

Twilight Mirage 19: A Single Moment, Caught

Transcriber: @russets; meko

[MUSIC- "[The Twilight Mirage](#)" starts]

AUSTIN (as Primary): Dispatch 171.

Hey, Satellite. There's something I've been thinking a lot about lately; I've been reading that book, the one you gave me, The Treatise on Change, and something's sticking with me. Like you said, the author doesn't think change happens quickly, but he definitely thinks it's necessary. He puts down all these words about how important it is to 'overcome the evening phantoms that scare us away from true development; the act of living well', he says 'is not in fearing the crash but in turning collision into commencement' and I don't know, I'm not a philosopher or a soldier or a doctor or a—what's he call them? Strati? I'm probably not one of those but it just, it doesn't seem as easy as he makes it seem. Just, look at the Beloved Dust: ?Signet, is haunted by echos of a history she barely knows; Fourteen Fifteen is literally losing every memory they have, and, that's a tragedy and not a step forward; Tender Sky is, she's right at the brink of something incredible but that's built on her past. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I just miss the cycle. Maybe I miss the simplicity, the safety of Crystal Palace. [sighs]

It's just that, out here, I don't feel like we need to worry about evening phantoms. There are plenty in the daytime.

[MUSIC- "The Twilight Mirage" ends]

JACK: Could we, uh, are the firecracker sounds coming from inside this room or are they coming from an adjacent room?

AUSTIN: This room is a big park, it's just a big open park. And so, yes, they're coming from the center of this big park.

JACK: Okay. Could I approach cautiously?

AUSTIN: Totally.

JACK: And sort of, like, hiding behind a bush or a small bench?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Tender and Signet, what are you doing? Are you following?

ALI: Uh, yeah, I was gonna suggest that, like, Signet has an ear that can maybe get information before our eyes can?

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: ...Sure.

[Ali laughs]

JANINE: Well, the thing—wouldn't that just get louder popping sounds? [laughs]

ALI: [laughing] I don't know.

JACK: You might get someone saying, "Quick, we can lure them over! For the trap we're about to spring!"

ALI: [laughing] Yeah!

JANINE: That's true. I'll give that a shot.

AUSTIN: What's that do? What's the abilities that it has?

JANINE: Amplification, interception, and it's implanted and also unreliable. The interception would not be useful, but the amplification I guess—

ALI: Oh, would make it louder. Okay, yeah.

JANINE: —would just make it—unless there's like tiny voices in the popping.

ALI: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: There are things quieter than the popping. Like, this is—I mean, imagine fireworks going off in your neighborhood. You can hear the fireworks, you can't hear the people talking underneath the fireworks. So this is what that does. This lets you hear—

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: One, that these—that popping sound is only quiet—it's not only quiet 'cause it's far away. It is also not at its actual amplification. So you raise it up until it's about the level of gunfire and then you can also hear a few distinct voices. There are—there is a woman with a British accent who is—who says, um—what does she say? I think she just says:

AUSTIN (as woman): You can come with me, or I'll activate the Torch units.

AUSTIN: And then there's another voice, another woman, who says:

AUSTIN (as second woman): We're not so afraid of you.

AUSTIN: And then there's gunfire. And this goes on for—there's also the sounds of fighting, like, physical fighting is happening here too.

JANINE: In the middle of the park?

AUSTIN: The sound that you're hearing, yeah.

JANINE: Okay.

JACK: Wow, that is—

ALI: Valuable.

JACK: Yeah, that is useful information.

[Ali laughs]

JANINE: Uh-huh.

JACK: Have we—I'm prepared to roll for this—have we heard of Torch units before?

AUSTIN: No, you have not.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Uh—no, you have not. You've not, not.

[Ali laughs]

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: I mean, I guess you could roll for it and if you roll well then yes, you could have heard of these. Um, I think—mm, you know what? You can—you can roll for them, Fourteen, because of a thing I know.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: *You* can roll for them.

[Ali laughs]

JACK: [playfully] No, *you* can.

AUSTIN: No, *you* can.

JACK: [laughing] No, *you* can roll for them. Um, I'm feeling—I'm feeling Powerful, because while this is not great news, it's at least a lead.

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: And also these people are clearly—it's that sort of thing you feel in Battlegrounds, right, where you're like "these people are preoccupied."

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: So I'm gonna roll Powerful.

AUSTIN: Perfect.

JACK: And see what happens.

AUSTIN: This is with the Veil again because you're consulting your memory, basically...Hey, that's a nine! You don't remember exactly what the reference was, but Castlerose once referred to Torch units. They are a—or maybe she bought some once, Miss's Castlerose, or had them in storage, or—you know what, here's what it was. There was a time at which another person who was in the group with you, in the organization, failed, and she said, [put out tone] "Ugh, I guess I'll just activate some Torch units and see if they can clean up the mess," or something like that, but not a thing that comes up often.

JACK: And usually comes up in, sort of, like, even for assassins, faintly ominous situations? In situations where someone has screwed up or where leverage can't be—

AUSTIN: I think this is—You don't have enough data to know what—

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: This happened one time, and that's like a—it rings a memory for you.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, "Oh, weird, yeah." So that's what I'll give you on that.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: I have a question, though, which is—‘cause I get to ask you questions on the Veil.

JACK: Sure.

AUSTIN: What was your first meeting with Castlerose like?

JACK: Um—this is a difficult question, right? Because it has implications about Fourteen’s arrival into the agency.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: I think that I didn’t meet her for a long time. And I thought that Castlerose was the name of an organization, rather than the name of a person.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: I had dealings with other agents—presumably the Castlerose Agency has handlers for other agents.

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: And I met them. And I was much younger than I am, and I had some missions that went very well through skill and some missions that went very well through luck. And missions that went badly for the same reasons. Until eventually one day I was called in and very matter-of-factly reassigned to a handler called Miss’s Castlerose. And my first reaction was like, “Oh, that’s a person!” And then, “Oh wait, this means that it’s the boss.”

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: It didn’t go well; it wasn’t a great meeting [Austin chuckles]. Our relationship, such as it is now, is one that has taken time and effort to build. It was very professional, Fourteen was very starstruck, but I think it kind of continued as a professional relationship for a long time before it ever became even the hint of a personal one.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. Good to know. So what do you do at this point?

JACK: Tender?

ALI: Um, I mean we—we should keep approaching, right? Like we were approaching kind of cautiously and now we have—

JANINE: I think actually Signet is approaching less than cautiously [Ali laughs], 'cause it sounds like bad stuff.

AUSTIN: Okay, so you're, like, going in?

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: Probably not running, but like a pretty brisk, straightforward walk.

ALI: Yeah, I feel like this is a weapons-drawn—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Sort of like, 'we understand the situation, now we can walk into it' thing.

AUSTIN: Totally. You take a—

JACK: Can I—

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

JACK: —hang back a little, if possible?

AUSTIN: Totally. A hundred percent. You take a curve in this park and see...I'd say twenty figures in a fight. Ten or so are synthetic units of a type you've never seen before. The others are all people, a number of them have on the robes of the Order; some of them have on the big coiled arms that you saw the woman that welcomed you here—that she had on. And one of them is in like slick, black metallic armor. And then there is another person, who seems to be floating between the groups.

And it doesn't take long before you see—before you hear gunfire go off again. And then—or, not even gunfire go off. I guess Signet is the one who can hear this. What you hear is, "Do as I say, or I'll activate the Torch units." And then someone else says, "We're not as afraid of you as you think," or whatever I said before. And it repeats. And there is a battle. And then it flickers and you, like, see it at a distance. And it repeats. But the woman floating between them is not repeating. The woman is Acre Seven, and she is replaying these events over and over again, and, like, looking at them the way that she looked a while ago at Morning's Observation, with intense scrutiny. She's replaying these events over and over again. And behind her, in the dirt, you see a number of graves that she's dug. Or maybe she hasn't dug them, someone's dug them, but they are behind her and she is the only person actually here.

JACK: Hmm.

JANINE: We should probably ask Acre what is going on.

AUSTIN: Also, as you get closer, you recognize one of them, Fourteen Fifteen. She has blonde hair and a burnt face, scarred over from when steam burnt her once.

JACK: Huh. This is one of the figures in the projection?

AUSTIN: Yes, this is the woman in the kind of slick, black—almost in my mind, it's very N7 armor—

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —it's very Mass Effect armor, but painted all black, with—I guess there's symbols of white and blue there. This is Mother's Story—which does rhyme with Mother Glory, I'm aware, but I committed to it [Ali giggles]. I thought about renaming her Mother's Song, but there's another one of the New Hegemony people with 'Song' in their name, so I can't. Ugh.

[Ali laughs]

JACK: Just heading it off at the pass, it's not a crossover. Mother Glory—

AUSTIN: It's not a crossover, her name is Mother's Story. So.

JACK: It would be good to try and attract the attention of Acre Seven in a way that isn't going to cause her to shoot at us.

AUSTIN: She does not seem to be armed.

JACK: Okay. Or frighten her more than necessary.

ALI: Yeah, um—

JANINE: She's usually the one who does the frightening.

JACK: Yeah. Yeah.

JANINE: I guess we haven't dealt with Acre Seven that much, but my interpretation of her is I bet she's pretty hard to startle.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: That's true. We can test that!

[Ali and Janine laugh]

AUSTIN: Also, you're a little closer now to these units, to these Torch units; they all have the New Earth Hegemony logo, or kind of the symbol, which—I think I've de—did I describe it at any point before? Maybe I didn't. It is where, like, that white and blue Earth—uh, the white and blue colors are from. It is a blue gem with—like, it literally looks like a blue gem. It has the shine and the curve of a polished blue stone with a white outline, like a thick white outline, that it is the center of. So it's almost as if it's—it almost looks like a ringed planet except it's just Earth, but it's surrounded by this white ring, that has NEH written on the top of it. And then probably something in Latin; these motherfuckers probably have some shit in Latin.

[Jack chuckles]

AUSTIN: I'll figure out what that Latin phrase is soon. But it's definitely Latin, because they—that's who they are. The Torch units—that's what I was saying, so they have those on them. They are—of the ones here—the note I was looking for is on my phone, so I have to get my phone. Here we go [Ali and Jack laugh]. It's like, right, I was writing this on a train.

ALI: GMing.

AUSTIN: GMing. So the ones here are—God [snorts], very good, my note, which I'll explain in a second—are white, and then there's one of them that is red, and you notice that the red one is also just broken on the ground for real and you can see this holographic replay that's playing over and over ends with it being bashed in by this like, long, extended spring-arm metal punch from one of these monks, who just smashes the shit out of its head. They are—they almost—they have heads that look like old-time stage lights or like Hollywood lights from the 1930s or '40s; like, the big, huge center spotlight with the four flaps, do you know what I'm talking about?

JANINE: Mm-hm.

JACK: Yeah, like lanterns, like theater—

AUSTIN: Like theater—yes. Yes. Is that what those are called, specifically?

JACK: I've heard people, at least in the UK, in films call them lanterns, which is really a good name.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah. The rest of their bodies are similarly built in terms of having sharp edges and having little bits of them that poke out, so like at their wrists they have a wrist joint but then instead of just the armor around their wrists stopping at their wrists, the armor continues out; it has those same sort of four plates that go out beyond the wrist. There are ten human-sized ones total with her—those are the ones that are white—and then there are two larger red ones

with her too, but there's one of them that got destroyed. The other one is not here. Of the ten, —like this plays out—she kills a bunch of them, the rest of the monks give up and come with her. And you see in the replay that Acre Seven arrives, like kind of comes from offscreen into this holographic replay, and at that point Mother's Story points a gun at her and then says—and now you're close enough to hear this—she says:

AUSTIN (as Mother's Story): I know what you are, Apparition. I will not let you take time from me.

AUSTIN: And she drops a rifle to the ground slowly, she like places it on the ground and then steps closer to Acre and then whispers something into her ear. Which, I guess, again, Signet has that ear and I've let that roll forward so what she whispers is:

AUSTIN (as Mother's Story): Listen to the honesty in my voice. You could have stopped this like you could have stopped that.

AUSTIN: And then Acre freezes, and Mother's Story walks back to her rifle and picks it up and walks away, guiding the remaining monks—of which I'd say there are probably seven or eight; like, they didn't get slaughtered here—down a hallway, kind of back the direction you came but then down a side hallway that you did not take before. And then—or, I guess you don't see that far. You just see them walk away until they're offscreen—outside of the holographic kind of screen.

Some other things you notice in this replay over and over: the Torch units also can light up their big faces and they do that to blind people. I think that's kind of where the battle went bad for the monks, was they all blinded them all at once like a flashbang and that's when the two or three monks got shot—three of them, three of them got killed.

JACK: [exhales] Hm.

AUSTIN: And Acre has not responded to you walking up to her. Like, she is in shock, of a sort. I guess, you know, Signet, in your duties you've probably run across people like this who, who—not like this, Acre is not only in shock. Like, there's something else happening because Acre Seven is not a person, is not a—uh, is a person—Acre Seven is not a human. There is something that is physiologically different about Acre Seven, or some history that you don't know about, or—a thing I'll note: these are not holograms being projected from something. Acre Seven is making this thing happen.

JACK: Hm.

AUSTIN: This is not, like, "Oh, there's a nearby projector." This is "Acre Seven is showing time happen again."

JANINE: Can I ask her what she should have stopped?

AUSTIN: She just says, um:

AUSTIN (as Acre Seven): Many things.

AUSTIN: And then keeps—like, she doesn't look at you. And keeps going through, like from place to place. And then you do notice that small things change in the next replay. Now there is—now, Acre shows up a little faster. At one point, you see a rock thrown from offscreen. At one point you just see, without any obvious cause, the light in one of the Torch units doesn't turn on when the rest of them try to blast everybody. That one, for whatever reason, is burnt out. But nothing changes the outcome. In fact, I guess here's the thing is like sometimes two people die, sometimes three people die. There are four graves behind her. And as she plays it over and over again, she's like:

AUSTIN (as Acre): I can get it a little bit better, but I can't figure out how I could have saved them.

AUSTIN: —is basically what's happening here.

JANINE: I think I want to say, like:

JANINE (as Signet): I don't know for sure that she was lying to you, but I suspect it.

JANINE: I don't necessarily believe that Acre could have stopped that so much that it was the effective thing for Mother's Story to say to her in that moment.

AUSTIN: Roll Sway. How do you feel when you say that? Do you believe that? Or is that a thing you're saying to calm her down?

JANINE: I think that's a thing that—I think that's one of those things that Signet believes but also knows is like, a platitude.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: Like a thing she chooses to believe herself sometimes.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: God, I have to spike something here.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

[Ali and Jack chuckle]

JANINE: I don't really have a choice.

AUSTIN: Welcome to the Veil.

JANINE: Yeah. I think I gotta spike Sad because obviously people died.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And Acre is not in a great place, and Signet's been there.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: I like when you hover your mouse over the last checkbox, it says "Spike!" with a little exclamation point.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Oh, it does [Ali laughs], that's good. Go ahead and roll it and spike.

JANINE: Okay...

AUSTIN: Hey, that's a ten!

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, what does it look like—So, a couple of things. One, what does it look like to spike out? And what do you do and say here? Like, how do you try to get her to break out of this and actually talk to you and such?

JANINE: Uhh [exhales]. I don't think this is a spike that would be a dramatic change in her comportment.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: Because I think this is the kind of—this sadness, this cumulative sadness, has been building up for a while. Like, this is just the kind of thing that I think is sneaking up on her.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: Because a lot of sad things have happened.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like, I think, you know, she's still gonna be sad from Gumption—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And she's still gonna be sad from being in Contrition's Figure.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like having that stuff come back. And even though there were some positive things that would kind of maybe disguise that sadness, I think—and you know, with Belgard especially—I think a lot of the peace that she usually finds has been kind of—not corrupted, but you know, camouflaging the sadness.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: So I think—I don't think it's a dramatic change, I don't think it's too different from the outside. I think it's just a moment where Signet actually realizes she's sad.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Because that's not a thing she acknowledges in herself terribly often.

AUSTIN: Yeah. What do you say? And also you have to choose one of these things, because you're using Sway.

JANINE: [exhales] Okay. I think the thing that Signet tells her is the first Excerpt and Divine that died after Signet's—whatever we want to call that.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: Her—you could call it escape, you could call it betrayal, you could call it, you know, abandoning...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: But the first, the very real like, "Oh, this person and this being died probably because you weren't there," in a very immediate sense. I don't know—no [sighs]. This might have even been the day of, but I feel like it has a little more impact if it was just shortly after.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like the first fatality after that particular engagement.

AUSTIN: Yep. Yep.

JANINE: So I think Signet explains that it was someone she knew; it was probably someone that she trained with because they were Excerpts at the same time, obviously.

AUSTIN: What was their name?

JANINE: I have a name because I had this person in mind that I wanted to bring up at some point [Austin chuckles]. Um—

AUSTIN: What generation Excerpt were they?

JANINE: I don't think this was someone in Signet's order.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: I think this was maybe second-generation.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: So it's not someone—that's I think what makes it worse, is that it's not a person that she can exercise a connection with through the Crypt or anything like that.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

JANINE: This is a person that she kind of—

AUSTIN: Is truly gone and—

JANINE: She doesn't have the right to the memory of this person in a sense.

AUSTIN: Heh. [softly] Yeah.

JANINE: Because they're not one of "hers", quote-unquote, and she's the reason, in some sense, that they're gone.

AUSTIN: Mhmm. Mm-hm.

JANINE: This person was The Brackish Tide That Swallowed His Toes, And Drew The Warmth Of Blood From Bone.

AUSTIN: Do you know already what—you said he?

JANINE: Yeah, I think it's a he. I think this is a he.

AUSTIN: What is the shortened form?

JANINE: □Tide□.

AUSTIN: Okay. Love that detergent [Janine chuckles]. Um [chuckles]. Tide, ping me.

JANINE: It's better than Bone.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's true.

JANINE: Like there's no words that are ideal to pull out—

AUSTIN: [laughing] Toes! The Excerpt Toes.

[Janine laughs]

JACK: And everyone's like, "They're not really real, they're not talking about toes, are they?"
"No, no, they're talking about Toes."

AUSTIN: What, um—Do you know what Divine he was paired with?

JANINE: Um, second generation would still be a personal quality, in naming conventions, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, a personal quality, just not one necessarily in a sort of democratic sense, right?

JANINE: Mm-hm. Um...Persistence?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm cool with Persistence.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: I don't think we've already had a Persistence...no, we have not. Persistence is good.

JANINE: Okay. Which is actually kind of funny, given that their name is Tide, but okay.

AUSTIN: Yes, it is. She says—she floats down at that point, to you. And she says:

AUSTIN (as Acre): Persistence. The Potent told me of Persistence.

AUSTIN: And then she like, turns her head in the flickery way that she moves; as a reminder, she's kind of stopping and starting like a GIF almost, over and over, as she moves and kind of

rewinds and fast forwards over, bit by bit. But here she actually does that, and then catches—it's almost as if she was looking for the right place and then finds it and hits 'play', and then her head kind of tilts downwards and looks away, and you can see that she's tearful and she covers her face. And as she does that the projections slip away and disappear, and she, like, pulls her hands away and she's been crying. And she says:

AUSTIN (as Acre): I think she was right. I think I could have saved them. Thank you for coming, all of you.

AUSTIN: Ulp, you said something and then disappeared. Someone talked and then they stopped talking.

JANINE: Wait, who? No?

JACK: Hm?

AUSTIN: Ali?

ALI: No?

JACK: No?

AUSTIN: Oh, weird. I heard something. Oh, you know what I heard? Is, I think I moused over something on this dictionary site. I must have.

[Jack and Ali laugh]

AUSTIN: But someone spoke for like, a half a second. It was like "bip." But exactly the way she speaks when she is flickery, and so for it to happen—it happened, and now I'm scared, 'cause she's here for real.

JACK: It's the version of the guitar string breaking.

AUSTIN: It is.

ALI: It's a haunted podcast!

AUSTIN: Oh nooo—it's October, you know. Spooky time. She's says:

AUSTIN (as Acre): I've lost contact with the others. They've...gone away. They're looking. They're...looking.

JACK (as Fourteen): What are they looking for?

AUSTIN (as Acre): To turn off the signal. To make contact. To help others. To gain access. The red one, it gave chase. To Waltz.

JACK (as Fourteen): Why did you stay?

AUSTIN: A thing happens, which is, like, it's as if the sun passes over her quickly, like time lapse, and her face becomes other faces. An older man, briefly, a child laughing. There's a moment in which she looks—she looks like an alien in Star Trek or in Mass Effect, or in—she looks like an alien-alien. It's like bark skin pulled tight across her face and backwards, she's like some sort of forest-person, you know? Like an elf in Guild Wars, or something like that. What are those called, sylphs? No, sylvians? What were those called? What were the tree-people?

JACK: Sylvians?

JANINE: Sylvian or something like that sounds right.

AUSTIN: Sylvians. In Guild Wars, like something like that. And she says:

AUSTIN (as Acre): I've left before and I was wrong to leave. The Potent sacrificed themselves for me, and I will never forget it and I will never leave again. At least until I know how I could have saved them.

JANINE (as Signet): And if you couldn't save them, you'll just stay here forever?

AUSTIN (as Acre): No. I just need more time. I've been taking time, since they did it. And once I have enough, I'll save them.

AUSTIN: She like—The sun kind of rewinds over her face again and now she is a—she goes back to, it's like a mustached man with a very thick face. Like a very squared-off jaw, but not squared off like a Hollywood actor, squared-off like a forty-seven year old welder [Jack chuckles]. He's definitely from Pittsburgh. Big, giant eighties mustache, wearing the uniform of an Excerpt. Did you—were you alive when Potency was killed, Signet?

JANINE: When was that?

AUSTIN: I don't know, that's why I'm asking you.

JANINE: Oh. But like in the grand scheme of things.

AUSTIN: In the last thousand years, right? Since Potency was one of the final ten, so it's possible you were alive when Potency died.

JANINE: Right. I kind of imagined—so Signet, I sort of picture around the three hundred-year mark.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: I also picture Belgard as one of the earliest in this sort of last batch to start dying.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: So possibly?

AUSTIN: That's totally fine. Basically, I just to know if you know this person that is—was Potency's expert. Er, expert [laughs, Ali giggles]. Excerpt. Their name—his name—was Promise. With The Fourth Promise Broken, The People Of The Clay City Watched The Sun Set For A Final Time. And what you know is that—this is from world generation, world-building. This is Dre's story.

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Potency sacrificed—Potency and Promise sacrificed themselves to give a ship carrying things from a planet enough time to escape an exploding star. That planet was Acre, and you probably don't know what she's about to say, but she says—she becomes to Potent. Sorry—she becomes the face of Promise and, like, voices his final words to her, which were:

AUSTIN (as Promise): Men like me can be replaced. No one's seen—I've never seen—anything like you. The world would be lesser.

AUSTIN: And then, like, a shadow crosses his face, as if a door has shut in front of him or a hatch has closed. And then the light comes back and she's back to being the vision of her that you've seen before.

JACK (as Fourteen): [exhales] You said you've been taking time.

AUSTIN (as Acre): Bit by bit.

JACK (as Fourteen): Where have you been taking it from?

AUSTIN (as Acre): Things and people.

[Jack chuckles]

JACK (as Fourteen): Like, stealing it from them?

AUSTIN: She, like, brings back up the holographic projection but only shows the one of the Torches, and then shows—shows the row of Torches lifting their weapons, and all of the lights turn on except the one that the light doesn't turn on. And, like, she kind of walks up close to it and if you do the same, you can see that the light's been burned out. It's as if she made it so that the bulb in that thing was older than it should have been.

JACK: Hm.

AUSTIN (as Acre): I am not like you. You are all beautiful, beautiful. You are all beautiful. I am not like you. I spent my best years, my best years, my *best* years, with the Potent. I will have them back. I was time when I was with them and now I am a single moment, caught. In this moment, I am a woman. In others, I was nothing like anything you know. You know.

JACK: Is this, uh—I wouldn't feel comfortable bringing them with us, or sort of going like, "Oh, it's for your own safety to come—" Acre Seven seems to know exactly what's going on here.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: This is not really a rescue at this point.

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: So I would be prepared to move on with some sort of assurance that we are going to try to do what her colleagues were working on.

AUSTIN: She, I think, like—I mean, do you voice that in some way?

JACK: Yeah, I think I, I think I—

JACK (as Fourteen): I don't want to take you away from this.

AUSTIN: She, like, lowers her hand and the Torch units all disappear again and she says:

AUSTIN (as Acre): I'm ready. We should finish what we came her for. I'll return to this...later. I can always find more time. More time...More time.

JACK (as Fourteen): Thank you.

AUSTIN: A funny thing happens which is, she does repeat herself a lot. And then, in your memory, you don't remember her repeating herself.

[Jack laughs]

ALI: Is that just for Fourteen?

AUSTIN: No, that's everybody.

ALI: Okay.

JACK: It's as though it's one of those things where, like, we're like, "Oh, this is a mannerism she has," but we only recognize it as it's happening?

AUSTIN: Yeah. A hundred percent.

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: Very soon after you had that experience, you've lost that experience She collects time in a lot of ways.

JACK: Huh. [sighs] It—

AUSTIN: Um—Go ahead.

JACK (as Fourteen): In which direction did they travel?

AUSTIN: She, um—[laughs] did you bring out this little map you downloaded from them or do you have your own—like, what do you [laughs]—how do you show off? [Jack laughs] Or do you ask just generally?

JACK: I think that—I think a thing that has happened a lot in this season is characters showing other people maps—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ALI: Mhm.

JACK: So I'm gonna keep going.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: And I think we're gonna show the map we picked up

AUSTIN: She says—as she sees it, she says:

AUSTIN (as Acre): Very resourceful. This is Waltz's map [Jack chuckles]. You took it, from the ship?

JACK (as Fourteen): I did.

AUSTIN: I should describe this map for people, because I didn't.

JACK: [laughs] It's great. It's really good.

AUSTIN: It's like someone had a sharpie and they quickly sketched out the shape of an asteroid. And they also had a second sharpie, which was red, and it's like [Ali laughs] between black and red, everything is just like—it looks like lots of very big curved letters that are, like, scrawled on in all caps with huge curves and like really—really heavy curves, so like the first part of the 'N' in the bottom left is like a tiny little nothing, and then the bottom right of it is this *huge* [laughs] mess of an 'N'. It's good, it's a good map.

JACK: My—

JANINE: It's, it's not like a sharpie, it's like someone who doesn't use brush pens—

AUSTIN: That's exactly it. Yes.

JACK: [laughs] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: Got a brush pen with a very, very, very soft nib.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: So some of the lines are incredibly fine, and others are just intensely dark.

AUSTIN: Gigantic. Yeah.

[Ali giggles]

AUSTIN: Um—

JACK: My favorite thing about it is that the bottom left of the asteroid is visibly on fire but they haven't used the red pen for this—

AUSTIN: Nope!

JACK: [laughs] It's just black. But they've ameliorate this by writing "Constant Reentry" in red capital letters below it—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: —and linking it with an arrow.

[Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: W—

JANINE: Also—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

JANINE: It's also on graph paper but highly irregular graph paper—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

[Ali laughs]

JANINE: —that actually looks more like blue and white tartan.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Oh, it's very good. When you found it in the ship, was it, like—has it been drawn by hand?

AUSTIN: Oh, definitely. This is definitely drawn literally by hand. Like literally, I think one of Waltz Tango Cache's fingers can become like a writing implement.

JACK: A crappy pen?

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: A crappy—right, yeah, exactly. Like, "do this and then print it out," basically. Anyway, she says:

AUSTIN (as Acre): Waltz wanted access to the core, and couldn't find it. And believed that he could find a key below in the old—in the abandoned sector.

AUSTIN: In the bottom of the station there is abandoned storage and abandoned quarters. Presumably abandoned because of how they are the part that is entering the atmosphere of this planet, which is dangerous and, you know, who knows? And then she says:

AUSTIN (as Acre): Massalia D'Argent. They told me they spotted something in the rocks and they left. With their machine.

[long pause]

JANINE (as Signet): Did anyone go to the communication room?

AUSTIN: She nods and says:

AUSTIN (as Acre): There is a signal being sent from somewhere else here that is blocking communications in and out—Not blocking. Not blocking. Not...blocking. Doubling. Reversing. Inverting. A counter-signal. But it's not coming from Comms.

JANINE (as Signet): Hmm.

AUSTIN (as Acre): I believe that the woman from Earth took them...potentially to the life deck. I worry. I worry.

JACK (as Fourteen): [exhales] Okay.

JANINE (as Signet): Well, it seems like the Heirs—

JANINE:—the monks—those are the ones called the Heirs, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, the Jeweled Heirs.

JANINE: Okay.

JANINE (as Signet): If anyone's gonna know what's happening, it's probably them. Or, at least, if anyone's able to get access deeper in, it's probably them. It might be wise—

JACK (as Fourteen): So if we—

JANINE (as Signet): to —try to resolve the situation with the—with our friend.

JACK (as Fourteen): With Mother's Story?

JANINE (as Signet): Mm-hm.

JACK: Who I recognize.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Mm-hm.

JACK (as Fourteen): I'm on board with that.

JANINE (as Signet): I don't think it would be wise for us to split up here.

JACK (as Fourteen): No.

JANINE (as Signet): We do have a habit of doing that [Ali giggles], but I think in this case—

AUSTIN: She says, though. She says:

AUSTIN (as Acre): I should find Waltz. If he is below and being pursued by the red Torch...the red Torch...than he may be in danger alone.

JANINE (as Signet): It does seem like you can take care of yourself reasonably well here.

AUSTIN (as Acre): Mm. Those units have no way to cause me guilt.

AUSTIN: And she smiles at, like, the notion of, like, "Oh, right, they're robots, they can't make me feel bad!"

[Jack and Ali laugh]

AUSTIN: Which is, like, it's a very—it's also a very—it's not her smile. Right, like, she is this woman right now, she uses she/her pronouns, she *is* this woman. But also she is clearly a lot of—she contains multitudes, literally. Right? Like, in some ways she is the inverse of you, Fourteen Fifteen.

JACK: Mhm.

AUSTIN: In which you become other people but you are—you are they/them, right, like you use they/them pronouns. She does come to inhabit different people in her memory that then filter through whoever Acre Seven is.

JACK: Hm.

AUSTIN: And also is not just—like, is this slice of time from this weird place, from this strange planet that included beings who were slices of time. And so that is who she is and she can probably take care of herself, so long as this robot doesn't make her feel sad [chuckles].

[Ali laughs, Jack laughs]

JANINE: Yeah.

JACK: Wow, same.

AUSTIN: Yeah, right?

JACK: Same. That's how I feel about twitter.com.

[Austin laughs, Janine sighs]

AUSTIN: So I think she just, like—she nods to each of you. There is something—there is something about her as she leaves, like she makes very direct eye contact with each of you. And even though she has, like I said, someone else's eyes, someone else's smile in a sense, she is showing herself to her through the identity of a person she once knew. There is something very ref—something very intimate about the look she gives each of you individually, because there is something of—she sees something of herself in each of you. I want you all to take plus one forward, so plus one on your next roll. You know, it is nonverbal but you can draw the lines yourself, in some ways, right. She has taken on many forms, Fourteen; she has lost something very important to her and is doing her best to rectify that, Signet. Tender, she is very clearly someone who is not like other people and has something going on there that is not—that society does not understand, necessarily, and at the same time is more interested in understanding that herself right now than—or kind of using that for her personal situation than like—she isn't out there changing the worlds, right, she's doing her best here but she isn't running for political office [Ali chuckles]. She's building her own temple, in a sense.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: So yeah, take plus one forward. That's one of her custom moves here. So. And then she kind of slowly flicker-walks through the garden, away. Where are you all headed from here? So I'll—this map does not give you direct directions so you'd have to figure it out, but the observation deck—there is a sign that does show you you can go right to the life deck from here. And you can also go—I'm gonna start drawing in things, one second. Right, so clearly you've gone from docking to—oh, I'm on the wrong layer, fuck [laughs].

[Ali and Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: Drawing this on my layer, let's get rid of that bullshit...nope, don't get rid of that, that's important...um, freehand maps, what's a good color for this? Not red.

JANINE: Green?

AUSTIN: Yeah, green. So, you clearly know you can go this way now. There is a connection that goes from Observation down to Life Deck. There is a collection that goes from Docking to Temple. There's a collection—er, connection—that goes from Docking to Storage. And there is a connection that goes from Docking to Comms. There is not a connection that goes right from Observation to Temple, it goes from Observation to Life Deck or Observation to Docking. Each of these is both ways, also, but I'm not gonna draw that because it's messy laughs].

ALI: Okay. And, as far as we know, we're in Observation?

AUSTIN: You are in Observation, a hundred percent.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Observation is this big park deck.

ALI: Right, right, okay. Um, and from—

AUSTIN: Gonna get rid of the arrow...oh, fuck!

ALI: [laughs] Woo-hoo-hoo!

AUSTIN: It's fine, it's fine.

ALI: Mm, okay.

AUSTIN: Give me a second, I have to push this to the back. There we go.

ALI: Yeah, mm-hm. Um—

AUSTIN: I deleted the map everybody, that's what just happened.

[Ali and Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: The Restful Temple of Privign just disappeared, it was wild!

[Ali laughs]

ALI: As far as we know and saw and heard from Acre, Mother's Glory went towards the life deck with the—?

AUSTIN: That's—correct.

JANINE: Mm-hm.

ALI: Okay. That is both what we saw and—

AUSTIN: Story, Story, Story.

ALI: Yes, sorry. Sorry.

AUSTIN: [laughs] It's fine.

ALI: Mother's Glory—

JANINE: Which direction was—

ALI: No, I said it again wrong [laughs].

[Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Which direction was Waltz Tango Cache being pursued in?

AUSTIN: Um, Mother's Glory be—[breaks off into laughter] Haha!

[Ali laughs]

JANINE: [laughing] Come on!

[Jack chuckles]

AUSTIN: Mother's Story—

JANINE: No, it's still different, Mother's Glory, it's still different.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I know, Story.

[Jack chuckles]

AUSTIN: Acre believes that—and also that wasn't even the question! The question was about Waltz, not about—ughhh [Ali laughs]. Acre believes—

JACK: Although, let's just be clear here, Mother Glory would do *amazingly* on this space station.

ALI: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Oh my God, Mother Glory would just—For people who haven't listened to Winter in Hieron, Mother Glory is a good character who would take no shit from any New Earth Hegemony bullshit [Jack laughs], would kick down the door and be a big cool jackal-lady. God. Okay. Waltz—Acre believes that Waltz was pursuing a key to the core somewhere in abandoned storage or in abandoned quarters.

JACK: We don't know why they've been abandoned, do we?

AUSTIN: Because of the heading towards the—

JANINE: Because it's—

JACK: Oh, because many, many people have left, yeah. Oh, I guess it's hard to—

AUSTIN: The last thing I will say is that at this point, at some point, the robot, the Junko—what did I say it was called? The surrogate chaplain, comes back, does make its way over to you and says:

AUSTIN (as robot): The next station: Storage.

AUSTIN: [laughs] And turns on its nonexistent heel and begins towards—to roll back towards Docking, where it would theoretically connect to Storage.

[beat]

ALI: Okay. Um—

AUSTIN: So, where to?

ALI: Life deck?

AUSTIN: Alright. There is a sort of a large spiral staircase. Like, it's broad, you can—it's at the edge of the Observation Deck looking out into the stars, and then there is a round, circular staircase that goes down. Again, all this stuff also, I guess the staircase is the first thing in this area that you've seen, that has this kind of Rococo, late Baroque styling. So like interesting curves on the edge of the handrail on the staircase, there is—it's made of polished wood with

little—the banister has like little gold and silver—or, again, precious metal that has been desaturated, all of this has still been in gray-scale with little bits of color here or there. Kind of—not engraving, not fluting, what is the word I’m looking for? But like embedded into the wood there is a spiral of precious metal and then gems here and there, in a beautiful pattern but again, not a perfect pattern.

JANINE: Inlaid

AUSTIN: Inlaid. Thank you. Thank God, that was gonna kill me.

[Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: And the spiral staircase is broad, like, it’s big enough for twelve people to easily walk up and down, and it runs down into the middle of this life deck; it kind of turns and goes into the middle of this life deck. And the life deck is kind of a collection of—like, the note says, “Life Deck: food, medical, et cetera,” where Waltz Tango Cache has written on this hand-sketched map. And the—looking down on it from here is interesting, because you have a nice scope-out of what’s happening, because it is laid out as a sort of circular room—sorry, I’m looking for my note on this...here it is—and it’s totally open.

So it’s kind of an open circle with a very small rock garden at the very middle, with like sand and rocks and small benches—not very small, small, you know, in comparison to the spaceship, but big enough for, you know, ten to twenty people to be in. Then, outside of that rock garden, like surrounding it, are little stands, almost like food stands. Or like, you know, hot dog stands, but not hot dog stands, like they’re like Japanese festival stands, you know what I’m talking about? And then, past that there is another circular row, like a concentric circle, of standalone rooms—like small buildings, basically, on this deck. And that is things like medical supplies and, you know, HR would be here, you know, those sorts of services are there and many of those look totally abandoned because they’re from a time when there were more people on this station. And then the outside ring has more of those things, but also it’s a lot of just solid—like, out—exterior—not exterior, but like wall, basically—that has things like paintings and more statues, lots of decorations on the very outside of the circular floor. It’s also a very tall room, because it is as tall as the—it’s as tall as a number of other floors put together and has this giant staircase coming down. And you can see there are places where you can—there are other little staircases up to overhanging mini-floors, where there were once even more places to visit but right now seem totally empty.

And as you’re looking down, you see that near—like in between the food stands and these buildings, like gathered around a few benches, these stone benches, are seven of the—um, that’s wrong, wait...one, two, three, four, five...no, it’s right. Seven Torch units, the white Torch units. And again, these are the robots that have big flashlight—big spotlight eyes, the big four-panel things on the outside of like—kind of like theater lights or spotlights, like camera-style, like old-fashioned Hollywood lights. And then Mother’s Story is there, and then

there are a dozen monks held hostage here. They have been like the New Earth Hegemony equivalent of zip-tied [laughs], they have small energy ties around their hands and behind their backs. And there is other Torches—Torch units—patrolling and keeping them in place. And you can see, like as you start to come down, that Mother's Story is lifting one of them up and bringing them into one of these rooms. Oh, there are also two little round hoverdrones. They are kind of beige in color, they're literally little tiny spheres. They have another—they have a little indentation that might be a camera or something and they're about the size of a fist, each of them. And those are like patrolling, basically.

JACK: Are there—and I'm still getting somewhat familiar with this system—are there like essentially Legwork rolls we can make prior to encounters?

AUSTIN: In what way? Like, what do you want to know?

JACK: Is there something—it's not so much an Assess roll or something—although I might do one of those.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: [laughs] But like, is there a way we can, like, become ready in some way? Like, gain hold or something?

JANINE: Strategize?

AUSTIN: Uh, so—yeah, Strategize totally does that. Which says: "When you scrutinize, plan ahead, or confer with each other to achieve a common goal you gain Preparation. If you prepare for a day or two in the fiction [Jack and Janine laugh], take one Preparation.

JACK: Hmm [laughing] Alright, hang on hostages [laughs, Austin laughs].

ALI: I think Analyze is probably what you're looking for?

AUSTIN: That is what you're—

ALI: 'Cause that's the one that's like, "How is x vulnerable to me?" or "What's my biggest threat?"

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That is totally—

JACK: I have a move that relates to that as well, so. Okay.

AUSTIN: You're gonna analyze while looking down? From this kind of—

JACK: Yeah, I'm trying to think of a more interesting visual here. Um—

AUSTIN: How does Fourteen Fifteen normally handle situations like this?

JACK: Well, the first time I did it, it didn't go great. Which is that I just kind stormed into the room [Austin laughs] and [chuckles] got my gun stolen from me.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: So I wonder whether or not this is a direct response to that. Which is, I guess what I'm going to do is, I'm going to—yeah, I'm going to look over the rail, but with the—the impression that one would get looking at it is, you know when you're, like, in big malls and people are leaning over looking down, just like you were talking about at the cinema, Austin?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: If you were to see Worthy of Grace doing this, you'd just see them leaning against the rail.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: With, like, their arms crossed, their elbows on the rail—except one hand is holding the glass pistol.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: And it's very much a—

AUSTIN: Sort of relaxed in a way? Like—

JACK: It's—yeah, the posture of someone whose job is blending in, until it's not.

AUSTIN: Right. Sure.

JACK: And the same way that—you know, we've talked about Fourteen taking on the character of the new bodies each time, I think there is definitely an instinct that Fourteen has for blending in that, even when they don't need to be doing that, is active.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: So I'm gonna roll Assess—uh, Analyze.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Which I'm gonna do feeling...let me work this out. I suppose this is—This is such an interesting mechanic 'cause it asks you to both be honest with yourself—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: —and also take into account narrative interest [laughs].

AUSTIN: Yup.

JACK: I think this is Peaceful rather than Powerful.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I think that had my encounter in the Mysteries gone well, it would be Powerful but instead there is a sort of peace in taking stock and in being quiet.

AUSTIN: Mm. Okay. And what is that extra move that you said you had? Is that—does that come up here?

JACK: I have Axiomatic.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Whenever I Analyze, I can ask the MC, "What is it only I can perceive about this situation or place?" for free.

AUSTIN: Ooh. Okay, cool.

JACK: We'll do the other ones first.

AUSTIN: Yep. Go ahead and give me—what's your roll, what's the Peaceful score?

JACK: Oh, minus one.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Oh-ho. That's not—

JACK: Oh, yes!

AUSTIN: That's a six!

JACK: Perfect. I just rolled a six.

AUSTIN: So let's ans—What's the one question you can ask again?

JACK: Oh, so, I just—It's, "What here is perceptible only to me?"

AUSTIN: Hmm.

JACK: Or, the exact wording is, "What is it only I can perceive about this situation or place?"

AUSTIN: And that's because of your training, theoretically, as like a bounty hunter and hitperson.

JACK: Yeah that's—yeah.

AUSTIN: Or is it some other reason? Is it because you're made of data, is it because—hmm.

JACK: I think that it can be a bunch of different stuff there.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: I mean, what's interesting here is that it has to be something that I can carry into this space—

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: —because there's no way I can contact Castlerose—

AUSTIN: Nope.

JACK: —or look anything up.

AUSTIN: Alright, so...I think the thing that you notice that only you could notice is...[exhales].
Um...The Torches, the Torch units, they don't move like people. You are made of data, you know what it's like to both be made of data and be a person. You've had a series of bodies—have you ever had a synthetic body? Or—

JACK: Oh yeah, absolutely.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Like once or twice. It's a bit cheaper.

AUSTIN: Right. They are—they're robots in the traditional sense. They are, like, old school—

JACK: Oh, they're like *robots*.

AUSTIN: They're like automatons, yes, they are not synthetic people. They are just robots. And they have patterns that you can exploit because of that. Which is to say that they are currently in a "Hold these twelve monks hostage" pattern. They are not in a, like, they're not people holding hostages. They are robots who are currently activated the "Hold these twelve monks hostages", like, routine. Sorry, that's not true. That's what they were doing. Now they've activated a different routine, which is "Intruder spotted" [laughs].

[Jack and Ali laugh]

AUSTIN: The—one of the—you're looking down and then you hear, like, "mbmbmbmbmb" as one of those little drones hovers up in front of you. And it goes like, [robot noise] "mbmbmpr?" and the eye zooms in and out—it's not an eye, but it's like a lens. And then it lights up bright red [Jack laughs]. And then all of their lights spin up towards you and, like, super flash—oh, that's not true! You got a seven, 'cause you took plus one forward from Acre.

JANINE: I was just thinking that. Yeah.

JACK: Oh!

AUSTIN: Yes! Not true at all.

JACK: Phew.

AUSTIN: Close one. So you do get a question. That didn't happen [Ali giggles]. Instead—

JACK: Can I [laughs]—Can I get a question and suggest how that didn't happen?

AUSTIN: Yes, sure.

JACK: Is it, the thing flies up and I just swat it out of the air as I'm leaning over this balcony?

AUSTIN: Uhhh, I think that would activate it too, if we're being honest.

JACK: Oh, right. It would go—alright [laughs]

AUSTIN: That's how drones work. Yes.

JACK: Oh, that's fine.

AUSTIN: It would know, “oh shit!”

JACK: “I’ve been attacked.” Alright, I get one question.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Alright. So, my question is...[exhales]

AUSTIN: To be clear, you could have that thing happen.

JACK: Oh, I could.

AUSTIN: You would just also have to deal with the repercussions.

JACK: I would have drawn the fire. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is they would know.

JACK: I think the question I want to ask is how—so there’s one main group of hostages?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And one hostage has been brought into another room, as we just saw it.

AUSTIN: Yes, correct.

JACK: Okay. How is the—how are the guards of the main, of the largest group of hostages, vulnerable to me?

AUSTIN: Um, there are two answers. One is that they—the thing I already told you, which is they are on their routine.

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: They’re not able to deal with rapidly changing circumstances. And that also means that they are not particularly—they are very vulnerable to sneak attacks, basically, as long as you can get that in.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And the second thing is that as long as you’re not looking at them, they will try to flash you with their flashbang light thing, they’ll try to blind you. But if you can anticipate that, you can

try to avoid it, and that—and get them while they're doing that, you know what I mean? They're not firing and blinding people at the same time.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so, if you can anticipate it, that's a moment of weakness for them.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: So that is the—no, you still choose two.

JACK: Oh, do I get—?

AUSTIN: On a hit—Oh no, sorry, I was looking at the wrong one, I was looking at the wrong one [Ali giggles]. No, wait! No, it totally is two. On a ten, ask three; on a seven to nine, ask two.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: So you get one more.

JACK: Alright, question two. Where is my best way into this—so we're in this large, open space where the hostages are visible.

AUSTIN: You're looking down at it, right, yeah.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Where is my best way into that zone where the large group of hostages is? Beyond just walking up.

AUSTIN: Um—

JACK: Is there like a passage or a—

AUSTIN: No, there's no passages.

JACK: —line of cover?

AUSTIN: But there is a line of cover. There—so is that exterior circle, the concentric circle, of other services buildings, like the medical building, the building for filing HR complaints—

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: —the building that is devoted to spiritual guidance, the building where you can talk to a career counselor, the building where you can—you know, like all of those sorts of buildings are

all right there. And you can cut between a little alleyway between them. Or, you could hop down on top of a building that's off—that's kind like of at an angle to where they are, where they're not looking, and from there you would have a completely clear shot at a range that is adequate to where your stuff is. That said, all of that is—in some ways, that is your best way in...but there's another thing to think about, which is: your best way in, depending on what your motive is, might be to come in, clear as day, from the garden because there aren't hostages in the garden.

JACK: Mhmm.

AUSTIN: Like, from the other side of the food stands, basically, in towards the middle. And you could get there also by running through the cover and coming in from that way, because from that way the Torches will face you instead of facing the hostages, which will keep the hostages safer.

JACK: Another thing I just realized is Mother's Story doesn't know what I look like.

AUSTIN: That is true.

ALI: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: She does know your gun, but she doesn't—

JACK: So that's something to bear in mind—Oh yeah, she does know my gun.

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah.

[Ali laughs]

ALI: So—

JACK: Okay.

JANINE: We could maybe kind of get the best of both worlds here, if we want to confuse these Torch units. I was gonna say I could create a diversion.

AUSTIN: Oh, totally! You totally could.

JANINE: In the garden, without us necessarily moving to the garden. So we get them moving but still have the extra advantage of them—

AUSTIN: That's a good idea.

JACK: Yeah.

JANINE: Um—

ALI: I also have a gun that's an EMP.

AUSTIN: That's true. You do, and they are robots.

ALI: If we wanted to try to just deactivate some.

JANINE: Mhm.

JACK: That is very true.

ALI: I want to put that on the table.

JANINE: Okay, so what if we, like, stir something up in the garden so they like...go that way...and then EMP and start throwing down like that?

ALI: Um, yeah, that works. That's a plan.

JACK: I'm super up for that. This is perhaps the most "the plan" we've ever done [Ali and Austin laugh].

JANINE: Which means it's gonna go terribly!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Listen, you all have plus one forward right now, still, because—

JANINE: Mm-hm.

JACK: No, I don't. I don't.

AUSTIN: Yes, you do; yes, you do; yes, you do! Because you successfully did an Analyze, which gives you plus one forward.

JACK: Oh yeah!

JANINE: Oh!

JACK: Nice!

AUSTIN: So—this is a sand garden in the middle, the kind of rock garden in the middle, right?

JANINE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: This gray-like layer, do you see the one I just laid down now?

ALI: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: That's the buildings.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: That's the row of buildings that is like, medical facility and blah blah blah blah blah.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then there's another outside layer, and then there's just walls. So that is the basic. And then food stands I'll do—what's a good color for food stands? Orange, 'cause it's nice and warm.

JANINE: Purple? Oh [chuckles].

AUSTIN: There we go. There's also this food stand layer, that's like...here. That—

JANINE: [laughs] This is all—okay, so people can't see this but it's like a series of concentric circles—I guess that's the word I want—inside of each other.

AUSTIN: Yep.

JANINE: And the idea of a layer of food stands made me immediately see this as like a planetary crust and core thing.

[Austins laugh]

JANINE: [laughing] And just the idea of a planet [Jack laughs] with a mantle of food stands inside...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Yup, it's good.

AUSTIN: Yep. That's it. This is like a top-down view, to be clear.

JANINE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: And so I've marked where they are.

ALI: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: They are the red 'X' here to—the eastern layer of the food stands and the services buildings. They're in between those two.

JANINE: Where are we?

AUSTIN: Wherever you want to be. You have the drop on them, I'm gonna let you come in wherever. Like, give me the plan of attack and then you can roll to risk to get somewhere...you're all plus one forward to do that at this point, so. But you can tell me what your plan of attack is, which I think you just did. You want to make a diversion to guide them over there?

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: And then you want to EMP them to fuck 'em up?

ALI: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Alright. So what's the diversion look like?

JANINE: Uh, so I've got my friendly neighborhood sash.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Friendly neighborhood sash? [laughing] My kinetic sash.

JACK: I'm sorry?

JANINE: Look, I—look. Okay, so [Ali giggles], I think—I don't think I throw that 'cause that'd be really obvious, but it slides along the cover—

AUSTIN: Like a snake. Like a little—

ALI: [gasps] Ooh.

JANINE: Yeah, like a silky little gilded snake [Ali gasps]. And then, like, pops up in the garden area and probably, like—I imagine the sash as like a very thin sort of silky fabric, but a lot like those scarves that—you can sort of wind them up and it just feels like a normal scarf, but then when you stretch them out it's like, "Oh, this is basically a blanket."

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Like, this is a big, giant piece of fabric.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: So I imagine that, as if it was caught in the wind or whatever, could look like a big, sort of living thing?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Like, it would look like something confusing, certainly.

AUSTIN: Alright.

JANINE: I think if it was thrashing around the garden especially.

AUSTIN: Yeah, kicking up dirt and sand and rocks.

JANINE: Yeah. Just like, “There’s just dogs fighting over there, what’s happening?”

[Austin and Jack laugh]

AUSTIN: Alright, give me a Divert. And, *and*, we get to talk now about what your stats look like.

JANINE: [nervously] Yeah.

AUSTIN: You have a choice right now.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is, you could attempt to—or not attempt to, but your kind of two choices are to roll your spiked-out stat at plus one, and then unmark one of those boxes, and then do that five times to eventually go back to even keel. Or, to immediately use a different stat at negative two, at which point you would reset everything. And that’s Alleviate, is what that is, is how that move works.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, to keep using that spiked-out emotion—in which case the emotion spike in that state decreases by one, and then when all emotion spikes have been removed, all state modifiers go back to normal—or use a different state at negative two—at which point you erase all of the emotion spikes in that spiked-out state but you then still must mark an emotion spike in the state you just rolled. Which means you’re in a unique situation which means you could

theoretically [laughs] go Peaceful—I don't think this is Peaceful—but you would spike out one stat while unspiking a different one.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is the worst, so.

JANINE: [laughing] It is, it's rough.

AUSTIN: So what're you going to do? How do you feel? is actually the right question.

JANINE: This is a weird thing. Because I can't think of a reason that she wouldn't still be sad.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like, I don't think that that moment of profound sadness that came up with Acre would just go away now that there's trouble.

AUSTIN: That's true.

JANINE: Like, they entered into this knowing there was trouble, the trouble was a constant. I think she's still—I think it's sadness in the form of, like, doubt.

AUSTIN: Riiight. Okay.

JANINE: A lot of the encounters she's had, that she's felt like she had a good plan and they were going into a situation well, they don't turn out great.

AUSTIN: Nm-mm.

[Ali laughs softly]

JANINE: Like, you know, that first thing in the Coliseum-y place went great, but everything since then has been kind of a mixed bag.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Alright, give me Sad. And make sure to add plus one to whatever you roll.

JANINE: Ugh.

AUSTIN: Okay, well that's still really fucking bad.

JANINE: Wow.

AUSTIN: That's still a five. Oh my God.

ALI: Ooooooh [laughs].

JACK: How do you screw up a diversion?

JANINE: They probably see it moving across the floor or something, right?

AUSTIN: Well, no, they see—I mean that would still give you—it would still—here, there's—the big thing that happens is, I think it gets there and I think it makes all of its shapes and then, very calmly, those two drones that have been flying around hover over to it and then, like, spark out at it their own little micro-EMP blast and it just goes dead.

JANINE: Shit.

AUSTIN: It just “pzzt”, falls down. You could probably repair it but, like, it is out of commission.

JANINE: Great.

AUSTIN: You have not been given up yet, though. Everyone—

JANINE: That's probably a really awkward moment on the stairs, right?

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yes, I'm sure it is. Like, yeah, what—how do you control it? Do you do hand stuff to control it?

JANINE: No, it's—I think it's with her interface, it's that kind of thing.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. So the other thing that happens here is, like, as it stops, the red li—all of the—the two drones, their lights go, have this now faint hint of red—because remember, all of the color is desaturated—so they're just like, slight red color, and the same thing happens with half, with six of the guard Torches.

JANINE: Ughh.

AUSTIN: And they begin to now pace. They are now, instead of being solitary, they are now walking in a pattern around that—their entire circle, basically. They are now kind of doing...thiiiiis...sort of pattern.

ALI: Mhm.

[Jack laughs]

JANINE: I'm picturing Signet, like, crouched on the stairs and also now immediately picturing her putting her face in her hands.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Aw.

JANINE: Just like, "Oh, great."

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Make sure you unmark one Sad.

JANINE: Yeah [laughs].

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Games!

[Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: Tender? What's your backup plan?

ALI: They're not, like, grouped together anymore, obviously, but like—

AUSTIN: They're are six doing this path, and I think the six are together. And then there's six still in the middle with the hostages.

ALI: Is there one that's visually different from the others?

AUSTIN: No. It's six—there are twelve white Torches...Er, yes, there are twelve white—no, there are eleven white Torches. 'Cause one of them before was red and that one is not here. So it's five—it's six back at the base, five—or, not at base [laughs]. Six with the hostages, five doing the patrol.

ALI: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: That's not true, there are seven total. There are seven total is what I said for this group, sorry. There are others in the station, twelve total. But there are—

ALI: They're not all here.

AUSTIN: There are seven here. So there are four with the hostages and three walking around on this patrol and the two flying drones. That is the correct number. I had to look at my notes.

ALI: [laughs] Okay.

AUSTIN: They have names and everything.

ALI: If I was to fire one rifle shot to get the biggest hit, it would probably be the four of them by the hostages?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: Okay. Those are odds.

AUSTIN: Is that like an AOE thing?

ALI: Um, yeah, I feel like—'cause the way that I've always described is like sort of hitting a target and then kind of rippling out.

AUSTIN: Right. Where are you when you do this?

ALI: Um, yeah, I think because they have—well, where is, um—

AUSTIN: Mother's Story is inside this building.

ALI: Okay, so not there. I was—[laughs]. Phew. Okay.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: Thanks for that heads up. And then the orange is the [laughs] food?

AUSTIN: Is the food stands, yeah.

ALI: Then I think, yeah, maybe like trying to come around? 'Cause if they're walking—they're doing a, uh—

AUSTIN: A patrol.

ALI: A patrol, right. If I wait long enough to kind of see the pattern that they're walking and then kind of slip in...?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: So yeah.

AUSTIN: That works. Give me your roll.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: This is—you're just doing it, right? You're not—there's no threat here, this isn't Ultimatum, this is Neutralize. This is "you're using force to attempt to neutralize a threat, take control of a situation, or maintain hold of something you have," right?

ALI: Uh, I have a disadvantage [laughs nervously]? I have not rolled since you told me to take that.

AUSTIN: What is your disadvantage? Wait, what?

ALI: I took a disadvantage from when I—

AUSTIN: Ohh!

ALI: From the thing with Sho.

AUSTIN: Yes. You over—yes, totally [Ali laughs]. Alright, so roll 3d6, take the lowest two.

ALI: So 3d6, take the lowest two, but then I have plus one forward.

AUSTIN: You do have plus one forward.

ALI: So it's whatever this is plus one.

AUSTIN: What are you feeling when you do this?

ALI: I think this a...hmmmm.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! [Ali laughs] [gleefully] I looked at your stats too! I also looked and saw that your Powerful is one away from spiking out!

ALI: Yeah, I, like—hmmm. I don't know that this is Powerful though, and I don't—

AUSTIN: Yeah, I don't know that this has to be that, but.

ALI: Yeah, it doesn't have to be. I don't think that it is, 'cause I don't think that it's the same sort of—

AUSTIN: If that diversion had worked it might be.

ALI: Right, yeah, exactly. Like, pensive? Is that it?

AUSTIN: Pensive sounds right.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'd say that that's either—oh, that's in here, that's Peaceful, right?

ALI: Yeah. 'Cause, like, I don't think she's walking with confidence but I think that she's doing so with determination.

AUSTIN: Okay. Sounds good. Mark Peaceful and give me a 3d6 plus one. Er, wait, what's your actual—what is your Peaceful?

ALI: Zero. So.

AUSTIN: So yeah, plus one. 3d6 plus one, take the lowest two.

ALI: It's a seven!

AUSTIN: No, it's not, 'cause you take the lowest two.

ALI: Oh!

AUSTIN: It's a four.

JACK: Oh no.

AUSTIN: It's a two, three, four, five.

[Janine sighs]

AUSTIN: Buddy.

ALI: Sick. okay.

JANINE: Can we just burn this asteroid? Just burn it all.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughs] Just burn it all, just set it all on fire!

ALI: "Hey, we're gonna go!"

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

[Jack chuckles]

AUSTIN: That's really good. Let me look at your sheet really quick to see if there's anything really fun here...I think it is your cyberlegs fuck up here. Uh, a thing that you've had for them for a while is like—you've talked about how they let you jump really high but they also, like, are a little—they're a little jumpy in a sense, right?

ALI: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: And I think you're pensive and you unintentionally charge them up. And then you go to take a step, and it just leaps you into the fucking air.

[Ali laughs loudly, Jack chuckles]

AUSTIN: And you're just like—you leap up into the air, Tender just from behind one of these food stands leaps up into the air and fires this shot.

JANINE: Oh my God.

AUSTIN: And it just misses, but it goes like, “boooooom,” [Ali laughs] where it does the cool rain sounds, the rainstick sound thing—not rainstick, whatever, the “whooh”...what are those sticks called that you described a couple weeks ago, a couple months ago now? That make the sound that this EMP thing makes?

ALI: I have no idea. I don't know what they're called. It was—

JANINE: Was it, like, thundersticks?

AUSTIN: Not the thundersticks, but the—or maybe it was a thunderstick, I don't know. That cool whooshing sound that you made forever ago.

ALI: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: It makes that sound and it fires off and it just misses, and the area, like, you know, there are ten, fifteen feet, all of the lights go off in that area and like flicker off.

[Ali snorts]

AUSTIN: And all of the spotlights come up at you and, like, see you flying through the air and then you come to rest, wherever you want to come—maybe on top of a building seems good. And guns—the guns are all drawn at this point. Fourteen, what are you doing as Tender lands?

JACK: [exhales] Probably [Ali laughs] about to shoot something.

ALI: Yeah, y'all should move in while I'm on top of a building [Austin laughs].

JACK: Oh, right.

ALI: I did the distraction! I did it [Austin laughs]. Hey everyone, I did it! [laughs]

JANINE: Nmmmm.

JACK: Okay. I am mad [Ali and Janine laugh]. I just decided that that's gonna happen before we roll anything.

AUSTIN: Okay. Uh-huh. Good.

JACK: That is how I feel.

AUSTIN: What do you do?

JACK: So I would like to....[exhales]. Man. So I am still on this upper level.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: And I would like to—is there a Torch that is, that is—are people facing me or are they facing where the noise was happening?

AUSTIN: They're not distracted, if that's what you're asking [Jack laughs]. If you try to make a move that will put you at risk, you'll have to roll a risk.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay.

AUSTIN: They are not distracted. They are, in fact, at high alert now, and their heads are on swivels, literally, but also, like, there's seven of them, they can cover. One of them will see you move at this point.

JACK: Yeah. Alright. Um—

AUSTIN: I think they're not actually red lights...I think it's like this faint orange light, almost like an amber spotlight—or, not a spotlight, a traffic light—in the fog.

JACK: Yeah, the way I picture them is, like, you know when you're in a room and you turn a light off and the way the light's—

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: —it will—the filament, it will remain kind of lit for a short period of time.

AUSTIN: One hundred percent, yeah.

JACK: Okay. Right, so. I would like to...I'd like to take a shot at one of them, though the one who is currently—or, I guess, the ones that are currently closest to moving in on Tender and Signet. Ideally Tender, actually, 'cause that went badly for Tender.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: So I'm gonna take a shot at the one who is most interested in that regard.

AUSTIN: Sounds good.

JACK: And then I'm gonna jump from the upper area, uh—

AUSTIN: Down.

JACK: Down. And try and take cover. I'm prepared to roll an attack and risk.

AUSTIN: Yeah, give me a Neutralize for the attack, which is when you force to attempt blah blah blah, et cetera.

JACK: So, this is Mad.

AUSTIN: [cross] You're Mad.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And you have plus one forward.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So let's roll...let's put a check in Mad.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Which means that one of my Peaceful goes down.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

[Ali sneezes]

JACK: No longer as peaceful as I was [Austin laughs]. That's a nine.

AUSTIN: That's a nine. Plus one!

JACK: That's a ten!

AUSTIN: That's a ten! That's a ten! That's a ten! So you take three hold and no harm in the doing. You can inflict harm; you can take away an advantage, which they don't have right now; you can suffer little harm, except that you already take no harm in the doing 'cause you rolled over ten; or you can force a change of location, which is one hold or two when you get to decide where it moves to; or you can impress, dismay, or frighten your opponent.

JACK: Yeah, okay. I'm going to—right, I'm going to inflict harm, right off the bat.

AUSTIN: What's this look like? What's the gun again? Like, talk me through it.

JACK: So the gun is, um...it has a glass handle that is inlaid—or not inlaid, it's like it's been laser-cut with flowers.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: And the barrel is very much like a sort of Blade Runner—the Blade Runner gun.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: In video games it would probably be a hand-cannon, considered a hand-cannon.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right.

JACK: But in this, it's not as short-range as a hand-cannon, I don't think.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. I think it's close to it. So I think it's between six and thirty feet.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's between two and ten meters.

JACK: So, here's what happens if the camera had been on Fourteen during this time.

AUSTIN: Yeah?

[Ali giggles]

JACK: Fourteen was—they were sort of lounging over this thing, looking and feeling very peaceful. Then the, um, [bursts into laughter] sash move failed—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: And it's as though a cloud went over their face very briefly [Austin laughs] but they continued. And there was, like, the loud hydraulic sound of Tender's cyberlegs going [chuckles, Ali and Austin laugh] and Fourteen's eyebrows just shooting up.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: And then they just level their pistol on one of the Torches and fire a shot.

AUSTIN: Nice. Um—

JACK: So it's as though they've been very calm, [laughs] and then a single expression of shock, and then—

AUSTIN: Can I add one detail here?

JACK: Yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN: Which is like how you use that forward. Which is, it spots you and you catch the light about to light up. And you hold—close your eyes—

JACK: [excitedly] Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: —'cause you know it's gonna flash you and, like, with your eyes closed take an aim and fire. And then we just gets shots of the sparks coming out of its head. So yeah, you do two damage, right, with the kinetic handgun?

JACK: Uh-huh, I think so.

AUSTIN: Yeah, two harm. So the first one of these sparks—its head, you know, sparks off and then it falls to the ground and drops its rifle. It is taken out.

JACK: So that expended one hold?

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: I would like to...let me just look at the list again real quick here.

AUSTIN: That was one of the ones near the hostages, by the way.

JACK: Cool.

AUSTIN: Right, 'cause it was—wait, Tender, where did you end up? Did you end up closer to the hostage group or closer to the patrol group?

ALI: I think probably closer to the...hostages?

AUSTIN: Okay. So then, yeah, there's three more left near hostages

JACK: And they're some distance away from me here; I can't literally fall on one of them, right?

AUSTIN: Um...no, but you can, like, hop to a roof and then jump onto another one?

JACK: Yeah, I'm just—please let me fall on one.

AUSTIN: Yeah [Ali laughs], you can totally fall on one.

JACK: Cool! So, I'm going to...can I keep this hold and take a risk move?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yes.

JACK: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: And then move into new positioning and then get to use that hold again. So yeah, go ahead and—

JACK: Mm-hm. Just thinking of the fight choreography.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Still Mad, by the way [Ali chuckles]

AUSTIN: That's fair. Give me a Risk to jump down from the stairs onto a building and then from the building onto a robot, onto a Torch. How do you feel? Still Mad, you said?

JACK: Still Mad.

AUSTIN: Which is plus, what? Plus one?

JACK: Uh, zero.

AUSTIN: No, plus zero, alright. And now you don't get a plus one from the Analyze. So.

JACK: Oh, do I not? Okay.

AUSTIN: No, you've used it. It's one forward, not ongoing.

JACK: Oh right, yeah. Okay.

AUSTIN: That...is a six [snorts].

[Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: So! [laughs] You, uh—what's this look like? I think you make it from the roof to a building, then you—

JACK: Oh!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

JACK: I have a proposal.

AUSTIN: Please.

JACK: Which is, I line up a jump.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: I make the jump. And the Torch looks up and there's a very bright light.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. And you are just—you can't see anything at this point. You still have two hold and you don't take damage because of the previous running thing [Jack chuckles]. You're still in the moment of spending that hold. So what do you do with the remaining hold?

JACK: Okay, I have two hold remaining?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I'm gonna spend—[laughs].

AUSTIN: Do you land on this thing still? Do you, like, hit the landing and knock one of these out?

JACK: Oh, yeah. I'm on top of it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: And it is still going and moving

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: And I can't see anything.

AUSTIN: No. Correct.

JACK: I think I have my eyes shut, I don't think it's—I think if I had them open, the visual would be the same.

AUSTIN: Yes. Or at least it would be almost painful to see at this point.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So I'm going to inflict harm.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: And the way I'm going to inflict harm is I'm going to, based on what I can tell—

AUSTIN: Mm-hm?

JACK: —try and break the glass with the butt of my pistol.

AUSTIN: With the—okay. You totally do that, that's fine. And you break the glass, because you still have that hold. So spend that hold one-for-one to do damage. You have one hold left. You've knocked out two of these now. Somehow, this has been successful, despite also meaning—I think for physical things, like, you're at disadvantage for the next few turns, basically.

JACK: That's—yeah that's totally fair. Because—

AUSTIN: At least.

JACK: I guess the last thing I'm going to do is—can I spend my last hold to force a change of location, so I'm not just, like, flailing around on the body of one of these Torches.

AUSTIN: Near the hostages? Totally.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I get to decide where though, right?

JACK: Yeah, because I can't see.

AUSTIN: Someone else grabs you and—A hand [laughs]. A hand grabs you from the back and says:

AUSTIN (as Mother's Story): I recognize you, amateur.

AUSTIN: —and throws you backwards through a door [Jack laughs] into a side room [Janine laughs]. Everyone else sees Mother's Story lift—with, like, intense strength—lift Fourteen Fifteen, again who is an opera singer [laughs], who is a living Vocaloid person and throw them into another one of these service rooms. Again, Story has on this dope armor and has a big—it's a big shotgun with—it's almost like a shotgun meets a Gatling gun, it has seven barrels—that she is just holding very lackadaisically in one hand, very relaxed. And, like, just starts stomping in towards this building, this side building, that she has thrown, with one hand, Fourteen Fifteen into.

JANINE: Cool.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Okay. Signet—let's wrap back around to Signet and then Tender.

JANINE: [exhales] So, okay. As much Signet would probably like to just sit on these stairs for the rest of the evening...

AUSTIN: [laughs] Head in hands, "I can't believe I fucked up this sash trick."

JANINE: Yeah. Just like—yeah [laughs], that's Sash 101. That was like the first shit she learned to do with that damn sash and she still fucked it up.

ALI and AUSTIN: Aww.

JACK: In sash school [laughs].

JANINE: In sash school. But I think that thing that stands up—uh, the thing that happens is she stands up in that kind of, like—she's probably moving in that way that anime characters move when they're really just fucking tired.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: Like all the moments are very heavy and kind of imprecise. And that's like the opp—she is a very precise person.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes.

JANINE: Like she—from her training, by nature, she is very, like, precise and toned and elegant and—so seeing her moving heavy is weird.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Mm-hm.

JANINE: But—so she stands up and she, um...[sighs]. This is weird. I'm gonna presume the Mariposa was on that shuttle.

AUSTIN: Yep.

JANINE: Um, and I want to—

AUSTIN: Or—mm. We talked about it being very small.

JANINE: The Mariposa's a small thing though, remember?

JACK: Uh, what is the—

AUSTIN: Yeah, but, like, there wasn't—

JANINE: It's not a big, full-sized—

AUSTIN: There wasn't—yeah, but we talked about—there wasn't walking-around space in that shuttle.

JANINE: [disgruntled] Mm.

JACK: The Mariposa's your mech, right?

JANINE: Could it be, like, in the trunk? Yeah.

AUSTIN: The—No [Ali laughs].

JANINE: Ugh.

AUSTIN: I think this is a thing you could call for if you set up communication again. But no, I don't think you have access—

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think that's a reach. And like, I'm not shutting it down 'cause I think it's a bad idea.

JANINE: Mm-hm.

JACK: It's slicker.

AUSTIN: But I think it would be a lot to be like you also have a ship that's—on top of your main ship, you also have another ship that has enough room for a mech in it [Ali laughs]. Even a small mech.

JACK: It's like a uniquely COUNTER/Weight problem, right, of, like, "Where are the mechs right now?"

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah. Uhh...Well, fuck, okay. I guess the only other thing I can do try to collect my fucked-up sash?

AUSTIN: You can do a lot of things, like I, I—these things are not that tough.

JANINE: No, I know, but I don't want to be blinded.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: And I could tie the sash around my face and it's, like, sheer fabric.

AUSTIN: Ooh, that's good. I like that.

JANINE: So, yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. That's nice.

JANINE: That's—

AUSTIN: Give me a risk to run out there and get that sash on your face.

JANINE: [exhales] Good. Yes.

AUSTIN: You're still sticking with Sad?

JANINE: Yeah, I don't—

AUSTIN: Slowly work this thing down.

JANINE: I don't think we're like—There's no way she's in a good place and there are no other bad things here that describes the kind of bad she is better than Sad.

AUSTIN: She's not Scared. She hasn't gone from being Sad to Scared at this point.

JANINE: No. Scared implies, like, I dunno...Scared—I think it takes a lot for Signet to be really, really scared. Like in a fight especially.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: 'Cause I don't think she is as worried about death as a lot of people.

AUSTIN: [snorts] Okay.

JANINE: Especially when she's sad.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I think when she's sad, especially, it's just like, "I've been here a long time." You know.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Fair. Alright, give me a Sad...that's a, that's a seven? An eight? A seven. A seven, 'cause you failed the seven before.

JANINE: Isn't it an eight?

AUSTIN: It doesn't matter, seven and eight are the same thing. Your goal here is to get the sash and put it on—I need to look at your, sorry I need to look at your—

JANINE: Oh sorry, I didn't realize this was—you had to look at the same thing. That's weird!

AUSTIN: When I look at your sheet, it's literally your sheet. It's the same one. So I'm looking to see if there's anything I can do to exchange that. Um, so I think you just—you're going to get hit in the process but you're able to get the sash and cover your eyes, so that the blinding—you're immune to the blinding at this point.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: But, you do get caught in the shoulder by one of their rifles. So take—you would take two damage.

JANINE: Which is canceled out by my two armor?

AUSTIN: Awesome. Which—what's the armor from again?

JANINE: So one of the armors is from my jumpsuit—which actually at the point I should probably say that when we started in the fight it did the thing where, like—remember the curtain-stiffer thing? We haven't done that in a while.

AUSTIN: Oh, we haven't done that in a while!

[Ali laughs]

JANINE: The vestments get sucked in—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: —and it's just like the opalescent, pearlescent, plug-suit kind of thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: So that has one armor. The second armor is from Armor of Faith, which is so long as I possess my Cybertome—aka the Exuvia—

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: —"you have the benefit of one armor—"

AUSTIN: So it's two armor.

JANINE: "—when this armor is the deciding factor in preventing harm. Instead, describe the inexplicable circumstances that cause the harm not to befall you."

AUSTIN: So tell me what those are, 'cause this is the thing preventing you from being harmed.

JANINE: Yeah. So I think the thing that happens is—the Exuvia usually hides in the crease of fabric.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: I think when all the fabric gets sucked in it probably nestles in one of those nodes.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: But I think this time maybe it's a little slow getting there; like, it's crawling to one of those little nodes.

AUSTIN: This is the big, weird glowy beetle that you have.

JANINE: Or even like, when the fabric gets sucked in it wasn't holding on tight enough or something [Austin chuckles], so it sort of slides and is like on the jumpsuit, and then it climbs up over a shoulder right where the shot is hitting, and the shot bounces off and the little bug just climbs in.

AUSTIN: It block—it literally. Okay. So it's made of something that is, at the very least, bulletproof.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or, I guess—

JANINE: Who knows what the hell that thing is made of.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Or what it is.

AUSTIN: These things are shooting hypercharged little plasma bolts, is what they're shooting.

JANINE: Maybe it just absorbs it.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Is that a cooler image? Instead of like a—

AUSTIN: That's a cool image, yeah.

JANINE: It just swallows up that energy somehow and vanishes.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And then goes into your plugsuit. Cool, good, you're not creepy.

JANINE: And, like, one of the hostages thinks they saw it but then they're not sure.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right. "Huh?"

JANINE: And they're like, "Did that really happen?"

AUSTIN: Exactly.

JANINE: "It's a little bug?"

AUSTIN: Cool. So you get that tied around your face. And, you know, we immediately see it happen, where they try to blind you and you're just able to move away.

JANINE: And flip them off.

AUSTIN: Tender?

[Austin laughs]

JANINE: I don't flip them off.

AUSTIN: That's a very Signet thing to do. Tender?

ALI: Hi! Hey.

AUSTIN: What're you doing? Hi.

ALI: So I think that I had been trying to use the vantage point of the food booth to sneak and I ended up on top of one?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Like, I think she landed on a paper mache sandwich.

AUSTIN: Shop? Good.

ALI: [laughs] Went into it and like—

AUSTIN: Oh *literally* a big paper mache sandwich. Gotcha. Yes. Yes. Perfect.

ALI: It was on top of the stand like, "Here's where the sandwiches are!"

AUSTIN: Good.

ALI: And I think that she kind of, like, crouches, like bends her knees a little bit [Austin laughs] to do the same thing...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

ALI: But, like, on purpose [laughs].

AUSTIN: Okay, yes.

ALI: And jumps up and kind of pulls the staff up so it's facing, what is it, horizontal? No, the other one...vertical.

AUSTIN: Vertical, yeah.

ALI: And pops the knife out to land on one of the robots, and, like, stab it.

AUSTIN: Nice. Nice. Give—how do you feel?

ALI: I'm probably pretty mad.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah, that's good.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Roll Mad. Give me a Mad. Your Mad is one. So 2d6 plus one.

ALI: Yeah, roll 2d6 plus a one...that's a five [laughs].

AUSTIN: Oh, buddy.

ALI: That's a five.

AUSTIN: It's not going well for you today.

ALI: That's a five.

AUSTIN: It is a five. It's totally a five.

ALI: Mm-hmmm.

AUSTIN: I think you—the thing that, here's the main thing that happens here is you miss. I think one of them looks up and blinds you as you're coming down, and you miss—yeah, you don't hit anything but your blade slams into the ground and is stuck there.

ALI: Yup.

AUSTIN: Stuck the halberd in, you're blind, and there are still a bunch of hostages kneeling all around you. So. That's a bad place to be in this moment [Ali laughs]. Fourteen?

JACK: Hey, speaking of good places to be in moments—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: I'm in a good one, aren't I? Great.

AUSTIN: You are.

JACK: Good one.

AUSTIN: You can hear Mother's Story cock her shotgun, like pump it. And she says:

AUSTIN (as Mother's Story): New threads?

AUSTIN: And then points—you can hear the air moving as she points this gun at you. You are in a little doctor's office, basically [Jack laughs]. You're in the lobby of a little doctor's office, like the reception area of a little doctor's office, and you hear her pump this shotgun. What do you do?

JACK: I'm going to try and roll risk.

AUSTIN: Okay. What are you doing, before you talk about what you roll?

JACK: Well, we're in a little doctor's office.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: A big, big inspiration for Fourteen Fifteen for me is Martin Blank in *Grosse Pointe Blank*.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

JACK: So I'm gonna do a very Martin Blank move, which is I'm gonna try and reach for one of those, like, little metal trays in doctors' offices.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh [laughs]. Yeah.

JACK: And try and just smack the shotgun to the side with this tray.

AUSTIN: Okay So this isn't about damaging, this is just about—

JACK: It's like an evasive maneuver.

AUSTIN: Sounds good. Give me a Risk.

JACK: Let's see how this goes.

AUSTIN: How do you feel?

JACK: Uhhhh [laughs]. I feel, um...I'm still Mad. This time I'm Mad because I got blinded by the thing and because she—she did a one-liner.

AUSTIN: She did.

JACK: And that's cause to be mad [laughs].

AUSTIN: [laughs] If ever there was.

JACK: Um—okay, well.

AUSTIN: Hey, that's a seven. That's a seven. Seven to nine, there will be a cost, complication, or choice introduced by the MC, which is me. So yeah, you knock her gun to the side, and then the round that she fires is an explosive round. Like, a little canister slams against the side of this doctor's office, explodes, and the place catches fire [Jack sighs deeply]. So now you are in a burning doctor's office with Mother's Story. And you're up close with her now, right? And so, I think at this point she tries to shove you away and make space. But you're—what do you do?

JACK: I'm gonna try and—I'm gonna try and beat her to that move. If she wants to try and make space, I'm gonna try and close in.

AUSTIN: Okay. And do what?

JACK: So I'm just gonna—I'm gonna try and punch her.

AUSTIN: Okay, give me a Neutralize.

JACK: But probably punch her with the pistol in my hand.

AUSTIN: With the butt of—mm-hm.

JACK: This is a Neutralize roll?

AUSTIN: It is. This is damage, 3d6.

JACK: How much can I see now?

AUSTIN: I think shapes, right?

JACK: Alright.

AUSTIN: Shapes and—

JACK: I can make out—

AUSTIN: And it's greyscale, still. So. The fire is now adding this really light orange glow to everything.

JACK: Mm-hm. Which is nice.

AUSTIN: It's nice [laughs]. As this place burns. This ancient temple. Good job.

JACK: I mean I—[laughs] I would have had the memory of that arsonist that I managed to take down.

AUSTIN: Oh, right!

JACK: But I don't have that memory anymore.

AUSTIN: You don't have that memory anymore! So yeah, 3d6.

ALI: Awww.

JANINE: Mm.

AUSTIN: And you're Mad still, I'm guessing?

JACK: I think now I'm Scared.

AUSTIN: Fair.

JACK: I think I'm Scared because this is going in a way that I was anticipating it to go [laughs] when I tried to take out one of those guys.

AUSTIN: No. Yeah. You took out two of them, to be fair.

JACK: Oh my God.

AUSTIN: Oh my *God*.

ALI: Holy shit.

JACK: That's even a good one, Austin.

AUSTIN: You rolled two ones! And—

ALI: Oh, are we marking our failures?

AUSTIN: Oh, mark your failures [Ali laughs]. *Please* mark your failures.

JANINE: Oh, whoops.

JACK: Oh yeah, those.

AUSTIN: This is not a game that's been mean to you in terms of rolls and stuff [Ali laughs]. This specific session has been *terrible*.

JACK: A six is definitely a failure, right?

AUSTIN: Oh, buddy! *Yeah*.

JACK: So I have leveled up here. Multiple times [laughs]. No, I haven't leveled up multiple times.

AUSTIN: Uhh.

JACK: I have leveled up and I have two points in the next one [laughs].

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay, yeah, good. So you try to close distance and as you do, you see shades of the Gunslinger. She just—she has the shotgun in her right hand and with her left hand she just hip-fires a pistol that she has in—like, a pistol pops out of the side of her armor in her leg [Jack exhales] and draws it like Robocop, super quick, and like, “bpp bpp bpp” and catches you with a—she has a hand-cannon also. Hers is slick and blocky, like it's a long, blocky barrel with a flat, blocky...holster—not holster, grip. And she pulls the trigger and it fires an armor-piercing steel bolt.

[Jack groans]

AUSTIN: Like it's a thin, steel bolt that just passes right through your chest. Take two damage, AP, armor piercing.

JACK: Okay, so that bumps me up to—like that?

AUSTIN: All the way to Moderate, yeah. Like, top—your Moderate damage is filled out. She's beaten the shit out of you twice now, buddy. I'm worried about you [Jack laughs]. Alright, people outside. Signet, you have this blindfold on. This sash, not blindfold—you have this sash on, which probably doesn't make it great to see, but wayyy better to see through than being actually hit by these flashes.

JANINE: Yeah. Things are probably a little fuzzy but the light is cut down dramatically, so that's—

AUSTIN: Yes. Yeah.

ALI: I just want to say I have a really good idea for the ones that are immediately around me.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm?

ALI: Just so, you know, you know that going into your next action.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah [Ali laughs].

JANINE: How many are around you and how many are left?

AUSTIN: There are two around Tender, where the hostages are.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: The other three are now charging down towards you all, from the side. This is all happening very quickly as always, so.

JANINE: You said the garden was full of rocks, right?

AUSTIN: Yep.

JANINE: Uh—

AUSTIN: It's a rock garden, so, yes [Ali laughs]. Various sizes.

JANINE: Cool. I want to start throwing some fucking rocks at their damn lamp-heads!

AUSTIN: Okay. So, pick them up and—

JANINE: 'Cause I don't have any other weapons so it's like—

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's fine.

JANINE: —once they're in range, sure, let's punch it up but—

AUSTIN: For now, like, just skipping a stone right in their face? Like a side-arm throw?

JANINE: I don't—I don't mean little pebbles. I mean like—

AUSTIN: Oh, you mean like big ol'—

JANINE: Probably like smaller than a volleyball, bigger than a baseball.

AUSTIN: Like, um—

JANINE: Like a stone that you would have to heft, but, like, Signet again is in—she's in good shape.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JANINE: Like she's in a limber kind of shape, but she's still strong.

AUSTIN: Like a—not a hammer, what's the throw? Shot Put. Like a shot put ball?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like that? Okay, cool.

JANINE: And she probably knows, like, how to fucking—

AUSTIN: How to do this?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Go ahead, give me a Neutralize. How do you feel while doing this?

JANINE: I think we're still, I think we're still just in Sad.

AUSTIN: You're still working through Sad?

JANINE: I think maybe when something goes well, sure, let's break that and feel something else, but until—

AUSTIN: She's not getting mad though? She's not—again, she's not getting mad, she's not scared, she's not—

JANINE: No. I think this is a case of her being kind of on autopilot.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Like, things are going bad and this is just her training acting now.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JANINE: Of just like, "Protect your eyes and use the materials around you to affect—" you know, whatever.

AUSTIN: Like, when we see her face she's distraught still.

JANINE: We don't, 'cause it's covered

AUSTIN: Oh, well, she still—she has a mouth. Or is she—is the sash completely around her face? It's not just a blindfold, it's like a mask at this point?

JANINE: I kind of like it more as a mask.

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah, that's fine.

JANINE: Like, I kind of just like the idea of her face being completely shrouded for this.

AUSTIN: I like that too. Yeah, okay.

JANINE: So we just don't know.

AUSTIN: Okay. Give me a Neutralize with Sad. With plus one. That's a seven! Phew. Close one there.

JANINE: I'll take it. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So you get seven to nine, you get two hold and you will take harm in the doing. Spend your hold one-for-one during the scene to inflict harm; to take away an advantage—they don't have an advantage—to suffer little harm; to force a change of location; or to impress, dismay, or frighten your opponent.

JANINE: I think I want to—do I get to choose which of the things they feel? Or, no, probably not.

AUSTIN: No. And also they're robots, which we talked about.

JANINE: That's true.

AUSTIN: I think you could still change what routine they're in but, like, yeah. What I'll say is you can do one damage for each hold you spend and these things have one HP. Which is how J—

JANINE: Can I—but, like—mm.

AUSTIN: You can take two of them out, is what I'm saying.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: You can also do other stuff. You could scare—

JANINE: I would like to take two of them out, yes.

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah. So you drop one with a rock and then maybe the other one gets closer and you knock it the fuck out? Or is it rocks twice?

JANINE: That was what I was thinking, was that because they're a slight distance away I was gonna throw rocks but, once they were in range, or once I was in range of one, I really just wanted to punch one in the face.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. And it just smashes right through the back of its head. Like all the way through.

JANINE: Maybe like a sort of flying Pogba punch. Like a real—

AUSTIN: Yeah, like a Superman punch, you fuckin' Roman Reigns this motherfucker, good. Unfortunately—

ALI: Do you do the cocking of your wrist before you—[laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughs] Cocks her wrist, as if it were a shotgun [Ali laughs], punches the ground, and then charges.

JACK: I've tried to punch two people today and it's gone terribly.

[Austin and Ali laugh]

AUSTIN: Remind me if the—how does your armor work? Your armor is just a pilot suit, right? So I think the second—the problem though is that the second person—like as you do that punch,

the final of this group lands a hit right on the back of your head. Like, just a chop. Like a heavy—or like a gun butt right to the back of your head. So take two from that. Your Reliquary—or not your Reliquary, your Faith—will protect you from one of those, but not from both. So take one damage.

JANINE: Okay. Would that be one Light or one Moderate?

AUSTIN: That's one Light, one Light. Yeah.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Each of those—everyone has five HP in this system, basically. Light to Moderate to Critical.

JANINE: Alright. Okay.

AUSTIN: What Light/Moderate/Critical means is what sort of attention you need after you've been damaged, in order to, like, keep on moving.

JANINE: Hmm. Alright.

AUSTIN: Tender? You said you had a thing.

ALI: Um, yeah, I would define this as a fight-or-flight situation.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: I—mm, okay. My staff is stuck.

AUSTIN: It is.

ALI: Would lifting it be just one action or could I include it in the thing [laughs] that I want to do?

AUSTIN: What do you mean?

ALI: Because I'd like to lift it up and make an attack, but like—

AUSTIN: Oh, I think lifting it up safely is like part—that's the thing. I think you have to take a move to do that. You either have to take damage to do it, you have to take a Risk to not be damaged while doing it...

ALI: Oh wait, 'cause like what—

AUSTIN: What's the thing you want to do?

ALI: 'Cause I'd like to either just lift it up or break off the knife part to kind of, like, sweep it in a circle around me.

AUSTIN: I think breaking off the knife part is good, because that's like a—that is like you are trading the ability to fire the gun part. Oh, no, you're breaking off the knife part is what you're

ALI: Right, so I can, like, just—

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

ALI: So it, like, cracks off and then I can just—

AUSTIN: I want to remind you that you are blinded and near a bunch of hostages.

ALI: [laughs] Okay.

JANINE: Nmm.

[Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: I'm doing my best—

JACK: Key reminder.

AUSTIN: I'm doing my best to not make this the game where, “and then hostage gets hurt” and that's the negative.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: But, like, if you swing a gun around in a circle [laughs] surrounded by hostages and ev—bad robots—not evil robots, they're just robots who've been programmed to do bad things right now—there is a serious risk. I'm letting you know what the risks are.

ALI: I am not going to fail this roll, is the reason why I'm describing it this way.

[Jack makes inquisitive noise]

AUSTIN: Oh hell yeah! Awesome!

ALI: Yeah, that's what I'm saying!

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Yes, yes, yes.

ALI: So I was wondering how generous you were gonna be with the bounds of this.

AUSTIN: With that thing.

ALI: Because I have a move that says—[laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'll let you do that. What's that move say?

ALI: "Mental conditioning allows you react and think faster than normally possible when you're in a fight-or-flight situation. Once per session, you may declare any dice roll ten-plus, as long as you do so before the roll."

AUSTIN: Awesome.

ALI: So, like, I—

AUSTIN: So you've declared that.

ALI: Yeah. So I—

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'll let you do that with Neutralize for sure.

ALI: Okay, yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN: Still roll Neutralize though. Because it says before roll. I just want to know if you make it; 3d6 plus however you feel.

ALI: [laughing] Okay.

AUSTIN: And also you still have to check the feeling. So, what do you feel?

ALI: Okay, yeah, for sure. But even if it's just like—are they all in front of me and then the hostages are behind me? Because if I have that positioning—

AUSTIN: No. You're in the middle of this terrible mix of people.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: But, like, think bigger. You know? This thing in you is activating, for the first time ever. Do whatever you—you're going to get a ten plus, you're going to destroy these two robots.

Show us what it means to have this weird brain. Show us this thing that you are. Like, not just break off the knife and do something. Push it to eleven, you know?

ALI: [laughs] I think being blinded and moving in a perfect circle that's high enough is a cool thing, but I guess if it's like—'cause I'm not—

AUSTIN: This is—one second. That's a cool COUNTER/Weight thing; this is the Twilight Mirage.

ALI: Right, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: There's a living sash; there's, you know—

[Ali laughs]

JANINE: It's not living, it's just—

AUSTIN: Janine blocked a bullet with a living beetle book that's made of some—sorry, didn't block it, ~~ate~~ the plasma burst [Ali laughs]. Like, if you're gonna have your Newtype flash, it can't just be "I hit them with the barrel of my big gun."

ALI: Right, yeah, yeah, okay. Um, I mean, how do we—mmm, how do we want to work out what—'cause in the Empath book, you can expend Flow in a way that's damaging.

AUSTIN: This isn't even from Empath though, right? This is from Percipient, right?

ALI: Right, yeah, exactly. But her being able to discharge that in a way that's like—

AUSTIN: Oh, I see. You're saying it is literally a psychic attack.

ALI: Right, yeah, exactly [laughs].

AUSTIN: Against these robots. It is like—it is like you are giving—Which is doubly interesting since we talked about them not being people, they are just robots.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: So you're like dispelling—is this like an EMP blast from you instead being of the gun?

ALI: Yeah, that's what—like / become it.

AUSTIN: Interesting.

ALI: And it just flows out of me that way.

AUSTIN: Does it come from the gun and then channel through you? Or is it literally born from your nonexistent Cyberbrain?

ALI: Maybe. I think that she, like, squeezes it to lift it up.

AUSTIN: Mm.

ALI: And then, like, knowing that she can't, or like—it's kind of the effect where you're stronger than you think you are and you take something and break it.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: But instead of her breaking it, it's like this—the energy goes out instead of in.

AUSTIN: Right. How do you feel?

ALI: [laughs] I think that I feel Powerful.

AUSTIN: Okay, mark that Powerful and spike out.

ALI: Yep! [laughs]

AUSTIN: And roll 3d6 plus two [laughs].

JACK: Wow.

AUSTIN: Take the lowest two.

ALI: Is it three or two?

AUSTIN: It's three 'cause you're at disadvantage 'cause you're blinded. It doesn't matter 'cause you're gonna get a ten plus no matter what, but you have to roll it.

ALI: [laughs] Okay, yeah. That's a sixteen, so.

[Austin guffaws]

JANINE: Ooh.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: It wouldn't be; it would *only* be a ten normally [Jack chuckles], but you spent this move. So you naturally—here's what's great. So, just to walk you through it [Ali laughs]. You're disadvantaged because you've been blinded by their flashlight things. So you're at lowest two. You rolled a three, a six, and a five, which would have been an eight, plus two from Powerful. So you would have already had a ten [Ali keeps laughing]. Which, to me, only makes it better that then you spent this ability to give yourself a ten [Ali keeps laughing].

So what's this look like? You pull the halberd out of—everyone's in slow motion, right, you're obviously moving faster than everyone else because you're in, like, Newtype mode. You're in—your Jedi senses have come alive, your—whatever this is, whatever this strange thing is for you, what's it look like for the camera? Do we get, like, a dope background? Are there speed lines? Like, what's the effect for the camera when this happens?

ALI: I think that it's the—the vision of the environment moves like it would as if she was in a digital environment.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Where, like, it's not that there's a cool glow that comes out or something—

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: It's that same ripple that it would be if, like, if she was in—if she was just creating this from

AUSTIN: Right. It's like what happened when you first fought Morning's Observation.

ALI: Right, yeah, exactly.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: Where instead of being able to move the floor or whatever, there's just an expansion of energy that like—it looks like, you know, it looks like the air moves.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Or, like, your vision of whatever's around her moves.

AUSTIN: Can we actually—let's go further. Let's do the thing. Like, rebuild this space.

ALI: Yeah?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Um, sure.

AUSTIN: It shouldn't do this. Something with the Mirage is letting you, for this brief moment—you're not in a digital space.

ALI: I'm not.

AUSTIN: But this thing happens.

ALI: [laughs] Um, okay. In that case, I—maybe like a barrier is created between the robots around me and the hostages?

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah.

ALI: Like I think that they're still damaged by this thing but also like the floor sort of rises up and becomes a metal barrier.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Right.

ALI: Like, tall enough to—it's probably hip-high, so it's covering their heads completely, but Tender still has the ability to—she can see it, right?

AUSTIN: Do this EMP blast around her.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And like—alright. And the hostages are safe [Ali laughs]. And I think, like, you know, you have to make this connection, right? Which is, you do the—as the walls come up, you see in the reflection of the metal walls, first you see Open Metal, obviously [Ali laughs], looking back at you. Then you see Signet, looking back at you. And then in the third one you see, protecting another hostage, you see yourself, looking just incredibly fierce. So here's the camera, the camera goes: you begin to lift the blade out of the ground, the ground reshapes itself into these barriers to protect the hostages, and then as the EMP blast expands outward, in the little barriers, the metallic barriers that are protecting the hostages, the camera just pans, kind of a curved pan from one of them, which shows Open with a grin, one with Signet with like a—Signet, what would the subconscious projection of you look like in this moment?

JANINE: Uh, specifically reacting to Tender—

AUSTIN: In seeing her power.

JANINE: Oh. Um—hmm.

AUSTIN: Using the Cyberbrain that you have this belief about, right? Your belief with her is, “Tender should use her divine gift only in service of the Fleet and the Orbit; I will not entertain its abuse,” and now you’re really seeing it [Ali laughs].

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah. I think Signet’s face would be like—you know, a very, like, thing where she is actively trying to restrain looking pleased.

AUSTIN: Okay [laughs]

[Ali and Jack laugh]

JANINE: Because this is very righteous.

AUSTIN: Yes, totally. Totally.

JANINE: She would like this a lot.

AUSTIN: And then we get a look at a reflection of Tender. And what’s looking spiked out at Powerful look like?

ALI: Powerful is different from Joyful, or like—

AUSTIN: It sure is.

ALI: Yeah. ‘Cause I think that there’s like—there’s something scary about it, right? Like there’s—

AUSTIN: It could be, yeah. Like, I don’t want to box you in to like “You look like a villain from a Gundam series [Ali laughs] who’s too full of themselves right now,” but that is one way to go. Powerful on the feelings wheel...things like Faithful and Hopeful are also there. Or Proud, you know, there are things there. But there is definitely the other thing you’re talking about.

ALI: I think she looks very pleased with herself.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: And I think that she’s grinning and you can see the fangs, and she, you know, looks very firm in her stance and, you know, feels like the embodiment of Powerful—

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: But in terms of the camera for the show, because she has no idea what this is—

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: And, like, we also don't [laughs], I think that there's a part—

AUSTIN: Right. Sorry, to be clear, there's the reflection of her and then there's her face. So what's the reflection look like? And then we can cut from that to her face. That way you get two shots, you get to know—I want to see what she looks like at the most spiked out Powerful in the reflection and then what's her face really look like, separately. Unless they are the same thing, which is possible.

ALI: Right, yeah, I just mean in the reflection of what this is she looks like the embodiment of what Powerful is and what you would think of as like—

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: You know, someone who knows their own strength and is in control of it [laughs]

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: And also, like, is willing to expend it at the drop of a dime.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: But, like, I think it cuts back to her and you see the immediate—that is not what she looks like in real life [laughs].

AUSTIN: Right. Right. She's just, like, sweating, and like—not scared but not sure what just happened.

ALI: Right, yeah, I think that there's definitely—you can tell that expended a lot from her.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You also see at this moment that the handcuffs, the energy cuffs, fall off because they were also EMP'd.

ALI: [laughs] Oh, cool.

AUSTIN: [laughs] There is still one robot left, um, the one that's near Signet [Ali laughs]. But I feel like at seeing the rest of—ah, no, it was in a pretty strong position. Let's deal with that and then we'll deal with Fourteen. Signet, as this happens—

JACK: [darkly] Deal with.

AUSTIN: This thing—I mean, Signet, do you just want to take this thing out? I think the thing that just happens sends this thing into a position of vulnerability where you can just do whatever the fuck you want to it?

JANINE: Yeah. What are their necks like?

AUSTIN: Ah, they're—good question. So they actually are—they're not—they look like stage equipment. Like, they look like rafters. There's lots of loose, single branches of metal, so like their shoulders are like twelve different branches that connect out. Their necks are similar. There's a single big metal column in the middle but there's lots of, like, support beams that are holding it in place. It's almost as if it's a low poly-count person, do you know what I mean?

JANINE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Like in terms of musculature. You can see five or eight of these, like, tendons, almost...these metal tendons. And then there's a single metal pillar in the middle.

JANINE: I mean, I should just go with my gut here and not belabor it.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I think the thing that happens is, like, she's sort of winding up to hit and then Tender does her really cool thing that catches this robot's attention. And in that window, Signet sort of whirls around and buries her heel kind of like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Slams her heel into one of those supports enough that it bends and gives and, you know, that neck area's no longer properly supported.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: And maybe just like, either bends it at such an angle that whatever cablework's in there is kinked and can't function anymore.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Or maybe just like, snaps it a bit. Like it—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I don't think she'd kick its head off, but—

AUSTIN: No. But, like, does she step through, basically, and shove this—leg kick through, break one of the metal supports, slam through the support—like, the main column where all the wiring is, and just shove it down to the ground? And then step off of it?

JANINE: Yeah, I think so.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: I imagine that the soles of her jumpsuit thing would probably be pretty heavy duty, because I imagine them having some sort of magnet thing in case you were spacewalking or whatever.

AUSTIN: Totally, yeah. Yeah, that's fair. Alright, cool, um—

JANINE: They'd probably be hefty in that—

AUSTIN: Right. Fourteen?

JACK: Hello!

AUSTIN: How are *you* doing?

JACK: So badly, Austin!

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's not doing—it doesn't sound great. She cocks her shotgun again [Jack chuckles]. Um—

JACK: Let me look at my stats here.

[Ali laughs, Janine makes sad noise]

JACK: Let me look at my stats here. Right, I can't spike anything.

AUSTIN: That would be bad, you don't want to spike anything.

JACK: No, I don't.

JANINE: Yeah, I promise, that's not great.

AUSTIN: It's not.

JACK: Uh, what's my—how well can I see at this point?

AUSTIN: I think you have one more move that's at disadvantage.

JACK: [laughs] Okay.

AUSTIN: And then you'll be back to being able to see.

JACK: Alright.

AUSTIN: It's a bad situation you're in.

JACK: It really is, isn't it?

AUSTIN: Yeah, so you have two of these metal rods sticking in your chest.

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Which are bad. You have fire spreading in this room. And you have her with a shotgun pointing at you, and you don't know what the next round's gonna do 'cause it seems to change based on what barrel is pointing out.

JACK: Uh-huh. Hopefully it's one of the nice ones. Um [laughs]. Oh man. Okay, alright, I'm thinking that I might—I'm going to roll Divert.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Which, the move is called, "When you engage with someone in an attempt to distract, misdirect, or otherwise direct attention to yourself or elsewhere."

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: And I basically get to pick a bunch of stuff if it goes well, which it won't.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh [chuckles].

[Ali laughs]

JACK: But the stuff is interesting.

AUSTIN: It's good!

JACK: It seems really narratively resonant to this particular moment.

AUSTIN: This is also, I don't know that you remember this, but this is what you did to her the first time you fought.

JANINE: [laughs] Oh no.

JACK: Oho [laughs], I don't even remember this. Well that's actually, that works 'cause—

AUSTIN: I'm ninety percent sure.

JACK: I think I know how I want to do it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Which is—and I want to be clear, this isn't a Sway 'cause I'm not trying to make a case, I'm not trying to make an argument.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: But I'm trying to fluster here.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: And I'm gonna do it by saying, "Pull that trigger and I'll come for you again."

AUSTIN: Ooh. This isn't—yeah, this is, this sounds like Divert.

JACK: This isn't an empty threat either.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: That's like—I can't make empty threats. I mean I—

AUSTIN: You could, but you'd be breaking a major belief.

JACK: I *can*, but I'd be breaking a major belief and this is not an empty threat. Fourteen—

AUSTIN: This isn't Ultimatum though, you're not—mm...I'm worried this is an Ult—what—hmm.

JACK: Well, let me check the rules for Ultimatum, actually.

AUSTIN: So Ultimatum says, "When you say what you want and what you'll do if you don't get it, roll." On a ten plus, they have to choose: make you carry out your threat or back down and give

you what you want. On a seven to nine they also have these options: they can “clearly remove themselves as a threat, fortify themselves, give you something they think you want [Jack laughs], attempt to remove you as a threat after taking the established consequences, or tell you what you want to know or what you want to hear.

JACK: This might be closer to an Ultimatum, actually.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Because, as far as I’m concerned, what we’re doing here is: if she does anything other than shooting me, I could see it in myself to let go of this thread, but if she puts an end to this body, that’s really bad news in theory.

AUSTIN: But also activates your Ultimatum, right? Which might be like, “I’m going to come kill you.”

JACK: Yeah, for real.

AUSTIN: “It’s a life mission now.”

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright.

JACK: So I’m—how do I feel about this?

AUSTIN: That’s a good question. That’s a *good* question.

[Ali laughs]

JACK: [laughs] Okay, I think I am Scared by this. I think that if you’d asked the Gunslinger how they felt about this—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: —they would have said Powerful, because they’re like, “This is what I do.”

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Unfortunately, they’ve just spoken to Sho.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: So instead of thinking, “This is what I do,” [Austin groans] they’re thinking, “This is what I do?”

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: So I’m gonna roll Scared, and we’re gonna see how this goes.

AUSTIN: 3d6, take the bottom two. What’s your Scared score?

JACK: My Scared score is one.

AUSTIN: 3d6 plus one.

JACK: Can we just double check the terms of this Ultimatum before I do it?

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: So, I am saying, “If you shoot me—”

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: “—I’m going to come for you.”

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Otherwise—

AUSTIN: Is the implicit thing, “Get out of my way”? Or “You need to let me go.” Is that the—

JACK: Yeah. I think—I don’t think Worthy of Grace is naive in the way that they expect that Mother’s Story is gonna walk out there and go like, “Ah, it’s all over! We’ve gotten rid of this.”

AUSTIN: Right. But—

JACK: But this is to stop essentially the execution.

AUSTIN: Yes. It’s like, “Don’t be lethal”, basically. Like, “Knock me out, take me prisoner, but don’t kill me.”

JACK: Mm-hm. Because you’re not going to. You’re going to make an enemy for yourself [laughs].

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Um, alright, so let's roll Scared. I've marked it, let's see how we go [MUSIC: *The Twilight Mirage*]. Also, before I roll it, I want to say that this isn't an empty threat, Fourteen believes this.

AUSTIN: Nope. Right.

JACK: But it is hollow in that they don't believe that they're necessarily capable of it.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: They're gonna enact it but they're doing this frightened.

AUSTIN: Right. 3d6...Uh, that is a three plus two, which is the lowest two.

JACK: That's a five .

AUSTIN: Five. Plus one is a six.

[Jack exhales and laughs in disbelief]

AUSTIN: Uh, she says...what's she say to you? Um...

AUSTIN (as Mother's Story): Can't wait to see you again, dear.

AUSTIN: And pulls the trigger.

[Music continues to end]

