not?

JANINE: Well. That's true- [call distorts]

ALI: [unintelligible]

JANINE: -of lots of things! [**AUSTIN:** Uh huh.] That's true of hot fudge, that's true of normal chocolate sauce, [**AUSTIN:** True, true.] that's true of caramel sauce, this is- whatever. Veal cutlets on papillotes, which I think would be like, their cut, their like butterflied or-

AUSTIN: Butterfly yeah, okay. [**JANINE:** Yeah.] That butterfly, yeah, okay.

JANINE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: This big one-

SYLVI: Also this family is eating butterflies.
Sorry.

JANINE: There is Fillet of Beef a la
Jardiniere, which I think is-

JANINE: This, I think this is called a la Jardiniere, because the picture, it has like a fence, and the meat is arranged like little hay bales? It looks like a little gardenscape, I think that's why it's called a la Jardiniere.

SYLVI: Oh my god, yeah, I see it.

JANINE: Uh huh Yep.

SYLVI: They made a picket fence- **[ALI laughs]**

AUSTIN: It means "in the manner of the gardener's wife."

SYLVI: Yeah.

ALI: Wooow.

JANINE: Sure.

ALI: We've of course arranged this to be a recreation of the maze.

AUSTIN: Oh yes, a hundred percent.

JANINE: Oh yes, yeah yeah yeah. And then some more fillets of beef on the side, for some reason. Lamb cutlets and green peas, again very standard presentation for this. Ham garnished, period. **[JACK:** This looks fucking great!] And there's a big like French cross on it? Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's so funny looking to me.

JANINE: Partridges aux Choux, which is like, partridges and cabbage?

AUSTIN: Ohh, is that supposed to be- it's like a big cabbage?

JANINE: I guess? **[AUSTIN:** Mhm.] Another tongue, this is a Tongue Garnished-

AUSTIN: It's the same tongue!

JANINE: It's like a bigger tongue than the calf's tongue, but it's got stuff on the bottom?

AUSTIN: And it's like, it looks like it's been floured and fried or something.

SYLVI: [wheezing] Bigger than before!

JANINE: It's got fur on it.

AUSTIN: It's bigger than before.

JANINE: It has hair!

AUSTIN: Oh that is hair.

JANINE: It's got a layer of, of like fluff.

AUSTIN: That's gross, I'm going to call that a printing mistake otherwise I won't be able to sleep tonight.

JANINE: Yeah, let's hope. Croquettes of fowl.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Fricassee of Fowl Garnished, and Fricandeau of Veal. Which these things also look like they're meant to lend to the garden moti-?

AUSTIN: Mmm, mhm.

JANINE: -Motif? Because one of them looks kind of like the fence, and the other one looks kind of like the hay bales?

AUSTIN: Ohhh, I think you're right. You're right, a lot of stuff went into- yes. Yes.

JANINE: It's kind of like a themed, which I think is very fun given our whole-

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Well, what a feast has been prepared here.

SYLVI: Well, I think Catrina looks like at the fillet of beef a la jardiniere? And is like,

SYLVI (as Catrina): Oh, they forgot the patricide victim in the middle of it. Well, that's fine, still a pretty good diorama, don't you think Carvisle?

[**JACK** chuckles, **JANINE** laughs]

AUSTIN (as Carvisle): Grrr-

AUSTIN: At this point, just is so owned, that actually for once shuts the fuck up, and does not try to come back at you because I think he's afraid he's going to get owned into oblivion if he does. At the end of the day, he shot father, you know?

SYLVI: Yeah. Looking very smug as I look over to see if Catalina enjoyed it. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yes. Here's the other thing, for those of you who are not serving food here, this is another moment where everybody in the house is here, and you kind of have the run of the place if you're not part of the food service, so. Downstairs people, what are you getting up to during this?

JACK: Alright. Exler bursts through the door into the kitchen.

JACK (as Vivian): What's the plan?

AUSTIN: Are you just talking to Martine and Eileen, or have you now brought all of the Downstairs people into- into it. It would probably be another bunch-

JACK: Oh shit! God, that would be kind of great, but if it's the- if it's the Columnar- but how much do we trust?

AUSTIN: This is the problem.

JANINE: I- so, I don't- think of it this way. I don't know if this is a thing of like, how much do we trust the other people, so much as like what story do we wanna tell? Do we wanna tell a story about a handful of servants like solving this problem? Or do we wanna tell a story about *all* of the servants like getting together to solve the problem? Which is more interesting to us?

[**AUSTIN:** Mm. Mhm.] And then like maybe sure, there's someone untrustworthy in there, but like. What feels cooler?

JACK: I *do* like the idea of the entire Downstairs staff having this weird like rushed presentation and crisis meeting?

JANINE: I'm inclined to agree.

AUSTIN: Do we have a name for the-?

AUSTIN: We didn't, did we. We didn't- yeah, Talbert. Talbert, the head butler. Who is- who would probably be who you'd talk to to be like, alright, we gotta- we gotta have a little bit of a Downstairs meeting before we eat our food or whatever.

JACK: What if people are just eating on paper plates and things during the meeting? It's like people had to have their dinner and occasionally have to- people keep going down-

AUSTIN: Fine- Talbert is like,

AUSTIN (as Talbert): Fine, I'll let you address everyone, but we are not holding back dinner. We are having after dinner service, and it needs to be prepared, so you'll only have as long as it takes us to eat.

JACK (as Vivian): Shit. Alright.

JACK: So we bring everyone up to speed-

AUSTIN: No no no, what does that sound like?

[SYLVI laughs]

JACK (as Vivian): Everybody, your attention please. We have reason to believe that the visiting Columnar entourage has malicious designs against the house. Items have been discovered upstairs in Exanceaster's bodyguard's luggage, including some sort of gas bomb, which has since been defused by Martine-

JACK: Looks at Martine like nice one, thank you, phew.

JACK (as Vivian): A set of zip ties, and some gas masks. Before the bomb was defused, the timer was set to go off during this dinner, so as we understand it, Guilford is expecting the detonation to take place sometime now. Where did you say Guilford was at the moment, Eileen?

AUSTIN: At- oh sorry, go ahead-

ALI (as Eileen): Um, Guilford was-

ALI: Would Guilford be at dinner?

AUSTIN: Guilford's at dinner at this point, yeah. Watched some movies and then came up for dinner.

JACK: Have they got the gas mask- I'm curious about how this scheme works, right? Would they have gone back to their room to get the gas masks if the bomb's going to go off during dinner?

AUSTIN: As you- as you ask that, or as this conversation is happening, Guilford gets up from the table upstairs and says,

AUSTIN (as Guilford): Ah, I'll be right back. I have to run to the- to the restroom.

AUSTIN: And Exanceaster's like,

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): Of course.

JACK (as Vivian): Now, the way I see it, our next step is to address the Guilford emergency. At any time now, Guilford is going to realize that the bomb isn't going to go off, and I assume isn't going to give up on their designs. They're probably going to try and accomplish it some other way. Does anybody have any suggestions as to how to handle this ongoing crisis?

JANINE (as Martine): I wanna volunteer something here. Guilford looked weird.

JACK (as Vivian): Weird how?

JANINE (as Martine): She caught me in her room when I- after I defused the bomb, and I made up some bullshit reason I was in there, and we- I sorta- she looked, she looked weird, I don't- she looked umm-

AUSTIN (as Peggy): Weird how?

AUSTIN: Says uhh,

JANINE (as Martine): Skittish.

AUSTIN: Caroline- no, says Kitty, says Peggy. Peggy asks you this.

JANINE (as Martine): She looked- like she was worried that- [frustrated exhale]

JACK (as Vivian): Of course she's skittish.

JANINE (as Martine): I don't know, she just seem- she seemed- she didn't seem-

If this was a big scheme, if this was a big plan, that they were all in on, it just feels like she would've been a little more confident. Because in that situation she would know like, well what am I gonna do, am I gonna tell our boss, because our boss will just have me disappeared or whatever the hell they do. It- it just seemed weird.

JACK (as Vivian): Hm.

JANINE (as Martine): And I just wanted to put that in front of everyone in case that is helpful to our approach.

JACK (as Vivian): Okay. I'm just gonna put something on the table. We can take it as it comes, we're going to need to move quickly. What if we kidnap Guilford? Bring her down here, hold on to her, make sure that she can't try anything funny. Make excuses as to her absence, say she got ill.

JANINE (as Martine): I think that will be hard, but um, that's my only objection, is that it would be hard.

JACK (as Vivian): I don't understand a version of this that works out well for- for us, honestly.

AUSTIN: Talbert says,

AUSTIN (as Talbert): Why don't we just inform the heads of the household? Why have you kept this a secret?

JACK (as Vivian): Inform whom? Coughton? What do you think he's going to do-?

AUSTIN (as Talbert): Lady Crevera is back and she could take action.

JANINE (as Martine): [softly] You told Catrina, right?

JANINE: Should you volunteer that you told Catrina?

JACK: Oh yeah, that's true.

JACK (as Vivian): Lady Catrina knows and she seems to be handling the upstairs portion of this problem. I would caution against telling-

AUSTIN (as Talbert): [overlapping] What were her directions when you told her this?

JACK (as Vivian): To keep the guests together, and to keep them entertained, to not let any hint of suspicion-

AUSTIN (as Talbert): No, what directives did she give *you*?

JACK (as Vivian): Well, you know Catrina, Talbert.

[SYLVI laughs]

JACK (as Vivian): She had to be talked into it. She spent a lot of the time looking at the ceiling, where she believed the bomb to be before I told her to pull herself together.

AUSTIN (as Talbert): We should go upstairs and inform Crevera.

AUSTIN: And it becomes very clear that you have to bring Talbert on board with whatever you do here. Because- if you want to keep it secret, or keep it a Downstairs thing. He is retreating to the safety of letting people in charge make decisions, because it's very scary.

JACK: Yeah, okay.

JANINE: There are two ways we could approach this, right? One of them is the- one of them is convincing him that- convincing him that like, that won't work because it, you know, Crevera probably can't keep a secret very well, or who knows. The other way [chuckles] is to maybe play on his sense of duty, where like the- I feel like you don't become head butler unless you have that sense of like, well we have to take on the difficult things because the family has to- has their own- the family has to worry about the diplomacy, and they have to worry about their own

things, and we have to take care of these things that could get in the way because that's our responsibility as good- as good and faithful servants at Somerset House, right? So I feel like we've got like two- we have [**JACK**: Yeah.] two approaches here, two angles, two possible-

JACK: We could even combine them as well, right? Where it's like, oh there's a potential sense that Crevera will punish us for letting it get to this stage anyway, if she knows. It's like, well why- how was the kidnapper even allowed to get into the house, did nobody you know, did nobody vet [**AUSTIN**: Right, right right.] what was going on? How could you even get to the point where- and also, maybe Crevera would be like, "Well why are you telling me this? Why haven't you handled it?" And I wonder if that combo, along with what Janine was talking about like, "look this really is our duty as the servants of Somerset House".

AUSTIN: Mhm. A thing that I've realized we've lost in the mix here is the, the reason for the- this is not a correction of anything. But a detail that I don't wanna get lost because we took a week between games and have been low-prep, is the reason the gas masks were because the Aposto- the suspicion of the reason, or because of the Apostolosian soldiers here including Bel'agos Bloom, the Pact admiral who has also been here [**JACK**: Right.] in the background? Who I've just had offscreen because Bel was with Car- was with Carvisle and presumably also being dealt with by Catalina and Carvisle the whole time basically. But is at the dinner table, and I just wanted to remind ourselves it is not- it seems like it is not only Guilford who is part of this plot, that's what the inclusion of the gas masks was meant to suggest, was that also, there are the Apostolosian soldiers here wouldn't be the ones who'd need those gas masks, so.

JACK: Yeah. It broadens the plot to a certain extent, right? Right. Because if this is just some sort of like, non-lethal but problematic gas, and they're not in on the plot, just let them get knocked out and deal with the fall-out. [**AUSTIN**: Mhm.] But they're in on it enough that they need these masks. [**AUSTIN**: Mhm.] I'm prepared to make a roll to try and convince Talbert here?

AUSTIN: Yeah, let's do it. I think this is- what's the angle you're taking?

JACK: Actually, do you want to do this, Janine? Cause this is more of the Upstairs- this is the Upstairs angle?

JANINE: See this is why I was like there are two angles [**AUSTIN**: Yeah, I think-] because there are two angles, right? There is the Downstairs approach where we try and kind of trick and deceive him, in the like- we don't need to do that, and then there's the Upstairs approach which is like, we have a responsibility, [**AUSTIN** chuckles] the duty to the family, to do duh duh duh, to fix it, and, I think it's just a matter of which would fit the vibe.

JACK: I think you should go for it. I think it would fit with what we know about Talbert.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So that's... two dice, I would say?

JANINE: Right.

AUSTIN: Self serious is definitely part of this.

JANINE: Oh yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. I don't know that-

AUSTIN: Above a two-

JANINE: Well, I was gonna say I don't know that Martine entirely believes this stuff, but like I think actually to a degree she probably does.

AUSTIN: Wow. Double Stairs Stare!

JANINE: I grow an extra pair of eyes! **[ALI stifles laughter]**

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Yeah!

JANINE: Immediately they lock!

AUSTIN: Unbelievable! **[JACK chuckles]** They lock with each other! Yeah, geez, what's the question? You lock eyes with- god, who do you lock eyes with? You lock eyes with- let's just stay on Talbert stuff, let's not try to widen out here. What do you wanna know? And I guess you could lock eyes with anyone you want, it doesn't actually matter, but.

JANINE: Uhh, I think in this case I wanna ask "what should I be on the lookout for?" because he has the information now, and even if he doesn't go along with it, there might be something **[AUSTIN: Mmmm.]** that he's like, he realized like, oh, **[AUSTIN: Right.]** if this is happening then X, Y, Z.

AUSTIN: His eyes, he- you know, sometimes it is as direct as it needs to be. His eyes keep slipping from yours and onto the locked basement door, right? Or the sub-basement, **[JANINE: Oh boy.]** the way down to the basement, right?

JANINE: [nervous] Uh huh.

AUSTIN: Sometimes- and it's very clear, he knows about skeletons in the closet that might be involved in whatever this plot is, and would prefer not to be part of the plot because that's very- it's a very tricky situation, isn't it.

JACK: [chuckles] Ohhh, lots of people with lots of responsibilities.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Alright give me another roll. I guess in some ways what you've learned here is there is vulnerability. This house has secrets and he's afraid of them being breached.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Whether you wanna lean on that or not is up to you. If you do you'll get an extra dice, but maybe it's not worth opening that door, you know?

JANINE: You mean literally opening up that door, or?

AUSTIN: I mean figuratively, figuratively like- saying "I know you care about the dark secrets of this house" could shift the tenor of a relationship, you know? But if you wanted- you can- if you do that, it will give you an extra dice on this roll.

JANINE: I think- the thing is that like, I think that's very in line with what Martine is already doing [AUSTIN: Sure.] right? This is an important house, and maybe you change the emphasis on the word important [AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah yeah.] or like, you know, there are a lot of things within this house that are worth *protecting*. [AUSTIN: Uh huh.] There are, you know-

AUSTIN: Yes totally, alright give me 3D6. Hey!

JANINE: Six five four!

AUSTIN: Critical success! Yeah you-

JANINE: I Superman-punch Talbert.

AUSTIN: That's how- he's knocked out, and he wakes up like, "I'm all in now!" No, he instantly you know, he's like,

AUSTIN (as Talbert): You're exactly right. Alright everyone. Put your dinner down. I'll- I'll hold off the after dinner service as long as I can. We have to solve this problem.

AUSTIN: And I'm gonna give everybody a +1 on their next roll from this crit.

JANINE: Hell yeah.

AUSTIN: A plus one. One extra dice.

JACK: They got the butler on board!

AUSTIN: Which basically means you get the whole household on board, right? As long as you can describe what that extra- it's basically you have an aiding dice in your back pocket from this success- you know what I mean? You've gotten help from someone else on staff going forward, and I say everybody, I mean Downstairs people, sorry Catrina, no one's helping you.

SYLVI: Yeah no I figured.

AUSTIN: How's dinner going upstairs, Catrina?

SYLVI: Um- oh!

ALI: Umm-

ALI: Sorry, just before we move off this I have- I don't know if we didn't say this and I missed it, but I was wondering, was March's servants also part of that scene? Or have we seen them?

AUSTIN: I don't think so, I think that there has- I think that the- so. Um, I think that March's servants are in their own quarters for dinner, which is rare, and weird. And is maybe part of the door that opened that let this happen, or the window that opened that let this happen. I know for a fact that Bel'agos' soldiers are like in effectively a joining- they ate dinner early, right? And have basically been standing guard, in fact I think maybe they're outside standing guard. And ate their own separate military dinner, you know an hour previously, the last time anybody saw them, they were at the like quarters of the house, you know, on patrol basically.

But yeah, I think March's people, not here, conveniently. Whether that's conveniently because they're part of the scheme, or conveniently **[ALI: Oh sure sure sure]** because it's a convenience for you in this moment- it just happened to work that way that March's people are not fond of being near you because of the way that they were given as a gift from this household to March's? **[ALI chuckles]** Who could say?

ALI: I was partially asking to see if there- if it would be- if I would have the opportunity to like serve them their meal and try to do like a, a Guilford-like vibe check, you know?

AUSTIN: Totally! I think you could go do that as part- I think that's fine. **[ALI: Yeah.]** I just don't want to retroactively say that everybody has like sat there this whole conversation in front of, yeah.

ALI: [overlapping] Oh, no no no, yeah yeah yeah, yeah I was asking cause I figured they weren't and wanted to **[AUSTIN: Yeah.]** put them on screen so to speak.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. So you can go find Laris, Leah, and Laurice, who are probably in a guest- part of the guest quarters or whatever. And have let you handle this service yourselves. You have more than enough people- you know, here's what it is. You have more than enough people now because Crevera came and brought *all* of her servants back, **[JACK: Ohhh.]** and they are servants of the household. So the guest ones get to take the night.

But you find them and they've, you know, they made their own dinner probably an hour prior or whatever, and have eaten and are just like playing cards in a side room. Do you- have you met- I guess we said- no, you didn't know them. You've probably met them before from other trips, though, so. They would know you by name, at least.

ALI: Okay sure, yeah. Yeah I guess in the like context they would've served themselves their own dinner, like, it's maybe her bringing in like a tray of like-

AUSTIN: Oh right, sorry, I didn't mean to step on that-

ALI: Oh no no no it's fine, but her bringing in like tea and like **[AUSTIN: Sure.]** some of the des-little cakes or whatever that was taken from the dinner service to be like,

ALI (as Eileen): Well hi everybody.

AUSTIN (as Laris): Hey, you looking to get dealt in, Eileen? We can deal you another next hand.

ALI (as Eileen): Oh, sure! Yes, yeah please, I have a, a few minutes to myself so to speak.

AUSTIN: Laris immediately takes one of the takes and just, you know, deck of- hand of cards in one hand, little cake in the other one, nibbling away at it.

AUSTIN (as Laris): So rare we get a day off- an evening off.

ALI (as Eileen): Yes, yeah, I'm glad that things worked out to let you take this time. I'm sure it must've been a trip to come all the way out here.

AUSTIN (as Laris): Yes well, that's what it is to serve someone as far-reaching as Exanceaster.

ALI (as Eileen): Sure! Yeah, um. Coughton isn't quite so exciting, and Crevera has her preferences, so. I wouldn't know. But how- you've come with quite a large group, I was wondering how the dynamics there were?

AUSTIN (as Laris): Oh, Bel'agos and their little guard. I don't like traveling with soldiers. But, it's fine.

AUSTIN: Has not mentioned to be clear, has not mentioned Guilford, is acting as if Guilford is not part of the quote unquote large group.

ALI (as Eileen): And you know that Ms. Guilford to be sleeping upstairs, how lucky she is.

AUSTIN (as Laris): I don't- well, she is a bodyguard. You know.

AUSTIN: Vibe's weird. Vibes in this room, weird.

ALI: [nervous laughter] Pushing through the weird vibes.

ALI (as Eileen): Have you spent much time with her during your travels with Exencester-

ALI: That's not how you-

AUSTIN: It's Exanceaster, yeah it's a weird spelling, uh huh.

ALI: Exanceaster, okay.

AUSTIN: Leah is like, Leah is doing a thing where it feels like she's sensing Laris' stumble and is like jumping to cover? And is like,

AUSTIN (as Leah): Oh yes, uhh, Ms. Gain is an excellent valet and bodyguard, we've traveled with her many years, she's great. She's fantastic. No questions about her service to Exanceaster, no questions about her loyalty.

[**JACK** chuckles]

AUSTIN (as Leah): And- and, she has a harsh exterior, but once you get to know her, she's a joy to be around.

JACK: You're asking a lot of questions that my "Guilford isn't mysterious" T-shirt should have already answered. [**ALI** laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: The sirens are going off a little bit.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: How do I push through this?

AUSTIN: Great question.

ALI: Into a roll.

AUSTIN: [whispering] Great question.

JACK: Hey! You wanna kidnap Guilford with me?

ALI: [giggles] Subtlety, solidarity, fly-on-the-wall, soothing platitudes- okay. Yeah I don't know, I feel like the way that I expected to push into this version of the conversation were to be like, ohhh, maybe it is that, maybe it's the like, as they're rushing to be like, oh we're so fond of this person.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: I can be like, oh I'm- I'm curious about this person because you know, she must be in such a difficult position having to sort of sit in both roles, you know?

AUSTIN: Love it.

ALI: And be like- I, okay. In my heart of hearts for me as Ali, [laughs] **[AUSTIN:** Yeah yeah yeah.] I think is trying to pierce out if Guilford is acting against **[AUSTIN:** Yes.] **[JACK:** Hm.] Exanceaster, and the real gossip that I was trying to get here is like, do you have a sense that there's like resentment there, or like **[AUSTIN:** Sure.] how does she act or speak about him **[AUSTIN:** Right.] outside of- you know what I mean? So.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that totally makes sense. **[ALI** chuckles] Give me your roll.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Are you using your plus one aid from other servants here? Or are you saving that. That would be what you got from Martine's crit.

ALI: Yeah yeah yeah yeah. Um.

AUSTIN: Otherwise I mean I would say this is probably, this is probably a two, two dice right now. You're a maidservant, you're talking to other servants, you're talking about- this is classic servants talking to each other shit, right? **[ALI:** Right.] You're basically gossiping about another person who is in service and who sits on- across a slightly different line, like I think you get that bonus one from that. So that's already- you're at two. But if you want three, you can tell me how.

ALI: Yeah, I was thinking of saving it but this also sort of feels like one of the more important rolls that [start laughing] I'm going to have tonight.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: And it feels important to her to sort of suss out the like dynamics of this situation in terms of like who to protect?

AUSTIN: Yeah. You could say you got that from having these little cakes and teas made, you could've like had someone else you know, the baker cook you some extra so that you could bring them- you know what I mean? We don't have to have a whole new scene with how you spend this plus one.

ALI: Yeah yeah exactly, I think that makes sense enough, okay.

AUSTIN: Alright, 3D6, [rolling noise] this is subtlety, right? No, oh my god!

ALI: Wait. Is that bad? That's bad, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you want under four, and you got five six five.

JACK: That's- that's as bad as it gets maybe.

AUSTIN: That's as bad as it gets!

JACK: Oh shit, Guilford was upstairs.

AUSTIN: If none of your dice succeed it goes wrong, the DM says how things get worse, somehow. You are prying too much, and it becomes *very* clear, and they are *very*, they just zip right the *fuck* up. They say,

AUSTIN (as Laurice): Oh, you know what I forgot, this game only has three- it's only three players- it's three- we're playing three player poker. So, um, yeah we can't shuffle you in, I forgot about that. But thank you again for the sandwiches-

AUSTIN: And they give each other like death glares in the sort of way that's like, I mean I'm still giving you something. They give each other looks like, does she know, you know?

ALI: Uhh, yep. That's, you know what, that, I wanted to know who was involved in this scheme.

AUSTIN: In some ways you got your information.

ALI: I feel as though I've gotten that information. [**JACK** chuckles]

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: The fact that it is invaluable to me is a reflection of that roll.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes. Catrina, how's the dinner going?

SYLVI: I- I feel like things got thrown off by Crevera arriving a little bit? Yeah yeah. I feel like she's become the center of everything.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

SYLVI: I think Catrina is trying to make it relevant for- it's Exanceaster that's sitting across her, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, or you're like next to Exanceaster-

SYLVI: I thought I was next to Guilford-

AUSTIN: Or no, right, you're right, you're next to Guilford who's now gone, [**SYLVI:** Yeah.] and your mother, and then across from you- excuse me, is Exanceaster.

SYLVI: Yeah, I feel like I'm trying to like bring Exanceaster into the conversation [**AUSTIN:** Yes.] but it kind of just keeps circling back to Crevera's stuff.

AUSTIN: Crevera is- yeah, a hundred percent. You know,

AUSTIN (as Crevera): When I was on this moon, we tracked the great, you know, Lubosicists across seven miles, and in a day- [skipping over dialogue sounds] -and then I went to town, and you should have seen the parties. It's like the war isn't even happening there!

AUSTIN: Just, bwuhhh. Eugh. And I think that there is a degree to which you continue to connect with Exanceaster on the "I want to talk about business" stuff front? You know, he was here to talk about that shit. You know, fundamentally it seems like he cared about that conversation and it's hard at this point to maybe- it's hard to maybe see, or find the space to do it? But the fact that you both are clearly wishing you could be doing it is winning small points, you know? In some ways. I don't think there's any other big roll here, and again, but I will say is, Guilford's been gone for longer than expected.

SYLVI: I might be getting stressed about that.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVI: I might be like,

SYLVI (as Catrina): Oh, is Guilford taking care of something for you?

SYLVI: [chuckling] To Exanceaster.

AUSTIN: And Exanceaster's like,

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): Ah, I suspect perhaps the food hasn't sat well. No offense to your cooks, but Columnar guests are rare.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Ah, my deepest apologies, I promise next time we'll make sure that their culinary skills are up to par.

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): Yes, you do that.

AUSTIN: Which is like the sort of offhanded flam that like, even someone who's on good terms with like- that's the type of person you're dealing with, right?

SYLVI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Exler and Martine, what's the- what's the next steps looking like for trying to stop this?

JACK: Speaking as Jack,

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: The- I don't know how we get out of this one without bringing down Columnar heavily on us. I feel like either- there has to be some sort of weird sacrifice here, right? Cause it's like, we might be able to get out of this just by ditching everybody and being like, alright, fuck these guys, but they pay us, and there is a great degree of social leverage that being part of the Solstice House- Solstice House might be faded, but it- oh, Somerset House, now I'm getting mixed up. But there is a degree of social capital there and financial capital that we would all be out of a job instantly, and we would be associated with the fiasco at that place, if we just bounce.

AUSTIN: Mhm. But what's Vivian doing?

JACK: I am wondering if we should start thinking about trying to kill Guilford and make it look like an accident.

AUSTIN: Someone's been playing Hitman.

JACK: Oh I mean, if we just kill her, then it's real bad news [**AUSTIN:** Uh huh.] because the staff of the house killed a guest- like this would be the exact opposite of what Stel Kesh broadly wants in this war is like, oh, a Columnar family visits and then- but, similarly, if Guilford is just allowed to continue walking around in this space, [**AUSTIN:** Mhm.] she is going to try and execute this plan, right? That's true to the fiction right, Austin? You're gonna have Guilford keep trying to do this unless she has a really good reason not to?

AUSTIN: You tell me. I mean, we'll play to find out what happens, right?

JACK: Yeah. So if we were going to kill her, we would need to kill her in a way that was so spectacularly obviously an accident, a tragic series of circumstances-

JANINE: I don't know that I'm on team "Kill Guilford".

JACK: How do we get out of this?

JANINE: So I-

AUSTIN: Just one woman, Janine, it's just one woman.

JANINE: Maybe, I'm- [chuckles] [**ALI** laughs]

JACK: Also please, the plan name is- the plan name Killford.

[**AUSTIN** laughs, **JANINE** chuckles]

SYLVI: God.

ALI: Mmmm.

JANINE: It's a great codename, no one will ever bust that one open. I, so, maybe it's just because I'm kind of like missing a piece here, but I'm not entirely convinced that the thing that Guilford wants to do is like, the way we understand it to be.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: I think we can agree that the thing she's doing isn't gonna be good if she does it. But in terms of like, motivations that might make you want to kill a person, I don't actually know where we stand on that. Which makes me kind of like, I would still much rather talk to her or- [**AUSTIN** exhales] I don't know, I want it laid out, but, [**AUSTIN:** Uh huh.] before I kill someone, I want it laid out.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: So is this kidnap Guilford?

AUSTIN: Excellent downgrade from murder to kidnap.

JACK: I just don't know how this goes- we know about the bomb, bang, she kills you.

AUSTIN: But you roll dice, you know.

JANINE: Yeah [laughs].

JACK: Yeah.

ALI: You know, I think the like, kidnap is a strong term when you could be in a room with someone and lock the door, right? Like, and force the conversation.

AUSTIN: That's still kidnapping!

ALI: Stop! [laughs]

[**JACK** laughs]

AUSTIN: Legally speaking, you're detaining someone against their will in a house that's not even theirs!

ALI: [embarrassed and pained] I don't know!

ALI: Nooo! I mean it's aggressive, but it's not kidnapping, is a whole-

AUSTIN: Mmmm-!

ALI: When you think of kidnapping you will like, you know, you bring someone somewhere else, this is just being intense.

AUSTIN: Tell it to the judge! Sir, I was just being intense.

ALI: I just really needed to talk to her about something.

AUSTIN: God.

SYLVI: You were detaining someone.

JANINE: Okay, well, what if- [**ALI** laughs] okay, so she went to her room to check on stuff.

JACK: She's a trained bodyguard.

AUSTIN: I mean she left-

JANINE: Starts freaking out.

AUSTIN: At this point, she's in the wind. She left the table and no one has seen her since.

JANINE: Right.

AUSTIN: Right?

ALI: We assume she's in the room- well we've had like, we wouldn't have had someone like, stationed there.

AUSTIN: No one mentioned anything like that, [**JACK:** No, I don't think we-] you know, I feel like- you hadn't had the conversation with people about it. [**JANINE:** Yeah, yeah.]

ALI: Right, yeah yeah yeah.

JACK: And we built the Home Alone trap above her door to knock her out when she-

ALI: [chuckles] I was just, you know, you'd have the heads up.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah.

ALI: But that's not what happened here. But we do have like a network of eyes at least, if she was you know, on the ground somewhere we could probably find her regardless. I feel like confrontation is the thing before it's violence? But I don't know what we would- the step there is give her a reason to explain herself besides "we're aware of this thing you're doing". Secretly, she's here to kill nobles, maybe our character at the end of the day, would be like, you know what-

AUSTIN: I would say let's- go ahead Janine.

JANINE: I was gonna say, if this is- I was gonna say, I started to say there's like, this is- why am I saying this? The thing I was gonna say is that like, if we can flush her out outside, I could use one of the family mechs-

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

JANINE: [laughs] And maybe corner her or intimidate her in some way? [**ALI** laughs]

AUSTIN: I'm gonna do the thing- I think it's very useful for us to sometimes say what type of story do you wanna tell, it's sometimes very interesting for us to talk through the dilemma. Also sometimes you're people who live in a house where the bomb is about- a bomb would've gone off by now, a gas bomb would spreading- a gas would be spreading through this place [**JACK:** Yeah.] had you not disarmed the bomb. I want us in this moment, what do your characters do? And let's not think about repercussions, because the clock is ticking.

JACK: Alright, let's go. I'm going to- let's take this from "we realized we have lost sight of Guilford". [**AUSTIN:** Mmm, mhm.] And nobody knows where she is. So I am going to run up the back stairs up into the second floor of the house to look for Guilford, and if anybody else would like to be-

AUSTIN: You hear the door to her bedroom close as you're climbing the stairs. Like close shut, and footsteps leaving.

JACK: Shit! Can I drop my pace and see if I can peep round the corner at her and get a sense of the situation-

AUSTIN: Yeah you get her going down the far- you get her with a bag slung over her shoulder, and a bomb under her arm, her other arm, [**JACK** chuckles] going down the far staircase. She is moving.

JACK: Yeah, has anybody else followed me up the stairs? Because I'm considering shouting "freeze".

ALI: I'll be there.

JANINE: I'm trying to figure out where Martine would- would like, what's the most natural move for her to do. I really do think she would- maybe not a mech, but I do feel like, I strongly feel like she's out in the garage getting something.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: I don't know what yet-

AUSTIN: Getting a piece of gear.

JANINE: I just- maybe she doesn't even know what, I just feel like she's out there being like, I got a lot of wild stuff in here, and it's time to use something somehow.

AUSTIN: Do y'all have the ability to communicate with each other from across the manor? Are you on a radio signal? Are you on comms?

JACK: Bad walkie talkies or something?

AUSTIN: Bad walkie-talkies,

ALI: We must, right?

JANINE: I had been thinking about that too of like, are there like, communication panels or something.

AUSTIN: Ah I like that better. Yeah I like- it's communication *panels*, because-

JANINE: It's kind of like the fancier, sci-fi equivalent of the little strings that ring the bells,

AUSTIN and **JACK:** Yeah.

JANINE: Where normally it would be someone from the family being like, get in here and sweep up this mouse.

AUSTIN: I say this because no one called home when Carvisle shot Coughton, right?

JANINE: Yeah, might just be built into the house.

AUSTIN: So it's in the house, it's in the garage, it's in the facilities. So yeah, so then Martine you're back there, and then Vivian and Eileen, you're upstairs, you're seeing Guilford about to head downstairs on the far hallway stairs.

JACK: What if instead of yelling freeze I just pull the fire alarm?

AUSTIN: Ohhh! [**ALI** laughs] Okay, yeah I mean you do you! Do you?

JACK: Yeah fuck it, let's get some chaos in this house! Sprinklers start going off!

AUSTIN: Sprinklers start going off,

AUSTIN (as alarm system): *Danger. There is a fire under way. Please move to the nearest exit at your earliest convenience. Danger.*

SYLVI (as Catrina): Oh goodness, someone collect father.

ALI: [giggles] I- I wonder if I should do the like, soft equivalent of yelling "freeze", of like-

JACK: [in a hushed tone] *Freeze.*

[**AUSTIN** and **ALI** laugh]

ALI: Of like appearing in the hallway as the fire alarm goes off and being like,

ALI (as Eileen): Oh Ms. Guilford! Let me help you to the exit.

AUSTIN: I mean again, carrying a bomb under her arm. So yeah, you could do that, [**ALI** laughs] I'm not gonna say you can't do that, but I wanna make sure that the stakes are-

JACK: Eileen's no-selling it.

JANINE: Let me carry your giant cartoon perfume bottle for you!

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah, exactly! Do you do this?

ALI: I mean... yeah? Cause it feels like, it makes sense to pull the fire alarm to sort of get everybody out of the building, but it doesn't make sense to let the opportunity slip to interact with her?

AUSTIN: She makes eye contact with you, and says,

AUSTIN (as Guilford): Leave as quickly as you can.

AUSTIN: And then turns to head back down the stairs.

ALI: Vibes on that seemed okay [laughs]. Look at and Vivian and just shrugs, did my best on that one [continues laughing].

JACK: Uhh, there's gonna be dice rolled here.

AUSTIN: I haven't called for anything, I mean what are you doing? [**JACK:** No but you were about to-] Everyone's leaving, everyone's going outside, I mean she's going down the stairs.

JACK: I'm gonna try and tackle her with ideally Eileen's help. We have the high ground, we might be able to knock her forwards down the stairs-

AUSTIN: You do have the high ground, I'm gonna give you a +1.

JACK: And there's two of us, and-

AUSTIN: And you have the +1 from other servants, you could call on another servant to cut her off or something.

JACK: Someone standing at the bottom of the stair, [**AUSTIN:** Mhm.] and she has no formal training.

AUSTIN: That's not true.

JACK: Okay.

ALI: Strong lower back from all the gardening-

AUSTIN: Yeah, well, what is this? This is, I mean this is going over, through an obstacle isn't it? It's not going under or around an obstacle, Jack.

JACK: It is not.

AUSTIN: Are you helping, Martine? Not Martine, sorry, Eileen.

JACK: Is there another way to do this? No, if we're being honest to the characters, Exler is just gonna charge her at this point.

AUSTIN: Okay, let's do it. Forward thinking. *Forward* thinking, you know? [ALI chuckles] Make off with Columnar treasure. Are you spending your +1 from before on there being another servant downstairs ready to intercept also?

JACK: Yeah?

AUSTIN: Okay. So is that two dice?

JACK: This is- this is not viable. This is simply not viable-

AUSTIN: You need five, you need a six on these rolls, yeah, uh huh.

ALI: You sure you don't want the assistance?

AUSTIN: Eileen you can assist, yeah. The way assistance works is weird, right? Because it's, if you wanna help someone else who's rolling, say how you're trying to help and make a roll. If you succeed, give them +1D. You still need to succeed in a roll to help, so.

ALI: Oh, sure sure sure.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean? I guess this doesn't say that you would- I guess let's just use regular PBTA rules which is like, if you fail you get- the consequences can hit you, you know? How would you be helping?

ALI: It's a matter of like boxing her in right? Like if Eileen lets Guilford walk past her, [AUSTIN: Mhm.] and then Vivian-

AUSTIN: She's going the opposite direction of you-

ALI: Oh sure sure sure.

AUSTIN: She's going the far end of the hallway to go down the back stairs, or maybe the front stairs, so you're probably coming up the back stairs. So she's probably going down the main stairs.

ALI: Oh okay, and then Vivian was following her very quickly and like shoving her down the stairs she was walking down?

AUSTIN: I think tackling her as she's going down the stairs, yes, correct.

JACK: Is there not an argument that this is solidarity? I don't [ALI: Yeah.] feel-

AUSTIN: It's not solidarity, you're helping rich people! **[ALI laughs]** And you're certainly again, you're going over or through an obstacle, you're not going under or around. This is not- tackling someone is not subtlety.

JACK: I'm doing it very subtly. Um, I don't think that this is, there's no way this is going to work, so the question is do we know dice knowing explicitly that it won't work? Or do we try to think another way around the problem? I would need two sixes on three dice?

AUSTIN: Wait, one six. One six is a success, it's just a partial success.

JACK: One six on three dice. That has happened in the last roll, the roll before that, **[AUSTIN laughs]** then didn't, then Sylvi rolled two sixes, then there was a four and a one, **[AUSTIN:** Wow, there's a lot of sixes!]**]** then we rolled a six, then we rolled another six, then we rolled another six, that was a two and a four. So every time we've rolled, well that four one one wasn't-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] And what's funny is that I'm looking up previous games now of rolls, and there are not that many sixes up here, you know? We're in the six zone right now. That's what Drake called it, right? The six zone?

SYLVI: [breathless] Oh my god.

ALI: Yuck.

AUSTIN: So bad.

ALI: [chuckling] I, yeah. In terms of like solutions, the only other one I could think of was like if we do a roll to make sure that she gets into Martine's path? You know what I mean? And we're setting up-

AUSTIN: Mmm!

ALI: For Janine-

AUSTIN: You're setting up Martine, you're actually helping Martine by trying to guide, trying to box Guilford in towards her.

ALI: Mhm.

JANINE: I figured what's in the garage by the way, but I'm not going to tell you until it's time.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Hell yeah.

ALI: Oh please do
[giggles].

JACK: Yeah. That's gotta be the way to do it. Is this that Guilford just finds her passage through the house to be consistently impeded by- a door is locked when she doesn't expect it to be, or there is someone carrying something-

AUSTIN: Yeah you can make this roll. This to me, is a Downstairs roll.

JACK: Yep.

AUSTIN: You have tried to derail her attempt through the house, yeah.

JACK: Okay, I'm gonna roll 2D6. [rolling sound]

AUSTIN: That is a Stairs Stare. So, at some point in the process, you make eye contact with Guilford. What is it, what's the point in this- in my mind this is a bit of a montage or a running scene, maybe a single take as she moves through the house and keeps running into locked doors and people you know, huge groups of people trying to get outside quickly, you know? And the sprinklers are on and that makes it harder to move through a certain space, and then whatever? But at some point you lock eyes with her.

JACK: It's as I open a door to let her pass through it.

AUSTIN: Ohh, so she got through in the way you want her to go.

JACK: Yeah. And I'm gonna just ask "what's really going on here?"

AUSTIN: [exhales] Do you... do you wanna see what's going on here, or have a position where you can interfere? Or do you want to- you just see it. You just see it instantly. She moves past you towards the trap you've set up for her, she's you know one more step away from that, you'll have to succeed on another roll to really queue it up, but it's all going great, and then you see the armband. And it's an M with a slash through it.

JACK: [breathing, taps the table] Ahh!

JANINE: See! [vindicated] This is why I was like, I don't think we should kill her! [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, everybody else seemed to pick this one up Jack, I gotta tell you. [**ALI** laughs]

SYLVI: [blissful] Oh I had no clue! Let's- hold on, let's not!

JACK: Sylvi, Sylvi and I are on the other side of the table going [gasps]! What gave it away Janine and Ali?

AUSTIN: Me very obviously trying to hold back information after people got rolls about how they should get more information?

JACK: [laughs] There are so many villains!

JANINE: Yeah it was the fact that- the fact that she- it was truly the thing of like, she seemed like she was worried about getting caught where it's like, I think even if she was working for like a rival government, that's not necessarily how that would feel.

AUSTIN: Exactly what I was trying to put down, [**JANINE:** You know?] so I'm very happy that came across.

JANINE: But also I thought I was wrong and being stupid, so. [**JACK, ALI, AUSTIN** laugh]

AUSTIN: This is- also we can now say why Laris, Leah, and the third L, Laurice, are all so buttoned up suddenly, because they thought that Eileen had like- Eileen was sniffing around too much around an act. Which I mean at this point, you know, the other way I was gonna show you this was, you know, Eileen- or not Eileen, sorry, Guilford you know, at this point does for at least a brief moment see the trio of servants, of March's other servants through a window, through an open window, and just tosses the gas masks out to them. Or maybe like slides them across the floor into another room or something. So they can mask up. The whole time that everyone thought that the masks were for the Apostolosians, in fact they are for the servants. The Kesh servants who've been given to Guilford- or not to Guilford, to Exanceaster.

ALI: Yeah I feel like that's what tipped me off the most, but even before that I was like "let's hear her out."

AUSTIN: Uh huh. So you're changing your roll?

JACK: Shit.

AUSTIN: Cause if you were to- as written, I guess instead of rolling again, you can first change your action if you want to, your insight might give you preparedness bonus dice at the GM's option. So yes you can change your action here if you would like. Also this is her being like, get out of here to the help, you know?

ALI: Mmm, that was, yeah yeah yeah. Yeah. She's been great. It's been a fun character.

AUSTIN: Right!

ALI: Hope you enjoyed Die Hard, ma'am.

AUSTIN: [laughs] That's exactly it! Like I guess I'm supposed to go- yeah, I guess I'll watch Die Hard tonight, first? [**ALI** laughs] Before I do my shit?

JACK: Gonna drink a whiskey sour.

AUSTIN: Yeah! Uh huh! She is the main character of a different game!

JACK: [chuckling] Oh, god. [exhales] The loose end here that I want is something with Catrina, I want to like, I don't know, warn Catrina or something but- oh like, throw Catrina a bone, sort of like, take my hands off what's happening here but- [**AUSTIN:** Uh huh.] toss something in the direction of Catrina? And then try and get out? Mhm. Or, do I just take the largest painting off the wall next to me [**AUSTIN** laughs] and run for the-

SYLVI: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: Ohh!

JACK: Shit, no! That's what I do. I'm forward thinking. I have a bag somewhere, and it has silverware in it.

AUSTIN: Oh my god. [**ALI** giggles] Once a month for the last five years, you've been stealing one piece of silverware and banking it.

JACK: And clipping rare you know, like, tulip bulbs and things?

AUSTIN: Alright, I'm not gonna make you roll for this, go and get your bug-out bag.

JACK: I just see the armband and sprint- run, just run for the shed.

AUSTIN: The shed is outside, presumably near Martine's mechanic shed, Martine you just see Vivian race towards you, past you, towards the, towards her shed, her gardening shed.

JANINE: Yeah. I think I do that like loud whisper thing, where it's like,

JANINE (as Martine): What are you doing?!

JACK: Ah god. Is it known that Millennium Break agents wear these armbands? If I were to just point to my arm where the armband is, do you think she'd put it together?

AUSTIN: I don't think- I don't, I don't know, I feel like,

JACK: Kind of wild that she's wearing an armband.

AUSTIN: Well! Sometimes political action that declare- you know, I will tell you in my mind what she was going to do before you pulled the alarm was kick the door into the dinner party, like literally break the gas canister, like toss it forcefully [**JACK:** Oh, bomb's not working.] onto the table to shatter it, to make it just naturally emit all that gas in the room, and yell, you know, "I am Millennium Break" or something? "We are Millennium Break"? And be a, have like a big

moment? That didn't happen because you pulled the fire alarm instead. So now she is all suited up for that, and that doesn't get to be the thing she does, she's trying to pivot herself.

JACK: God I think I just shout-

JACK (as Vivian): Millennium Break!

ALI: What?

AUSTIN: Not- loud enough for more people to hear it?

JACK: No, no just like in passing towards my shed.

JANINE: A loud whisper?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you scream-sh, you whisper-shout it.

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah okay.

JANINE: You know I bet Martine puts that together, should be honest after the looks and the like, feeling something was off. Mmm. It's tough cause like I don't know how Martine feels about Millennium Break.

AUSTIN: Mmm. Mhm.

JACK: Yep.

AUSTIN: Great question.

JANINE: Especially to the extent of like, people who are living out here- I mean I guess it's been awhile.

AUSTIN: It has been five years, let's say, since *PARTIZAN*.

JANINE: Yeah. But like I bet for most or all of that five years, Martine has worked at this house.

[**AUSTIN:** Yep.] And like, you get news here through certain filters. So, I, you know I don't think her as a Millennium Break sympathizer?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: I think she is maybe at most at the like, "they have some good ideas" stage?

JACK: She hasn't been reading the zines.

JANINE: No. [**ALI** chuckles] I think you know, especially like again, getting her news through certain filters, she's going to probably be like, I think their methods or bad, [**AUSTIN:** Right, right.] and a lot of the things she would cite as examples are like, things that are not true, or a lot of details were left out of them, or lots of complicated things. And I guess Vivian's just like, leaving, right? I mean Vivian's getting-

JACK: Going to my- [**JANINE:** Yeah, your shed, but like,] to my shed to get my-

AUSTIN: You still have the, what seemed like a Columnar drop-pod escape device which now you start to think, wait, that was in Guilford's [**JACK:** Yep.] stuff. That would probably call something else here.

JACK: Yep, or, escape means-

AUSTIN: Or it's still the same device, but-right-

JACK: Might not take me to a Columnar ship.

AUSTIN: No, correct. I've read all the zines is such a funny Millennium Break would be, you know, sympathizer-fanboy. It's great.

JACK: I work on the tulips.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: I've read the zines.

AUSTIN: I've read the zines. I'm doing my part. Catrina, you see Vivian and Martine- you see Vivian sprint past Martine, turn back and go [inaudible!] and then [**JANINE** chuckles] go on her way.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Oh gosh, she's trying to warn me of something and I can't hear her!

AUSTIN: Oh my god. [**JACK** chuckles] Do you start heading towards that direction? Or do you stay with your family and with March?

SYLVI: Yeah I think I am going to politely excuse myself. And just be like,

SYLVI (as Catrina): I'll be back shortly.

SYLVI: And then scurries off, like.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

SYLVI: Way faster than she should've if she's trying to play that off.

AUSTIN: While you're heading that way, Eileen, Eileen what are you doing in all this chaos? Have you just gone outside with everybody else? Are you-?

ALI: Yeah, I was gonna ask if I could be the one to intersect with Catrina? Because we have that former friends relationship-

SYLVI: True.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: That hasn't been on-screen yet, and I feel like, both have the opportunity and the like, the want to be like, well the fate of the family is what it is, but I can't- [laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: Catrina's always kind to me.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: So I think that like, as Catrina's like running in that direction, Eileen sort of comes from the side of the screen essentially to like, you know, from behind the house to be like,

ALI (as Eileen): Oh, Catrina!

[ALI laughs]

SYLVI: She like yelps. [AUSTIN laughs]

SYLVI (as Catrina): Oh! Eileen, hi! Is everything good? What's- I saw running.

SYLVI: And points in the direction- [laughs]

ALI (as Eileen): I believe that things will be, but you should follow us instead of dealing with everything back at the house.

SYLVI: Like looking back and forth between the house and then Eileen, like three times I think she does it? And is like,

SYLVI (as Catrina): You know, yeah, okay. I- I think it'd be good to get out of there for a little bit anyway.

ALI (as Eileen): Yes, you shouldn't be married by tonight. Let's go and figure things out.

ALI: And then yeah, I guess just following Vivian at this point.

JANINE: Which I'm sure Vivian is very excited about.

ALI: [laughs] Welllll. And now I'm like do I, am I- is the play here is to put Catrina in the path of Guilford? Like, [laughs] elsewhere? Is there like a different- if Vivian has like made off with a Millennium Break sympathizer, is there like a different contingency plan that like the Downstairs have been organizing, and is there a way for Eileen to be like, well tonight Catrina's one of us. And whatever you know, [**AUSTIN:** I see what you're saying] arm hooking we were gonna do with each other, she's gonna be included in it, even if we're not like.

AUSTIN: My instinct is mostly that Downstairs is gonna stay close to like, the family, you know what I mean?

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: The Solstice family. You know, there's probably a "hey, we all in case of a big fire, we all go to, we all walk the well, the Downstairs people walk a mile to go to the safety place or whatever" and then come back with you know, car- I mean, you probably have, we know you have your space Hummer here. So everyone piles in one of those and drives off to wherever the nearest safe you know, not safehouse, but there's probably something between here and the very front gate where everybody first landed and drove in from where you can go. There's probably not a poolhouse, but you know, some sort of other house on the property.

ALI: A potentially worse idea.

AUSTIN: Please.

ALI: [laughs] Would be like, just knocking all the chess pieces off this board. [**AUSTIN:** Mhm.] But would I lead Catrina to her mother's mech? And be like, if you need to escape-

AUSTIN: You can use this.

ALI (as Eileen): The thing you need to do is to escape and make a future for yourself. You're always above this, and I want-

[**ALI** laughs]

SYLVI: What about you! If she says that, she's like,

SYLVI (as Catrina): Wait, what about you though!

ALI (as Eileen): I'll be fine, I think [laughs].

SYLVI (as Catrina): *You think?*

ALI (as Eileen): Like, I think whatever's happening tonight will- will, the sympathies will be on my side.

SYLVI (as Catrina): Um, sure-

SYLVI: She does not understand what the fuck you mean by that.

AUSTIN: No, how could you?

SYLVI (as Catrina): Sure..... Yeah.

AUSTIN: Martine, are you still prepping something? Has what your prepping needed to change given the-?

ALI: Oh yeah- [breaks into laughter]

JANINE: It, yeah, so it kind of has, it's kind of had to change a couple times, actually [**AUSTIN:** Yeah, uh huh.] And now I'm like not sure- well, I mean I think I- the thing is that like I think I kind of know what I do, [**AUSTIN:** Mhm.] but it's like, it's not like fun [chuckles] in the way it was originally gonna be fun.

AUSTIN: Oh.

JANINE: So, a thing that I think if I were a rich person,

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: In a space future who had a remote house,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I would have some sort of firefighting equipment.

AUSTIN: Sure.

ALI: Mmmm.

JANINE: Perhaps some sort of large firefighting robot type.

AUSTIN: Oh, for sure.

JANINE: Type suit, or device. Just like, you know, tucked off in the corner somewhere, just in case you need it. This thing I don't think is like the archery-like exoskeleton suit things we talked about which were you know, you can kind of dress 'em up to suit occasions and stuff like that. This thing is probably old. This thing is probably like a few generations old, because it would've been I think bought when things were a little more prestigious around Somerset House. And it's like been maintained, but it's kind of like when you're at a farm and they have like an antique tractor, and you're like wow! That's really cool, and they're like yeah, it looks really cool. [AUSTIN and JACK chuckle] And it's like, it's a good and working piece of equipment, but also it looks like when it was made.

So it is an old-fashioned firefighting mech and I think Martine is in that. And her plan is now less to try and kidnap Guilford, I don't think she sees like a point to that. And to be honest, I don't think she feels very strongly about like Guilford trying to get certain things out of the house?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: I think the thing that she's doing with this firefighting mech is kind of like covering the staff and the family.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: As they go wherever, Uh huh. just like, I imagine there's like some sort of air gun and water gun situation, which like if someone's chasing- if someone might have intentions towards your employers with poison gas, might be useful.

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: I think that's her angle, which is like, it feels a little bit un- it feels a little anticlimactic because it's not a pursuit, it's not figuring out what Guilford's after now, [AUSTIN: No no no, totally.] and getting in the way, but it's like, this is just honest at what would happen to- especially this character who is like, a bit of a fence-sitter, bit of, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I mean the- I will give you that there is a- you know there's probably a more dramatic way to do this. There is probably the thing of like, ohh, and they come outside and their guns are blazing nad stop and you block all the bullets and, you know, whatever. But I actually think that it's-

JANINE: Who's guns?

AUSTIN: The- the servants. [JANINE: Oh, okay.] The Downstairs servants who are also Millennium Break. But no, but I think this is the thing, right? Is- this is a plan that operated on surprise, and killing rich people was a nice bonus, but that was not their objective. And seeing you, you know, stomp out in this firefighting mech, right, and by the way, I feel like it's become increasingly clear there is no fire in the house, because there's no fire? But, you being there in a

firefighting mech is calming for people, and they're like, oh well there's a fire, so I mean obviously, you know, it's a good thing Martine's here with the firefighting mech, cause otherwise that fire is definitely-

JANINE: Any other mech is gonna be way too conspicuous, this is the thing.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent. **[ALI chuckles]** So I think your presence stops the three Ls from being like, well we have- part of our objective here was to knock off this families also, and instead they focus on what they're here to do. And no one's here to see what they're here to do, which is extremely funny and fun for me in some ways?

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: But I can tell you what the result of what they're here to do is. Which is that the ground does start to shake. **[JACK chuckles]** And I think the first thing that happens is all through the- and it's evening now, right? So it's maybe even hard to see at first.

But all through the hedge maze, including the outside bits that you can see, new flowers burst from the interior stems of all of the plants. They're not the sort of you know, you stole tulip bulbs before, so we'll say that they're tulips. Tulips don't grow out the bushes of a hedge maze, that's not what they do. They're sprouting as if from the small interior branches, the leaves are falling off the hedges themselves. There's this strange transformation happening. The facade of the house begins to shake and change.

You don't see it, I think maybe the only thing we see of it, the only like image of what is downstairs in the basement, is a shot from behind the Millennium Break folks as they like kick down one door, and you know, drill through another one, and hack through a third, and on a table in the dark with a single spotlight on it, is a one-for-one perfect model of Somerset House. And they lift it off this pedestal and unplug it from something, and unchain it from something, and begin to leave with it. And as they do, the house falls apart.

Because the house is a Branched who has been chained here for hundreds and hundreds of years.

SYLVI: [gasps] Oh my god!

AUSTIN: And such is Somerset House, that the actual physical thing begins to implode, like Fall of the House of Usher style, and when they emerge through the back door of this place, maybe the side door or the one that, the one that Eileen came through, there is a fifth person with them. A body that is all plants, all stems and roses. And they begin to leave into the dark, having succeeded at their primary task. Having freed the Branched who has been chained here, studied, etc. for a *long*, long time.

What's everybody- what's- the house is like, truly crumbling into the dirt at this point.

JACK: God.

AUSTIN: The only thing left of the household is the maze. Everything else is just like, fallen apart. I think like, you know, the food and the furniture are in the rubble, you know? The- it's the bones of the house, were the Branched. I mean said straightly, what this- and it's no one who's alive? I think it's totally possible that members of this household had no idea- I mean Catrina didn't know about this, right?

SYLVI: No, absolutely not.

AUSTIN: That the literal house is a Branched who'd been forced and put into a sort of stasis to take a form. The Branched can be whatever they want, and if you can make them want to be a thing and hold them in that position you can use them.

JANINE: I have a question.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: Was the wallpaper Branched? Or was that, is that also in the rubble, it's just furniture with big rolls of wallpaper.

AUSTIN: Oh that's very fun. I like the idea that- cause I can imagine Crevera wants to redo the wallpaper-

JANINE: Cause if they didn't know, they would want to redecorate!

AUSTIN: Yeah a hundred percent, a hundred percent. So yeah, those are the sorts of things that have been redecorated, right? Maybe the very first layer of wallpaper wasn't, but, yeah.

SYLVI: [wheezing] There's a big fucking pile of taxidermy-

AUSTIN: Yeah, a hundred percent, right? [**JACK** chuckling] Yeah.

JACK: Oh, that's a good thematic mirror with the taxidermy though. [**AUSTIN:** Oh, isn't it?] The a Branched house.

AUSTIN: Imagine how excited I was! [chuckling] [**JACK** chuckles]

SYLVI: Anytime, ma'am. Anytime. [laughs]

JACK: God.

AUSTIN: For the record, this Branched's name is Thalia. T-H-A-L-I-A. But I don't know if it's gonna be a scene with them, they're gone, you know? I don't know- I do think that they need to figure out a way to get out of here now, cause Vivian has their you know, their escape route thing.

JACK: Which she's setting up next to a stream in some woods, like a little gully, nearby, and you know, plugging the ends of it into the ground like a little tripod and unscrewing the bit at the top, and like a little lilac colour light shooting up into the sky.

AUSTIN: Uh huh, right, and again, it's just like a little drop pod is gonna shoot down, that's big enough for a few people to get into. But you are the only one there.

JACK: Well, me and my bag of silverware.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. I mean I think immediately the thing that's happening back with the group of people is, "oh my god they blew up the house", right? And everyone just tries to make sense of what they're seeing in very simple, regular terms. Rumour is some people saw someone with an armband on, it must've been Millennium Break who came to blow up the house and kill everybody, and thank god Martine was there to keep everybody safe in the big firefighting mech. You've saved Exanceaster March's life, unbelievable. Guilford's gone-

JANINE: Sound like I've impressed an important guest.

AUSTIN: It sounds- you've impressed an important guest! [**ALI** and **JACK** laugh] And Catrina you've outshined your siblings, and Eileen, you've improved Somerset House's reputation.

ALI: Have I?

AUSTIN: Well because you've saved- you've saved Exanceaster's life in the version of this that gets told, right? Exanceaster brought someone- Exanceaster's whole household was shot through with Millennium Break, right? And that's no good.

JACK: The gardener's disappeared.

AUSTIN: The gardener's disappeared, ugh. They must've killed the poor gardener.

JANINE: With spoons, and then buried the evidence.

AUSTIN: [laughs] And then buried the evidence! Uh huh.

JACK: Or, in a, like a Dorothy L. Sayers way, oh, the gardener must have been in on it all along! You have to be careful of Millennium Break, [**AUSTIN:** Mhm.] they can embed themselves in-

ALI: Oh yeah, that gardener was always mouthing off.

JANINE: Oh yeah, they get to the gardeners first.

AUSTIN: Mhm. [**ALI** and **JANINE** chuckle] Let's- let's jump a week. Where is everyone one week from today?

SYLVI: Somewhere with my mum's mech, apparently. [**ALI** squeals] Yeah no, I think I fucked off the second things started to get weird.

AUSTIN: Ohh, the mech is falling apart, remember, because it hasn't been maintained yet?

SYLVI: Yeah, but like I'm sure I've still got my like credit card.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, for sure. Yeah yeah yeah.

SYLVI: Just ending up somewhere like completely not sure what I'm doing, backpacking through sectors of space in a very expensive mech.

AUSTIN: It's extremely funny.

JACK: And for a short time, dinner-wear at a Kesh house.

AUSTIN: God.

SYLVI: I'm sure there's some stuff in there, I'm wearing like a juicy track suit or something.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. Yeah yeah yeah yeah. Perfect. Vivian?

JACK: I'm in a cell! [**JANINE**, **AUSTIN**, **ALI** laugh] On like a, god, what's a fun Millennium Break hideout? I'm on a cell in a decommissioned oil rig somewhere else on the planet that is now being run by Millennium Break. Millennium Break are pretty sure that my heart is in the right place, and they are very happy at the bag of silverware that I brought them-

AUSTIN: It's very expensive silverware.

JACK: But they are keeping an eye on me just in case- especially until their agent Guilford is sort of- they make contact with Guilford and the Branched she was sent to rescue again.

AUSTIN: Martine?

JANINE: Who's like- what was Exanceaster's like career again?

AUSTIN: So Exanceaster is an incredibly important, powerful magnate of industry. [**JANINE:** Right.] He is the head of the Frontier Syndicate, which is like a huge big data like, super big data

firm. And then his em- his current like pet project is a thing called the March Anecdostatist Foundation, which is, the long and short of what they're doing is taking- basically hooking people up to a system that captures all of their movements when they do things like fight in mech combat arenas, or play combat- do combat sports against each other, and then drill that info you know, analyze that info in a big data algorithmy way, and then create AI, basically drone mech combatants out of it.

The thing that he's really doing, I'll just say straight up what the thematic thing is happening with the Anecdostatists is, they are not- they originally hoped to just be able to capture battlefield data. But a bunch of laws got put into place about who gets access to that stuff? Protecting, effectively protecting the copyright of battlefield data, and so he said fuck it, I'll build my own library. I'll train my AI on my own library by hiring people at pennies at the dollar to do death sports, right? He's training his like, his stable diffusion combat AI by just paying people peanuts and getting them into like, you know, you thought CTEs were bad in the NFL, he is just straight up paying people to do death sports, including on Palisade. **[JANINE: Cool.]** They are making combat-style NFTs. Uh huh.

SYLVI: Oh my god.

[JANINE groans]

AUSTIN: We're back in sci-fi babey! It's time to look at the world! So yeah, if you wanted a job!

JANINE: So that's the thing is that, that's what I was thinking is like, I- you know, while the family is like between houses-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: A lot of their big machines are not- are gonna be like in storage, if you're like staying at friend's mansion for a little bit, you can't park all of your mechs in their mech garage, their mech garage is full of their own mechs.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: So I wonder if Martine like parlayed things into **[AUSTIN: Miserable.]** like a mechanic's internship, **[AUSTIN: Oh yeah, definitely]** at Exanceaster's thing, and the thing I like about this is that like-

AUSTIN: You're in the company magazine, they write a feature story about you, you know?

JANINE: Yeah! The thing that I like about this is that I think Martine goes into it being like, wow this is the real move up. **[AUSTIN: Uh huh.]** This is like, you know, I've been you know, self-taught mechanic, I like had to learn from books and like, and now I'm in the big leagues, I have the chance to really prove myself, and that Millennium Break thing was weird, I'm glad

that's behind me and stuff. In her very like fence-sitting like, this is just how society is, [**AUSTIN** laughs] I think this experience might be the thing that kind of like radicalizes her a little bit, finally.

AUSTIN: She sees just how bad it is and that like,

JANINE: Yeah, she has an idea in her head about what it'll be like, and then the thing that happens is, she is cleaning blood out of robots.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

JACK: Mmm.

AUSTIN: Great. Eileen, how are you doing?

ALI: Weird, I bet.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: I think that I'm also in the position of like, this definitely has not radicalized me, and the like, the thing of like I am definitely in a position of like staying behind with the family, like it's Eileen like, you know, dragging Carvisle's luggage, and you know, he speaks to her really shortly and she's with the family in that way. But I think maybe if there's like, if there's like a version of this silver lining here, it would be like maybe she stays in touch with Vivian?

AUSTIN: Mmm.

ALI: It's like her going downstairs and like opening like a package from Vivian, and it's like new Millennium Break zines or whatever. [**AUSTIN:** Uh huh!] And now the downstairs staff is like, really into it?

AUSTIN: That's very fun. Bit by bit, you know? [**ALI:** Yeah, you know.] Can't get 'em all at once.

ALI: Day by day.

AUSTIN: Maybe you've replaced Talbert as the head of the household? I feel like Talbert just wants none of this anymore, you know?

ALI: [laughs] Really?

AUSTIN: I think he's just like,

AUSTIN (as Talbert): And I'm retiring.

ALI: Yeah, fair.

AUSTIN: Not like out of any- **[ALI:** Well that's the-] he's not mad about anything, he's just like, oh my god.

JANINE: It's that thing when Worf goes to DS9 and he's like, well the Enterprise got destroyed so I might just go to whatever the fuck he was gonna join some company in the middle of nowhere. He's just done, he didn't want to be in- in there anymore cause he was serving the house, you know, now the house is gone.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] He's just done. I was the butler- I was the butler of Somerset House, and Somerset House is gone, you know? Yeah, Ali.

ALI: Yeah, I'm wondering if like because they don't have a house anymore like, the vision of Somerset House is actually like this like wide, almost like hotel suite, but like seems so small for the family.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: But the camera recognizes this place as luxurious, even if they're so put off by having to share like a three bedroom or whatever. And instead of Eileen going downstairs, it's like a side room that she's able to go into that like, suddenly seems like incredibly cluttered cause there's still all of the staff in there, it's like her being like,

ALI (as Eileen): Oh Vivian sent again!

AUSTIN: Right, it's like the thing of like the family has moved from the big vast manor to the like, fancy hotel penthouse suite, like down by the seaside or whatever, and so.

JACK: Ugh.

AUSTIN: It's cramped for them, but for everyone else watching, it's like still way too much space for these three people or whatever. **[ALI chuckles]**

JANINE: I like Jane Austen's Persuasion.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Yeah, yeah, uh huh. Yeah. **[ALI laughs]** Alright.

SYLVI: I don't think they hear from Catrina for a very long time.

AUSTIN: Because that's fun too, right? Because like-

SYLVI: No yeah.

AUSTIN: Just like her mother, you know? Like, you start to gain that reputation, which puts you at the head of the house in a weird way, right? Just like-

SYLVI: I don't even think she's going for that either,

AUSTIN: No totally!

SYLVI: She's just like, oh! I don't have to fucking deal with my family for a bit. I'm gonna have fun for once!

JANINE: Is Coughton dead? Or is he alive-? [wheezes]

AUSTIN: Oh my god, Coughton's alive.

ALI: He is alive, but the vibes are soooo off because his wife can't leave anymore? [**JANINE** laughs] Like she doesn't have the mech and is just in the house and is making it everybody else's problem.

SYLVI: And now it's a marriage of inconvenience.

[**AUSTIN** and **ALI** laugh, **JACK** and **JANINE** chuckle]

AUSTIN: Miserable. Amazing. Alright, I think that's going to do it for us. I'm gonna close the loop, Exanceaster absolutely decides to join up with the Bilateral Intercession-

JACK: Woah!

AUSTIN: Yeah, you saved this person's life, and I think that there is a degree to which he looks at Bel'agos and is like, you know, you were next to all of this, you let this happen under your nose, you know? You were so distracted by the fucking other, by Carvisle and Catalina arguing and you trying to one-up them, and you try- you know? You lost sight of me, and I think that there is like, this doesn't happen that day, do you know what I mean? I think everything- Exanceaster's smart enough to be like,

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): Yes, well it was good to see you even if the circumstances are bad, but you know, Bel'agos and I have to get back to Pact business.

AUSTIN: And then a week later, Exanceaster is like sending word to the- I mean, it shows up to the Solstice family, but I actually think it's written to Catrina, it doesn't stop Crevera from just opening the letter and reading it and responding instead, but,

AUSTIN (as Exanceaster): Catrina, it was so nice to speak with you in an extended way over the-

AUSTIN: Duh duh duh duh, you know, that thing happens, and bit by bit, gets pulled in, and so will get to show up on Palisade as a principal antagonist hopefully, we'll see.

[Music begins: "[Permanent Peace](#)" by Jack de Quidt]

[music ends]