

PARTIZAN 19: On the Edge of Fracture

Transcribers: lofty 0:00:00~0:15:00 and 1:30:00~1:37:00 // rain (@ariskofrain/rain#6887), 1:37:30 to end // Aaron (@goblinfootfall#6647) 0:15:00-1:30:00

[music: [TANAGER. PERFECT. TOUCHPAPER.](#) begins]

AUSTIN: Kween Overture Rooke had not chosen to work with the Society of Banners and Bright Returns. In fact, as she'd been assigned as the group's broker by Scrivener's Guild lottery, choice never came into it at all. But after meeting that band of misfits for the first time, she was so pleased by her assignment, that she permanently worked words of gratitude to the Divine Fortune into her nightly prayers.

She saw in each of them a reflection of a different age in her own life. In Thisbe, the way she used her strength and endurance as a soldier, committed, unstoppable. In Broun, her time as a tinkerer and a mechanic, to say nothing of a shared thirst for profit. And in Valence, a modern mirror. The care she felt for others, her ability to walk delicately between the lines, to get things done.

But now, with the war heating up, with the reports from SBBR's activity in Orzen, and with whispers in her ear that something big was coming, she was kicking herself for thinking of them as friends or favourites instead of simply clients.

It had happened overnight. Stel Nideo had entered the war against Apostolos on Partizan. Whether it had done so throughout the Principality was anyone's guess, but probably. Probably. What she would say for sure was that the act had sent Orion and Columnar into a new, more direct style of rivalry. Not war by definition, but not peace by any standard.

And yet it was in this moment that Broun decided to go off book and hurt civilians? In this moment that Valence had sought to get the group caught up with amateur revolutionaries? She had championed them, helped them set up shop, secured their first contracts, and shielded them from management when they went bad. But if they were going to go where she thought they were, then they would need to trust her as much as she did them. And if they couldn't, then who could they trust?

[music plays out]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interactions between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker. Joining me today, Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: Hi, you can find me [@bleatingheart](#) on twitter.

AUSTIN: Andrew Lee-Swan.

DRE: Hey, you can find me on twitter [@swandre3000](#).

AUSTIN: And Ali Acampora.

ALI: Urm, hi, you can find me [@ali_west](#) on twitter, and you can find the show over [@friend_table](#).

AUSTIN: We are continuing- or actually- As always, you can support the show by going to [friendsatthetable.cash](#), that's the one I have to remember to say, because it's the thing that lets us continue to thankfully pay our rent. So thank you for that. As always, we are continuing our game of Beam Saber by Austin Ramsay. My goals, my principles are to ensure that everyone at the table is safe, to convey the world honestly, to fill the world with detail, and to play to find out what happens.

AUSTIN: How's everyone doing? We're in downtime, we're in SBBR downtime. We haven't, uh, we haven't yet really seen what, what, what the results of that last arc are. And y'all probably don't know the results of the last Rapid Evening arc yet. I guess Ali, you've probably listened to those episodes. But, but the party certainly doesn't. So how, where do we, where do we want to start with? I, I guess I'll let you know, I did a bunch of math off, off mike. And, I can go over that really quick for y'all. If you click on the "Factions; SBBR" sheet.

AUSTIN: Big stuff. One; House Brightline relationship, up to plus one. Your HORIZON- you worked with HORIZON, need an adjective for that at some point. I don't know what you think Gucci thinks of you, but that would go there. Imperium's Plume, uh, not a fan, of you. You in fact lost two trust with them, or two relationship with them. They believe you are villainous and cruel. Which is good, that's good. Scrivener's Guild, has dropped down by another one, down to trouble makers. I think the moment that it was clear that you were actually fighting in the streets on behalf of seditious elements of, of civilization-

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AUSTIN: You've kinda caused your bosses a little bit, a little bit of trouble. We'll get to that, I'm sure. Your Oxblood Clan relationship went up to three, it's maxed out. I've written down "comrades," but again I'm totally flexible with what that is. But that was the vibe at least. And then, your Church of the Resin Heart went up, too. And, and I don't have a good adjective- I need good adjectives for both of those. We don't have to come up with those right this second, but you're at, you're at plus two with them. You can, you know, you can rely on them in a real way.

AUSTIN: Bigger picture stuff. Your relationship with Stel Nideo went down by six points. Mean's you're- Or your- By six trust points, your relationship is only down by one, cause of the way that builds up, but like, not good. They are not big fans of you right now. You know it's not enough to have like, the entire nation at your throats, but they're going to be a little bit more cold to you if

they come up. Meanwhile, because of working so tightly with House Brightline, any time that you need to work with Stel Kesh is going to be almost a little bit easier. You have, you have almost a full bar with them. If you, you know, schmooze with them this session, or if you did another mission with them, your relationship with Stel Kesh would go up, and that's basically just like, having someone like Gucci on the inside vouching for you, in a sense. Stel- most people in Stel Kesh don't know who the fuck you are, but it turns out having one of the more powerful Houses in your corner can help you quite a bit.

AUSTIN: I'll also note that, the reason that Stel Nideo stuff went down, just to like, put it on, on, you know, on the recording; damage to important infrastructure, civilian deaths, squad sustained- one of their squad sustained casualties, their target was high profile or well connected, and you hit them in a region that they control. So a bunch of reasons for them to be pissed. So it, so it goes. What else...

AUSTIN: Also, your Stel Orion trust dropped, because again, of the, the, the violence in the streets, the fact that civilians were harmed badly, and, the uh, the, just general causing them shit. It's still at one, so it didn't actually drop down an entire, like, relationship tier, but you're right on the edge, you're right on the edge of being back to neutral with them. The thing that I need y'all to do, before we continue, is to decide if you want to do any upkeep on your stuff and refresh your quirks.

ALI: Please.

AUSTIN: Also payment. Payment is the other thing. I rolled for payment, we talked about this in chat already, or if you look at the chat I rolled a bunch of stuff, don't worry about most of that, most of that's other faction shit, don't worry. But at the very top of all of those rolls, I rolled five supply, plus a bonus personel, plus another one with Kesh from working with someone from Kesh. That's why that happened. And so that's, that's, if you look at your sheet, I think it's six, six kind of floating supply points, or five floating supply points, and a personel. But yeah. You could spend that, immediately, to do some quirk, some quirk upkeeps, if that's a thing you'd like to do.

ALI: I would like to.

AUSTIN: What is your, what are you current quirks at, right now?

ALI: Three of my four quirks are spent.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Hidden compartments, fast acceleration, and compatible limbs.

AUSTIN: Okay. Then-

ALI: My torso is doing okay.

AUSTIN: Good job to the torso. Uh, yeah, then you can spend, the way upkeep works is you spend one material, and then you get to roll, uh... What are you rolling here? You roll, duh duh duh duh duhh. Oh, you spend one material and then roll that many dice. So you can roll one material per die here. It's one, if you just want to roll that die and see how many roll there.

ALI: Oh, right right, okay. Yeah. 1d6... Oh, and that's a one.

AUSTIN: That's a one. Uh, you could, at this point, without declaring another action, and spending one of your downtime actions, you could spend one more material, per quirk, to clear those. I don't know how you want to balance that out, it's up to y'all as a group, obviously. We could also roll the rest of people's upkeeps, just to see generally where we are, and how much material you feel like you need, do you know what I mean?

JANINE: I feel like Ali probably needs a quirk refreshed the most, right? I have, I have to-

AUSTIN: I mean that's what I'm saying, is where y'all at.

JANINE: Yeah, I have two expended, and I would like to, clean up one, but like...

AUSTIN: Do you want to just do your upkeep rolls now, and then we'll see where everyone is at, and then decide how you wanna...? Because Valence doesn't need one at all. Valence is completely chill, right.

DRE: Yeah, I don't need one.

JANINE: Alright.

AUSTIN: Valence needs other help.

DRE: I don't know if I'm chill, yeah.

ALI: We can see where it falls, because I think I'm also probably in the best position to fix it anyway.

AUSTIN: Thisbe, if you're gonna take this action I would say roll now, and then you could, you could have a better idea about how many total quirks are, up in the air, you know?

JANINE: Wow, okay.

AUSTIN: Oh my god. Also a one.

JANINE: Sick.

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AUSTIN: Very sick. Okay, so that drops down to one right now, and then, and then Broun you're at two. Do you want to spend bonus ones to try to clear those off, or do you want to use a downtime action when we get to downtime actions?

ALI: I'm just going to spend the two now, because we have a bunch of floating points, and I'll just find more of it if we need it. [Laughs]

AUSTIN: If you need to, uh huh. Alright, you are down to five floating supply points, two personnel. Thisbe, how are you feeling? You just going to stick to the one, or are you also going to spend...?

JANINE: You know, I think if the Quirk I'd expended was "guttled cockpit" I'd leave it, but "scary weapon" is so useful.

AUSTIN: Okay. [Dre laughs]

JANINE: That I think I would rather-

AUSTIN: So you're going to spend it?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. So you are down to four floating supply, and two personnel.

JANINE: I use scary weapon every fucking time.

AUSTIN: You do, you do use scary weapon every fucking time, it's true. Alright. So those are your upkeep actions. Now, it is time for, my favourite part, listing the ingredients. Entanglements. [Dre laughing] You, you're going to roll on table B of entanglements, and you will be rolling 2d6. That is three from having targeted a tier three, squad, which is Partizan Palace, or the Emphyreans Plume, whichever you decide is, was your target, they're both tier three, and then minus one from the plus one that you have with, with Orion. So 2d6, and you're going to take higher. You also have Slippery, you also have Slippery, which is roll twice and keep the one you want, which is already pretty powerful.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you want to just roll twice and keep the one you want?

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: Instead of continuing to start- okay, so give me 2d6 twice. Alright, so that's a three. And give me one more. That's a five. Alright, so the three, on B, is Lowest Bidder, which is "turns out your squad's gear was manufactured by the lowest bidder. All vehicles immediately

suffer the level two damage “busted”, and the level one damage “low on ammo”, each of which can be resisted separately, or each pilot can pay one material to get the good stuff through back channels”- I think we’ve seen this one before and it sucks. It’s expensive.

AUSTIN: Or, Debriefing; “One of your squad is questioned by your superiors. One of the pilots or cohort is taken in to be grilled. Make a Fortune roll to see how well they resist the pressure. One to three is a level two harm, to be resisted by the pilots as normal. Four to five is minus two trust. Or, bribe the grunts grabbing the person with one personnel.” I, I lean that way-

JANINE: That’s very interesting.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I lean that way, but it is up to you if you’d rather, either have some of your gear break down, or have the debriefing. I have answers for either of these things, to be honest.

JANINE: Considering what’s just happened-

DRE: It seems like debrief-

JANINE: No go ahead.

DRE: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah. Given the events of- I could easily imagine the Scrivener’s Guild basically sending some fucking accountant cops your way. Are you leaning that way?

ALI: I think so, that sounds fun.

DRE: Yeah, that sounds good to me.

AUSTIN: Okay. Who would they pick up from your group? I’m guessing Broun, you’re the person who’s like the most, like... Valence is like what we traditionally think of as the face, in the sense of talking to people and getting answers. But in terms of like, being a citizen of this empire, they would probably go to you, because of being an Apostolisian, being a person who was like, born here, not being what they would call “adrift”. Like, all the stuff that is like, you know, that.

JANINE: I think you could make a solid case for anyone on the team.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I don’t think they would come to question- oh, I guess they would- what they would do with your is more than question you, right? They would be like, “we are going to download your footage,” or whatever.

JANINE: Yeah, exactly. Like that's, that's the thing, is everyone, everyone has an angle you can approach them at depending on what information you're after.

AUSTIN: I was, I was picturing them as not being as bad as they actually are, and, you're right, they would easily detain the person who is not one of, is not a citizen, or the person that they don't think is a person, right?

JANINE: The thing you described is like, way harsher than what I was... Like, you know, for me, a lot of it is like, Thisbe is not great at deception.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: And things like that, but, you know. I think it depends solidly on like, what is the information they want, or would want, and that would probably determine who that they, who they'd go after.

AUSTIN: I think that they basically want to know, if you're part of a seditious movement, right? And whether or not they- whether or not it reflects, what they see as a liability. If you're now working to... Here's a question. That mission did not go through any official Scrivener's channels, right? So I imagine- or I guess that's true, I'm guessing that's true? You just like- as far as I remember it, Gucci was just like "hey ,do you want to do this mission for me?"

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: That's true.

AUSTIN: There was no conversation that was like, "we'll put it all through like the official channels, and you'll sign off, blah blah blah."

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So, I think there's a bunch of ways that we could do it. One is, "Hey, are you running operations without our approval?" Like, in a sort of, like, intense regulation way. The other is, are they more concerned with the particulars of that mission? Potentially getting into, "Are you organizing some kind of resistance? Are you doing something seditious? Are you doing something treasonous?" And with the Scriveners' Guild, I lean almost toward the former that could stumble into the latter. It's -- they're not like secret police, you know what I mean? [Laughs] They are the IRS, who also sends mercenaries around the world. [aside] Which the IRS obviously does, *indirectly*, in a sense, but they -- I feel like they would almost just want to follow the paperwork, and be like, "Listen. You can't keep doing missions that don't come through us. That's the thing we do together," and maybe along the way they could stumble into knowing more based on how these rolls go.

JANINE: My argument for Thisbe is just that I don't think it has to be any one thing in particular. If we decide, like, well, the angle they're most interested in is, "Why'd you punch that statue in the face?"

[LAUGHTER]

JANINE: You know. I'm just leaving the door open to -- Like, my full opinion is that the Thisbe interrogation is like the uncomfortable comedy interrogation, probably, which is, I don't think what we want right now.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's like -- It's that, or it goes down a route that is just not what we want in general.

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: The harder version of it is really tough, for reasons around how Thisbe sees the world and who she is as a person. Yeah. So...

Valence is interesting because of definitely being the person who's not from here. And -- all sorts of --

JANINE [cross]: Also being in a weird place right now.

AUSTIN [cross]: Being in a weird place right now --

DRE [cross]: And also being really fucked up. [laughs]

JANINE [cross]: Uh huh!

AUSTIN: Being really fucked up, and being in a mask. But then the question is, like, "How do they get you?" An element here that we haven't raised is that you do have a hidden forward operating base, and so it's like, if you were like, "No, I'm staying in," the cops aren't going to find you in your secret base, you know? You could turn yourself in or something. They could request a conversation and you could go in for the conversation. But I wouldn't be like, "And then they broke in and grabbed you." [laughs] That would feel like betraying your shit.

ALI: Yeah. [laughs] There's a version of this that's like... [slowly and deliberately] Broun comes back from the mission... lets everybody lay low... heads down to the office... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Cause they're thinking, like... "Here's to the next job!" and then it's like, "Can you... Can we talk to you up in the other vaults you don't know about?"

AUSTIN: God, what does a Scriveners' Guild interrogation chamber even look like?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I feel like it's probably -- it's probably a situation where there's, like, a lot of -- The thing that they're trying to hang over you as you have a conversation is, like, information that they have. So it's just, like, a lot of printed out sheets and maps that have your travel markings, your like... "We know you went to -- We have like the Isle of Logos circled, we have Orzen circled, we have..." You know, here are copies of the plane tickets that you bought, here's a photo of you getting off a train. In a pretty simple room... [changing his mind] Or, *or!* We've talked about them having like a private club vibe with plush leather carpets and nice armchairs and stuff, and it could very easily just be one of those, a room like that, *but the room is a little too small...* [laughs]

ALI: Yeah, I was actually thinking like... Have you ever been in a safety deposit box, if you have one or know someone who has one?

[laughter]

JANINE [cross]: Been inside of one?

AUSTIN [cross]: OK, like a -- [laughs] I've never been *in* a safety deposit box, but yes.

ALI [cross]: Nonono, but there's, like, they have these little rooms that you can go into, like, look at your box or...

AUSTIN: Yeah. You, like, get the box and then you take the box into a different room...

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...where there's like an empty table, maybe there's a chair, you know... yeah. Totally. I know what you mean. Yes.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I like that; can we combine those two things? Can it be, like, you step into a room that is the size of a big closet? [laughs] But it has a really nice carpet. It has, like, a grandfather clock that's ticking incredibly loudly because of the small space. And the information is out on a beautiful, polished, dark wood table that has these kind of big armchairs across from each other there... or not even across, but like, both looking in at the table, next to each other. You're being interrogated by someone who's barely making eye contact with you. I like it.

Uh, Dre and Janine, are you good with Broun being the one here who gets this interrogation?

[DRE and JANINE make affirmative noises]

AUSTIN: All right. Um, I think that this is -- the person who's interrogating you is... What are the titles like in the Scriveners' Guild? [pensive] Broker... [decisive] This is Broker Treequote. Treequote like "tree" and then "quote." Broker is a title, not this person's first name.

Um, let's do the Fortune roll, see how that goes, and then have that inform what we do. I think this is probably a Fortune roll equal to your Resolve... Uh oh! [chuckles]

[nervous laughter from ALI]

AUSTIN: Your *zero* Resolve.

ALI: [chagrined] Oh, yeah, that's right!

AUSTIN: Remember?

ALI: It's so funny because I... [continued nervous giggling] I have the points to upgrade something in Resolve.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And I was like -- 'cause I'm being such a weird math nerd about developing this character through upgrading them...

AUSTIN: [amused] Mm-hm?

ALI: So I was like, "I'm gonna do this downtime and then figure out" [suppressed laughter] "what I'm gonna put these points into." Um... and for now...

AUSTIN [cross]: We're at the point -- I feel like you had more points when we started today. Did you already spread them out?

ALI: Right, I took -- I took some of my XP and I scooted it into Bombard, and the rest of it ...

AUSTIN [cross]: I see. Gotcha, gotcha, gotcha.

ALI [cross]: ...I still have five dots to scoot into Resolve. Once I... yeah.

AUSTIN: Once this mission ends.

ALI: Yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Er, this downtime.

ALI: I mean, I *could* do it right now...

AUSTIN: [laughing] You could! You could. It would give you a *die* to resist this with, instead of *none*!

[Both laugh]

ALI: Um... I, yeah, I'm leaning Command right now, but, like... who is Broun?

AUSTIN [cross]: Who *is* Broun?

ALI: I should know that, but I don't know! [laughing]

AUSTIN: It happens! Listen...

ALI: Um. Yeah. So...

AUSTIN: I'm happy to have you roll zero dice on this. That's fine. But, you know, maybe this is the reason you learn a little -- you're like "I gotta work on my Consort. I gotta learn to just chat with people."

ALI: Yeah, I'm gonna -- [suppressed laughter] Yeah, I did this on purpose, so I'm gonna -- I'm sorry, everybody.

AUSTIN: No, I love it. Thank you. Thank you for being this player. Um, give me 2d6, and take lowest.

[ALI sighs]

[typing noises]

AUSTIN: [pleasantly surprised] Hey!

ALI: My lowest is a 5.

AUSTIN: You know -- And your highest is a 6, that's not bad, all said. All right, so on a debriefing, when you get 4 or 5, you just lose 2 Trust. You don't take any Harm, which is good.

[ALI snorts]

AUSTIN: So you're gonna lose 2 Trust. Unfortunately, I do think that that 2 Trust... will...

ALI: [realizing] Oh, no.

AUSTIN: ...knock you down to negative -- er, down to zero -- with Orion. Which is very fun, for me. [distracted humming] All right, so, Broker Treequote, who I imagine is like a... sort of like... I imagine him in the sort of model of a British secret agent that is not the James Bond model but is the John Le Carre model, the, like, Tinker Tailor... middle aged, receding hairline, you know,

what are the... what is the... Why am I blanking on this? Why am I blanking on these glasses that I've been wearing for the last two weeks in Animal Crossing? Like, horn-rimmed glasses. Um, and a brown suit with a yellow tie. Very severe but not cruel. And he is like...

(as Broker Treequote) Very good of you to join us today, Calmera. [AUSTIN finds Treequote's voice -- decisive and clipped] So. Orzen. Would you like to tell me about your activities there? Because our official records indicate no contract that would have brought you or the... ah, Society? to the box canyon of Orzen. []

ALI (as Broun): [nonchalantly] Oh, um, yeah. I, uh, we had contracted a client of mine from before our arrangement. I think that I gave you my employment history when I signed up, right?

AUSTIN (as Treequote): I see, I see. Who was this client of yours that you say you were working with?

ALI: [laughs] Wait. Um. If I say Gucci...

AUSTIN: Gucci is her real name. I mean --

ALI [cross]: Gucci is her real name. I need to use --

AUSTIN [cross]: That's her public name. That's her government name. If you said --

ALI: I need to use her *secret* identity.

AUSTIN: Well, her secret identity is the leader of a terrorist group.

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: That's the one you probably -- this is the dilemma, here!

[ALI cackles]

ALI: No, that's why I would know her as Gucci. Because we're both --

AUSTIN: I'm saying if you tell them you're working with terrorists, that would explain --

ALI: Nonono. Yeahyeahyeah. What I'm trying to say is that...

AUSTIN: That you were doing work for your client in Kesh named Gucci Garantine. Yes. Right.

ALI: Yes. I'm thinking out loud and saying that if Broun knows Gucci's real identity, then the work is the shadow and not -- you know what I mean? They can talk publicly about the work but not the specifics of it...

AUSTIN: Right, right, yes.

ALI: Because that's the part that's -- OK.

AUSTIN: Yes, totally. Rightrightright.

ALI: Perfect.

(as Broun) Gucci Garantine. Of House... Brightstar?

AUSTIN (as Treequote): Attache Brightline, yes, of course, of course. We've done some minor work with her before. Nothing as daring as this! Invading a Nideo town famous for its theater -- [dryly] which I understand you ruined -- and its statuary -- which also we received some damage estimates for. Now, I need you to assure that this was not taken under the table. I understand, times are hard... war, crisis, et cetera... but if you begin to act outside of the purview of the contract you've made with the Scriveners' Guild, we will simply cut you off, and without our protection... hm.

ALI (as Broun): Right, I think I might have misunderstood. I remember reading in my contract that, under the first six months of our arrangement, there would be a sort of overlap, where I would be able to take my previous jobs' missions to ... [laughs nervously] um, to continue that work until that time was up.

AUSTIN (as Treequote): [even more dryly] Your previous job, yes. Well, let me see your employment history here. It says you had been doing *maintenance* work for Gucci Garantine. That adds up. That is *different* than assault maneuvers, Kalmera Broun.

ALI (as Broun): Sure, sure. Uh...

AUSTIN (as Treequote): No, no, I understand the... confusion, let's call it... but you must see the clear difference. It's as if you and I had a deal to buy, let's say, milk, and you, as part of that agreement, agreed to buy milk from me. But I said to you, "You know what, it's fine. You can continue to buy water from other people." But instead you bought oat milk. And goat milk.

ALI (as Broun): [ruefully] Sure. Sure. Right.

AUSTIN (as Treequote): And almond milk. [irritated] But, certainly, the milk contract is with me!

ALI (as Broun): I'm sorry. I thought that I had a timeline to, um, still keep in contact with my friend who... owns some cows? I miss her, so...

AUSTIN (as Treequote): [cutting them off] There's nothing wrong with socialization. There's nothing wrong with keeping in contact. [Sardonic] And in fact, if you would like to

buy milk from your friend, you only need to have her fill out a milk contract. *With the Scriveners' Guild.*

ALI (as Broun): Right. Yes. I'm sor -- We've been doing this very recently, and there's a lot of, um, rules?

AUSTIN (as Treequote): [sharply] So what did you recover from Orzen?

AUSTIN: And he takes on a different posture.

ALI: Um.

AUSTIN (as Treequote): Because there is the matter of the money, but there is also, as you know, the matter of information and materiel. And if you recovered either, each must pass through the Scriveners' Guild's hands before final payment is issued.

ALI: [sucks teeth, then says under her breath] Lies.

AUSTIN: [laughs, tickled] They say, out loud!

ALI: Yeah, no, um, that's Ali. Um... what am I trying to do here? I think that there's... ugh. I think there's a version of this where Broun can be like, "Well, I was outside. I was hired security. We had interference that we didn't expect. It was more violent than I expected," but trying to be the one that, you know, "I didn't get any information. I was inside my mech the whole time.

AUSTIN: Which is true! All right, I think we can zoom out there a little bit. He continues to grill you on this and tries to get more detail. And one of the things that becomes increasingly clear, and I think maybe the thing he leaves you on, is, he says...

(as Treequote) I trust you with this, Broun, because...

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...it's not trust at all. Within the day's end, you will learn it. Our relationship with Stel Nideo, our nearest neighbor, is incredibly important to us. They enter the war tonight. And they are a *big* spender. If you're going to act against one of our biggest clients again, without approval, you will be cut off from the Guild immediately, and there will be repercussions. Is that clear?

ALI (as Broun): Very. And I will make sure that Thisbe and Valence are similarly --

AUSTIN (as Treequote): [cutting them off] Whatever you do with your employees, I -- [scoffs]

AUSTIN: Just... hand waves.

ALI (as Broun): Understood.

AUSTIN: Um, and it turns out he's right. That night, or maybe the next morning, by the time the news hits regular feeds, it becomes clear that -- and, you know, this is put in everyone's Partizan Palace, "Emergency update!" Stel Nideo has breached Stel Apostolos's ocean defenses and has taken the city of Lion's Rest, their capital city, in a daring raid and an attempt to liberate the noble prophet, Gur Sevraq. They have *not* allied themselves with Kesh, and have in fact had to fight their way through some Kesh forces in order to do it. The kind of... grossest phrasing in Stel Orion media conversations or public conversations is that "the race is on," the race to see who can rescue Gur Sevraq from Apostolos, between Stel Kesh and Stel Nideo. And it's probably worth saying, just as a reminder [chuckles], that Gur Sevraq is not anywhere near Apostolos. So... just one of those good, "we fight on that lie" wars happening here.

AUSTIN: Um, all right, that is Entanglement. I've reduced your Trust with Stel Orion. You are now Tier 0 -- or not Tier 0, Trust 0 with Stel Orion. [quietly] And that is Entanglement.

ALI: Can we -- can we zoom out a little bit on that last bit and...

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: ...talk about how the other player characters fit into it?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

ALI: 'Cause I get the situation but not...

AUSTIN: The particulars.

ALI: The actual specifics. [aside] And if I don't get it, then...! [laughs, implying "the audience probably doesn't either"]

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. So, back in the -- Two Rapid Evening missions ago. Actually, we can go back to the very first downtime for you guys. Y'all -- Gur Sevraq was like, "Hey, I would love to have an escort through the desert." Do you remember that, Valence?

ALI: Mm-hm.

DRE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: And then y'all were like, "No, we're gonna do this other thing with Sable instead, but we'll sell you some mechs." Those mechs helped defend Gur Sevraq from an attempted kidnapping, along with the members of the Rapid Evening, who were hired to go protect Gur Sevraq from the kidnapping, slash to kidnap Gur Sevraq...

[ALI giggles]

AUSTIN: ...So they kidnapped Gur Sevraq... sort of. They did rescue -- they did rescue them from some Stel Orion people trying to kidnap him [laughs] and also some Stel Nideo people trying to kidnap them... it was a mess. Uh, Rapid Evening extracts Gur Sevraq, but instead of turning him over to Kesh proper, to this group in Kesh called the Curtain (which is like a secret society, basically, a very powerful secret society), they *keep* Gur Sevraq. And they tell that secret society, who includes Jack's character's mother (who is very powerful), that actually Apostolos kidnapped Gur Sevraq. And so, because of that, Stel Kesh basically had the justification for this new super-offensive against Apostolos, and now Nideo has decided to also go quote-unquote "rescue" Gur Sevraq.

But we know, the audience, that Gur Sevraq isn't even there. That's all a lie. For some reason -- I guess I've already addressed this -- Apostolos is kind of so trigger happy that they're not even focused on trying to prove that they don't have this person. They've basically said, "We can't prove that anyway," plus "look at all these cool toys we have, we're gonna smash these fuckers to bits," and now they're fighting a war on two fronts. So that is the kind of arc of what's happened here. And I'll just say, like, I'll add a little more flavor for you, in terms of like what's happening at this big faction tier level, which is: The other thing that is now brewing -- and I don't know where the focus of the camera's gonna be in the next few episodes, my guess is it won't be here, but this is good flavor too -- is that this idea that Orion is gonna start shipping a ton of material and mercenaries and machines and everything else -- fuel -- to Nideo is being contested by Columnar, who is saying, "We have to stay out of this," and that "neither of us should go over certain trade limits that we agreed to with any of the Stels." And so we're looking like there's going to be a trade war-slash-some sort of blockade and blockade running between Columnar and Orion. So, like, there's almost -- almost everyone is about to be in the big fight, to some degree or another. And that is the kind of big picture.

Gur Sevraq, I'll note, is safe and secure. And I'm sure that might come up this episode, so it's probably worth just noting that, that he is available, if, for instance, Valence, you wanted to have a conversation or something like that. A psychic conversation, presumably.

All right. We are done with entanglements, and that means that we are now into downtime activities. Everyone has three, and you can always spend an additional Materiel or Personnel to take additional ones as necessary. Um, I guess there's also the matter of [sighs] we need to talk about upgrades real quick still. I know that y'all decided to do Scrapyard, which I think helps you with quirks, recovering from quirks -- er, having expended quirks. Uh, and Loyal Bar, which, I think gives you -- I'm pretty sure, I'm double-checking -- it gives you an extra die on gathering information on upcoming missions, basically, or current missions, because you have a bar that you can go talk to. And obviously I think the Scrapyard is just, like, a scrapyard. I don't know if it's like, underground at your base or off to the side of the lighthouse, I don't know exactly, but that I get. The Loyal Bar, though, I need details on. I need to know -- I *need to know* where it is, what it's called, what's going on just generally with this bar.

The thing I was gonna say is -- I can tell you... probably where that bar is. I suspect that that bar is in the Underbridge part of town, not the Brightsky part of town. The Underbridge part of town is the part that's like where the Oxblood Clan is. It's the part that is not... [searching for words] ... The working class area but also the area where the kind of business dealings of Orion don't like to go through. There's kind of, again, in Oxbridge, this gigantic bridge with an ox, like, holding it up, statues holding it up, that goes across the land and not across the water. Like, if you zoom in on the map, Oxbridge is between this big lake and then the sea, and the bridge goes over the entire city. And so under the city is kind of the area where a lot of working class folks live, a lot of people who do the dirty work for the big corporations that are set up in the Brightsky region. There's Brightsky West and Brightsky East, the two regions outside of the shadow of the bridge, and then there's also just, like, some trade guilds there! And also some criminal enterprises there! And also, you know, there's also a lot of canals. It's a very canal-filled area. So it's like Venice underneath the Midgar Plate, let's just be honest.

JANINE: Do you remember Tommy's Bar from *Remember Me*?

AUSTIN: I don't, I'll be honest. I'm shocked you could -- that's a deep pull. Let me pull it up.

JANINE: I was originally thinking of the bar from *Freedom Wars*, but then I realized what I actually wanted was Tommy's Bar from *Remember Me*.

AUSTIN: [amused] From the PS Vita game, *Freedom Wars*, which was cool as shit.

[ALI laughs]

DRE: [quietly] Oh, wow.

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah!

AUSTIN: Let's find this bar. Do you have a video?

JANINE: Tommy's Bar is like a, um...

AUSTIN: Oh, is it like the outdoor one?

JANINE: Yeah, it's like an outdoor bar -- it has this sort of noodle restaurant kind of vibe, but also it's like... sort of halfway out in the open. It's got like a little bit of shelter to it, but it's also just like... you have to really fucking work to get there, because it is kind of in the undercity area where there's areas that are -- I don't remember if it's flooded, or...

AUSTIN: It is flooded, yeah.

JANINE: Yeah, yeah. So there are like -- literally, there are straight up canals, there are -- it's a very similar vibe.

AUSTIN: Fucked up that there's not an easy way for me to find a good section of this game where that takes place right at that bar, because not enough people played this game.

JANINE: It should be right at the beginning, because that's like the first shit you do.

AUSTIN: [resigned groan]

JANINE: I think I found... well... I found it, I found it. What's it called? It's called the Leaking Brain, that's what it is. Not Tommy's Bar.

AUSTIN: Of course. [mildly sarcastic] Those are different. I mean, it does say Tommy's Bar a number of times in here, it's not like it doesn't say it at all.

JANINE: Yeah. But the sign says Leaking Brain.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah. Here we go.

JANINE: And the objective is "Go to the Leaking Brain," so... [laughs] It doesn't look as -- it looked more "noodle stand" in my mind.

AUSTIN [cross]: This shop that I have here -- I like this. The thing I like about this -- two things -- One: a really good blend of just, like, girders and tarps and sheets and wires criss-crossing. It's kind of under a bunch of material, so it would be protected from the rain, obviously, but it also is just kind of, like you said, open ended or thrown together in a way that is -- that is very Orion. Stel Orion's aesthetics are very much showing the -- not only showing the material that's being used to make something, but often going out of your way to show off the engine, you know? It's like the hot rod that has the engine popping out of the hood, or has, like, a glass top hood so that you can see all the engine work inside of it. It leans more like dieselpunk than steampunk, so the idea of exposed girders and exposed wiring and exposed cabling all kind of covering up a spot is really good. And the other thing about this photo, this screenshot that you sent, is like: it's so clear that you can just see the nice part of town in the distance. So I can imagine this bar being similar to that. Does anyone have a good bar name?

ALI: [mock-portentous] The Leaking Brain.

AUSTIN: Ah -- hmm.

JANINE: Write it down.

AUSTIN: [sarcastic] OK.

ALI: [laughing] Oh, no!

JANINE: "Bar Name Generator."

AUSTIN: Strange Barren Roadhouse. Drunken Outlaw Saloon.

JANINE: Expensive Palm. Bright Jaguar.

AUSTIN: The Runaway Sidecar -- We can't be The Expensive Palm.

JANINE: Gentle Sugar Bar.

DRE: The Troll Pub. 'Cause we're under a bridge.

AUSTIN: Wow.

ALI: Ooh!

JANINE: What are those garages that don't have walls called?

AUSTIN: Uh, a driveway.

[DRE and ALI laugh]

JANINE: They have a roof, though.

ALI: A pit stop?

AUSTIN: A car port?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [naming another bar] The Home Depot.

JANINE: Ride... Fish.

AUSTIN: Don't like it. [laughs]

DRE: Fish Food.

ALI: I would not go there.

JANINE: Deep Dish Steakhouse. [outraged amusement] That's not good!

[Howls of laughter from DRE]

AUSTIN: Welp. Damn, I guess we're going to the Deep Dish Steakhouse!

JANINE [cross]: You can't *do* --

AUSTIN: [emphatically] I guess we're going to the Deep Dish Steakhouse! Write it down!

[laughter, sputtering from everyone]

AUSTIN: Writing it down! Adding it to the --

ALI: [struggling] Deep Dish Steak --

AUSTIN: "How do you like your steak?" "*Deep dish.*"

ALI: Oh my god, is that -- OK, wait.

AUSTIN: I'm writing it down!

ALI: Everyone is obsessed with that idea of like -- I talked about this in the bird Live at the Table where it was like, hot plates that you cook meat on. What if you did that but it was, like, a cake pan, and you put steak in the middle of it --

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Steak in there.

DRE: Mm-hm.

ALI: And then you put like potatoes on the side, and then some greens on the other side, and then you, like, [trying not to laugh] put them all in a big pizza oven, and then it comes out really good... [laughter] I want a deep dish steak...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Deep dish steakhouse.

[ALI struggling]

JANINE: You can do that on a pan. You don't have to do that in a cake pan. You can just do that in a pan.

AUSTIN: [mock-sagely] Well, it's *deep dish*, Janine. It's deep dish.

ALI: It's deep dish.

JANINE: So we're saying -- we're saying we're not interested in Cafe Feedbag, then.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Absolutely not!

DRE: Um... I just got "Mystic Moose Hideout..."

JANINE: I'm just saying, what if you put a steak and some potatoes in a feedbag, and then put it on a pizza?

[general laughter]

AUSTIN: Now we're talking.

ALI: I do kind of love just... Deep Dish. As a name for a bar.

AUSTIN: I -- yeah, I've written down Deep Dish -- This is not on -- I am -- GM fiat, Deep Dish Steakhouse. You can call it "The Deep Dish," maybe that's what people call it, maybe it was a steakhouse at one point but it's mostly a bar now, you know what I mean? Like, we've talked about your base being kind of on the line between Underbridge and Brightsky West, I imagine this bar is maybe similar? Maybe it's like into Underbridge, but it's close to the border with Brightsky West, to the degree that, like -- Someone had aspirations once. You know, a century ago, fifty years ago, someone was, like, "This is gonna be it. This is gonna be the thing. Our steaks -- our deep dish steaks are gonna be so good that people are gonna come into Underbridge for it." And that didn't happen, but what did happen is, it became kind of a good neighborhood bar.

45:00

That also probably still does -- OK, what if instead of doing *big* deep dish steaks, they do, like, deep dish steak *pies* now. Do you know what I mean? Like, you can get a beer and a steak pie for a real reasonable price. And a shot. [Laughs] Can we go to the Deep Dish Steakhouse, please?

ALI: Please. Please.

AUSTIN: I'll put "Steakhouse" in parentheses.

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: It's still the best thing that this generator has given me.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah.

JANINE: 'Cause the alternatives are like, "Jerseyville," or "Cafe Doodlebug Pizza." [trails off into laughter]

AUSTIN: [perky announcer voice] Cafe Doodlebug Pizza! Yum. Um. All right, well...

JANINE: That's the best we could do.

AUSTIN: Love it. All right. Downtime moves.

[ALI and JANINE laugh]

AUSTIN: Who's got 'em?

JANINE: I gotta get defragged.

AUSTIN: You *gotta* get defragged.

JANINE [cross]: I gotta get --

ALI [cross]: Can we go over --

JANINE: No, you go ahead.

ALI: Sorry. I just wanted to go over beliefs and stuff?

AUSTIN: [emphatically] Yes! That's a good idea. Thank you for doing my job.

ALI: [giggling] Sorry.

AUSTIN: No, I mean it. That was not a drag. Uh, Broun, since you brought it up, let's begin with you. What are your beliefs? What is your drive? Where are you at?

ALI: Sure. The reason I brought it up is 'cause I rewrote all of them from the beginning. Like, 'cause we had that conversation about how the ones that I wrote were kind of bad, and I just needed to get them all out, like, clean sheet. I was just like, I need to fix this.

AUSTIN: I get you. Yeahyeahyeah.

ALI: So, I'm playing Kalmera Broun. My callsign is Markup, my belief is to... no, my drive is to own a spaceship. [Laughs] My connection with Thisbe, uh, the first one is "Thisbe is capable of more, and if I can get her to trust me I can use that." And then the second one is, "Thisbe wants offworld too, and I want to know what she'd spend to do it." And then my revised Valence one is, "Valence has good connections, and hopefully if I impress them, they'll lead me to people with deep pockets." So, the vibes are all the same there, they're just better. [Laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I got you. You've kind of, like, tightened them up a little bit, made them a little... not even, like, "actionable," but -- which is the thing here -- but very much about what Broun believes about them, for sure.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Valence. Talk to me about your drive and your connections.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Also, Broun, you're at one tick of your drive clock -- of your *first* drive clock.

ALI: [laughing, chagrined] I knooooow...

AUSTIN: You have a long term project that's coming up, though. That'll help, right?

ALI: Yeah, I ... it's gonna be a weird downtime one way or another... what we're doing with it...

AUSTIN: We'll see how it goes.

DRE: Um, my drive is "Convince a Stel to become tireless defenders of the Nobel."

AUSTIN: OK.

DRE: My connections are -- er, my beliefs -- "Broun is quite dependable and competent. I hope to see them as trustworthy." I have two beliefs for Thisbe. "I'm not sure why Thisbe resists her potential, but I want to open her eyes," and "Thisbe is simple and straightforward."

AUSTIN: Ah, Thisbe.

JANINE: Um... So I'm playing Thisbe, my callsign is Diesel, my drive is to find the farmers again and be of use to them. I have two ticks in my first drive clock. My connections with Valence: "Valence seeks my obsolescence" and "Valence's priorities are beyond my understanding." And my connection with Broun is "Broun will sell or trade me in the moment my usefulness is expended."

AUSTIN: So. Downtime actions. You need to get defragged. That is going to be a recovery action, I believe. A recovery action says -- a recover, rather -- [reading from book] "When you get treatment to heal your pilot's Harm, you use the Recover downtime action. To do this, you need to get medical care from a medic, veterinarian, autodoc, or someone else with a good amount of anatomical" -- in this case, robotic -- "knowledge. If none of the PCs can fill that need, you can have a contact" -- which you don't need. "Your healer rolls Engineer, and the patient marks segments on their healing clock." Based -- I'm gonna quickly check the alternate rules 'cause I'm gonna read from there. We're doing faster healing rules. You -- the second you do this, you're going to recover all level 1 Harm. So I think that's all you have currently, right? So as soon as this happens, you get to clear this. We don't need to talk about the clock filling or anything like that based on where your Harm is. Valence, we're gonna have to talk about clocks filling.

DRE: Mm-hm!

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: But, I'm guessing Broun, are you good to do that?

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: OK! I believe -- and I'm just gonna triple check -- that that is a Thisbe move, not a Broun move. Like a Broun -- um -- it's a Thisbe downtime action, not a Broun downtime action. The person rolling doesn't have to spend an action to do that.

ALI: OK, cool.

AUSTIN: So what's that look like? So that's what I actually care about is -- talk to me about what it looks like to heal Thisbe. Both of you.

JANINE: So part of it is that I think Thisbe -- I think Thisbe has, like, protocols in place to self-diagnose and stuff. I just think it's, like, very difficult for her to do that alone. Like, that's part of how I think of her time with the farmers, is, like, I don't think they would have been able to restore her completely if she didn't have something like that. But she's not great at, like, figuring out where to look. You know, she has a lot of stuff on a lot of disks, and maybe doesn't know, like, how to access that wisely?

AUSTIN: Mm.

JANINE: She doesn't have that particular kind of technical knowledge. So, I kind of imagine Broun's role in this being, like, "Well, OK. You probably have something like -- Can you go into cmd.exe and type backslash-whatever?"

[multiple people laughing]

JANINE: And I imagine it is like the fact that Broun has this knowledge. They have this, like, logical understanding of how these kinds of programs tend to work, that Thisbe, while she has the program and can run the program, doesn't have that knowledge, that same logical... you know?

ALI: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: I think that there's [laughs] -- there's also the version of this of like, Broun trying to Google, like, user manual shit for Thisbe models [laughs again].

JANINE: Uhhhh...

ALI: And being, like, "Oh, well, I can find the one for Thisbe mk. 2," or whatever...

JANINE: But there aren't though, remember? Like that's the whole thing with Thisbe, is, like, she was in the ground for a few hundred years.

ALI: Sure. Yeah. Um, sure.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm -- you get both of that -- both types of those characterizations, right? Which is like: Broun does that, realizes "Oh, shit, there's nothing." Like, the type of unit you are -- We don't *know* the type of unit you are. You look around, you can't find anything. I guess what you eventually find is just, the sort of like, you ever been to a Wikipedia article and it's clear no one cares about the thing you're looking at? You're like, "There's two lines of text here. This is a thing that was clearly very important to ancient Babylonian farmers, and *no one* knows anything about this rake." And that is the sort of vibe, is that you do the research, and the research comes up shy, and you're like, "Well, I guess I gotta fuckin -- base -- I guess I gotta kinda go in..." You know, like you said, I like the idea of finding something *similar* and being like, "OK, what is --" You don't know anything about *this* model. Is there any model, is there one model from this era that did manage to, like, make it through time? And you find that it's, like, instead of the labor unit it is the commerce unit or the combat unit and you're like, "Oh, OK. I have to flash the firmware three times. I get it." And then you go to do it and you're like, "Nope. I have to flash it four times. It's a different model, they must have built it differently," or something like that. But I do think that, like, you have to, we should make sure to show both sides of those things. This is what Broun's expertise looks like, but this is also the truth about Thisbe's model, which is, there just aren't any ones out there that we know, you know? So. Not great resourcing out there.

[JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: I would wonder, actually. Thisbe, is it -- er, not Thisbe, this is a Janine question, not a Thisbe question. Is this like a thing where Broun, digging around, would find, like, "Oh, there was this whole period where people in the Divine Principality were making robots that looked like other species, that weren't human or Apostolisian?" And it was like, "Oh, well, here is the slime person robot. Here is the -- what are other aliens? -- like, the Talonite, the bird person robot. Here is the, you know, all the different things." Or is Thisbe just, like, a particular -- is the model that Thisbe is kind of a solitary experiment, in terms of like the line of design that she's from?

JANINE: I feel like the mindset that leaps to Thisbe is not a mindset that stops at Thisbe. Right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: Like, at the point where you're building a hyper-advanced robot that looks like your fantasy stylized version of an Ashen, of a Hypha, et cetera, you've probably done this before. Probably with slightly less complicated, like, models, and things like that.

AUSTIN: Right. Totally.

JANINE: Slightly less, like -- slightly more straightforward designs. But also, I think this is probably, like -- this hasn't come up before, right? Like, it just -- I hadn't really thought of this before, but, like, Thisbe's provenance probably hasn't come up before. Because it's not, you know -- because she was dug out of the ground and then some, like, mercenary pirates took

control of her. And then Broun got her from them, and I doubt they had -- at no point in that process does anyone have any idea what they're doing. [Laughs] Right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally.

JANINE: So I, like -- I don't even know that they would have told Broun, or if they would have even known. They would have just been like, "This is a robot. We have it. Now you have it."

AUSTIN: "Weird deer robot, I guess."

JANINE: And I don't think Thisbe would volunteer -- I don't think Thisbe would have been like, "Hi. My name's Thisbe. I'm question-mark years old. Uh, I don't understand cars, 'cause they're different than me..."

AUSTIN: [laughs] Um, then yeah, I would say that specifically, maybe the thing that you find is from a similar line, there was a group of -- there are still in use robots that are designed after Talonites, which are like big walking bird people. For people who listened to our previous season, *Twilight Mirage*, Kitcha Kanna was a Talonite. And they are used for long-distance communication on worlds -- like this one -- that don't have, like, a standardized long-distance communication thing. They're like birds that literally -- they're like big bird robots that can fly, and are designed specifically to fly across, like, deserts and mountains and rocky regions or through, like, radioactive wastelands and places where there isn't oxygen, stuff like that, to deliver packages and messages and fend off anyone who would try to steal that message, that, like, a person in a, what do you call it? suit -- a hazmat or environment suit wouldn't be in as good of a way to defend themselves. So they're militarized communications drones, basically, that are also big robot bird people. And those are still in use on certain worlds. And those have a certain -- they've been upgraded a bunch of times. This is the iPhone 6 to iPhone 11 thing, where they're at, like, Talonite model 302, and you're like, "well, what's model 102 look like?" and that helps you. I like that a lot.

Valence!

DRE: Hey, hi.

AUSTIN: Is it time for you to recover also? Is that also your first move?

DRE: Yes.

AUSTIN: All right. So, you have level 2 Disconnected, level 1 Enraptured. Level 1 will heal when this Recover happens no matter what. Level 2 requires you to fill the healing clock, at which point it will drop down to level 1. To fill the healing clock, Broun is gonna roll the Recover -- uh, their Engineer skill to do the recovery. If they roll a 1, 2 or 3, the healing clock only goes up by 1 segment. If they roll a 4 or 5, it goes up by 2 segments. If they roll a 6, it goes up by 3 segments, and if they roll a crit, it goes up by 5 segments. Which is to say, unless they roll a crit, you're going to need to spend two actions trying to recover that Disconnected. I believe you

could also spend -- you *can* also spend one Personnel point for an extra die or to increase the result level by 1, and you can do that after the roll. So, let's see what the roll is, and then let's also just talk about what this is, and then we can go from there. Does that sound good?

DRE: Mm-hm!

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Broun, what is your Engineer?

ALI: My Engineer is a 2, I believe.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that looks right.

ALI: Let me just double check... Yeah. Perfect.

AUSTIN: All right. Do you wanna roll 2d6?

ALI: I would love to.

DRE: Roll for it!

AUSTIN: Yo. Holy *shit*.

ALI: That is uh... snake-eyes.

AUSTIN: No, that's the other one.

ALI: No, snake-eyes is two ones. [laughs]

[JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: [also laughing] Snake-eyes is two ones! This is the other one!

DRE: Boxcars, is that what they call it?

AUSTIN: Is that what it's called? Boxcars!

DRE: Boxcars is double of something, I don't know...

AUSTIN: Double sixes. Yeah. That's -- that's a crit, that's gonna heal Valence down to -- it's gonna clear the level 1 harm, and it's gonna drop Disconnected into a new level 1 harm. And then, 'cause you ticked the clock again, I'm gonna rule that actually clears it, because any ticking of a clock will... [pauses] sorry, I'm tryna... [decisively] You know what, I'm just gonna clear it, it's fine.

[DRE bursts out laughing]

AUSTIN: Uh, that was a joke just for me and you, Dre. I fucked around in the harm field and kept fucking it up. So, you're healed! This is an incredible roll. [gleefully] I cannot believe that over in the Rapid Evening... [fails to suppress laughter]

[JANINE joins the mirth]

1:00:00

AUSTIN: ...we have Exeter Leap rolling straight ones, rolling snake-eyes to heal, and over here we got Dr. Broun! God damn.

All right. So. This is -- Valence and Broun, you tell me what the fuck this looks like, this incredible healing roll.

[ALI snorts]

DRE: [softly] Oh, boy. Um, I think this happens pretty soon after we get back just because of how messed up Valence was.

ALI: Yeah, I think narratively it was like, Broun was gonna take a nap. [laughs] And let Valence relax a little bit, and then probably did it -- I feel like this was probably before the interrogation, even.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that makes sense.

DRE: I think while Broun is napping, Valence is just kinda waiting in their workshop.

ALI: OK, perfect. Um... [giggling] Broun gets up. Makes some coffee. Goes into their workshop.

(as Broun) Oh!

DRE (as Valence): Operator Broun.

ALI (as Broun): [sighs] Yeah, hi.

DRE (as Valence): [deadpan] No, see, it's a joke.

ALI (as Broun): [clearly uncomfortable] Mm. Mmhm.

AUSTIN: [gleeful] Ooh!

ALI (as Broun): How are you feeling?

DRE (as Valence): Uh. Not good.

ALI (as Broun): You wanna lay down and... try to talk me through this?

DRE (as Valence): Well... OK. So normally I could do this myself, um, but something is fucked up with my hand so I can't -- my hand can't -- like, my fine motor control is all messed up.

ALI (as Broun): [hesitantly] OK, um...

ALI: And I think Broun is like... opening up [laughs] like, a drawer, and looking through different sorts of gears and stuff.

(as Broun) Uh, what else is going on?

DRE (as Valence): I just need some -- some kinda patches along the kinda exoskeleton.

ALI (as Broun): O-kay.

ALI: [laughing] Broun opens up another drawer, making this mental list...

(as Broun): Yeah, lemme -- lemme take a look and see if I'll need anything else. So, your motor skills aren't going well. Do you -- [hesitantly] um, where should I start looking to fix that?

DRE (as Valence): OK, so I can kinda walk you through the first part.

DRE: Valence rolls up their sleeve. It's kinda -- it's a very, like, jerky, it's kind of like grabbing the arm of their robe and shoving it up.

ALI (as Broun): Do you -- ahem. OK.

DRE (as Valence): Broun, you're gonna have a lot of questions.

ALI (as Broun): [sighs] I've been having these questions, so it's fine. I'm, um -- I just wanna get you better. So let's just get into it.

DRE: I think the area where Valence has skin on their arm kind of, like, shimmers and turns into that teal-purple mist and just disappears, and there's a robot arm.

AUSTIN: What sort of robot arm? Is it, like, a smooth C3P0 robot arm? Is it, like, a very complicated Terminator robot arm with pistons and gears? Is it a -- like, what is it?

DRE: I think it is very complicated but sleek-looking. I'm trying to google "robot arms" right now and it's not really giving things for me.

AUSTIN: OK. No, I get it.

DRE: Like, the hands probably have the individual, like, platelets where all the knuckles and stuff are...

AUSTIN: Is it like... this? [quietly] Wrong chat. Boom. [normal volume] Is it like *this*, where it's like you have...

DRE: Oh, yeah! I like that.

AUSTIN: ...like, a big armor cap on your shoulder, and then revealed pistons and cabling, and still five... you know, four digits and a thumb. (Is a thumb a digit? I never know.) Et cetera. Is that the vibe?

DRE: Yeah. 100%.

ALI [cross]: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: All right. This is "[Robotic Arm](#)" by [Alexey Vasilyev](#). On Artstation. [spells artist's name] So that's like the vibe of the entire robot body that you have -- or is it just the arm?

DRE: No, that's kinda -- yeah. That's a good vibe for all of it. OK.

ALI: And the question that I had which is that it was like -- it's like a visual effect of, like, Broun is seeing the skin go away? On purpose, like a shield has been dropped.

DRE: Mmhm, yeah.

ALI: [laughs] I think they do that, like, weird impressed condescending whistle again.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: And they're just like:

(as Broun) Tell me if any of this stings.

And starts, like, slowly...

DRE (as Valence): Oh, hold on, hold on, hold on. There's an easier way to do this.

ALI (as Broun): [apprehensively] Oh!

DRE (as Valence): I need you to, um, just tap the edge of my fingers in the order I tell you.

ALI (as Broun): Sure.

DRE (as Valence): OK, um. Pinky.

ALI (as Broun): Uh huh.

DRE (as Valence): Index.

ALI (as Broun): Got it.

DRE (as Valence): Middle. Ri --

ALI (as Broun): This one? [laughs]

DRE (as Valence): [quietly amused] Yup, mm-hm. Ring.

ALI (as Broun): Got it.

DRE (as Valence): And thumb.

ALI (as Broun): Mm-hm.

DRE (as Valence): And pinky again.

ALI (as Broun): How's that feel?

DRE (as Valence): Uh, fine?

DRE: And then a little, like, door opens up and lets Broun see the internal components.

AUSTIN: I swore you were gonna give me a sixth finger. Which is totally possible!

[all laugh]

AUSTIN: I don't know how many fingers the Nobel robot body has.

DRE: [jokingly] Yeah, there's a sixth finger, and it's just flicking Broun off 'cause of the whistle!

JANINE: [laughing] Daaaamn...

AUSTIN: [laughing] Damn! Attitude! But it's actually just above the index finger, so it doesn't actually look like throwing anyone the bird, it's just, like, in between the thumb -- like, make an L with your thumb and then imagine another finger coming out between the two... and it's flicking you off!

[guffaws and snorts from the group]

ALI: Yeah. There you go. [deadpan] Very offended. Sure. Yeah. Um... Yeah, I think Broun blinks three times...

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI: [laughs] ...and then is like,

(as Broun) OK, well, tell me if *this* stings.

And is sort of carefully, like, disconnecting some of the wires, looking through some stuff, um... I think that they're like... it's weird. [Laughs] It's so weird, 'cause I don't imagine them being... I... they're curious about what's going on, right? But they've been coming at this from a sense of being like, "Well, fuck it, Valence is a weirdo anyway..."

[DRE laughs]

ALI: "...Just be in that corner and I'll figure it out," [laughs] and now, like... I think they're, like, smirking... you can tell, like... [laughs again] What am I trying to say? I think if you were, like, at a bus stop and you can tell if somebody next to you is, like, mentally making fun of your outfit or something. [snort-laughs] I just don't know how to describe this! But there's that, like, [scoffing noise] when they open, they see one of your wires and, like, scoff at it, like "God... Jesus..."

JANINE: So rude!

ALI: [laughing] I knooow!

AUSTIN: God...

ALI: Um...

JANINE: [mock-contemptuously] Couldn't even invest in the wireless XL arm cable? God.

[all laugh]

ALI: Yeah. I... do they talk?

DRE: I mean, probably. You know, there's probably some Valence saying,

(as Valence) Oh, wait, no, don't touch that. That goes to this. What you're looking for is that way.

AUSTIN: [delicately] Does the camera get a better understanding of -- of Valence's anatomy here? Genuine anatomy. Like, does it become clear to the viewer what Valence is through this process?

DRE: Not yet, but I think the next part does.

AUSTIN: Oh, OK.

ALI: [giggling] Sure.

DRE: 'Cause I think Valence -- at some point Broun does -- reconnects a cable or, like, clears off a piece of corrosion or something, and Valence goes,

(as Valence) Oh, OK! Yup, that got it.

And does, you know, like, the hand flex thing.

ALI (as Broun): Cool. Looking good.

DRE (as Valence): OK, I need one more thing from you.

ALI (as Broun): I'm right here. What's up?

[AUSTIN laughs]

DRE (as Valence): You know what, I'm just gonna do it, and then you can ask me all the questions you want.

ALI (as Broun): [skeptical but intrigued] I have not been asking questions. Let's go.

DRE: OK. Valence takes off their mask... and it's just...

ALI [cross]: Whoo! OK. We're doing it.

DRE: It is just a -- Yeah! We're doing it. Inside, where Valence's face and head should be, it's just kind of a -- it is a skull-like shape, but there's nothing there. It's just blank.

AUSTIN: Wait. OK. Wait. How do you see the shape?

DRE: No, but I mean -- Like, there's not facial features.

ALI [cross]: Oh, so it's like a --

JANINE [cross]: Is it like when you pop a faceplate off an anime figurine?

DRE: [deeply skeptical] Sssssure.

[AUSTIN hoots; JANINE blows a raspberry; various noises of amusement]

DRE: I'm thinking, like... It's Mr Potato Head before you put the nose or the eyes or mouth on.

AUSTIN [cross]: I gotcha.

ALI [cross]: Oh, oh, oh, OK.

DRE: But if that was like a person head instead.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

DRE: And I think similarly, there's, like, the little -- no, there's not mist or anything, I think just a -- the face of this skull becomes translucent and you can see just a hovering orb of that, like, purple-teal gas. And the transparent screen on the front of the face swings open, and Valence floats out of their body.

AUSTIN: Hell yeah. Fuckin' ball of gas.

ALI: Ummmmmmmm... [laughs] [incomprehensible noises] On seeing the mask open, and the dust -- I feel like after the skin experience, seeing the gas come out of the face is like, trying to be like, "Oh, what did I..." [laughs]

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI (as Broun): You OK?

DRE: At this point, Valence is only able to speak telepathically, and says,

(as Valence) No, no, I'm fine. You didn't do anything.

ALI: [laughs] I think Broun's like, looking around the room 'cause, like, when you hear a voice in your head that you were hearing in your ears a second ago, it's like, where's that sound coming from?

DRE (as Valence): [reassuring] Oh. No, it's Valence. I don't have -- I'm not connected to my speakers anymore, so...

[AUSTIN laughing in the background]

ALI (as Broun): Your sp... your speakers.

DRE (as Valence): Yeah.

ALI (as Broun): Your speaker -- right, your speakers! That you speak to me with. Right. Your speakers. [babbling] Um, what's the next step here?

DRE (as Valence): Um, there's actually -- there is a, uh -- there's a hole in the back of my head. Well --

ALI (as Broun): This head? This one?

DRE (as Valence): Yeah, that head, yeah.

[ALI and DRE both giggle]

ALI (as Broun): Yeah, got it. Um.

ALI: Broun very gingerly [laughs] putting their hands on Valence's shoulders, I guess, pulling the now-empty head concave forward, um... feeling the back of their neck...

(as Broun) I -- where's this hole?

DRE (as Valence): It is right below, um, where your right ear would be.

ALI (as Broun): Oh, got it. OK. What's next?

DRE (as Valence): That -- that's it!

ALI (as Broun): [tentatively] I just press on this hole?

DRE (as Valence): Well, I... Seal it.

ALI (as Broun): Ohohoh! Oh, yeah.

[All laugh]

AUSTIN: I also thought the other thing!

JANINE: I thought the was going to be a "get a paperclip" situation.

AUSTIN: I thought it was going to be like, oh, you have to clear out some gunk from that hole. / see.

[ALI and DRE both laugh]

AUSTIN: There was, like, a *leak*. I get it. I see.

DRE: Yes.

ALI: OK. I -- yeah, I thought it was a chest situation, and we were using the head hole to open up this --

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Yeah, no.

ALI (as Broun): I, uh... uh, yeah. Oh, yeahyeahyeah, I see.

ALI: And I think -- [tries to finish sentence and breaks down laughing twice] -- I think Broun stands up to get other equipment, but, like -- if the communication is telepathic, I feel like there's -- Valence is able to pick up a lot of nonverbal stuff, which is like, Broun's immediate panic and immediate thinking about the shift of air. [laughs again]

ALI (as Broun): [flustered] Do you -- do you need, um, like, a container or, or something while I'm -- I just have to, uh -- you good?

DRE (as Valence): [nonchalant] Yeah, no, I'm fine.

ALI (as Broun): Cool, just -- I'm just -- I just -- There's some metal that I should get to just make sure this is... [deep breath] Closed. Um... just wait one second.

DRE (as Valence): [cheerful] Mmhm!

ALI: Broun goes and gets it.

DRE: I think Valence bobs behind Broun as they go to get the metal. [laughs]

ALI: Yeah. I think that they get, like, a series of -- It's a big -- It's like one of those hobby packets, where it's like, I guess, the size of a book. You kind of open it and then you open it up and there's like, different soldering tools with different tips and stuff and different sizes. I think Broun sort of wants to fill the hole, but then be able to cross-hatch the patching in such a way that it looks smooth. You know what I mean?

1:15:00

DRE: Mm-hm.

ALI: Um, just a little extra effort for you today, Valence. [laughs]

[DRE laughs]

ALI: And, um, it's so funny 'cause I was gonna ask you before that... if Valence is someone who's, like, talking a lot while they're being worked at, 'cause that's, like, a personality type someone would have. You know, people either handle needles by just not looking at them, or by talking to the nurse a bunch so they don't have to think about it.

DRE: Mmhm.

ALI: And I think it's almost the opposite thing now, of, like, Broun being aware of Valence in their head, and, like, making more small talk because they feel like their -- [laughs] their mind should

be filled with something, so, like, there's an interaction there. Or it's sort of like a defensive measure.

[both laugh]

ALI: Just being like,

(as Broun) Yeah, um, this is -- I'm sure you're not looking for upgrades, but your arm, um... If I -- I could switch some of those out with copper inputs, and you might, you know, see some benefits in your motor skills, but I -- you know, it's up to you.

DRE (as Valence): Why copper?

ALI (as Broun): Well, the cables that you're using right now are sort of a silver and copper mix, and then when you have iron clips in between them, it just kind of messes with the communication a little bit. Like, if you imagine the electricity going through your body as like a... Like a handshake! [clears throat awkwardly]

[DRE and ALI laugh]

ALI (as Broun): It just makes it easier and makes it wear down less fast.

DRE (as Valence): OK. That makes sense.

ALI (as Broun): A little tune up.

DRE (as Valence): I might take you up on that. I'll go find some copper somewhere.

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI (as Broun): Oh, I -- I was offering because I have it. Um...

AUSTIN: [making fun of Broun] 'Cause I steal it all the time! I have some on deck.

ALI (as Broun): Yeah, I could, um... It's just if you're looking to... [clears throat] Have you... when was the last time you had an... upgrade?

DRE (as Valence): [quietly] Home.

ALI (as Broun): [pause, then frantic small talk] Well, this hole looks patched up. Um, did you, um, you good?

DRE (as Valence): Yeah.

ALI (as Broun): Great!

DRE: Valence floats back in [laughs]. The hatch, like, swings shut, and they put their mask back on, and Valence puts out their right hand and says,

DRE (as Valence): You know, like a handshake.

[ALI laughs]

ALI (as Broun): Right. Yeah. Um, you're welcome.

DRE (as Valence): You know, I'm not -- I don't go poking around in your head when I talk to you.

ALI (as Broun): Oh, sure, I... [laughs nervously] No. Why? No.

DRE (as Valence): I can only hear what you want me to hear.

ALI (as Broun): Sh-- yeah, and we, you, mmhm. Mmhmhm? Mmhm. [babbling]

[Hoot of laughter from AUSTIN]

DRE (as Valence): Well, I guess I appreciate your discretion and, uh, not wanting to be nosy, but if you have any questions, I think I owe you that.

ALI (as Broun): You know, Valence, I think that I've learned a lot today already. I'm glad you feel better. If you -- if there's anything you need help with that you were not asking for because you didn't [hesitantly] want me to know about the floating part of you, I'm here.

DRE (as Valence): I appreciate that.

AUSTIN: I really love that Broun spent the morning working on [ALI laughs] Thisbe and was like, "I can't believe there's no fucking manual for this model!" and then is like, "Oh, OK. Here is an alien robot from a place no one I know could have ever been to. Completely different -- And, *and* they float around as a ball of gas. Great."

ALI: [deadpan] Having a great day.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

ALI: I gotta get the *fuck off this planet*.

[All laugh]

AUSTIN: Gotta *go*. Um, great. Well, Broun --

Oh, I just wanna note really quick. The chances of you rolling a crit on two dice is 3%. Which is 3% *less* than the time Keith rolled all fails to heal Clementine, I believe. It's either 3% or equal to, exactly equal to, I don't remember what the stats said. I don't remember what the dice roll was, but that's incredible.

It is now your turn to do a downtime action. What's going on with Broun after that?

ALI: Oh, it's *my* turn to do a downtime action...

AUSTIN: It is. It is your turn to do a downtime action.

ALI: Um, I -- whoof, I wanna do everything in this downtime. Um, my mech has 2 -- a level 2 damage and a level 1 damage.

AUSTIN: [amused] It does. You have to fix your mech.

ALI: I sure do. Just a very long day for Kalmera Broun.

AUSTIN: Mmhm. Mmhm.

ALI: Um, what's the math, what's the stuff on that?

AUSTIN: Oh. You know what? Real quick, between the group of you, someone should clear a quirk for free. Or you should get a materiel back 'cause you bought Scrapyard, and you could have done that at the end of the last session, before this session started. So I'm gonna retroactively give you back 1 materiel, is what I'm gonna do.

ALI: OK, cool.

AUSTIN: Anyway, besides that you still have 4 supply and then 2 personnel. Fix, you said that's what you're gonna do? You're gonna do Fix?

ALI: Um, yeah, I just don't know what the *stuff* of it is.

AUSTIN: It is the same thing you just did. [laughs]

ALI [cross]: Oh, perfect, OK, yeah. Just for my robot instead of my robot friend.

AUSTIN [cross]: Except for this instead, um, just for your robot instead -- you're right. You are surrounded by robots, yes.

It is the exact same thing, so just doing it is gonna clear the level 1 harm, er, the level 1 damage, and then you have to fill the clock to get of the level 2 damage. I believe you have both, right? I haven't looked. Yes, you have both.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, so, give me 2d6. And if you roll two sixes again, then we gotta go to the casino!

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: No, we shouldn't do that. Social distancing still in effect. We gotta go online and make some bets!

DRE [cross]: Time to do Granblue pulls!

ALI [cross]: That's a 3 and a 2.

AUSTIN: Welp, there's a 3 and a 2. So here's what happens. That's gonna advance the clock, the repair clock, by 1, it's gonna clear Decalibrated, but that's all it's gonna do. You could now spend a materiel to complete a level of this and drop that level 2 Scorched to a new level 1, if you wanted to, but you're going to need to do multiple additional... you know. If you wanted to completely clear it at this point, you're gonna need to do another repair attempt, another Fix attempt.

ALI: I think I'm gonna spend the 1 to drop it down and then maybe just leave it for now?

AUSTIN: OK. If you do, um, if you do another Fix it will clear it for sure, just so you know. Keep that in mind as you do other downtime stuff.

ALI: OK, yeah.

AUSTIN: If you wrap back around to your third action and you're like, "Well, fuck it, let me just fix this thing," all you have to do is fix it, is roll Fix again and that will clear it because it's level 1.

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: What's this -- also, it probably isn't Scorched anymore, it's probably, like, Singed or something, right? Or, like, um... some other... it depends on... how do you repair Scorched damage? Is that getting new parts on there, is it -- yeah, go ahead.

ALI: I... yeah. And the other one was Decalibrated, which I think is just like Broun sort of hopping up on a big -- it's probably, like, one of those big cherry-pickers that you can kind of go up and down a mech on and just, like, reworking the cameras. But I think Scorched is probably -- and this is probably why it's not fully finished yet -- I think that they have to, like, initially sand down what's been burnt.

AUSTIN: Mm. Sure.

ALI: And then get, like, a poly to fit some of those deeper marks in. And then I think eventually you put another sealant or whatever onto it, and you can do the second part to make it armored up again, but I think now -- what's a good word for this?

AUSTIN: So in other words it's almost as if you've only gotten that first step done? Where you've like --

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I gotcha. You haven't, like, resealed it yet. Or it's like, the armor part of it hasn't gone back on yet. Or not "back on," but you haven't coated it in whatever that last step is, which means it's still like --

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Not thin but it's more susceptible to -- it's unprotected or, like -- I know what you mean.

ALI: Yeah, it's like uncoated.

AUSTIN: Uncoated. That's a weird phrase, but...

ALI: Yeah. Janine, help me! [laughs]

JANINE: What?? Oh. Um...

ALI: Imagine you had some, like, polymer clay, and you sanded it down, and then you didn't put the paints or stuff on it yet.

JANINE: Unsealed, unfinished...

ALI: Yeah. Oh, unfinished is probably better!

AUSTIN: [approving] Unfinished, unfinished, yeah. There you go. "Unfinished" works.

All right! Now we are back around to Thisbe. Two more actions for downtime.

JANINE: Uh, the thing that I mean -- I know the two things I wanna do, I just don't know the order in which to do them and also how to do them.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: I think maybe I should do the little one and then do the big one. I want to start another long-term project, since I finished the other one.

AUSTIN: OK. And what is this new long-term project?

JANINE: Well, I don't know how to break this down. 'Cause, like, the first step was, find the farm. The next step is probably not "go to the farm," it has to be something, like, before that, right? It has to be some sort of --

AUSTIN: Well, like, I mean, yeah. We know that fictionally speaking, you leaving this planet at this point is off the table.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You've found the planet. You have not yet found the *farmers*, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So maybe there is an intermediary step here that is about locating who those *people* are.

JANINE: What's the way to do that when you're not there, though?

AUSTIN [cross]: I mean, is there a public record of imports and exports? Is there a galactic phone book? Is there a --

JANINE [cross]: Didn't -- but wasn't part of finding the farm that it was sort of an uncharted, like, not necessarily part of the main --

AUSTIN [cross]: Yeah, it was off of the -- that data had been hidden intentionally. It was from a world that that data had been -- was not part of the easy-to-access public information. It wasn't, like, on the map, basically. But we know that that world exists.

We didn't get into *why* that was. I have suspicions that are not big capital-P Plot suspicions so much as, like, worldbuilding, which is like... sometimes planets do bad. And it's easier to pretend they don't exist, or are, like, subsidiary planets, instead of saying that they are real. [laughs] And so you just remove them from the balance sheet and write them off.

JANINE: You know who probably keeps records, other than governments?

AUSTIN: Who's that?

JANINE: Pirates and shit.

AUSTIN: Yeah, pirates and shit.

JANINE: And we know that pirates and shit are active there 'cause that's how Thisbe got there.

AUSTIN: Totally. And we know that there are pirates here on this planet, or former pirates -- both pirates *and* former pirates, because we know Exeter Leap is here! But also we know that in Stel Orion there is a group called House Callister, and they are literally former pirates who sold out to

get recognition and get a house. So yeah, there are totally pirates who would have that type of data here, even people who --

JANINE: And worlds who are doing poorly would probably deal a lot in black-market-exchange stuff.

AUSTIN: Absolutely. Totally. So yeah, I think maybe that's the situation, it's like, finding someone to find the farmers, right? And I think given the fact that you know this -- you know what the planet is, that helps quite a bit. And given the fact that there is a throughline here that we've just figured out, you know, the vector for you figuring this out, I think it's only a four-step clock. Compared to finding a specific planet in the stars. [Laughs]

So, yeah, pirate records is good. You should roll for that. What are you using to get into pirate records and -- or to -- yeah. You tell me, what is Thisbe's process here?

JANINE: Hm.

AUSTIN: Is this a thing where you're trying to go talk to people, is this a thing where you're stealing records [laughs], is this -- you know, what's the play?

JANINE: Good question. And in most of these things, I have nothing.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. I mean, you have one in Prowl... and that's it! That's the only one here that's...

JANINE: [deadpan] That's the best I can do.

AUSTIN: I mean, you could really get into trouble and roll Wreck [laughs] and try to break into a place!

JANINE: It's also narratively difficult to imagine Thisbe, like, coming out of that last encounter and being like, "Well, I need to contact the Ashen, but first, I need to do some B&E."

AUSTIN: I mean, but Thisbe isn't us, right? Like, is this a way in which Thisbe's prioritization is just different than ours?

ALI: Feels --

AUSTIN: Sorry, what were you going to say, Ali?

ALI: I was gonna say, we just got that bar.

AUSTIN: You *did* just get that bar. [sucks teeth] You did just get a loyal bar. That's true.

ALI [cross]: That's a vector into information.

JANINE [cross]: Yeah, I just break in there!

AUSTIN [cross]: Nononono, but for --

ALI [cross]: Well, no, you can talk to somebody.

JANINE: I don't have a lot of *talking*.

AUSTIN: [ruefully] That's the actual thing, I think, yeah.

ALI: [disappointed] Sure. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Not a lot of --

JANINE: Unless the thing I wanna talk to is someone's motorcycle.

ALI: Well...

AUSTIN: And a very fancy one, because that would be a motorcycle that could talk, which are rare! Um, and I don't think -- Oh, I mean, that is the other line here. You could declare a contact, and it could be someone, something that you could interface with, if you wanted to go that -- Listen. When I look at the faction sheet and you go over to the independent side, besides the House Callister pirates and under Orion...

1:30:00

...here's some other people who are clearly up to no fucking good, slash are cool. Ke- ah, Kinoki, or Key : No Key, who is a, who is a different algorithm robot thief. Definitely probably knows how to get to some shit. There is, the, buh buh buh buh, there is Panorama, which is a criminal organisation that sells perspective bleeding. And then yeah, back over in Orion, you could always look into- or maybe they're not Orion. Where is, where... Buh buh buh buh... Thought it was Orion... Yes, the Divine Arbitrage, which is a, "it is said that this Divine was too long delayed, this anteperennial-" "that Divinity was too long delayed, this anteperennial machine, a god of Trade. But the truth is, if it wanted to be a Divine in the Twilight era, it simply would have negotiated that deal." It is a shadow broker, it is an information broker Divine, that knows, that can get basically any type of information that you're looking for. It is a Divine, which is to say, dangerous. But also something you would definitely roll interface to communicate with. This is a Divine that showed up very briefly in a previous season, without the word "Divine" attached to it. It was just called the "Machine, Arbitrage." And was like, in a few scenes in *Twilight Mirage*.

AUSTIN: It is shadowy as fuck, but, you know; would have this information. So you, you do have, there are ways you could lean in the machine intelligence route to go down, some of this, this information.

JANINE: Where are they?

AUSTIN: I don't know. That would be part of the roll- part of the roll, right? Would be, how well do you do?

JANINE: And also, how would Thisbe be aware of them?

AUSTIN: They're- I mean, they're a Divine, right? So-

JANINE: Alright, so it's like a...

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's one of those things like "how would you know about, the CIA?" Right? Or the NSA, you know-

JANINE: How would you approach the CIA if the CIA were a robot?

AUSTIN: Were a robot, were a single robot that had, I mean, the Divine Arbitrage is almost certainly in, Oxbridge. Like, it's probably in the town you're in. And the thing-

JANINE: I wonder if this is maybe just, maybe a, maybe that's a thing that Thisbe would like... find out, very, almost innocently? Of just like, maybe Thisbe would, would, go to that bar-

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Just because like, Thisbe has passively picked up. Like, "you can go to bars for information."

AUSTIN: Yes. [Ali giggles]

JANINE: Like maybe that's a thing that Broun said like, "oh it's good that we're getting in with that- with the people at that bar, because we can get so much information out of that" or something. And Thisbe's like "oh, okay."

AUSTIN: And then, then you ask someone very politely, "do you know the name of the farmers on this planet?" [Janine laughing] And they say "what do you think I am, the Divine Arbitrage?" [Ali and Janine laughing] And then you go "oh."

JANINE: "Okay."

AUSTIN: "Okay. Yeah, okay, I'll find- where are they? Where's that at?"

JANINE: "And if you were the Divine Arbitrage where would you be?" [Dre laughing]

AUSTIN: Right, and then it's just like, it pulls back to a huge dark tower in Brightsky West, right? Like, that's it, there it is. It's this giant squared off obelisk in the middle of town. The Divine

Arbitrage, if I'm remembering correctly, uses "it" pronouns. Happily, willfully, wants nothing to do with anything that can trace itself back to human gender. Arbitrage- Arbitrage be like that.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So. Yeah, do you want to give me a- what is it, an interface roll?

JANINE: I guess so. I have no idea what that is[???

AUSTIN: Again, you could use Wreck; I'm going to say it gets weird if you try to Wreck a Divine, but, let's go-

JANINE: I don't- look, I appreciate you trying to find a way to give me the thing I have two in-

AUSTIN: No! It's not worth it.

JANINE: But I don't understand how Wreck gets me information about pirates.

AUSTIN: Oh, no, it would be you literally trying to break into this Divine's self, and that would be, a nightmare. I'm telling you, you could do it, but it would be real, you'd be really opening yourself up to repercussions here. Whereas interface is so much more the like, talking to a thing older and greater than you, you know?

JANINE: I also have a hard time picturing Thisbe deploying Wreck unless someone is like, shooting a gun at Broun or something.

AUSTIN: Totally, totally.

JANINE: Like it's- I don't think Thisbe just goes around being like "oh wow, that's a nice Divine tower you have, what if I just fucking snapped it in half. Tell me about pirates."

AUSTIN: I'm just trying to, I'm just trying to provide you the menu, that's all.

JANINE: Mmmhm [knowingly]. [Dre and Ali laugh]

AUSTIN: Give me 1d6.

1:35:00

JANINE: That's a four.

AUSTIN: That's a four, so you advance that clock by two. What's that mean? Does that mean that you've like lined up a meeting with Arbitrage somehow? For like, the- but like, maybe you don't have direct communication with it yet?

JANINE: I think if we're determining that Arbitrage is the end goal of finding the farmers-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Then it would probably be having a door- having a foot in that door.

AUSTIN: Yeah. The thing that I kind of imagine is, imagine the... Imagine Wall Street. Imagine the, the... The Hollywood version of Wall Street, from like, 80s movies. Lots of yelling, lot of- I mean 90s movies do it too, obviously, but like, eventually what Wall Street is changes so dramatically. But, you know, people in suits yelling about buying and selling stuff. Computers everywhere, terminals everywhere. And here's it's like, there- it's like like an open air market for, commod- commoditized amounts of information. So it's like, you know, I have- I will sell you the futures on these trade routes, etc. Not the actual routes, just the money that will made by whoever ends up buying these routes, or whatever, right. And, in the midst of that, you have to put forward a petition, and one of the- basically one of the- the head trader here is Arbitrage. And, you put forward a petition, and your petition isn't even supposed to be held- like, heard for another year, basically, you're not supposed to have petitioner status. And the nature of your petition is written down -- I think there's probably some sort of attendant who like, laughs up at you. Looks up at you because, because they are much smaller than you, but like,

AUSTIN (as Attendant): You want to find a farmer? On planet, what? Never heard of it. Okay, come back next year.

AUSTIN: And then by the time they turn around and look at their screen, you've been moved up a bunch of slots, because Arbitrage has taken an interest in your petition. Out of a sort of like, curiosity. Because, to it, you are a big curiosity. And then the attendant turns back around and says,

AUSTIN (as Attendant): Come back in two weeks. You'll have a meeting with the Divine then.

AUSTIN: [sigh], like,

AUSTIN (as Attendant, out of character): I hate it when it does this.

AUSTIN: You know. [Janine laughs] So yeah. Boom.

1:37:30

AUSTIN: So now we are on to Valence. Second action.

DRE: Um! I would like to work on my downtime project of finding out who attacked the Nobel.

AUSTIN: Good call, which we did advance a little bit - how are you doing this?

DRE: I want to try and have Valence basically, like, meditate on the vision they saw?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Um, and through that and a combination of Farsight, basically try to, like, astral project themselves to that moment.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So, um, give me-- I mean that also sounds like an Interface to me, unless you have another... or Survey I guess? Or Study?

DRE: Yeah, I was gonna try and do Survey.

AUSTIN: Let's do Survey, you have-- that's what your Farsight is, right?

DRE: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, so, that's a 3d6.

DRE: Um, can I also-- I'm gonna use my Spark.

AUSTIN: Uhhh, what's that do? Yes.

DRE: Spend your Spark to get a +1 to Farsight using Survey.

AUSTIN: Totally. 4d6.

DRE: Uh, 5.

AUSTIN: Bad roll, unfortunately-- I mean, 5 is not bad, but 2, 5, 2, 2 is not, not what you wanna see.

DRE: Rough.

AUSTIN: So advance it by 2. Um, and, and here's a moment where I get to clarify something that was maybe too, um, too vague in the original, and that's actual play-- when we, when I did that sequence, the kind-of describing what you saw on the camera, if people go back and listen to it, there's a moment where I'm starting to say one thing, and then I get distracted by another flight of thought, because that's how my brain works, and I started by saying to you, the, um, that you-- there was something about the stars that seemed familiar, and then what seemed familiar was that you noticed that, like, the ship design of these ships that you'd seen in the vision, um, were similar to - or at least one of them was similar to the vessel that attacked the homeworld, right? This kind-of like, unique design that you haven't seen anywhere else in the Divine Principality, that is associated with this group called the Pact of Necessary Venture, which you now know seems to have been responsible for that attack. Or at least, that's the jump that you'd make. The second thing, that I meant to actually finish the thought of saying, um, and

then by the time I'd realised that I didn't say this outright, it was too late, is that you recognised the stars too, um, you recognised the actual star formations and the, um, there's some navigational aids in the sky, or in space that you, that *you*, and we didn't talk about this, but how did you get here?

DRE: What do you mean?

AUSTIN: From the Nobel homeworld.

DRE: Oh, geez. *Oh*, like, oh yeah, um, god. I think the way that I pitched it to you was that basically, like, Valence was loaded up in, like, the equivalent of the pneumatic tube you send to the bank teller through the drive through, but just through space.

AUSTIN: Right, right. So, um, I think that there's, like, a lot of time there that you look at space, even if you're going incredibly fast with a weird super space tube, and you know that they were coming through, basically-- they were basically going to where the Partizan Gate that you're not supposed to use takes you. They're obviously beyond-- like, I *think* that the subtext was clear? But maybe I should be even *more* clear: they breached the gate. Or, they had gone to where they're not supposed to go, at the very least. Um, so that's one thing that I just wanna underscore here, that like, the Pact of Necessary Venture, which at least some of went to where you saw, the place they were was the arm of the galaxy that they were not supposed to go.

If I move us over to the galaxy map, which we don't ever do because there's no reason to, normally, the equivalent here is that they went to the point I'm about to ping, which is like *here*, right to the south of where Partizan is. Partizan is in this little white sector where all the different Stels meet. They went into the sector D, which is listed here as Caelestia Nullius? Which is, like, no-one's sky, basically? Uh, the-- the so-far uncolonised by the Divine Principality arm of the galaxy, which is, I believe it is called, I'm gonna double check it, the Scutum-Centaurus arm? Yes, correct. And so, that is where they were, so that is one thing you definitely know. Let's make sure we tick that clock twice, right? Boom. Um, the-- I'm trying to think if there's anything else you need to know here.

I think there's a way here in which, as you are doing this and messing with these, y'know, projecting yourself back to this place, um, I think maybe unintentionally, you've rubber-banded Gur Sevraq back here too. And, um, there is, like, a... there's an interesting thing here, right? Which is, you're, you're still, what, 2 points off on this? 2-- 3 ticks off on this? Um, but, you know what I think here, is this-- here is the way to maybe talk about, I figured out the way to walk this line. Um, you're seeing this space, in front of you, and then suddenly instead of seeing it in front of you, you're seeing it on a screen, on a-- on the same type of projector you were in before? And it's as if you've moved back into that room, um. Or, maybe you realise you're in a different projector room, and the room that you're in is, uh, is some sort of military... like, communications, or not even communications, but like, map room? Uh, and it looks like the styling is Aposolitian? You're not really a hundred percent sure, but in the room with you is Gur

Sevraq, and the two of you are now looking at the same footage that you both saw in your brain, uh, last session. And, uh, he says to you,

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) They are called the Pact of Necessary Venture, Wolf. And, they are only the latest limb of the terrible body of the Divine Principality. I hope you are well.

DRE: (as Valence) Uhm... actually, I'm more well to see a face that I recognise now.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) Fair enough. Very strange times.

AUSTIN: ...he says, and is kind-of, like, looking around this strange, like, military base room that you've been projected into that seems to be Apostolitian - but let's not even get into it right now. Um, I think that they just immediately try to give you a bit more context about the Pact. Um.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) As you may know, one thousand years ago, the prophet Logos Kantel came to this world. And they brought with them the power and message of our God. The potency of progression. And the planet and the moon was changed. And in that moment, the Principality itself could have changed, but a different path was taken.

The Princept at the time, now known as the Tranquil Princept, saw the might of God. Saw the demands that our Lord made, and shook in fear. Knew, in their heart, that they could not simply make the Principality into something it wasn't. Our Lord saw this in them, and as you know, our God is not cruel. And so an offer was made. The Principality would have the time it needed to change. To progress. To move into a different form. One where it did not see all of space as its territory already. Where every new world was not simply a ball of resources waiting to be claimed. Cities filled with citizens, not yet brought into the fold. Or, bodies standing in the way. And the Tranquil Princept kept that oath. The Tranquil Princept said that they would enact change generationally, slowly, over time. They established a group to help pursue that change. And Our Lord said, very well, but as part of his oath know that if you move beyond Partizan, if you go into the Scutum–Centaurus Arm, before you have progressed, anything you send that way will be destroyed. And if you do it *twice*, then this oath will be broken, and I will arrive and judge you.

I don't know how or why or by what mechanism, but, it is if a wall went up then, between your part of space, what the Principality calls Caelestia Nullius, the Scutum–Centaurus Arm, and here, and that wall has stood ever since. Somehow the Pact of Necessary Venture, a group not yet six years old, managed to move beyond that wall, to navigate through it or around it. Not once, when it seems they threatened your people, but now twice, as we saw in the vision.

The Pact is a group of people spread throughout the Principality, who carry allegiance only to themselves, and their hubris. They believe that with the recent war between the Princetps, it is time for someone else to take the reins. They believe that they *are* that someone else. But how do you take over an empire like the Principality? Well, they believe you simply bloody God's nose, and colonise the territory they protect, that you squeeze everything from the people there. That you draft them, your soldiers, for a frontline that inside of the empire they swore to protect. What I mean to say, Valence, is they knew very well what they were flying into, and they did it anyway. They sent countless to die, knowing that they were sizing up God. How many more must they have in reserve? And how low must they think of the citizens of the Principality, that they dream of leading?

Worse, I-- I don't... they are not a unique evil. They are the first to breach the wall. They are not the first to try. The group that the Tranquil Princetp established, they stopped previous attempts. Perhaps because they are caught up in their own ambition now, perhaps because of the chaos of the war, perhaps because they are complicit - I don't know. They did not stop *this* attempt. And if it was not this one, it would be another. The Principality is ill. It has always been such. It is driven by an ideology which subsumes everything into itself. The Principality is greater than any moral, any God, any Divine inside of this world. Even those who worship the Divines must relate their worship to the Principality first. Even the Progressive Asterists must relate their faith to the state. This is why the Disciples of Logos reject Progressive Asterism as a misunderstanding of Logos Kantel's words. A misunderstanding or a manipulation. Because even the Progressive Asterists are forced to relate their faith to this empire.

No matter what happens, unless the Principality changes, I-- I... this will continue to happen. This is what drew me to the church.

AUSTIN: And I think there's, like, a degree of, like... resignation, but like... Gur Sevraq deals with a lot of big picture things? And there's this moment, where even in this kind-of, like, projected version of him, you get the sense that thinking about the particular history that brought them to the church grounds them? Because it's not about big ideas, it's about, like, "hey, I remember being 13 and hearing a sermon that moved me". And realising, like, the history-- I mean, very specifically, we-- out of character, Dre, you and I haven't really spoken on mic, like, in an episode about the religion that the Nobel have? And the religion that Gur Sevraq has-- Gur Sevraq has, in any, like, material terms, um. You know, I think we both know that, like, they both worship the same deity, right? Um, but I don't know that we've talked about what those beliefs look like, or I guess for the, for the Disciples of Logos Kantel/The Friends of Gur Sevraq/The Church of the Resin Heart, there is, like, a throughline that you'd maybe pick up on from some of the stuff we've seen? But I haven't been explicit about it and probably, it'd be better to do that, and I'm curious if the Nobel stuff lines up with that stuff, if that makes sense?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, so like, the one thing we saw from the Church of the Resin Heart, was the kind-- travelling the Prophet's Pass during that Rapid Evening arc where Gur Sevraq was leading a kind-of a convoy-- a pilgrimage through the kind-of furthest west part of Partizan on the map, through the deserts, towards the tropics and eventually over the sea to Logos City, which is where Logos Kantel originally made the ocean, or did the miracle that brought the ocean onto Partizan.

And, uh, I think what I-- what didn't necessa-- there's a whole sermon about Progression, I think, y'know, Gur Sevraq has kind-of just echoed maybe a little bit of what we said before during that episode about progression, and what progression means to their God is about improvement, and moving away from imperialism, and moving away from selfishness and blah blah blah. Um, but that is kind-of, like, the heart of how I imagine the Church of the Resin Heart's belief structure and practices to kind-of be about? Theirs is not, like, the God of creation, theirs is not the God of being, it's the God of *becoming*, is kind-of the way I have always thought of it. And those are, like, philosophy terms, being and becoming, but like, becoming is just like practice or process, or like, getting somewhere, right?

DRE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: It's the-- it's the practice, or the process of, of change. You might think about it in terms of change, to the degree that I don't even know that there's an agreement as to, like, where God came from. They don't care if it's the God that has always existed, or a God that's always existed, or if this is a God that was made, I think there's probably a thousand theories, I think some people probably say this was a Divine that turned into a God, other people say this is, it's just the Perennial Wave, other people say that it's actually not related to history at all and it is, y'know, an omnipotent, omnipresent God that's existed for all creation, the unmoved mover, however you wanna talk about it. Some people think that it's probably, y'know, their God is-- like, that part of it isn't the part that matters to them, I think the part that matters to them is that this is a God of change and process.

I think a lot about some particular visions of God when I think about this God? Um, I think a lot about the black theology, the kind-of liberatory black theology in the civil rights movement? Which saw God as almost, like-- almost like a vector through which we could enact change, and enact, um... like, justice? But it didn't-- it wasn't that God would come down and sweep, y'know, the villains into the sea, necessarily, but it's about, like, finding a... or enabling a certain sort of human action, not necessarily about doing that action in, in the case of Gur Sevraq's God, themselves. It's a God of, um, it's a God of, like, not ambition in the political sense, but aspiration in the personal sense. Where it's, like, I want to, I want to just, like, be a better person in X, Y, Z way, and I think that's what the belief is about, is about God enabling that sort-of change?

And that practice is very similar, so like, the-- travelling the Prophet's Path is all about, like, seeing - literally, it's a ritual about kind-of being mindful of the ways in which the miracle worked

on the land? Like, literally, “here is a part of the world where gravity didn’t exist, here is where it did, now it’s desert, now it’s sea, now here are the plants”, right?

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Um, but I think that’s also true for like, what-- if we zoomed in and just did a side episode on just what was the Church up to in on the isles of Logos, I think it would be things, like, tutoring programs? Like, rehab programs? Shelters? Like, all sorts of transitory things where people are trying to get from point A to point B. And it’s not because they think that, like, and then you get to point B and you’re done, necessarily.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But that’s the-- I think that’s the vibe of what the Church of Logos Kantel-- or, the Disciples of Logos Kantel have always been about, is about that style of change? I don’t know if that matches up with-- well, we’ve talked a little bit, obviously, about these aspects and I’m drawing on some of the stuff that you’ve told me about the God of the Nobel, but does that line up with, with what you think about, or what the Nobel, I guess, how the Nobel think about God?

DRE: Yeah, and I would imagine that if we, like, ever sat down and did, like, an in-depth lore bible for a Friends at the Table season?

AUSTIN: Yes.

DRE: That probably the Nobel would have, like, different words for this, but that it would be...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Oh, sure, definitely.

DRE: ...like you said, a similar vibe. Like, y’know...

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: ...worshipping God is not, like, an end state in-and-of itself, it’s not, like, y’know, “I follow the ten commandments right now, and I’m good”, um, and it’s more of an idea of like--

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Right, which, which, to be clear is also my-- I don’t know that anybody’s fai-- I think that’s one of those things that comes up in culture where people, like, as if that’s, like, what Judaism is, I don’t think that that’s exactly it, there’s actually a lot more to being a good person...

DRE: (overlapping) Yeah. (laughs)

AUSTIN: ...than following just some rules, right?

DRE: Right, yeah, uh. I think it's, like, a handful of core principles, and again, I don't... I don't have that kind-of, like, written out. I think the thing--

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah, I kind-of sprung this on you, so don't-- no worries!

DRE: Yeah, um, but I also think that, like, what those core principles look like can action as something that's probably in flux?

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: And like, open for... open for debate makes it sound like the Nobel are a bunch of "debate me" bros, and they're not, but, um...

AUSTIN laughs.

DRE: Like it's, there are discussions around, like, "what does it mean to do good?"

AUSTIN: Right. And like, how to... how to arri-- like, in other words-- I mean, this is, it's easy to be like "yeah, well, of course, we all do that", but we don't really do that, like...

DRE: Mm.

AUSTIN: There are not lots of ethical conversations in-- or, conversations about ethics and doing good in, like, the American culture you and I both live in?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Most people don't go to *literally* an ethics class...

DRE laughs.

AUSTIN: ...until they take it as an elective, *maybe* one day, *maybe* you have a high school civics class that touches on this stuff, or maybe, if you're *really* lucky, you have a philosophy or ethics course? Um, or you go to some sort of religious school that touches on this stuff? But a lot of people don't have that style of, like, ongoing conversation about what, "what is the good?"

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: "What does that mean?" So is that something the Nobel, like, practice, *literally* practice in a much more concerted way?

DRE: Yeah, if I could, like, compare it to something that I do in my day-to-day life, like, as a therapist, um, you know, I kind-of find myself torn between, like, kind-of two different philosophies? Um, and I'm not gonna use, like, specific language for these, um, but like, y'know, there are some schools of thought within therapy and, like, some types of therapy where the idea of, like, therapy is to be corrective, y'know? It is to say that, like...

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: ...um, and like, some of these are definitely in, like, shitty ways, and very judgemental ways, and very, like, normative ways. in a damaging way? But not all of them are, y'know, even, there are ones that are like this that are, that are normative in the sense of, y'know, the norm of a person is to be happy and you're not, so how do we help you identify what you need to change about yourself to live a happier life?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

DRE: And then on the fl--

AUSTIN: Which does not-- go ahead-- pathologise it, so much as set, like, a goal, I guess is one way to think about it, or?

DRE: Well, it doesn't pathologise in the sense of, like, here's your diagnosis? Um, but it does pathologise in the sense of, like, this, *this* is harmful or bad, because it's making you sad or, y'know, anxious or whatever.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: And so there *must* be something wrong with it, right? Um, and again it's not pathologising in the sense of, y'know, "you're fucked up because you have an anxiety disorder".

AUSTIN: Right, right right, that's what I was trying to-- yeah, yeah, that's what I was trying to emphasis, yes, exactly, whereas what it is saying is, "here are particular things in your life that we can address and talk through and work on, in order to get you to a better place, that *you* want to be at, that is not about, like, undermining who you are as a human being".

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: Or saying that that makes you less of a human being, or something like that, yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Interesting, yeah.

DRE: And then there's the flip side, which is to basically say, like, what can I *teach* you that you haven't already tried? Like, by trying to say that what you're doing is wrong, I am completely invalidating your lived experience, and there's nothing that I, as a therapist, can bring to bear that is more impactful knowledge than, like, your lived experience and the innate knowledge that you have as your own person, knowing what you need. And so, therapy in that sense is more about, let's figure out not what's wrong with you, but what are the rules that you have created for yourself, what is the narrative that you've created for yourself that is limiting you, and forcing you to see yourself as messed up.

AUSTIN: Right, right, right. And so you think that that-- those elements of your therapy practice are the sorts of things that guide the Nobel in the sense that, like, that is the sort of comprehensive take that they put on process, or becoming, or self improvement but not in, like, the cheesy sense?

DRE: Yeah, well, and I think within the Nobel there's probably both, y'know?

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah yeah yeah, totally.

DRE: (overlapping) Because, like, within my own practice, there's both, um...

AUSTIN: I mean, that's what's in all cultures, there's... (laughing)

DRE: Yeah, yeah!

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Of course! Y'know, right? Exactly, yeah.

DRE: Like, sometimes when I meet with somebody, it does seem like genuinely the thing that is going to help them the most, meet the goals they tell me they wanna meet, is basically something along the lines of, like, behavioural training, y'know?

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: And that is definitely a very, kind-of, traditional "this behaviour is good, this behaviour is bad" sort-of thing, that I personally don't like to do, but sometimes, that's kind-of what a person is looking for. And it's...

AUSTIN: Sure.

DRE: ...and in my mind, it's not my place as a therapist to say, "well actually what you're looking for isn't deep enough, and I want you to think in X, Y, Z way." (laughs)

AUSTIN: Right, is that actually, is that actually kind-of a throughline for the Nobel, are they at a place culturally where there's this sort-of trust in the individual to determine the outcome that they want.

DRE: Yes.

AUSTIN: And then, it's about enabling that path, not prescribing it, right?

DRE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay, interesting.

DRE: And I think--

AUSTIN: I don't know, I'm, I'm curious if-- I don't know that the Church of the Resin Heart is *there* yet, I suspect they're probably a little more prescriptive still, because of living insi-- the Nobel are not an empire, I'm guessing?

DRE: No, no, And I--

AUSTIN: (overlapping) As far as I know! Right

DRE: I was about to say, I think that really, like, there are probably, not probably, I think there were times within the Nobel where they were more, I don't know if they ever were true empire in the way that, like, y'know.

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah.

DRE: But they prolly got real close!

AUSTIN: They weren't as big as the Principality, but they were, right.

DRE: (overlapping) Yeah, or at least they had--

AUSTIN: Yes, right, well...

DRE: (overlapping) ...they had imperialist and colonisational attitudes.

AUSTIN: And were, and also, are all psychics, are all--

DRE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: All have ESP or tele-- telepathy in some way, which-- which, again, cause Valence is not a special case as far as we know.

DRE: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, which, so, who the fuck knows? No, that's really interesting. Yeah, I would say that one of the things with the Church of the Resin Heart is probably that there is... I think living in this way as, like, a people who, they're not *occupied* because this is not their territory in that sense?

DRE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: But they're certainly extremely marginalised, and could not, could not practice as openly as they do anywhere else in the Principality, as on the isles of Logos...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...which have this, like, special degree of sovereignty, and special, and specific connection to Logos Kantel. Um, I think that they are-- there is probably a little bit more prescription in terms of what it means to be a good person? I don't think there's anything there that's, like, I'm not waiting on the-- I'm not, like, sitting on a twist where I'm like, "aha! *and* they think everyone has to kill *seven people* to be good!"

DRE: Right! (laughs)

AUSTIN: Um, there's not, like, a-- but I do think that there's probably-- part of what makes them effective is that their image of what the "good" is, is very historicised to their moment, and their situation, um, and it's mostly stuff about, like, helping other people, and mostly-- not that I'm saying that, like, the Nobel mean-- are like, full-on libertarian whatever, but like, I think that there's probably an emphasis on, for instance, learning skills that help-- that let you help other people, or whatever, and that stuff is, like, culturally prescribed, not, not literally prescribed-- not, like, only... the only good people are doctors and duh-duh-duh-duh-duh...

DRE: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: But that there is a, there is a sort-of, like, bias towards that sort-of stuff in the practice, um. Which is complicated, for all the reasons that all this stuff is.

DRE: Mmhm?

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AUSTIN: Anyway, anyway, anyway. I think we've a pretty good idea at this point, um, and I think maybe, I guess, given that that's what the Pact of Necessary Venture is, given that now we have a good-- or, a better understand of, like, where these faiths are at, and what the kind-of ideology is, a little bit behind us, I'd be curious, does Valence have any other thoughts here, or like, what's... what's Valence say after Gur Sevraq says "here's the Pact of Necessary Venture, they spit in God's face twice"?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh, and are now threatening, and now their presence threatens to destroy everything.

DRE: Yeah. Well, I think, for Valence, um, because I think another thing that would be important to, like, say about the Nobel, is that explicitly, like, they peacefully, and encourage to co-exist with, like, other people, cultures, uh, y'know, whatever.

AUSTIN: Right, the whole S-C Arm is not the Nobel.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That is-- again, there's not like a big Nobel empire, there are other cultures, presumably other faiths that the Nobel know and interact with, right?

DRE: (overlapping) A hundred percent, and I think there's-- there has to be those among the Nobel who have, like, converted to other faiths, or like, don't have any faith.

AUSTIN: Sure, sure.

DRE: In the way that most Nobel do, and like, that's fine. It's more than fine...

AUSTIN: Is that-- right.

DRE: ...fine is, like, "well, *okay*", but, no, it's--

AUSTIN: It's life!

DRE: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: That's part of what life, right? It is not, it is not about-- it is not about which path you take on your p-- on your progression journey, it's about progression, right?

DRE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, I-- which goes back to what you said before about the two different types of therapy that, y'know, your practice has, right? Or not two-- that was really sanded down, I know, but you know what I'm saying.

DRE: No, but, yeah yeah yeah, that works.

AUSTIN: Does that, does that stick at the front of Valence's mind? I'm just trying to get us back into the sequence, like, is that-- does Vale-- is that a concern for Valence?

DRE: Yes.

AUSTIN: That, like, "hey, God is threatening to destroy all these people and, and it's for the reason that Gur Sevraq laid out", which is, like, the terms were *extremely* clear, there were multiple warnings! But, for Valence, that seems to be something that is, like, even with that, there's this, like, intrinsic-- not intrinsic, but deeply held belief that, you-- you wouldn't want God to show up and just, like, obliterate everything.

DRE: No.

AUSTIN: Because-- just because it's, these people don't worship-- I mean, again, it's not because they don't worship God, it's because the Pact--

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...or the Oath was specifically broken, but still, I'm sure that-- that comes to mind for Valence.

DRE: Yeah, absolutely, and I think... y'know, Valence's big question for Gur would be, what would it take to change this? Like, what would it take to... to create a situation where... whether that looks like, making-- making it so that, like, the system here changes, to where it becomes a place where either it is not possible that somebody would go...? Y'know, cross that border, or that it would, like, not be a part of the-- ethos? (laughs).

AUSTIN: I think... right, right right right, so I think... I mean, I think the first thing is that Gur Sevraq says, pretty plainly, like

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) If we do not reroute history, then with the momentum it has, what comes next is disastrous to everyone here on partizan, and the many others throughout the Principality. We both know that our Lord prefers not to intervene with our affairs, but now I suspect it is an inevitability. I may not do what God asks of us, but someone will. Mark the just, was your task, and to... recover and rebuild Their Exemplar, that is what I was due to take on. If I do that, if I go into the Church and take the Resin Heart, beating still, if I go to the Memoria Teardrop and recover the countless eyes of the

True Divine's Exemplar, if I capture the blood that runs through the springs of the Pique Ridge, if I find and listen to and hold the Exemplar's voice as it echos in the windswept canyons of the Barranca, and if I recover whatever is hidden in the Taiga, then what we have is possibility itself. The Exemplar is... it is our Lord's Divine, made here a thousand years ago. Separated under what circumstances, I do not know. But I know where it is now, where its parts are. And, if I do as our Lord said, then the wall that separates us from Them will fall, and Their attention will be swift. Complete. I do not weep for those who travelled where they ought not, with desire in their hearts to conquer and colonise. And squeeze, and enlist, your people or any of the others in the arm where you are from.

DRE: (as Valence) I would.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) (tuts) Oh, Wolf. They would come to conquer you and you would... cry for their deaths.

DRE: (as Valence) Yeah. You know, you speak of progression, at what point do you decide that someone doesn't get to progress any more?

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) When their existence and their aspiration is the erasure of that possibility for countless others.

DRE: (as Valence) And that's fair, and I wouldn't say that it would be wrong to do that.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) But you weep anyway.

DRE: (as Valence) Yeah, I would.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) Mmm. Regardless, that is the possibility that God has asked us to pursue. It is not one that either of us are happy with. I might be happy with the death of those on those ships, but... the people who saved me from the attack on my life? Those who I interact with on the isles of Logos? You and your compatriots? Would I see you all dead? Or would I see you live, simply because of the proximity they all have to you and to I? That's not justice. And so, I will lay out... I will lay out our options.

The first is, we travel to where the Exemplar's parts are, and we destroy them. That would prevent God from travelling here for the foreseeable future. This is not a time at which a new Exemplar could be built without notice. This would not stop the Pact from trying to move into Nobel territory. But, they would only ever strike wall. But, if-- if instead we use the Exemplar to destroy the wall, if the entire Principality and not just the Pact turns on our Lord, I... I can't be sure they will not invent a way to harm us in the most eternal way, to kill our God.

And so perhaps, we destroy the Exemplar, and keep the wall up. That's one option.

AUSTIN: And I think that he kind-of looks to you for thoughts on that one.

DRE: (as Valence) I would much rather hear your other options before...

AUSTIN: They laugh, yeah.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) Fair enough, I... you do not doubt my faith or my loyalty.

DRE: (as Valence) No, I don't. I might disagree, but I don't doubt you.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) Then please understand that when I say this, I say it with a sort-of... comprehensive belief. As you know, others... worship Divines, their local spirits, countless pantheons. I don't know to what degree you hold those beliefs in merit, but I will tell you this - our Lord is not the only star in the sky. At the centre of the Milky Way galaxy, the Divine, Perennial, sits. She who spun the wave into existence, so long ago, carries a sort-of impossible power, and... hard to comprehend philosophy. Valence, I was not always a member of the Disciples. I was raised among Perennial's chosen, among those who believe in recurrence and cycles and... the world turning around in on itself. It's where I first dreamt of possibility. Because, for those who worship her, everything turns eventually. My studies, and I admit, her guidance, are what lead me to our Lord. And yet, today, I wonder. I wonder what she would do with something like the Exemplar. A Divine built by God. It is a possibility, it is-- it is chaotic, I admit, but it is... it is an option to consider. We do not need to make a decision now, but, these are... these are what I have, given the circumstances. I wish there was another way.

DRE: (as Valence) There might. We're not the only people here who want to see the Principality change.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) (sighs) Many carry a small hope in their hearts, that the day that comes after this one will be better. That is not revolution.

DRE: (as Valence) But what if they speak of revolution?

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) Valence, you're in the company of revolutionaries, now! I've been spending time with a princess.

DRE: (as Valence) What's that like?

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) Interesting, in fact I-- tell me about these revolutionaries.

DRE: (as Valence) It's just two groups now. I know that's not enough to stand against an entire entrenched moon, but... they believe.

AUSTIN: Is that true, actually? Is it more than-- is it?

DRE: Well...

AUSTIN: Let me think, okay, so it's... it's...

DRE: (overlapping) As far as Valence knows it's Oxblood, and Horizon?

AUSTIN: Right, and Horizon, yeah, okay. Well, um, I think Gur Sevraq says-- "Could you--" actually, I think Gur Sevraq says,

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) Who are they?

DRE: (as Valence) The Oxblood Clan, and a kind-of covert group called Horizon.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) I thought you were going to say the Rapid Evening, and was going to be very confused. Uh, Horizon...

DRE: (as Valence) And who is that?

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) Oh... it's a long story, my friend. Two is not nothing. In fact, two is two more than... hm. Regardless, is your thought simply, we overthrow Partizan and... and then what? The Principality is still the Principality. Our Lord will not be deterred, simply because we won one stronghold.

DRE: (as Valence) Is one stronghold not progression?

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) (sighs) It is... evidence, I suppose. That progression is possible, and ours is a Lord of possibility. I may need a favour from you.

AUSTIN: And there's a degree of, like, you can tell that, that they're in a moment of recall, and thinking through possibilities, and are kind-of falling to that part of their, their brain, right? Um.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) Whatever we build can't just be us. If we go down this road, it has to be... it has to show that it isn't only that there are people who can be swayed, it has to-- it has to prove that we can, we can find in what is already here, something worth redeeming, or worth...

DRE: (as Valence) ...worth weeping for.

AUSTIN: (as Gur Sevraq) Hah, yes. And, and that those people, many of them may already be scratching at a cage they don't understand that they are in, that the things

that matter most to them; family, love, aspiration, faith - that these things need not be defined in the shape of empire. That talent need not be executed on by the Princept for it to be valuable. Faith does not need the scaffolding of the Divine Principality. The Divine, ours or theirs or some we haven't even dreamt up yet, need not be a stand-in for the tyrant. I have... conversations I need to have. I'm sure you do too. Reach out to anyone you can think of. I'll be in touch soon.

AUSTIN: Go ahead, what were you going to say.

DRE: Just that,

DRE: (as Valence) I will.

AUSTIN: Um, and I think the sight fades a bit. And then you're back in the room that you began to project in. Um, so, you don't know who inside of the Pact ordered that attack, but you do know the Pact of Necessary Venture did it, so, here's what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna remove-- I'm gonna give you a bonus "x" in your 8-step clock here, because of just narrative, like, to address the narrative change here? But, you still have 2 more to go to figure out who particularly inside of that pact or what the structure is, where you'd be like, "alright, this is, this is exactly what happened here". Um, so. That is your turn, now we're on to... Broun! Second action.

ALI: Hi! Yeah, um, I... (laughs) I have a lot of stuff I wanna do this downtime.

AUSTIN: Uh huh?

ALI: Um, we were-- we were talking about it privately for a bit, um, and I was, I was saying how... I think Broun is in a weird place right now, in this specific point of time, where they're really hearing the top-- the clock ticking?

AUSTIN: Ah, yes.

ALI: I think that the closer anybody in this society gets to a war with Apostolos, uh, the less Broun wants to be on this planet? Um.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And that is, like, a real anxiety, that is a real fear, um, Broun has to, y'know, walk down the street and try to exist as a person within society and that's going to become a lot tougher...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: ...if shit goes off.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

ALI: (laughing) So I'm gonna start this downtime by doing a Collect, which is just Broun sort-of... um... (laughs) we're all good here!

AUSTIN: Uh huh?

ALI: Broun sort-of, like, frantically trying to collect resources to be able to use them for other stuff.

AUSTIN: So you're literally trying to add fuel to the tank so that you can do more downtime activities, so you can more quickly get out of this fuckin' place.

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay. What does this collection look like?

ALI: (laughs) Um, I'm not sure, so I'm gonna read from Collect, cause I have it open.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Choose a region to Collect from, and roll dice equivalent to its wealth rating. Gain an amount of supply points equal to the highest dice rolled, and if a crit is rolled, take 9 supply points instead. However, the supplies are not meant for you, um, if any of them come up as a 1, gain the supply points, but then immediately roll an entanglement on the table, which is what we did, uh, for Gucci. I was trying to Collect from Gucci...

AUSTIN: Right, right.

ALI: ...to be like, "heyyy, I'll do this shit for you"...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) And then an entanglement, right, yes.

ALI: ...and then it went bad, yeah. Um, which is why I should not be doing this a second time, but I like this move, and I--

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Rubbin' my hands together!

ALI: ...it makes so much sense that, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: It works in this moment. Um.

AUSTIN: You don't have to worry about the faction....

ALI: (overlapping) Who's wealthy around me?

AUSTIN: A lot of people, right? So you've-- you've kind-of two options based on the fact that you're in Orion territory, there is Oxbridge - Oxbridge is a 3 wealth, but then more broadly, if I move us back over to, like, the... the Partizan map...

ALI: Yeah, cause I remember last time, I-- it's by region and not by faction, right? Yeah.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) It's by region, right, so Oxbridge has a 3 wealth, the Orion-- the Low Slate which is all of Orion's territory, this whole region that's been kind-of dotted in here? Has a 4 wealth. So if you go out of town, there is more wealth, like, off in big factories, and, y'know, farms, and big, y'know, corporate facilities and stuff that are spread all across this lower map. Y'know, the Pyramid Planes to your south-east are, like, kinda especially wealthy subregion in, in the Low Slate that have, like, a ton of huge, uh-- again, it's like a, it's a huge agricultural district, but like, you have to think about that, not as, like, individual farmers, so much as, incredibly wealthy super-farms? Um...

ALI: Mmm.

AUSTIN: There are-- but there's just people all throughout all of Orion, uh, or not people, there are companies and trade guilds and, uh, y'know, organised, uh-- other pacts like the one, like the Pact of Necessary Venture, between, y'know, minor houses. There are straight-up houses of nobles, of Stel Orion nobels, lots of, like-- think about this in terms of, um... oh, it's right on the tip of my tongue! It's, like, go back to, like, 1880, and there's super rich people who control lots of land and territory?

DRE: Barons?

AUSTIN: Baron-- Robber barons! There are lots of robber barons.

ALI: Ohhh.

AUSTIN: That style of, like... like, modernist capitalism? Where it's just like, "yeah, this is my company town, and everyone here pays me in AustinBucks, I pay them in AustinBuck, and they pay me back in AustinBucks, and they never see *real* money, and I own all the stores here"! Uh, that is the type of place, um, and so... y'know, we-- you could tell me, do you wanna stay in Oxbridge in the city you're from to Collect, or do you wanna go out into the countryside, or, y'know, somewhere else? Um, there's lots of people who are wealthy.

ALI: Um, yeah, I-- I feel like I would rather travel out a little bit?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Just because I feel like Broun... sort-of values their reputation within their neighbourhood, y'know?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

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ALI: And also... (laughs) ...of course, I was playing the *Final Fantasy VII* remake last night.

AUSTIN: Sure.

ALI and ANDREW laugh.

ALI: And... (laughing) I do... I'm very early, don't say anything. but I got up to the part where Tifa and Cloud are sort-of going around, like, changing people's filters and asking them for money for it?

AUSTIN: Ohh, right, yes.

ALI: And I, yeah, and I do think that that's, like, a very good set-up here in terms of, like, finding something for Broun that is not sort-of... outwardly demanding, but also something that they could very easily lie about, and be like, "oh, when was the last time you checked the pistons on your... whatever."

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Right, "on all your farming equipment, or on all your..." Right, yeah yeah yeah, totally.

ALI: So I think it's sort-of a tour of... doing that shit.

AUSTIN: Yes, I love this, I love this. Alright, well, that's a 4-- you're gonna roll 4 dice, um, I'm gonna finish reading this, one second, uh, (Austin hums) ...this can be supplemented by trading supply points, uhh, you could also just trade materiel for personnel, but you don't need to do that, that's not gonna come in handy here for you, so yeah, go ahead, and just give me 4-- 4d6.

ALI: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Try not to get a 1! Do your best not to roll a 1!

ALI: Don't roll a 1.

AUSTIN: Hey! No 1! And a 6 in fact, damn! God *damn!* You got the 6, you got a 4, 3, 4, 6. That means you get 6, um, 6 supply points?

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh, an amount of supply points equal to the highest die rolled. Jesus Christ. I believe...

ALI: Perfect.

AUSTIN: ...I just wanna make sure of something here. Yes. After-- I dunno if this is in the version of the books that you're look at, this is in 0.51 - after the *first* Collect during downtime, each subsequent Collect takes a cumulative minus 1 die, as likely targets begin to take precautions. So can't just do this in-- you can't...

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...I mean, you could try again with 3 dice, and do immediately...

ALI: I remember that Tips at the Table episode! We're all good!

AUSTIN: Mhm, yeah, Austin Ramsay listened to us, and was like "I gotta fuckin, duh duh duh duh duh, lemme add that shit."

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: "Can't be gamin' me like that."

ALI: "Lemme get that *outta* there!" Yeah, um.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so... (laughs) So I'll add 6 more...

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...floating supply points. I shouldn't even say floating supply points, cause supply points are just non-declared, um, materiel and personnel. So yeah, that means you're at 10 supply points currently.

ALI: Perfect, um. And I-- it's funny cause I can't directly use that, like there's not a downtime action that's like, further your drive clock? Or is there, no?

AUSTIN: Long term project.

ALI: (overlapping) It's pro-- yeah.

AUSTIN: Which you can spend resources on, right?

ALI: Okay, um...

AUSTIN: Because you could always spend 1 personnel point to get a plus 1 die, or to increase the result by a level, basically. Um, so.

ALI: Okay, perfect, okay, cool, awesome.

AUSTIN: Yes. Um, should we wrap back around to you for how you-- so that's what you do, basically, right? You go around, and tell people that they need to get the copper finish added to-- sorry to go back to the thing you did to Valence...

ALI and DRE laugh.

AUSTIN: ...I didn't explicitly mean that! But, like, they-- people need to get the undercoating, and they don't.

ALI: (overlapping) Yeah, it's the, it's a different gamble. It's like, yeah, it's like, "oh, your, um-- the, y'know-- every two years, your, um, generator should be oiled, and I know a lot of people on this planet don't really do upkeep like that, but do you wanna give me \$20 now, or do you wanna give me \$2000 in a month when you have to call me to fix this?"

AUSTIN: Right, right, "you have to flush all the toxins out of your..."

ALI: Yes. Yeah! Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah!

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah, "...your agro-mill!" Uh-huh. Um, great, well it goes fantastic with a 6! You get paid a lot!

ALI and AUSTIN laugh.

AUSTIN: Yes. Janine says, "Broun's duct cleaning services."

ALI and DRE laugh.

AUSTIN: Um, I think part of that too, is like,

AUSTIN: (as Unnamed Farm Owner) Oh, absolutely! We need everything to be spick and span, everything needs to be perfect right now! We're churning out extra stuff, our factories need to be-- of course! We'd love a consultant!

AUSTIN: Y'know?

ALI: Uh huh.

AUSTIN: Um, and so, yeah, money-- money *runs* in.

ALI: Right. I, I--

AUSTIN: Alright, let's come back-- oh, go ahead.

ALI: Sorry, I just-- I wanna add this, cause I think that there's even a part of Broun's awareness around this, both it being an anxiety, and being something that they feel like they can take advantage of?

AUSTIN: Mmmmmm.

ALI: Of being like, "the Apostolitian forces might be coming soon, and you're gonna want this stuff to be, y'know, on top of it."

AUSTIN: *God*.

ALI: "And I'm gonna-- I'm, *I'm* the person who knows what you need against them."

AUSTIN: Mmhm. Mmhm!

ALI: Um, because it's so easy to do, that why wouldn't they make that lie, right?

AUSTIN: God, it's *miserable*. It's a nightmare, totally.

ALI: Um, yeah, it's bad!

AUSTIN: Totally. Um, uh, and also not true! Nothing that we've seen has been Apostolitian aggression to other Stels!

ALI: No!

AUSTIN: But that doesn't stop people from being like that.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, alright, uh... let's go back to Thisbe. Thisbe, you have one more action for this downtime, unless you spend resources and blah blah blah, but... What are you doin!

JANINE: So the... I don't-- what's this action called? Uh, I don't remember what the action was when we did it before, um, was it... was it Shmooze?

AUSTIN: What's the thing you wanna do? What's, like, the...?

JANINE: To contact the... the, uh, Lake Timea.

AUSTIN: Oh, the Sable Court people, yeah!

JANINE: Yeah, the Sable Court.

AUSTIN: Um, what is the-- what is the mechanical output... not output, out-- wow. Woo! Outcome, that you want from this conversation?

JANINE: This is, this is, like, Thisbe letting them know that, like, "hey, some shit's going down now".

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Cause remember, there's the whole thing of, like, "hey if you guys know any groups who might want in on this..."

AUSTIN: Totally. So.

JANINE: "Let us know".

AUSTIN: So I think that that is... I genuinely think that that might not be even a move. I think you can just *do* that? Um, that is the way the wind is blowing, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: As long as you're committed to, like, letting people know that stuff.

JANINE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: What... what should I... what should I-- I would let you Shmooze just to get, like, that added relationship basically? But there wouldn't necessarily be a, um-- I don't need you-- you can't fail that, for me, do you know what I mean?

JANINE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, so if you-- maybe that's a way of thinking about it, is like, is there a world in which you want to do something else but frame it in that frame of conversation with them, or something like that, y'know?

JANINE: No, I think this is, like, a very-- I think this is, like, a very functional thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I think this is, to Thisbe, the exact same as delivering a message to Morningbride.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool.

JANINE: It was, y'know, it was-- it stopped just short of someone saying, "hey, can you tell, can you tell them this".

AUSTIN: Yeah, yes.

JANINE: It was basically that, it was basically, "hey, if you know anyone", and Thisbe's like, "well, I know someone".

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: So it is, y'know, to her, it's the exact same thing.

AUSTIN: Let's do it as a long term project? Um, and here's what I'm gonna-- the long term project's going to be interesting here, or what it's going to be is a clock, um, I'm gonna make-- I'm gonna add a clock to the table, um, and it is gonna be a big clock. It's gonna be the biggest clock we've ever seen. It is this... giant clock. And what I'm gonna do is tick a box every time y'all are able to get someone added to this conversation, this conference, this, like, revolutionary conference that has kind-of kicked up. It starts at Oxblood Clan, Horizon, that's 2. You told Gur Sevraq, Dre?

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: That's 3, um. And then now, if you wanna do this with them, 4, you're at 4 of a maximum of 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 groups here, which I think is actually-- wait, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11... that's actually equal to the number of groups I've written down as, like, "could *these* people show up? are *these* people involved? what's going on with them?" Um, so, that's including people you've no-- you don't know, so that's not even, like-- you shouldn't feel like you *need* to fill this clock up, but the number that this gets to will be how many people-- how many groups want in on that conversation, basically. Um, uh... I'm wondering if there is, like, a, it's not

even a-- it's not even a roll for me, like, I think that you-- you telling them this is going to get them there, um, I'm just trying to see, like, is there a world in which you get to say that this was, maybe this is what we do, um. Is there a world in which this is a Train action for you or something? Y'know? Or an Enhance-- it's not an Enhance cause you're not working on a vehicle. I'm trying to get you something for this move, or you can just take a different move, if you've another thing you'd like to get done during downtime, y'know? That's also fine.

JANINE: Um, I actually have an idea of a way in which this could count as Train?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Just in terms of, like, y'know, the way that Thisbe contacted them before initially was to stand on a mountain and to broadcast a cryptic message.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: And you can't really sit on a mountain and broadcast, "hey, there's a revolution".

AUSTIN: No, you cannot.

JANINE: That doesn't work so good? So like, I wonder if this is a, if this is training Resolve in that, it requires Thisbe to, to produce and then project a much more subtle message than normal?

AUSTIN: Yeah! I like that a lot!

JANINE: Like, she has to think a lot more, uhm, non-directly and try and, like, determine-- what is a way that... and I think this is also a thing that, like, she would have to do herself, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like this is, she would have to figure out, y'know, based on her past experiences with, uh, the Sable Court, like, what is it that they will respond to that they will also identify as coming from me, that they will also be enticed into.

AUSTIN: Totally, um, I like that a lot. (reading) When you spend time bettering yourself, mark 1 attribute xp, or one playbook xp - I don't think you have-- you do not have the Resolve training upgrade or whatever, so you don't get 2, but yeah, go ahead and mark a Resolve. Um, cool! I like that a lot! Alright, Valence!

DRE: I know I'm going to Shmooze.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: I'm trying to work out who I want to Shmooze.

AUSTIN: That's a good question.

DRE: Um, cause I'm either going to Shmooze the Scrivener's Guild? Just to, like, get them so they're not fuckin on our back all the time?

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

DRE: Or... I'm tryna think if there's anybody else...

AUSTIN: If you-- so the way Shmooze works, we talked about this on our first downtime, is that it's a faction-scale thing, and not a-- not a squad-scale thing.

DRE: Ah, gotcha, okay.

AUSTIN: But if you wanted to somehow-- the mechanical one in terms of Schmoozing that would go well for you, is Kesh, because of being, you are literally a point away from getting your Kesh relationship up to level 1?

DRE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: And... that could be interesting. (laughs) Let's say.

DRE laughs.

AUSTIN: Uh, that could be *interesting*.

DRE: Um, I do love the idea of making interesting things happen.

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: Um, and for that's about, like, do you do some extra stuff with Horizon, right? Um, or something like that, y'know? To like, tighten up that, that connection somehow.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, again-- it's Kesh, so that's what the roll would be, but fictionally when we position it, it would be about Valence... y'know, is that Valence working with Oxblood and Horizon to help set up this conference that we've been talking about, y'know?

DRE: Yeah, no, that's-- that sounds...

AUSTIN: Securing a location together, and it's like, it's not that we're not rolling to do the securing-a-location part, we're rolling the Schmooze to see how well does the schmoozing-- does the hanging out around that stuff go.

DRE giggles.

AUSTIN: Y'know?

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Um, I like that, I like that a lot. Uh, so that is, uh... buh buh buh buh... choose an appropriate action, increase trust according to the result, and you can spend Personnel to add one to this-- what are you, what are you rolling?

DRE: That's what I'm now trying to think of, um.

AUSTIN: You have 1 in Consort, 2 in Sway, 1 in Interface, those are the-- Consort and Sway are the ones that come to mind most clearly? But I could imagine a world in which you told me that you were, like, the thing that you were doing to Schmooze was actually doing the work of, like, Studying? Or Surveying to find a good location or to-- you know what I mean? Like--

DRE: Yeah, I mean, that's kinda what popped to mind, especially because if Valence can, like, project themselves out...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: ...it saves a lot of foot work, and it also saves a lot of potentially, like, exposing yourself, or people being like, "man, this one person like, came around my shop the other day", "wait, they came to bother me too!", and... (laughs)

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, yes, a hundred percent, true. Alright, yeah, so give me a 3d6, um. I'm not giving you... the plus 1 from Farsight, uh, cause this is not a gather information roll, but you are getting a plus 1 from Slippery, your recon move, so it's still 3d6.

DRE: Oh, that sucks.

AUSTIN: Oof. Oof-- no, well I mean, whatever, it's-- it's only ever gonna be-- this is the thing!

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Is, even on a level-- even on a 1 here, you've rolled a 1, 3, 1 - even on that, you get one point which is enough to push Kesh up from...

DRE: Oh, that's true!

AUSTIN: ...level 0 trust to level 1 trust. Um, which is very funny to me. It's funny to me because now if someone in the Rapid Evening looks you up, they're gonna see that...

DRE laughs.

AUSTIN: ...you're in the good books with Kesh, because Gucci Garantine is going to put you in the good books for Kesh! Do you think this is a situation where it's, like, the reason that you only get a 1 from this is... you did it from your bedroom? Like...

DRE: Yeah. A hundred percent.

AUSTIN: It's like, you didn't pound the pavements.

DRE: (overlapping) This is not as good as-- yeah, this is not as good as being boots on the ground, for sure.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly, exactly. But yeah, you locate, um-- what is it? Where is this happening? Is there like, a-- what is the, what is the secure location you find where the conference of all sorts of dissidents and revolutionaries and cults and etcetera can all come to visit? And talk about if they wanna group up and do some shit together.

DRE: I mean, I heard of this new place called The Deep Dish.

AUSTIN: Okay, (laughing) it probably shouldn't be The Deep Dish!

DRE and ALI laugh.

AUSTIN: I'm-- I am going to put this in your hands in terms of, like, coming up with this-- maybe you don't have to come up with it this moment, we can sleep on this, we're not going to have that session for probably another couple of weeks, um. It should be somewhere secure, it should be somewhere where-- that's like, neutral territory? Because no-one is going to wanna go to, like... "alright, come over to-- come over to Orion's house! Where they're definitely going to be chill to duh duh duh". The stuff that you know is now available to you, in terms of, like, coming up with a cool place based on who has agreed to come here - you have Horizon's resources, you have the Oxblood Clan's, like, amount of labour, they could build something, they could, y'know-- it's sort of like having the Teamsters on your side, y'know?

DRE laughs.

AUSTIN: Um... uh, they'll just, like-- if what it costs is hours of work, they will be able to provide the hours of work. Um, you have the... the Sable Court's weird magic shit, and you have, uh, the Church of the Resin Heart's other weird magic shit. You have their, like, relationship to the communities that they're in, on the isles of Logos, but I don't know if you wanna have it at the isles of Logos, you know what I mean? Like, I, I-- you can dream up a place that's not on this map, you can find a hidden island somewhere, or you can find some place in the mountains, you can-- you tell me where we end up, in the end?

DRE: What if we just met in the middle of the Prophet's Sea?

AUSTIN: Okay. W-- Gur Sevraq has a base. Um, well. Clementine Kesh and Gur Sevraq have a base.

DRE laughs.

AUSTIN: But I don't know that we can *commit* to that like that, you know what I mean?

DRE: Mm.

AUSTIN: Um, but that-- that would be a cool (laugh) place for this to happen! Ali, you've listened to those episodes, right? Or those recordings. Or you're listening to those episodes. I guess you've not--

ALI: (overlapping) I-- Yeah, everything but the, the third part, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, um. *God*, I think we leave it open for now, and we see where it goes, but I do think the thing you just said, the, like, can we meet at the middle of the Prophet's Sea in some configuration is probably the vibe, right? Alright. Lemme-- lemme think on it, and you think on it too, and we can wrap back around. Um. What, uh, who's next? What's up, Broun, we're back around to you.

ALI: Oh, is it back to me?

AUSTIN: It is!

ALI: Okay, cool. Um... (laughs) I've cheated, so I'm going to choose to the rest of my downtime actions in pairs.

AUSTIN: Oh, sure! Uh huh!

ALI: So this-- this first one, I am going to, um, work on, I wanna Acquire an Asset, and I want to work on one of my do-- long term projects.

AUSTIN: Okay. What is the asset you're looking to acquire?

ALI: I think that I'm trying to acquire, like, a fake license?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Not, like, a fake license, but, like, an off-world... an "I own a spaceship and I should be able to move in-and-out-of-ports" license.

AUSTIN: I see, got you.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like a, like a-- yeah, like a license, like a, yeah. But not a fake one, you're saying a real one?

ALI: Right, uhm, I--

AUSTIN: But you're--

ALI: I'm saying one... (laughs) I'm not trying to go to the DMV. But I am trying to have these documents, so you... tell me, uhm.

AUSTIN: The right amount of *money* could make a legitimate one appear, right?

ALI: Sure, yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's the thing, right? It's like, you could go to the DMV and prove that you know how to pilot a-- I mean, it's not even you know-- this is the thing. This is the thing that's difficult, is, it's not just, you could go to the DMV in this world, it's, you could go to the DMV, along with your corporate sponsor, that it shows that you've passed all the tests, that says you know how to pilot a spaceship, and that you are under their contract, and blah blah blah, or... you could Acquire an Asset. So.

ALI: Yeah, I almost feel like the-- the, the first thing that my mind is reaching for is how... like, medical marijuana clinics worked in California for a little bit...

AUSTIN: Mmmmm.

ALI: ...before legalisation was full? And it was just like, there's this guy who can kind-of fill in the right forms for you.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, totally. Yeah, I think that there's definitely a degree of this where it's, like, you maybe find a-- and we'll see how the roll goes, let's start with that, um, so you're gaining temporary use of an asset, once special item or set of common items, duh duh duh duh duh, um. You might get a (mumbles)... duh duh duh duh... where is the roll, here we go! It is, you're going to roll the squad's tier, your tier is 1, the quality will be equal to your tier, which is 1 - I think you probably need a tier... you probably need a tier 2-- this only exists at tier 2 and above.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which means you need a 6 or a crit on this, *or* to spend Materiel to boost it there, right?

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ALI: Sure, yeah, it's sounding like I should roll the 1 and then spend it to make it higher.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) And then see-- yes, yes. If it-- depending on how it goes, yeah, exactly.

ALI: Oh, cause it's going to be a spend per tier.

AUSTIN: Per tier, exactly.

ALI: And it's per tier not per number, right?

AUSTIN: Correct.

ALI: So if I roll a mixed success, I can--

AUSTIN: You can still boost it there with 2 more Materiel, yeah, exactly.

ALI: Right, okay.

AUSTIN: So go ahead and give me your roll, 1d6!

ALI: It's a 4.

AUSTIN: Alright, so it's literally the thing we just said, so spend 2 Materiel to boost it up to, uh, so. I'll drop your current, um, your current ten supply down to eight supply! Um, do you want me to keep a sideboard, dya want-- of your...?

ALI: (overlapping) Yeah, I have a-- I just wrote it in chat, that my...

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: ...cause I just spend 1 to do the move and then 2 to-- for the success, and I had 6...

AUSTIN: Wait, did you spend 1 to do the move, or did you...?

ALI: I'm saying that I did 1 to spend the move, just to make it easier. Cause I'm doing two moves at once.

AUSTIN: I see. I see, I see, I see, I see, yes yes yes yes yes. Gotcha.

ALI: Yeah yeah yeah. So.

AUSTIN: So 7 left.

ALI: I'm keeping my stock and then if I have to get into the crew's bank, we'll talk about that.

AUSTIN: Gotcha, mmhm!

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: Uh, so then what was the other thing you were gonna do? So yeah, you go through the process, you pay off the right people, and you get a fancy sticker that says that you're allowed to launch-- to *pilot* a ship off of, y'know, through the Partizan gate to rest of the Divine Principality - *not*, not, quote-unquote "*The Partizan Gate*", not the one that we talk about that goes further into unknown space, the one that goes back towards the Principality.

ALI: Mmhm, okay, cool! Um, and then the other one that I want to do is work on my long-term project, which is, um, fixing the S.A.D. device.

AUSTIN: Fixing a-- oh, yes! Yes yes yes yes yes, okay. That is, that is a long term project with Engineer, right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um!

ALI: Just roll 2d6?

AUSTIN: Mmhm!

ALI: That's an 8.

AUSTIN: Well, it's a 4.

ALI: It's a 4 and a 4.

AUSTIN: A 4 and a 4, right. And that means you get two more ticks on the clock, uhh.

ALI: Okay, cool.

AUSTIN: Which does not-- oh, this is the first time you rolled it, right? Yes. Okay.

ALI: Yeah. Is there spending to increase it, or just have to do it again?

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah, totally, you could-- you could do the same thing as, as before, 1 Personnel point to add one tier, which would give you another point. Or you can spend a Personnel point to roll it again.

ALI: I need to wait 'til it's my turn again! (laughs)

AUSTIN: I think it's your turn... forever, now.

DRE: Yep! I'm done.

ALI: Yeah... oh. (laughs)

JANINE: Same! Just you!

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

ALI: Well, hi everybody.

AUSTIN laughs.

ALI: Welcome! (laughs) This is Friends at the Table! Okay, cool, perfect. I think that I will... spend one more now to roll again. That's a 4 and a 1? Okay, and that's 2 more ticks...?

AUSTIN: And that's 2 more of your-- yep, two more ticks. Exactly, which-- which *now* you gotta say, do you spend one more and just complete it?

ALI: Right. Uhm.

AUSTIN: Cause you only have one left!

ALI: Yeah, I think I'm gonna do that. And then--

AUSTIN: Okay. That's really, really, *really* useful!

ALI: I spent so much *fucking* money on this thing, though!

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh!

ALI: I guess I-- a lot of the money that I spent was for the-- the thing. But, this was not a good deal on my... (laughing)

AUSTIN: Well, you could always Collect again! So wait, this is a stealth audio device, this, like, makes it silent, right? Um, which is perfect because, I wanna tell you, they are one-- they were one tick away from getting their personal goal, or their, like, squad goal, which was to completely, um, to basically completely create an undetectable coven? Um, so you've done it for them, you've given them that last tick that they need to create their-- to completely hide their coven, and protect the Sable Court, kind of indefinitely? Which, nice work. And in exchange, what are they giving you? What's the thing that you wanted? It was resources for your drive clock, basically, right?

ALI: Yeah, it was, um, I think the original arrangement we'd made was that, like, I would fix this thing and then they would give me something back that they didn't need?

AUSTIN: Yes, totally.

ALI: And what you had initially suggested there was like, "oh, we have this extra Rolls Royce that we don't use, cause we're...", y'know. Yeah.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Right, yeah, that's busted up, but is, is in... so yeah. You get, like, a... y'know, they're gonna ship over to you some sort of tiny frigate, y'know?

ALI: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: A space frigate, a-- a spaceship, um, that, that needs some work, um, and the reason--

ALI: Oh, this is a spaceship?

AUSTIN: Right? Wasn't that-- or, you're saying, you were saying a literal Rolls Royce.

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: You weren't saying, like, a fighter ship. Or-- a ship, you were saying, like, a car.

ALI: Wh-- If this is an understanding from three weeks ago, that's fine, I will take the spaceship. I will take a very shitty spaceship.

AUSTIN: Well, you-- the thing is, you can't own a spaceship that works, cause your Drive is to own a spaceship, right?

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: So maybe if what you're trying to do is the game of, like, let me fix up this car, and then I'll sell that *car*, and then lemme fix up whatever I got from that *car*...

ALI: Yeah, right.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean? You could do that trading game, you could do the-- I'm gonna trade this, this, um, paperclip until I get a house, like that's a thing you could try here.

ALI: Right, (laughing) Yes yes yes. Yeah, I-- I would definitely kind-of meet you in the middle there cause I think the original thing with Broun was being like "oh, do you have any, just, spare parts that you don't need, because that's the thing that I-- that's the thing that's valuable to me."

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Um, whereas a car is sort of whatever?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Um, but yeah, I-- I don't think that they have a spaceship right now, It's beyond-- yeah.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) No, okay, then, then-- yeah, so then yeah, it's like, a very fancy...

ALI: It's maybe a whole process.

AUSTIN: ...it's a very fancy transport vehicle that they are going to, to give you a... they're giving you in exchange for fixing this, like, stealth audio dampener or whatever, y'know?

ALI: Perfect.

AUSTIN: Okay! Uh, wh--

ALI: Is it another move to start a long term project?

AUSTIN: Starting a long term project is a move, correct.

ALI: Okay. And what would you think...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) And that, I believe, costs you a Personnel point.

ALI: Yeah, and what would you think it would be for this, would it be, like...?

AUSTIN: This is a 4-step, if you're...

ALI: ...collect the funds, okay.

AUSTIN: ...if you're, like, if you're-- and I say this, this is a very specific thing that's weird, is like, this is-- this is a lower clock than the previous clock because stealth audio devices are much rarer and harder to work on than a fancy car in your town filled with fancy people, y'know?

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: And flipping it, and all the stuff that would go into that, for sure.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: You can clear these other projects-- once we, once you fill up a whole thing, you shouldn't feel bad about clearing a project out from the list.

ALI: Okay, perfect. Perfect! Thank you!

AUSTIN: There you go. And I advanced your drive clock there for that one. And I've-- and you know what, I'll advance it again...

ALI: Perfect.

AUSTIN: Well, yeah, I'll advance it again for getting the license, which is-- I'm, I'm... that's the only time you can just do an Acquire an Asset to get that, and I'm gonna, I'm gonna just make a note here that this is, like, if you somehow lose that license...

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: (typing) ...lose X in clock.

ALI: Alright, I guess that's...

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Um, okay! So I'm starting a new--

AUSTIN: So, like, "fix luxury vehicle" or something like that?

ALI: Yeah, so my, the wording I ended up on was "fix up transport to get funds to save up for ship", uh, "spaceship finances".

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

ALI: Uh, which is, like, to have the piggy bank full, not so much to--

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

ALI: ...yeah, okay, cool, perfect. Um, and in that case...

AUSTIN: Love it.

ALI: ...with my final two moves. Well, I-- wait. That was...

AUSTIN: Mmhm. No! That was--

ALI: ...a move to start that.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And then I have one more to spend.

AUSTIN: You have one supply left, yeah.

ALI: Yeah, and I would like to... well the-- yeah. I would like to--

AUSTIN: Or-- wait-wait-wait, roll those dice. Cause, cause, sorry, it doesn't cost a whole separate one to... start one.

ALI: Ohhh, to start one, okay.

AUSTIN: It's not like, start one and then-- so go ahead and roll your... Engineer, I guess. Damn! That's a 6!

ALI: 6.

AUSTIN: You go-- you're goin at it! That fills by thr-- filled by three.

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: Doesn't fill all the way up, but...

ALI: Ohhh, my poor stressed Broun.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ALI: Um, what is-- that fills up three?

AUSTIN: Yeah, so next downtime...

ALI: Perfect.

AUSTIN: ...you'll be able to fill that up, for sure.

ALI: Perfect. Um and I think on my final action, I want to... um, reduce-- I wanna cut loose with Valence.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a good idea, can we...? Can we... one second. Um.

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: Before you do that, cause you're off doing that shit, right?

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: You're off doing that shit, Valence is-- sorry, Thisbe is learning how to, um, communicate clandestinely with, with the Sable Court, um, and Valence, you've been scouting things out. Um, uh, and... I think the idea-- you float that idea, of doing something in the middle of the sea, right?

DRE: Mmhm?

AUSTIN: And... I think, I think that Gur Sevraq is going to connect you to... uh, the person who has a giant battle station that can move into the middle of the sea, and that person is Clementine Kesh. God, how does this meeting come about, in which you're going to propose this to Clementine Kesh, Valence? How do you identify the part of the sea that is the right place to have a meeting where no-one will be able to find it?

DRE: Ohhhh, um!

AUSTIN: Is it like-- seeing shipping routes, or seeing military movements and being like "no-one goes to this one place, coincidentally"?

DRE: Yeah, or it's the equivalent of, like, what's the Bermuda Triangle in the Prophet's Sea?

AUSTIN: Yeah, good call. What is the Bermuda Triangle of the Prophet's Sea?

DRE and ALI laugh.

AUSTIN: Um. Looking at this cool map that Annie drew, as if-- as if it's going to reveal itself to me!

DRE cackles.

AUSTIN: Which is-- y'know! What Valence did, actually, right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, what if it is literally where Annie has drawn "Prophet's Sea" and drawn a bunch of waves, cause it's like, especially turbulent there?

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Y'know? Let's-- let's go with that. Oh! What if it's-- what if it *is* there, and that is where the Resin Heart was recovered.

DRE: Oh, yeah! Sure!

AUSTIN: Y'know? Um, uh, so yeah, it's like, the "E" in where it says "Prophet's Sea" here. So that's-- that's, you've figured that out, you tell that to Gur Sevraq, you tell that to Horizon and to, uh, to the Oxblood Clan, presumably, right?

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: How... Clementine, or Valence, uh, does Gur Sevraq, I guess, make this meeting of the minds happen, between Valence and Clem? I'm guessing it's-- it's not, cause like, there isn't a telephone you two can get onto, um, but there-- you are a weird psychic.

DRE: Yeah, but in order for me to speak telepathically, someone has to have a revealing interaction with me.

AUSTIN: With you, yeah, which has not happened, certainly. Um.

DRE: Um, I don't know if there's a way that, like, Gur Sevraq could be, like, the bridge here?

AUSTIN: That's possible. Um, you could also have... an incredible, and I don't know how this works with the timeline, but an incredible meeting on the isles of Logos with both of you in, like, beach wear. Um, at like a-- at like an umbrella drinks place, you know what I'm sayin?

JACK: I mean, I'm on board-- do you remember how the last episode that I recorded *ended*??

AUSTIN: I *do*! And I don't know what that means for you, you're gonna have to tell me what that means for you.

JACK: God, it was like a real moment of high tension on the bridge of Icebreaker Prime.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um, and like, does Clem kind-of just, like, leave afterwards?

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JACK: Like, tries to get out, tries to, like, get them out of her hair by going far away, or, like-- I dunno, like, is it just like--?

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah, well, and then is this the op-- is this the moment where Gur Sevraq says, "oh, good, you're already at Logos, you're already at the isles of Logos, there's someone I need you to meet there, they need approval to use Icebreaker Prime" and, like, trying to basically-- not get on your good graces again, but put you in that position where you feel like you get to make a decision.

JACK: Right. Even though the decision has probably been made for me by Gur Sevraq already.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, yeah. We-- Janine. Jack, can you read what Janine... you're not in the chat right now.

JANINE: Jack can't read it.

JACK: (overlapping) I'm about to be.

AUSTIN: Only because I need you to read what Janine said as if-- and just, read it out loud, cold read.

JACK: Okay, "I don't suppose Clementine's favourite watering hole is the 'Deep Dish Steakhouse'."

AUSTIN: Uh huh! That's their... new, loyal bar. The Deep Dish Steakhouse, uh, deep in Oxbridge--

JACK: You guys have a *bar*?!

AUSTIN: Oh yeah! (cackles)

DRE: Uh huh.

JANINE laughs.

AUSTIN: It's different over here, Clem!

JACK: Wow! Okay! Right, yeah, is this, like, *God*...

AUSTIN: I just want you to know, real quick also, there was a surgery roll in this session?

JACK: Oh, how did it go?

AUSTIN: Broun had *two dice* to roll on, to do this surgery.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Both of them were sixes.

ALI: Yep! (laughs)

JACK: *Hoooooly* shit! So is this... you know how impossibly rich people-- oh! *Oh!* It's, um, all these fuckers, these rich fuckers who are, like, stranded-- "*stranded*" on holiday right now, right?

AUSTIN: Ohh, right, yes!

JACK: You know how, like, they're able to interpret crisis as, as vacation?

AUSTIN: Uh huh?

JACK: Like, I wonder to what extent Clem is just, like-- like, the fact that this is a moment of colossally high tension aboard Icebreaker Prime, *and* Clem is going on a beach holiday? Are mutually, like, they fit together perfectly in Clem's mind.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: She's like, "of course! I *have* to have a break, and I'm (laughing) gonna do it on a beach"!

AUSTIN: On a beach! Yeah, uh huh! Perfect. Um, so yeah! Do you actually take a skiff out, or a boat out, to... to, I guess this changes some of your previous thing, here, um. You know what it is? How about this, Valence, where it's like, you located the spot with your mind's eye, but you can't have this pre-meeting meeting via telepathy.

DRE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: You need to actually bring people together to have this, this meeting, right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, and, and-- the chief one, the first person you need to speak to here to get them on board is Clem. Um, and, uh, that is... this is gonna be interesting! Um, there's a-- a nice deck, it's like a white wooden deck, looking out onto a beach, um, there are gulls in the air. Clementine Kesh, what are you drinking, and what are you wearing?

JACK: Um, oh my *God*. I, I was--

AUSTIN: I'm sorry, I'm sorry I sprung this on you!

JACK: (overlapping) I was playing *Animal Crossing* ten minutes ago! I didn't know I had to pick *beachwear*!

AUSTIN laughs.

JACK: I'll, I will-- I will get back to you, and we'll...

AUSTIN: Okay, that's fine.

JACK: We'll put this on Twitter.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I think, I *think*, y'know, like a one-piece swimsuit, and sunglasses, but you can't see the sunglasses because she is wearing a large sun hat over her face?

AUSTIN: Of course!

JACK: And lying on a sun lounger, um, and is drinking something out of a... space coconut!

AUSTIN: Got it. Yeah.

JACK: Do they have coconuts in space?

AUSTIN: We'll find out! (laughs) They do, but they're, like, a slightly different color, like instead of brown and green, they're brown and...

JANINE: Orange.

AUSTIN: Orange. Oooh, that-- that looks and sounds good to me, actually.

JACK: Oh, *wow*.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: And let's roll for 3 ingredients for this cocktail...

AUSTIN laughs.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's the--

ALI: There's, like, a slightly softer texture on the weird coconut hair?

AUSTIN: Mhm?

JACK: Oh! Ohh. I don't know that I like that!

ALI & DRE giggle.

JANINE: It's just fur, it's just, like, thick...

ALI: (overlapping) It's very nice, it's very comfortable for your hand.

JACK: (overlapping) That'd be worse!

JANINE: (overlapping) ...it's like a beaver fur coconut?

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: I don't like the... words you said, for me.

DRE: Uh. I don't like those.

3:00:25

AUSTIN: Alright, I'm gonna need! A d100 from everyone on this call.

DRE: Dang, I don't even get to talk about Valence's beachwear?

AUSTIN: Well, I wanna finish the drink first!

DRE: Oh, that's, that's true, okay.

AUSTIN: And then we'll get to-- promise, I *promise* I want to know what Valence is wearing.

JACK: I have rolled! A 28, that is an appalling roll.

AUSTIN: Okay!

JACK: On a D100.

AUSTIN: "Grapefruit Juice, Pink". Already, in the-- we're in the right vibe! Alright! Dre, what did you roll?

DRE: 74!

AUSTIN: 74, this is... uh, Falernum liqueur. I don't know what Falernum is! It is--

JANINE: It sounds like a part of a nose!

AUSTIN: It does.

JACK: Mmm.

AUSTIN: Sorry-- Falor-- Falernum. Falernum is a syrup liqueur or non-alcoholic syrup from the Carribean! It is best known for (laughing) tropical drinks! It contains flavours of ginger, lime and almond, and is often--

ALI: Yummy!

AUSTIN: ...cloves or allspice. It may be thought of as a spicier version of Orgeat-- Orgeat syrup, which is, like, that, um... yeah. Okay. Yes. Okay! So far, we're doing alright!

JACK: (overlapping) This is an excellent cocktail!

AUSTIN: So far, this is just a real cocktail! Great. Uh, I need-- what are the other numbers? What else we got? We need, I need two more D100s!

ALI: Oh, this is everybody. Okay.

AUSTIN: Oh, *yeah*, all 4. We're mixin' a drink here.

ALI: 56.

AUSTIN: The 56th ingredient is Blue Cur-- curaçao liqueur.

ALI: Oooh, perfect.

AUSTIN: Uh, which, *again*, I feel like is still in the realm, I feel like we're mixing a lot of flavors now, but, but it's not off the table. What is the--

ALI: Are we just splitting one of those giant, like, fishbowl monstrosities (laughing) for the table?

AUSTIN: I think so, I think so. Wait-- sorry...

JACK laughs.

AUSTIN: I want to be clear, y'all are rolling-- I don't know that you're *here*.

ALI: Fair.

AUSTIN: But if you wanna be here, that's fun!

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: But... we'll-- I guess we'll talk.

JANINE: I *do* have that sarong.

AUSTIN: You *do* have that sarong. What is the last ingredient?

JANINE: 15, which if this was an official, official drink mixing tabletop game, I think would be bartender spit.

AUSTIN: Eugh, gross. It's apple juice. (laughing)

ALI: Ooooooh.

JACK: Oh!

AUSTIN: It's apple juice.

JANINE: That's cute! That's cute.

AUSTIN: That's cute! So, apple juice, uh, Cra-- I don't know how to pronounce this word, I've never--

JACK: Is it [cah-cow]?

AUSTIN: Cr-- well, it isn't. [curr-a-shoh]? [curr-a-show]? [cor-a-sow]? Anyway, it is, it's c-u-r-a-c-a-o, right? Uh, then, um... what was it? Uh, (pronounces differently) Falernum? Falernum? I don't know how to pronounce that. F-a-l-e-r-n-u-m. And... gra-- was it grapefruit liqueur, was the first one?

JACK: Yeah!

AUSTIN: There you go! Grapefruit juice. Love it! I would drink this! Um, so yeah, who is here? I think it's, I *think* it's probably Valence and Clem, I bet... it's not a big group trip for this one. I bet this, this has to be a little more clandestine than that, right?

ALI: That s-- yeah. I, yeah.

JANINE: Thisbe is probably on a mountain somewhere, y'know?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think this is, like, while those other longer term actions were happening, this is happening. So Valence, what is your beachwear?

DRE: Alright, I got a couple-- a couple images to drop here.

AUSTIN: I'm excited.

DRE: Um, so--

AUSTIN: Make sure you drop em in general Partizan chat here.

DRE: Oh, yeah, good call. Um, so Valence normally wears, like, a very thick long robe?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

DRE: They are still wearing something akin to a robe, but it's a much lighter, flow-y fabric? Um, I found this pattern, and I think it goes really well with the previously established color palette for Valence?

AUSTIN: Ooooh, wow!

DRE: Umm...

AUSTIN: This is, like, a pink and blue, uh, and some purples in there, and...

JACK: Oh, wow!

AUSTIN: It's like, um, it's like the robe has been, like, subdivided into-- it's like stained glass, or, like, a bunch of tightly packed stones, like, with hard lines between them? It's very pretty.

DRE: And I think it's just got a big... flow-y trail to it, like that.

AUSTIN: Unbelievable.

DRE: And sure, we'll give Valence a very big sun hat too.

AUSTIN: Love it.

DRE: And, of course, their wolf mask.

AUSTIN: Their wolf mask is still on, with their gem in their ear.

DRE: Mmhm! Yep.

AUSTIN: And all that. Love it. What a fuckin' look! Uhm, alright! Well, the two of you meet, uhm. You're just told where to go, Valence? And there's just a person, sitting-- I would guess that Gur Sevraq would have told you that you were there to meet, um, the princess that they mentioned before? Um, and that the princess is the one who has, has kind-of technical control of the station, of this fortress that they're living on. Um, and here she is!

DRE: Oh gosh, do we have, like, a weird, like, sign-countersign thing set up?

AUSTIN: Oh, you must! Right?

DRE: Wh-- what would this be for the Rapid Evening? Because I think the Rapid Evening people would be far more likely to have that kinda thing set up.

AUSTIN: It's cute that you say "the Rapid Evening people", as if there was anything like solidarity on the side of the Rapid Evening.

DRE laughs.

JACK: I think it's, um... oh, what do you think Gur Sevraq has told you to say, I think that's the actual question.

DRE: Oh, man.

JACK: Cause I know what Clementine says in response.

DRE: (as Valence) Um, how long until sunset?

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Who are you, and why are you on my beach?

AUSTIN cackles, DRE giggles.

DRE: Uh, I think Valence (laughs) kinda fidgets and says, um,

DRE: (as Valence) Uh... how long do you think until sunset?

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) I take it you're the person I've been sent to meet.

DRE: (as Valence) I... don't know.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) My name is Clementine Kesh, I represent the Rapid Evening.

DRE: (as Valence) Okay, then, yes. I'm Valence.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Good.

DRE: (as Valence) Um, how's your drink?

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Excellent. Thank you. What can I do for you, Valence?

DRE: (as Valence) There are a group of people who need to meet discreetly, and Gur Sevraq told me that you might have the means to give us a physical space to take up, within the Prophet's Sea.

AUSTIN: Jack, before you respond, I need to tell you something very important that the party achieved in the moment before you got on the call that I only just remembered, and is worth

saying out loud. Which is, that they have *literally* as equal a reputation among Stel Kesh as *you* do.

ALI and JACK laugh.

AUSTIN: So, when Valence, or when Gur Sevraq said “there’s this person named Valence who’s gonna come meet you, they represent the Society of Banners and Bright Returns”, you would have looked that up, y’know, and, oh wow! Okay! They’ve done a lot of work, they’ve-- they’ve done a lot of work with House Brightline.

JACK laughs.

AUSTIN: But it’s positive, and it seems to be generic repairs, and, like, there’s no... there’s no flags because, remember, you don’t know shit about what House Brightline *really* gets up to. Um, and your beef is only with Gucci, y’know?

JACK: Right, right, right.

AUSTIN: Uh, so, it’s like, okay, they’re in good standing, is a thing I just *needed* to make sure was clear, cause they *literally* earned it, and this is the circumstance in which it’s a lever on which they can pull a little bit.

JACK: Yeah, absolutely! So I think Clementine takes the hat off her face? Uh, and sits up in her chair.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Valence, all sorts of people want to have clandestine meetings, all over the red moon of Partizan. I would ask that you would be a little more specific.

DRE: Um, where is-- what is Clementine sitting on right now?

JACK: Uh, like a sun lounger.

DRE: Okay, I think Valence sits on the one-- is there one next to her? Or is Clementine the kind of person who would, like...

AUSTIN laughs.

DRE: ...move all the (laughing) ones away?

JACK: I think it’s, it’s, uh... oh, yeah, no, let’s say it’s a parasol, the lounger that Clem is on, and then another one, in case, y’know, the light or the shade would be better on the second sunlounger.

AUSTIN giggles.

DRE: Sure. Um, I think Valence sits down there and says,

DRE: (as Valence) There is a group of people who are seeking to upend the way things work around here.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Hm. Continue.

DRE: (as Valence) It's people from... different Stels, different organisations that... want to help uplift the people who don't have a voice, uh, get walked all over...

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Yes?

DRE: (as Valence) A revolution.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Uh, I'm sorry?

DRE: (as Valence) We want to start a revolution.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Against whom?

DRE: I think Valence kind-of, like... (laughing) vaguely gestures around?

AUSTIN laughs.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) And Gur Sevraq told you to speak to me?

DRE: (as Valence) Yes.

AUSTIN: And the image flashes in your head, again, Clementine. You, adored by so many people.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Valence, have you heard of Fort Icebreaker.

DRE: (as Valence) No! It sounds impressive.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) It is the front line of the Apostolitian defence. A vast mobile fortress patrolling up and down the north-eastern border of Apostolitian territory. Or at least, it was, until about 72 hours ago, when myself and my unit, following a pitched battle, captured it for the Rapid Evening. Does this sound like the kind of location you

might be looking for, to... begin to make moves towards this revolution of which you speak?

DRE: (as Valence) That sounds perfect. Assuming it's sea-worthy.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) I don't know whether or not it's sea-worthy, that stuff I...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Oh, it is. It is, it is, I-- you, or are you hiding this, or is this-- okay.

JACK: Clem... I think she's just, the--

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) I usually leave that stuff to other people, we have engineers on board. I'm sure that they would tell me if it, if it weren't sea-worthy. It's not exactly comfortable.

JACK: And she kind of gestures around herself.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Hence.

AUSTIN laughs.

AUSTIN: It's not exactly a private *beach*!

DRE and JACK laugh.

DRE: (as Valence) I think that's okay, we're not planning to move in.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Your presence aboard Icebreaker Prime would, were it to be discovered, of course, signal to Stel Apostolos that you were planning to move against them. Is this something that you would be comfortable with?

DRE: (as Valence) I thought you said you stole it, and so it was yours now?

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Yes, but I think that if Stel Apostolos sees *anybody* aboard Icebreaker Prime, they will begin to move against them.

DRE: (as Valence) Does that include you?

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Of course it does, I wouldn't have stolen it, otherwise.

DRE: (as Valence) Okay, that makes sense. Then I guess, sure.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) And what loyalties do you have to Stel Kesh?

DRE: (as Valence) The only sort-of loyalty I have with House Kesh is... (sighs) we've been in good standing, um, we've done work with, um, House Whitestar.

AUSTIN: Uh, Brightline, unless that was an intentional...

DRE: No, yes, House Brightline.

AUSTIN: You're good.

JACK: (laughing) It would have been a very different response.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah.

DRE: (overlapping) Yeah.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) You would need to be prepared to throw that away.

DRE: (as Valence) Are you not on good terms with Gucci Garantine?

AUSTIN laughs.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Is she here?

DRE: (as Valence) *God* no.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Wait, are you on good terms with Gucci Garantine?

DRE: (as Valence) If by "good terms" you mean, she tries to... moralise to me about war while also worshipping a machine of death, then yes, I'm good terms with Gucci Garantine.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) I don't know *what* you are talking about.

AUSTIN cackles.

DRE: (as Valence) We're on good terms, as far as she trusts us to get a job done, I don't *like* her.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Okay, well, um. I do, so...

AUSTIN laughs.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) So I think that's probably going to be a point of tension between us.

AUSTIN: Ohhh, it's beautiful!

DRE: I think Valence shrugs and says,

DRE: (as Valence) It didn't stop me from saving her life several times. The last time I was with her.

JACK: Clem is just-- Clem was just looking at her, like, space Instagram feed?

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

JACK: Which has, like, 4 of her rich friends *and* Gucci Garantine on?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: This is like, this is like... this is like finding one of your friends knows, like, someone you went to school with, completely independently.

AUSTIN: Well, not just that, but like, someone who was in your, like, econ class, y'know?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, someone who, like, always turned her homework on time and was part of student government, y'know?

JACK: Is, like, having her life saved by this wolf-masked...

AUSTIN: Uh huh, person, yeah. Uh huh!

JACK: Beachwear-wearing...

AUSTIN: Yes.

DRE giggles.

JACK: Bu--and I think that it is, it is such a strange thing, that like, if only for her peace of mind, Clem, like, files it away as something to be turned over later?

AUSTIN: Mhm! Mhm.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Icebreaker Prime. Where do you want it?

DRE: (as Valence) The middle of the Prophet's Sea.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Well I'm sure... I'm sure we could look into that. And what's in it for us?

DRE: (as Valence) What are you looking for?

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Loyalty.

DRE: (as Valence) To what end?

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) It doesn't concern you.

AUSTIN laughs.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) You are asking me to turn over the prize flagship of Stel Apostolos to you.

DRE: (as Valence) I'm asking to rent a conference room. And it's not just me asking, it's Gur Sevraq asking.

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) Well, they could have asked me themselves - Valence, the most powerful weapon in Apostolos' defensive line is not a conference room. I'm sure that we could find rooms for you somewhere in the Winter Palace in Cruciat...

DRE: (as Valence) Why did you come? What did you need out of this?

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) A holiday.

DRE: (as Valence) Why did you come to meet me? If you're this dismissive, and arrogant, and claiming that you don't need anything from us, why did you bother?

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) I beg your pardon?

DRE: (as Valence) We both need something. You know what I need. What do you need?

JACK: (as Clementine Kesh) There is a throne at the end of a red room in Cruciat's Winter Palace. Before the year's out, I intend to be seated on it. Right now, I could use another drink.

AUSTIN: I think that's a scene, if Valence is good with it.

DRE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: Okay, I'm gonna advance the conference members clock to 5 as the Rapid Evening commits. Jack, thank you.

JACK: Ooo-ee. Of course! That was a lot of fun! It's nice to-- I didn't anticipate having a beach episode!

AUSTIN: You got one, congrats!

JACK: Yeah! I got a beach episode!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! Broun, what else are you doing in this rush of activity?

ALI: You know, I've been busy. I've been doing a lot of...

AUSTIN: I know!

ALI: ...work, um. I think it's time to cut loose!

AUSTIN: Oh, it *is* time to cut loose! That's true, cause you have 4 stress, Valence has none, Thisbe has 3. But, Thisbe, you straight-up can't cut loose--

JANINE: I can't cut loose, no.

AUSTIN: ...without taking a scar. So, uh.

ALI: Yeah, I have 6, so I'm right in the spot where I should clear it.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) You're right on the-- oh, boy! Okay, yep!

ALI: Yep, I mean, I was considering *not* doing it, and then I was like, but then if I get an early...

AUSTIN: Yeah, no, you're right.

ALI: ...knockout, it's gonna be a whole thing, yeah.

AUSTIN: So who are you cutting loose with? Valence, you said?

ALI: Yes, I would like to cut loose with Valence.

AUSTIN: Alright.

ALI: I think it's a similar thing to the-- the, Thisbe-Broun downtime from last episode where it's, like, Broun ready to leave on their own... (laughs)

AUSTIN: Uh huh...!

ALI: Like, going to the door, putting their coat and shoes on, but then, like, seeing Valence in, like, a group area, and being like,

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Hey, I'm about to go out, uh, actually, I was gonna go to this bathhouse and I know that they have these, like, oil baths? They might help the, um, adjustment to the... work, I did.

DRE: (as Valence) Oh... oh! Um, yeah, that sounds... that sounds great...!

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Sure, um, I'm... leaving. Are you ready?

AUSTIN laughs.

DRE: (as Valence) Uh, yeah, sure!

ALI laughs.

ALI: Yeah, I, so yeah, I... god, I had this, like, I wanted to do this downtime, because I had this very specific vision, um, in my mind of like, being able to go to a big building with a bunch of separate rooms that have separate baths in them? But you have this, sort-of, like, big open, like, welcoming area, and they have... you know when you can buy bulk greens or, um, if you go to a hotel and they have those weird little spinny things for the cereal that they give out?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

ALI: I was imagining those, but with, like, with different flower petals and different salts.

AUSTIN: Oooh.

ALI: And, like, different add-ins to the water, so you can kind-of go to your own bath and customise it, and then, like, vibe for a bit. Um, so (laughs) I think there's also, there's probably, like, a mixed area? Um, but Broun is a weirdo who doesn't wanna be around people, so is going to the private area? And I think that the reason this might make sense with Valence, um, (laughs) I spent a long time writing about the Force? And I think that--

AUSTIN: Ah. Mm.

ALI giggles.

AUSTIN: From St-- uh, Star Wars.

ALI: (laughing) I had a whole thing for Star Wars. Um, and I don't know that, like, Valence's situation is the same? But I think that there's... there's the, there's the version of Broun being like, "oh, I'm, y'know, I'm chilling. Um, oh! I wonder how Valence is doing. I wonder if they, like, figured out the... how to turn the... whatever".

AUSTIN: How to turn the oil bath on, and add the right amount of copper flakes, or whatever goes into a robot's oil bath.

ALI: Um, right. Um, and then just trying to, like (laughs) see how hard they can think about Valence to be like, "yo!" Like, just like...

AUSTIN, DRE and ALI laugh.

ALI: In their mind, just being, like, "Vaaaaalence!"

DRE: "You *up*?"

AUSTIN and ALI cackle.

AUSTIN: Yeah, god!

ALI: Ahhhh.

AUSTIN: Well? Valence, does it work like that? Is that a thing?

ALI wheezes.

DRE: I think normally it wouldn't? But with Broun having, like...

ALI: Fair.

DRE: ...literally touched the closest that is to Valence's brain - yeah, probably?

3:20:10

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Valence?

DRE: (as Valence) H-- wh-- oh!

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Oh, hey!

DRE: (as Valence) ...huh.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Hey!

ALI laughs.

DRE: (as Valence) Hi.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) How's it going? I just wanted-- uhm, the heating is weird on this? Um, I-- I always forget that it's left is the heat, cause it's not labelled correctly.

DRE: (as Valence) *Ohhh*.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) So I wanted to check that you're... yeah.

AUSTIN giggles.

DRE: (as Valence) No, this... this is, uh, this is-- I appreciate you inviting me!

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Sure! H--

ALI: And Broun, like, now realises (laughing) they don't know how to shut this off! And is having that same sensation of, like, "oh, there's someone in my brain, I have to fill my brain with things", um.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Ho-- how's it going?

DRE: (as Valence) Um, g-- good? I...

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Right.

DRE: (as Valence) I've never had *this* happen before.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) What?

DRE: (as Valence) Well... I shouldn't say that. I've had other Nobel be the first to reach, I've never had... someone be the first to reach for me that wasn't... Nobel.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Oh. Oh! Ohwowowowoah! Oh! I called *you*!

DRE: (as Valence) Yeah.

AUSTIN laughs.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Oh, *right!* Um... well, hi.

DRE: (as Valence) Well, did you not mean to?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) No-- well, I... wanted to see if I *could*.

DRE: (as Valence) I... guess you can!

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Hey!

DRE: (as Valence) ...hi.

ALI & AUSTIN laugh.

ALI: Great. (laughs) I don't know, I don't know if there's, like... I, like, a heart-to-heart to be had here. But I, I do think there's... Broun is such a closed-off person that I think having them sort-of... I w-- (laughs) I think kind-of having them boxed in a corner here to be forced to talk is... is interesting? And I, I'm comfortable using that phrasing, cause it's them doing it to themselves, and not Valence... doing it to them, right?

DRE: Yeah.

ALI: Where, like, they-- this is probably the most open and honest that Valence has gotten Broun to be, just in terms of, like, finally forcing Broun into the position where they feel like they have to speak. Um, instead of, like, easily being able to duck out of those, even just the, like, "oh, the weather's been weird" sort-of situations, right? Um. And I also think that there's something very... stress-relieving about being like, "oh! I'm impressive!"

DRE laughs.

DRE: Yeah! Fair.

ALI: (laughing) "I did this thing!" Uhm, I'm cool with just, like, zooming out here, but I don't wanna, like, take the camera away if there's more Valence has.

DRE: I mean, I think the only thing that... that Valence would say, because now-- there's twice now that Broun has, like, been talking telepathically with Valence and is like, seemingly very anxious about it, um. And I think, so Valence would say...

DRE: (as Valence) You-- I... I told you earlier that this, it's not like it's... (sighs) It's not always on, and I can't, I can't see anything you don't want me to see, Broun, I'm not gonna go looking for something, rooting for something.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Oh. Oh!

DRE: (as Valence) I don't even know if I could if I wanted to.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Right, well... but is it like a phonecall?

DRE: (as Valence) (sighs)

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Wait, okay, let me know if you can hear this. (...)

DRE: (as Valence) ...n-no? What are you...?

AUSTIN laughs.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Okay.

DRE: (as Valence) What was I supposed to hear?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Ah-- I was just... okay. Mmm.

ALI laughs.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I was thinking of something, but I was thinking about how I didn't want you to know about it.

DRE laughs.

DRE: (as Valence) Then... yeah, I couldn't hear it.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Oh, sick, okay. Can you... wait. Can you... can you hear the number I'm thinking of right now? 9. 9. 9. 9.

AUSTIN laughs.

DRE: (as Valence) Well, hold on, how many 9s are in the number? Is it, like, 9,999 or...?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Oh. No, okay, it was just 9. Okay.

DRE: (as Valence) Okay.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Okay. What about now? (...) 10.

DRE: (as Valence) Oh, 10, okay.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Oh! Fuck! Okay. Sure, okay. Um.

DRE: (as Valence) That took a while. You don't, it's not like-- did you feel bad that I wouldn't be able to guess it, and so that's why you...?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) *Maybe.*

DRE: (as Valence) You're... the only person that knows.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) About the mind stuff, or the cloud stuff?

DRE: (as Valence) Uh, the... the "cloud stuff". (laughs)

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Oh, sure.

AUSTIN laughs.

DRE: And I think Valence does genuinely laugh at that.

ALI laughs.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Yeah... I-- you don't see a lot of clouds around, so I understand.

DRE: (as Valence) I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Oh, I don't care.

AUSTIN cackles.

DRE: (as Valence) I appreciate that about you.

ALI laughs.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Well I--

ALI: I'm, um (laughing) realising that this has come to that point. Um, I think Broun's like,

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Well, I'm-- um, glad I was able to help you out. I should get going.

DRE: (as Valence) Okay!

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Yeah. Well, bye!

DRE: (as Valence) Bye...!

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: And then there's no other conversation while you're in the-- in the baths?

ALI: I... (laughs)

AUSTIN: Does it slip back? Is it one of those, like, seven minutes pass, or three minutes passes?

ALI: I, like-- there was that, like, moment, where I was thinking of a punchline, but I don't know what it would be.

AUSTIN: It's like a ques-- like a-- "do you remember the name of that book with duh-duh-duh?", like, one of those?

DRE and ALI laugh.

AUSTIN: Yknow?

ALI: Um... oh! I think I know what it is. Um. Fu... sure. I think that it... (laughing) it's so funny! I... I'm saying this out loud, and I'm like, in my head, I'm like "I don't want this to sound too romantic"! But I think that there's-- I *think* that the version of this that seems like, the way that it slips is that, like, Valence and Broun are walking home after the situation or whatever, and like, Broun is like, "oh, let me stop here and get some bread before we get back", but they say it telepathically instead of vocally? Um, if that... feels... good? (laughs) I dunno!

DRE: Yeah!

ALI: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Um, yeah.

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: That's good!

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: I'm here for it! Uhm. Alright, that's your last move, right? Unless you start dipping into (laughs) extra money. Does that clear out your total from before?

ALI: Oh, I didn't do the stress roll!

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, roll 1d6. Duh.

ALI: (laughs) 2.

AUSTIN: Oh my god, all that. All that, and you get a fuckin 2. Okay. That's how it be sometiiiiiiiiimes.

JANINE: To be fair, that was like, work.

ALI: (overlapping) You know...

JANINE: That was, you were doin' *work*.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you know what? True. Absolutely.

DRE: Lotta brain work going on!

AUSTIN: Totally. Totally.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: It's very stressful to determine how much, exactly, mind reading someone can do on you.

ALI laughs.

JANINE: Like...

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh.

ALI: (overlapping) It is, yeah.

JANINE: ...it's not chilling at the bath.

AUSTIN: It's not. Fuckin', fair enough. Alright, uh! The final thing here for me, is like, a preliminary-- is, like, a visit, right? I think maybe... after all this stuff has happened, and there's, like, a moment of breath where it's like, adjusting to-- realising the world isn't going to crash in on you, right? I think that there is, uh, or maybe in some ways this is, like, the return of that, which is like, there is straight-up a knock at your base, and on the other-- or at the front door of the front, the kind-of, like, front side lighthouse, attached office place? Where people can, like, come see you and don't understand that underneath the island is a whole military base?

Um, uh... Kueen Overture Rooke shows up. K.O. is here. Uh, and is, like, hoping to speak to you about recent things. Um, who answers the door?

DRE: Okay, help me remember, where is Kueen Overture Rooke from?

AUSTIN: Uh, she is your rep, your Scrivener's Guild rep. Previously...

DRE: Okay.

ALI: Yeah, she's like our manager.

AUSTIN: She's like your manager, she's like your... dispatcher, or like, your main connect? Like, she has other, she has, like, other clients who she manages, is the way to think about it. Like, yeah, she's your manager in the way that you think about, like, a talent manager, y'know?

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: There's a world in-- it's almost like a, um, like an investment counselor, almost, right? I think that that model of, like, "alright, let's look at what you have, let's look at what's available to you, where-- where is it best that we put you?", yknow? And, and... put your resourcing, and blah blah blah. I think she has on this incredible look from Big Freedia who is her face-cast, wearing this kind-of, like, red slacks, with just, like, a bright orange, uh, like, top, a *long*, dark wig, a pink shirts with an orange bow-tie, she is gleaming, it's perfect, she's incredible. And she is at your door, and says to whoever opens the door, it doesn't matter who is, she strides in,

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Y'all are causin' me the *biggest* pain in the neck. What are you *doing*?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Hey! Hi.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Hi.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Welcome. Do you want, um, some water or something...?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) I would love-- I would love some water, I would love a lil somethin else. You're causing me a *lot* of trouble, Broun.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I... that's an accident. You know that's an accident.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) It's not an accident. You know that I know it's not an accident, you know I've been around this moon...

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) (overlapping) Well...

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) ...for a long time, and that, sometimes you get yourself into accidents. On purpose.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) There's just been a lot of pies to stick fingers in, um. And, y'know. I'm sorry that I didn't realise.

AUSTIN: Shaking her head.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Even beyond taking the mission, even beyond... I don't even *know* what you were doin' in Nideo territory without any approval, the stuff you did out there wasn't *good*, Broun. That gas? I-- it's one thing if you're against combatants, I don't even mean this in the "it doesn't look good" way. You hurt a lot of people. You ever drown?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I've--

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) No. No, you-- you haven't.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) It was diluted below military grade, anyway.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Can I tell you something about civilians? Is, they're way below military grade. Like, way below military grade. How many people did you kill? Do you know? Do you have any idea?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) ...no.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) You wanna *guess*? Ten? Thirty? How many people had heart conditions, Broun?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I don't know.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Yeah.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I don't know! I... I had a gun pointed at me, and I did what I had to, like everybody else does.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Like everybody else does, that's right. But I don't want you to...

AUSTIN: How does she say this? Um...

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) The difference between everybody else and you is sometimes, Broun, you make it sound like you're not like everybody else. If you wanna own it, and say, "listen, what we do here is *dirty*, cause people pay us to do dirty shit", then we can roll with that. But I know the missions you like to take and don't like to take. I know most of the time you don't like to take missions where you end up gassing a civilian population on concert night. And when you work through *me*, I can make sure you don't take those missions. When you do stuff freelance, *real* freelance, that's why you get in trouble. That's *when* you get in trouble.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Do you know?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Do I know what?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) How many people died?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Do you wanna know?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Do you think I should?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Yeah, and uh, here's the report. Names... family, it's all on there. Oh, and, uh, there's something else in there which...

AUSTIN: ...and hands you this manilla envelope.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) ...from Apostolos? Your visa. Your work visa?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Yeah?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) It's under review.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Wait, what does that mean?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Well, you were here in Orion originally to work with... uh, Adamant, right?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Right, but we-- I signed up with the Scrivener's Guild.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Right, and in peace times, even in the earlier stages of this war...

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) What--

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) ...that was fine.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) What "peace times"?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) When the only thing we had to worry about was the Branched. Now this whole planet is on fire. And, I don't speak for... Apostolos, but my gut says that... what they're lookin for is all hands on deck. If you was still with Adamant, big arms manufacturer and all that, maybe it gets extended. But as a mercenary?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Right, I know. I get it.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) You just did a job for Kesh. It might not be... a job that makes a lot of sense to me, but. That's who-- that's who Apostolos is fighting. So.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I got it.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) I'm just sayin, be careful.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I'm gonna go get the other two.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Alright, I'll take a seat.

ALI: Oh, *Broun*!

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: Oh, *Broun*. Uh huh. Yeah, which, which-- let me just say, I guess, in no uncertain terms, like, you and I talked about this off-mic, um, and kind-of realised, you brought it up, actually, that like... yeah, no, there is definitely this new weight over their head, which is, as the war kicks up, not only are they on a-- on a moon where there are, like, places where people are suspicious of Apostolitians because of everything that's happened, but also, yeah, of course Apostolos wants to, like, bring home all of its people, right?

ALI: Of course they do! (laughs)

AUSTIN: Pull the leash a little bit.

ALI: Yeah, it's very tough! Um.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: Fish out of water is both very demeaning and very true.

AUSTIN and ALI laugh.

AUSTIN: Yes, totally, come back to the school, y'know?

ALI: Oh boy. No. (laughs) I summon the other two.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Everyone else gets summoned by Broun.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh huh, yeah, there's a tray of drinks, um.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Y'all are gettin in over your heads on some shit. Alright? I pay attention. You're not my only client. I see the jobs come in. Everyone else is focused on what they think is the big picture, they see war, Apostolos, Kesh, Nideo now. They see the blockade between Columnar and Orion. They see big players. I'm paid to pay attention to little players, like you. Like the Oxblood Clan. Like, uh, what's that church? Resin Heart. I see movements happening. I see now, that friend of yours, Gucci, she says she needs someone to do light escort duty in the middle of the sea. And she requested you. Which tells *me* that you already made a plan that I didn't know about. *Again.*

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Well, if she has me on speed dial, I can't... be... responsible for that. Do you want me to just say no?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) No. No. I... what are the three of you gettin' involved with?

ALI: I think Broun cannot help but look very pointedly at Valence, who is...

AUSTIN and ALI laugh.

ALI: ...starting this for all of us. Um.

DRE: (as Valence) Uh, work?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) You're doin' work that's bigger than your shoes are. You're doin' big boot work. You're only supposed to have slippers on.

DRE: (as Valence) I guess Gucci Gar--Garantine?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Garantine. Yeah, mmhm.

DRE: (as Valence) I guess she disagrees.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) She's only supposed to have *pumps*! ...who all is involved? This is-- time out.

DRE: (as Valence) This is the first I've heard of this job, so you-- you tell us.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) I'm talkin' to you as your champion. Not as your assigned broker from the Scrivener's Guild. I want what's best for you, I want what's best for all my clients, but I'm especially close to y'all, because, y'all a bunch of cool outcasts, and, I find that endearing. You know this about me. Who y'all workin' with? For *real* real.

DRE: (as Valence) (sighs)

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Somethin' is happening on Partizan, I need to know what it is.

DRE: Can I roll a Study here?

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely, give me, give me a Study. This is a Gather Information, it's not even a risky-- even a low level will give you something, so. Just give me a flat Study.

DRE: Well, that's... not great.

AUSTIN: That's a one or a two. Um, it is clear that... what are you trying to learn? You're trying to see, like, is she lying to you, or is she, like, representing something else.

DRE: How earnest is she, yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, her earnestness is not... is not in doubt. Um, what is not... clear is whether she has skin in the game. Um, she-- her earnestness about *you* is a hundred percent clear. What I think the question that comes to Valence's mind is, like, I can't tell if she cares because this is a thing that she'll want to know about, and be part of? Or something that she can't-- that she

doesn't want to hear, and doesn't want to be part of? Or if there's a third reason why she wants to know who's involved in this? Etcetera. Um, that is, with just, like, a level 1 Gather Information, like, a limited success, you can tell that she is not-- she is not lying to you or trying to, like, sell you out, or like, here on behalf of someone else. You can tell that she is being genuine in her concern.

3:39:02

DRE: (as Valence) Okay, we... god. We made a mess of the first thing we did. The second thing we did didn't go great either, so why... why now?

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Because I've been in this game a long time, and I see what happens when a bunch of little people get together. The answer is, there's less little people than there were before. If y'all are moving on some shit, you gotta be quieter about it than this. And also it's not--

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) (overlapping) Well, what if we were just--

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) ...in-character for you, Broun, I thought you were tryna leave.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I, um, I was saying, we were adjacent to people, um... doing things.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Okay, I see. Okay. That makes more sense. I don't get the impression that all 3 of you are maybe like that, but.

AUSTIN: I think that she's-- kind of, like, looks at Thisbe, is trying to, like... "how do I breach this?"

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) We haven't spoken much, Thisbe. You got some good results, so, I want you to know that I respect what you can do, and the same goes for you as the two of them, y'know. Be careful, and I-- keep me in the loop, so that I can keep you protected.

JANINE: (as Thisbe) I don't wear shoes.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) You need big ones, so. Y'know, I bet we could find some.

JANINE: (as Thisbe) (overlapping) Actually, they would not be that... that big.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Do you not have big feet?

JANINE: Thisbe has, like, tapered legs, remember?

AUSTIN: Yeah, but they're *big* still. Like, if a tractor has a tapered... legs... it's still gonna be bigger than a lawnmower's legs.

JANINE: I think the area of her feet would be about the same as the area of, like, a person's feet, because they just taper to a flat... end.

AUSTIN: Okay. I was imagining--

JANINE: Y'know?

AUSTIN: ...that they were-- I believe you. Um. Regardless, she wouldn't have said that, because you don't have big feet. But you're still very big, so she would have said it. Um.
(laughs)

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Shoes are about support. Not just about, y'know. Anyway. If you find you... get in too deep, you let me know.

DRE: (as Valence) Yeah, will do.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Alright.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) What, um... (coughs) options do you have for us, if we... if we know, um...

ALI: Glancing to Valence again.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) If we... if things were really getting serious.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Well. How attached are you to your name? How much do you wanna keep working in this line of business? Oh, we worked together for a minute now, but, you should know, y'know, I've lead many lives, and that means having connections, that means... if you need to lay low somewhere for a minute, that means, if... if you need to move across the planet, we could do it. Ain't nothin' free, and I mean that for me too, you call in a favour from me, that means I call in a favour from someone else, but... y'know.

What I *don't* need is for you to call me and say, y'know, "Auntie Kueen, we need help balancing the books on our new operation that we haven't registered with the Scrivener's Guild." Or if you're gonna call me about that, you better come with a paycheck. I got bills, too.

DRE: (as Valence) That's fair.

AUSTIN: (as K.O. Rooke) Well, I'm glad you're all doin' okay. I'm out of water now, so. I dunno what I expected of you three.

AUSTIN: And there's just the vibe of, like... it's almost as if she also rolled a 1 and a 2 on her Study check?

ALI chuckles.

AUSTIN: Um, y'know, I think maybe she slips into just a more, "now, let's get on with our regular visit, can I-- lemme see the inventory, let me, like, do the normal checks to prove that, like, all of your stuff is up to safety regulations according to the Scrivener's Guild's demands", y'know?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Uh, and goes through with whatever the normal monthly check-in is, y'know? But yeah, y'know, when she leaves, she also does leave you with the contract, or has you sign the contract if you take it, to basically do security at this conference that Valence and Gur Sevraq and Clementine Kesh, uh, and now, I guess, y'know, Thisbe and the Sable Court have, have lined up. Um, so. That is the mission on offer for y'all next. Broun, I'm curious if you-- if you wanna be part of it. There's a world in which you're like, "naw, I'm good", and we can talk about what that looks like. Um...

ALI: Yeah, I feel like there's-- there's, um, because Broun's interest in that meeting was, like, "hey, K.O., how would you, how are *you* going to protect me from this?" Um, that makes them curious why they wouldn't let K.O. in? Um, especially from Broun's point of view, they're really open with... (laughing) with everyone, like, to kind-of partner up with.

AUSTIN: You're saying here, wait, why wouldn't Valence have let Broun-- or, let K.O. in on this? Or...?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I see, yeah.

ALI: Or, if-- Thisbe, just as much.

AUSTIN: Right, sure. I mean, my read is on this with Thisbe is mostly, like, I dunno that-- Thisbe is going to do it because that's where Operants Broun and Valence are going to go.

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Am I wrong about that, Janine?

JANINE: No, I think that's-- that's correct.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Yeah, fair.

AUSTIN: Then, yeah, I think-- if you wanna raise that question, you should raise that question to Valence.

ALI: Uhm, yeah, I think it's definitely after K.O. leaves, Broun shuts the door behind them, and um, Thisbe and Valence are still in the room, and they're just like,

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) So... what lies are we keeping track of now? What's happening?

DRE: (as Valence) Do you really trust her that much?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I trust her more than I trust Gucci, or... Gucci, or...!

DRE: (as Valence) Eh, that's fair. That's fair.

AUSTIN: The Oxblood people. Eh, Jesset seems pretty chill.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Uh-- yeah, Jesset's fine, but I... I'm not joining-- that's a whole other...

DRE: (as Valence) Look, you've known her for longer than me, so I... will trust your opinion on her, but. (sighs) The people from the Oxblood clan have done way more for me than she has.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) But she's right that what they're doing is stupid and dangerous and not... (laughs) ... we're not doing that.

DRE: (as Valence) You don't have to.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Right, and I'm not. Why does it mean we have to lie to her? Weren't *you* the one who was bleeding your heart out over not telling Gucci that you had, like, played a song or whatever? She's our *real* boss.

DRE: (as Valence) I'm surprised that matters to you as much as it seems to.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) She's our *boss*. She paid for this building we're in! Well, she didn't *pay* for it, but, like... that's the thing, that's the thing we're doing!

DRE: (as Valence) Okay, so what do we tell her?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I don't fucking know! What are you-- what's happening?

DRE: (as Valence) You heard what Jesset said! You've heard just as much from him as I have.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) This is the first I'm hearing of this Gucci security situation.

DRE: (as Valence) For what it's worth, me too.

AUSTIN: There's a knock on the door.

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: A messenger delivers that contract.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Come in.

AUSTIN: It's not Gucci, it is literally just a-- it is, like, a pre-signed contract for that job? It just needs to be initialed. Umm, again, not a member of House Brightline or of Horizon, just like a commercial messenger service person, and is literally the job that had already hit-- I mean what happened here literally is, that-- that contract got to the, um, the Scrivener's Guild first, and K.O. *rushed* here, beating the contract from arriving to you.

ALI: Yeah, I think the tension in here is that, like, Broun doesn't even know the name Gur Sevraq, right? So there's definitely been, like...

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: There's a second part of this that's like, completely...

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Yeah. Um.

AUSTIN: Right right. This-- the last time you checked in on it, it was... yeah, Jesset City being hyped about working with Horizon and, quote, "maybe some other people", and now there's a clock on the table that says "conference members: 5", and--

ALI: Right.

JANINE laughs.

AUSTIN: It's not necessary-- But, *you* see that, but it's not clear that Broun does.

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: Right-- I'm with you, in other words, I'm saying, like...

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: ...Broun doesn't see that there's a bigger thing potentially happening. Broun does not know that there is, like, a meeting in the middle of the sea on a stolen Apostolitian fort!

ALI: (laughing) Sure! Sure sha-sure.

DRE laughs.

AUSTIN: Right? You're right, yeah.

ALI: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. But I do think that there's... I do think Broun feels that they're being left out of something and then also sitting through a conversation of, like, K.O. also being left out of that that's like, "what the fuck is actually happening".

DRE: (as Valence) You didn't seem to want to know. I mean, when Jesset said that they wanted to build a group of people, you... didn't seem like you wanted to deal with it.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) You're right. Fine. You're doing me the favor of keeping me out of it, thank you.

DRE: (as Valence) But if you *don't* want to be kept out of it, I will tell you.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) No. I'm fine.

DRE: (as Valence) Well, you know how to find me, if you change your mind.

AUSTIN: I guess, like, is that it? Do we leave on that? Is there... is there a follow up? Do you take Valence up on that offer, to-- to find them, or... do you just kinda let it hang? I mean, likewise for Valence, is that it?

DRE: I don't know if that's it for Valence, um...

AUSTIN: Is there a... can I propose a thing?

DRE: Mmhm?

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: Is there a moment where-- alright, so. When I get into a fight with someone...

ALI: Mmm.

DRE laughs.

AUSTIN: There are, like, there are... there are moments in-- inbetween making up, or like, having th-- not even making up, cause this isn't like a *fight*, but this was an argument, but before returning to-- returning to the conversation where, first I go, "I'm mad, rarararargh." Then I'm like "oh, I fucked up, oorgh, agh." And then I'm, like, "grrrr, I'm mad again." Then I'm like, "Mmm. rrrrgh, agh." And then there's a moment where I go, like, "agh, I should call them", or, "I should go in the other room and talk through this" or whatever. And then I go, like, "no, I don't wanna do that, actually." And *then*, eventually, it comes back around, and, like, do it. But what I, what I can't do is, fuck up and think in my mind "hey, can we talk about this right this moment" and jump--

ALI: (cackles) Right, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean?

ALI: Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: I can't just open a mind link! And--

ALI cackles.

AUSTIN: ...fall into a conversation that I am not actually necessarily... so, could that perhaps lead to a follow up?

ALI: (laughs) God, I think we've certainly left that door open. Um, I think--

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh!

DRE: Mmm.

ALI: (giggles) I think for Broun, it's like-- there's... it's such a weird situation of, like, being left out, and being aware that you're being left out, and then also, having that conversation with K.O. and then needing to lie to them because everybody else in the room is?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Um, that like, keeps that wound open.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

ALI: Do you know what I mean? So I don't know that they would be the first person to, like... (laughs)

AUSTIN: To reach out in that way.

ALI: Right, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Not even to reach out, but to, like, reach that point of the cycle of thought where you go "I-- we should talk through this more".

ALI: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: I think for Broun, it's just, like, yeah, fuck that. Fuck this. I can figure this out on my own.

AUSTIN: Valence?

DRE: I think where it-- okay, if Valence comes back to talk to Broun about it, I almost wonder if it is a proposal of, like, cause Valence is, like, pot committed to this. Y'know?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

DRE: They are *in*. Uhm...

AUSTIN: What are your beliefs-- wait, what are your beliefs for each other again? I know this is-- this is an annoying question to ask at this...

ALI: (overlapping) Oh, I don't have a new one yet! Lemme actually write on my sheet...

DRE: (overlapping) God, yeah, I haven't written my new one about Broun yet, after we had our cool hang sesh!

ALI laughs.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Um, yeah, I've like, feel like I don't even know where to start with it, really.

AUSTIN: Your current ones...

ALI: Yeah my, my current one was "Valence has good connections and hopefully if I impress them, they'll lead me to people with deep pockets."

AUSTIN: Uh huh! And Broun's-- sorry, and Valence's for Broun, I have it up Dre, is "Broun is quite dependable and competent, I hope to see them as trustworthy". Um.

DRE: Oof.

AUSTIN: So yeah. Uh huh?

ALI cackles.

DRE: Hey, you know what? There's some people at this weird *Metal Gear* conference that probably have deep pockets, so...

AUSTIN: (laughs) Right! Right, right.

ALI: Uh huh!

AUSTIN: Is that the-- do we get, do we get, like-- like, cynical utilitarian play from Valence, which we've not, I don't think, *ever* seen from Valence.

DRE: No, no, no.

AUSTIN: No, okay.

DRE: I think if there is a conversation, it is... I think it's Valence finding Broun, like, at their workshop, or, y'know, wherever they would be kinda during the day, um, and like maybe doing, like, the sheepish, like, knocking on the open door? And like...

ALI and AUSTIN chuckle.

DRE: Being like,

DRE: (as Valence) Hey...

AUSTIN laughs.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) What.

ALI: Broun not looking up from the, like... (laughs)

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh huh! No, that was like, a fuckin' *dagger* in my heart.

DRE: Mmhm, mmhm.

ALI cackles.

DRE: (as Valence) If, after this, you still are... opposed, or not interested, I... I'll leave, I'll leave SBBR. You've got a good thing going, and I don't wanna... I don't wanna mess it up for you.

ALI: Um, I think Broun kind-of rolls their eyes, because that's such, like, a... I think someone like, being willing to, like, fall on the sword in that way (laughs) the reaction is such, like, a,

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Ugh, fine, whatever.

ALI: And like, puts their thing down, looks at Valence.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) (sighs) Well, what *thing*?

DRE: (as Valence) I wanna tell you the truth, but I also don't want you to accuse me of being melodramatic.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Fine, then I won't. Go on.

DRE laughs.

DRE: (as Valence) I'm not very reassured, but I will. Broun, if something radical doesn't happen in Partizan, I don't... I don't know if anybody's safe, and I don't even mean that in the, y'know, like, the way everything is going, there's the people who have everything, and they're gonna keep us below our bootheels... God is real, and God can be vengeful. And someone from here... took a-- what they thought was their best shot, but was actually a potshot.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) So that's why you're organising all of this. Getting us involved in this cause it's "God's order".

DRE: (as Valence) No! Not because it's God's order, because I'm... cause I'm terrified of what God's order *could* be.

ALI laughs.

ALI: I think-- what you were just saying, actually, cause I don't know if there was like, a least... (laughs) like, a least compelling reason for Broun.

DRE: Oh, sure, yeah.

ALI cackles.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

DRE: There's a reason Valence said, "you're gonna think I'm melodramatic".

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

ALI laughs.

ALI: Um.

DRE: (as Valence) Broun, we... *we*, the Nobel, we weren't... we weren't always gas without bodies.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) And you think starting a resistance group on Partizan is going to do anything about that?

DRE: (as Valence) No! It's--

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Then why are you telling *me*? What are you *talking* about? This doesn't *matter*! What matters is living to the next month, or-- or the next year, or...

DRE: (as Valence) I'm not here to live... to the next day, or month. But Broun, even if that's what you care about, which is *fine*, that's *also* what this is about.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) No. That's-- that's not what this is about, this is... ugh. This is about Gucci taking advantage of, of... very scared, talented people, this is about... people having ideas that they're not gonna be able to make good on.

DRE: (as Valence) I appreciate that you just called me talented.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I was talking about Jisset.

DRE: (as Valence) I'm really scared, Broun.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) (sighs)

DRE: (as Valence) God is coming. And if something doesn't change, we won't be ready. And then there will be changes, whether we want them or not.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Valence, if you're talking about a Divine power, what does it matter what we change? Do you hear yourself? I understand that you're scared, we can... we can just try to unwind, we can take it easy for a little bit, we can take easier missions. We can try to get out of here. Why don't you just go *home*?

DRE: (as Valence) (sighs) I mean, one, I can't. It's kind of a... kind of a one-way trip.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) That's too bad.

DRE: (as Valence) Eh. Not really.

ALI laughs.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Sure.

DRE: (as Valence) There's some decent folks here. Taught me about, y'know, how to make my brain and my head lighter and more aerodynamic, so that was, that was pretty nice.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Shut up. I couldn't care less about this. If you think that this-- is working, it isn't.

DRE: (as Valence) I know it's not. I knew it wouldn't, but.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) What am I going to get out of it? Cause a better Partizan is not something that matters to me.

DRE: (as Valence) What does?

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) I just wanna get out. All I wanna do is go. I don't... care about the people here. I don't wanna see another sunset ever again.

DRE: (as Valence) Then let's try and get somebody there to help you go.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) You promise that?

DRE: (as Valence) Yeah, Broun, if that's what you want, that's easy for me to promise.

[music: [TANAGER. PERFECT. TOUCHPAPER.](#) begins]

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) If you think so.

DRE: (as Valence) Shit, it's a lot easier than the promise that, I guess I'd made to try and save a solar system. Getting one rocket ship is-- that's small time, now.

ALI: (as Kal'mera Broun) Well, you make sure you can manage to do both. Cause it's not going to be one or the other.

DRE: (as Valence) You got it boss.

AUSTIN laughs.