

Twilight Mirage 08: We are the River, And it is the Sea

Transcriber: Cy @vlasdygoth

AUSTIN (as Primary): Dispatch 93 B. Priority. Protocol code I, Quire, Touch, Mirage, Alpha, Alpha, Alpha, Gamma. Sub-protocol, bypass unknown. Begin voice signature. Primary Observer Demani Dusk, authorized direct communication channel, now entering linked broadcast quarantine, connection with Satellite Observer, cut, connection with K-net wide, cut, connection with Mirage wide, cut. Linking with K-upside switchboard. Linked. Connection with REHQ established. Connection. Locked. Begin live transmission.

[MUSIC — The Twilight Mirage]

AUSTIN (as Primary): Boss. They're here. And I don't think they're just coming for her this time.

[MUSIC — The Twilight Mirage ends]

[2:55]

AUSTIN (as Corrective): In my dreams, I've curved this place, flat boulevard from funicular, an overhang into sidewalk patio, burnt coffee and barbecue and tilted strings and scaffolding and the inconsistent shoulder rubbing of people, Second Street drifting.

In my dreams I've curled this place around me, sitting still on a bench while many fill the streets with chatter, swilling drinks, dancing in the blush of starlight ink, who do not know how close they are to the one who left them drifting.

In my dreams I've curbed this place, the By-and-By and by and by, I cruise from temple top to agitprop pinnacle, a stop at each Divine: retired to statue, retired to shape, retired to tired symbol of then—to when these people, this fleet, these targets, these echoes of deceit, these simple, happy, joyous folk, these people, these people, they're people first—'til then, the long days before I came, when they could just be drifting...

AUSTIN: And then he like taps his, his the ashes off of his cigarette. And then like, just puts it out and says like:

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Second Street Drifting.

JACK (as Fourteen): The city is a poem?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Twenty-seven statues. This is a special cell. I'm a special prisoner, they don't want anyone getting in or out. The thing that gets out—

JACK (as Fourteen): Um—

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Is... my poems. So. Maybe someone picked them up and enjoys them. Hm?

JACK (as Fourteen): Enjoys them enough to, to to create a city?

AUSTIN: He like, shrugs.

JACK (as Fourteen): Okay...

AUSTIN: Let's go to you, Signet. You make it to a door, finally. Past all these paintings. And it's just like, a big wooden door. And it has— you can hear like some talking on the other side. But that's it.

JANINE: Can I make, well I mean... I have a, I have an amplifying ear so can I, I would like—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, with that I'll just say you can hear.

JANINE: I think Signet would, yeah.

AUSTIN: There are three voices. And they are arguing about who's to blame and then every once in a while, someone just makes like, basically just says like, you know, a bishop to queen six. As if they're describing a move in a chess game. But there's like a... a kind of like, a resigned argument? Do you know what I mean? Like do you ever get into an argument with somebody on a train or like, on a trip where like, I guess we're just gonna have this argument for the next eight hours, like? We're just fucking in it, huh? And then like it might stop for a little bit, but because it's an argument between three people, another person picks it up.

JANINE: Mmm.

AUSTIN: And they're, they are... they're arguing over little details. Like, you know. If you hadn't picked up the milk that day, like, tiny little things like that. But there is the sense that there is a deeper frustration happening. There is something that's not just those little arguments.

JANINE: Okay. I'm going to... gently knock on the door, like a back knuckle kind of like, dainty knock.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. You can hear them all stop at once. And someone, you hear like the shuffling of feet, and then you hear a, a woman's voice who says—

AUSTIN (as the woman): Open the door very slowly. And hold it open. We can get out now.

JANINE: Wait, is she, telling *me* to open the— ?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes. Yes.

JANINE: Okay. I, I do that then, I turn the knob and open the door very slowly.

AUSTIN: So the door begins to open, and you feel yourself being pulled inside as the door opens and you can feel that the door will shut itself behind you if you don't resist it somehow. How do you, do you try to resist it, or do you let yourself get pulled in?

JANINE: I definitely try to re— actually? Wait. Okay, yeah, sorry I am definitely going to try to resist it.

AUSTIN: Okay. How are you doing that? Or how do you feel while you're doing that, I guess?

JANINE: *[cross]* Right, yeah I think—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* It could just be a risk roll, because when you're aware of and act to avoid imminent danger, but, so how are you feeling?

JANINE: Yeah. We need a moment, though, cause that's boring.

AUSTIN: Mhm, totally.

JANINE: So I think... There is a moment of the, of that just very matter of fact like, oh these people need to be out of this room and it sounds like, you know, there's some distress, and maybe there's some useful information there, and then... feeling that initial pull and that awareness of like, oh, this is why they're presumably stuck? Takes that peaceful mood probably to, I think in the moment it is scared.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: I think it would change from scared really quickly, but I think in that initial moment of resistance—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* But in that brief second, yep.

JANINE: It's like an "Oh, fuck," kind of thing.

AUSTIN: That's fair. Alright, go ahead and give me a scared roll, and make sure to mark your spike. Alright, that's an eight. So. Here's what I'll say is... you can... so on a seven to nine the doing of it, there'll be cost, complication, or choice introduced by the MC. You can open the door, successfully, and keep it open, but in doing it, the door will be broken and will be stuck open. You won't be able to close it. Or, you can get taken in, you can go in and be stuck in there.

JANINE: I think I'm going to go in and be stuck in there.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Rather than break the door.

AUSTIN: That's fair. As you do, you hear, like as you get pulled in, you hear like a weird, sloshing sound from behind you? But then the door closes and you're inside. And you see three people. One of them is, has very dark black skin, and she has like these six rings that are like concentrically getting bigger and bigger around her neck, like a necklace. And then her like, face and arms have these like, white markings on them with like, white lines on her face. And then her hair like, comes out and up like wings. But they hold in place as she moves. Another person is, and she's the one who opened the door for you, so she's the one first one that you saw. Then there is what you guess is a robot person? They have like a, they're like hooded and have like, kind of like long drapey cloth all around them that's like orange and like, yellow and red. And the kind of a shawl. And then their head is just this like, shiny chrome orb. It's like a big chrome egg, and then there is another person, they are... very androgynous and have like white and black cloth wrapped up in layers kind of like, up around their back with white straps around their back. It's very like... they look like they're wearing curtains but they're pulling it off. They have their head back in a single ponytail, and have like the flat of their chest exposed. And are wearing like... kind of, clear flats.

And in the middle of this room— so this room is like, fancy and decorated, it has like a burgundy carpet? And lots of bookshelves with untouched books and in the middle of the room is a game table. And they were playing a very fancy version of chess that is a three person version of chess. I think maybe, of the people in this room, or in this game, I think Tender and Signet are the two who would know what this is, for different reasons. Tender, because I bet you you've designed a place based on this style of chess before, and Signet I bet you've had to, I bet you've had to have played a version of this chess before, because it's like the sort of thing that nobles do, to or like, not nobles but officials and people in high positions in the kind of religious court have done to like, while away the time.

And it is a version of chess called Three King Chess. And it's a three person variant of like, 3D chess, in which each player places a king for themselves and then also places a second king for each of the other players so each player has three kings and each player also places kings for each of the other players. And so the way it works you literally just like, okay instead of that bishop, you have a king there. And the way you win is by killing all of the other kings. And also, it's like... tables range from just being traditional chess tables to being like, complex battlefields, and this one is a complex like, like holographic like, battle table? Where instead of just being like, oh here is a rook, it is like a battalion of tanks and like, oh instead of just being here is a... a bishop, it's like okay that bishop is just a cool space plane, or whatever.

And there are like, it's, it's actually a thing I like here is the fight is happening in a kind of destroyed version of the city from before. Or the kind of the, poem city. It's like, you can recognize the same types of buildings, you see, instead of seeing the twenty seven statues,

they are the bodies of the twenty seven divines laid out. Like, destroyed, shot through, decimated, kind of dilapidated. And they're having this war around them. And the one who's wearing the white and black cloth, they get up and they go like—

AUSTIN (as the person): You should've held the door open! We've been stuck in here forever. *[sighs]*

AUSTIN: And they like, sit back down and sulk. And then the, the robotic looking one like, slowly turns their head and looks at you and, and just says

AUSTIN (as the robot): I sense there was a hard choice. Perhaps you made the right one.

AUSTIN: And then like, turns back to the game and like presses a like, reaches over and moves a pawn forward into a position that will definitely get the pawn taken. What do you do?

JACK: We've got a fucking tactical robot here.

[laughter]

JANINE: Uh....Okay, so I think. *[sighs]* Yeah I think, I think Signet's big thing in this place is that like, because she was here before, there is an overwhelming urge to not pull at the wallpaper? If you know what I mean?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Uh huh.

JANINE: Because like, there is like an understanding there of like, you're not supposed, you're not— you're just supposed to kind of, be.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: When you're here.

AUSTIN: How long ago was it that you were here again, how many years?

JANINE: A long time ago. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: It's like— It is probably part of you know, part of the fundamental elements of a society that she takes very seriously.

AUSTIN: Right, I'm just trying to figure out, like a hundred years ago, or like twenty years ago, I'm trying to think if you know any of these people, if you've met any of these people.

JANINE: *[cross]* It was, it was like— It was probably like, right after her divine died.

AUSTIN: Okay, okay.

JANINE: So it would've been a considerable amount of time ago.

AUSTIN: Hundreds and hundreds of years ago, okay, cool.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yep, that's fine.

JANINE: So yeah I think, I think she sort of... glances back at the door and like, okay, well.

AUSTIN: Oh, so on this side there's no door.

JANINE: Oh.

AUSTIN: On this side, that is a bookshelf.

JANINE: *[cross]* So there's no door at all.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

[Jack laughs]

JANINE: Huh, okay.

AUSTIN: And you can see that they've like, you can see that they've emptied out that bookshelf a couple of times, because they only have like the, the top rows of books re-like, shelved? In fact like when you opened it, some books fell off of the shelves, but there are also just piles of books that were clearly never put back on the shelf because they were trying to see if that door was real and if they could open it, and they couldn't, so.

JANINE: Yeah. Okay. Alright. I think Signet's just gonna talk to them, then, just.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE (as Signet): I'm They marked scars of light in pitch; born in fiercest purpose and beheld as the signet sealed upon our pact, could you tell me anything you know about this place and the state that it's in now?

AUSTIN (as the robot): An excerpt?

AUSTIN: Says Soft Stone, who is the robot with the orb head.

AUSTIN (as Soft Stone): You've been here. Hm...

AUSTIN: The black woman steps away and like, puts her foot up on a, up on a chair and like, kind of just like takes a lean forward as if to show that she's not impressed that you are an excerpt?

AUSTIN (as the woman): What you need to know is, this place has us trapped here, and we don't know how to get out. But this was not on our schedules. And we've been here for too long.

AUSTIN: And the third person they say, who's in the white and the back cloth says:

AUSTIN (as the person): It hasn't been that long, it just feels like it's been that long.

[sighs]

JANINE (as Signet): Where are you all supposed to be?

AUSTIN (as the person): We're supposed to be in our cells for most of the day.

AUSTIN: This is, in fact, I think that they say it.

AUSTIN (as the person): I'm sorry, my name is Blueberri, Blueberri Jin. And we're supposed to be in our cells for most of the day, but then for a couple of hours, we're supposed to get together and talk through our problems, but when we got together to do that today, we didn't get to leave. And... my internal clock says it's only been a few hours, but to us it's felt like weeks.

AUSTIN (as Soft Stone): I'm starving.

AUSTIN: Says Soft Stone.

JANINE (as Signet): Alright, well... I'm here with several other people and we are here to figure out what's going on here and to hopefully restore everyone to their respective programs. It may take a while longer, especially now that I'm in here.

AUSTIN (as the woman): Did you just get trapped?

JANINE (as Signet): No.

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): Korrin, calm down.

AUSTIN (as Korrin): You just got trapped. You're trapped in here with *us* now. You're supposed to save us? And you got trapped.

JANINE (as Signet): I'm not concerned.

AUSTIN (as Korrin): Alright, then open the door!

JANINE (as Signet): If I thought it was really that much of an issue, I would've made a different... well, no. Instinct is instinct. Either way, I'm not concerned.

AUSTIN (as Soft Stone): I am a little concerned.

AUSTIN: Says Soft Stone.

AUSTIN (as Soft Stone): Korrin, it's your move.

AUSTIN: And... Korrin like rolls her eyes and comes back down, and moves her queen into like, attack position, basically. Let's jump back to the conversation. With, with Corrective and Fourteen Fifteen and Tender.

JACK (as Fourteen): Why... why couldn't I have had this conversation outside?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): It's far. I wanted a drink. And to sit down in my chair, it's a comfortable chair.

JACK (as Fourteen): So, so, so you can leave this, just so, just so we're clear, you kind of equivocated when I asked it before, you can leave this room we're in now?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): No, but I can let you in and let you out.

JACK (as Fourteen): *[cross]* No... Okay. Okay. We're gonna go down into that city.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): You should be careful.

JACK (as Fourteen): What should we be careful of?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Listen. I didn't make that city, but. Someone takes a poem from a guy like me, and turns it into a place like that? In a place like *this*? That's not good. What're they trying to get at? Trying to pin something on me, maybe, what's the effect of that? People know. Hm?

JACK (as Fourteen): People know what?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): *[sighs]* If someone comes in here and takes a place like this, a place where people are *vulnerable* and... people are supposed to be improving themselves, and then they pin it on a guy like me, they pin it on someone from Earth when it all goes bad, well.

JACK (as Fourteen): You're saying you're, you're a scape, you're an easy scapegoat.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): The easiest.

JACK (as Fourteen): Hm.

ALI (as Tender): Do you know anyone who would do something like that?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Not in here. Suppose people from home, or someone from here who's... itchy. You ever get itchy?

ALI (as Tender): This conversation isn't about me.

JACK: I'm gonna try and roll Probe?

AUSTIN: Sure. How do you that, tell me, tell me the picture first.

JACK: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: Like is it a series of questions, is it looks, like what are you, what are you doing?

JACK: It is... I'm going to put my hand out to take the bottle of brown liquor and I'm going to like, dilute it into my water, I'm not gonna like finish the glass of water, I'm just gonna get this sort of like, diluted liquor, and I'm going to pull out a... notepad and pencil.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: And flip to an empty page and just start asking questions quickly.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Okay! Gimme a, give me a Probe, which, how do you feel while doing this? As a reminder—

JACK: I think I've—

AUSTIN: Go ahead, go ahead.

JACK: No, go on.

AUSTIN: No, you go first.

JACK: I was gonna say I think I feel powerful here because I am... attempting a technique that has worked before.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Which is to give the impression that I have a prewritten list of questions.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see. *[laughs]* Good, I like it. As a reminder, briefly, if you, if you roll something, if you roll a stat, you unmark the opposite one. So for instance, Tender, I see that you have both mad and peaceful marked, which is possible if you had maybe had two mad and then rolled peaceful.

ALI: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: But if you didn't, then whatever the most recent one is would've undone, do you know what I mean?

ALI: Yeah, yeah yeah, I get it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. They like, balance each other out. It's one way to keep your stuff in order. Alright so give me that, give me that powerful Probe. Mm.

JACK: Oh!

AUSTIN: Oh! That's a twelve! Goddamn! Alright, when you pay attention, study, or examine someone's reactions—

JACK: Oh, I'll tell you, I'll tell you what happens here at first is that I do have questions written down!

[Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh that's really funny, that's really good!

JACK: I did not think I did have them.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Did you— did you know that, or did they just show up?

JACK: Oh, they're from another day.

AUSTIN: Ah, okay.

JACK: They're just a list of like, interrogation questions that like— oh no! They're questions that I wish I'd thought of during the interrogation of the guy from the Mysteries.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: I went back to my cabin and was like—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* "Oh fuck," right, next, yeah exactly.

JACK: *[cross]* Ugh!

AUSTIN: Cool, cool. Okay, so when you pay attention, study or examine someone's reactions during an interaction in an attempt to learn more about them, on a ten plus hold three, on a seven to nine hold one, spend one for one to ask the following questions when the interaction ends, the holds expire. So, are you telling the truth, what are you really feeling, what do you intend to do, what do you wish I'd do, and how could I get you to blank? And you can kind of tie those like, are you telling the truth can be a thing that you spend in a larger conversation, do you know what I mean?

JACK: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. So like, what are the questions you've written down? What's one of the ones you ask him?

JACK: So... I'm trying to work out, I'm trying to work out how to frame one of these questions on this list.

AUSTIN: Mhm. And again you can ask other questions, spending the hold will be things that you can do to then like— like you can ask him a question and then he can give you answer, and then you can spend a hold to say are you telling the truth, and I'll have to answer that. Or like, you can ask him another question and then say what are you really—

JACK: *[cross]* Oh, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: You could say like, how do you feel about being stuck in here and he can give you an answer, and then you can say what are you really feeling, which would give you the truth there, you know?

JACK: Mhm. yeah. *[exhale]* Okay.

JACK (as Fourteen): The way I see it, you're stuck in this cell and we're in a—

JACK: I don't know if I, I don't know if I phrase it like this, I can't quite work out the way to phrase it, but like:

JACK (as Fourteen): We're in a position of power, here. How do you wish we would exercise that?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): *[long sigh]* Frankly, I like the way things work around here, and the sooner things could get back to normal, the sooner I'll be a happy man. I don't like seeing anybody suffer more than anybody else. Don't believe what people tell you.

JACK: Is he telling the truth?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Which I think also suggests he is not behind this, right? Like, he does genuinely want things to go back to his being a regular prison.

JACK: *[cross]* Yeah, yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Regular in the sense of like, a utopian prison in which every prisoner's needs are met, and it's about rehabilitation instead of punishment, and blah blah blah. You know.

JACK (as Fourteen): How long have you— how long are you— how long have you got left in here?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): They don't have an end date for me. Not yet. Once I'm rehabilitated, but I don't regret anything I did, so.

JACK (as Fourteen): You don't see— you're not leaving?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Mmm.

AUSTIN: He like, shakes his head left and right and says:

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Never's a long time, right? Maybe one day I'll say, oh I'm sorry I did the things that I did, maybe I'll say, oh I repent and I am one with the Fleet and that's a long time away, but maybe that'll happen one day, I don't know. But it's been two hundred years. Haven't thought that once.

JACK (as Fourteen): Are you in contact with the Hegemony?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Hm. It's a complicated question. Not as much as I'd like to be. But they get nearer every day.

JACK (as Fourteen): *[cross]* How are—

AUSTIN (as Corrective): They send a message now and then. I've no problem telling you, telling a man* like you that, you're a working man*. Someone comes in and they acclimate and we get a little bit of conversation. Or... someone else gets arrested. And it's not long before they do say the magic words, before they are folded into your Fleet, but. We have a few moments now or then to socialize, and I find out how things are going back home.

JACK (as Fourteen): Do you know what happened at the Mysteries?

AUSTIN: He raises an eyebrow.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Oh, they got another one, didn't they? Which one was it this time? How many are left?

JACK (as Fourteen): Enough.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): *[hums]*

JACK (as Fourteen): In your poem—

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Mhm?

JACK (as Fourteen): What happens to the divines?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): By the time I wrote the poem, they were already gone. It's a record. Or was a record at the time. Twenty seven I shot twenty seven down.

JACK: *[laughs]* And I like turn and look at Tender.

ALI: *[laughs]* I'm really mad!

JACK: Do you say that?

ALI: No, I'm just like glaring at this guy.

JACK (as Fourteen): Okay, I wasn't going to ask— you're in here because you killed *twenty seven* divines?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): I'm in here cause I got caught.

JACK (as Fourteen): Well. What was the last one?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): *[laughs]*

JACK (as Fourteen): No, no, no, what's funny?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Contrition. And I always remind myself of that because if Contrition was alive, my nameplate would have my name right. It was a little window, there was a little window where— after Contrition was killed, they didn't know how to do apostrophes. And so my name here is Declan Corrective but my *name* is Declan's Corrective. Had to make the old man's wrongs right.

JACK: I don't even know if I want to get more information from this guy. I have one more. Yeah, okay.

JACK (as Fourteen): In the event that you're freed, Corrective, what will you do?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): I'll go back to what I did before, which is—

JACK (as Fourteen): What, kill a twenty eighth?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): If there's one left, but. *[sighs]* I think there's a misunderstanding.

JACK (as Fourteen): Probably.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): We kill the divines to bring the people home. At least that's what I was doing. At the time, there was a bit of a divide between... what I wanted, and what the Hegemon wanted. The Hegemon wanted full on execution. Wanted the ships gone, wanted the people gone. He identified some old colonies, took those out too. Not me. I don't think that's how you win a war, I think that's how you lose one. I think you win a war by... hm. Wars are won with bread, not guns, right, that's a familiar thing, you've heard that, you've heard bread not guns, right?

JACK (as Fourteen): Right.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): You can't win with bread if people aren't hungry. So.

[30:00]

JACK (as Fourteen): Okay, alright, we're done here, I have one question and then I'm going to leave. You're going to open the door and I'm going to go into the city with my friends.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Mhm.

JACK (as Fourteen): This is the second— you are the second person who has said “bring people home” to us. Like it’s something that we’re gonna want to do. Why should we do that after you’ve killed our divines?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Because there are things worth belonging to that are not divines.

JACK (as Fourteen): That’s not a very compelling argument to me right now.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): That’s fine. I don’t need to bring all of you home. You’re not on the list, I don’t have a note. I have to bring home the worker. The worker can say here and work all he wants. *[sighs]* Do you think I—

ALI (as Tender): *[cross]* Wait, you have a—

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Hey, hey, hey, before you leave, before I hit that button and let you out, remember. I have a question for you.

JACK (as Fourteen): Fine.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): How many divines do you think there are? Total? Add ‘em up.

JACK (as Fourteen): What, right now?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): No. Ever.

JACK (as Fourteen): Maybe like a hundred and fifty?

AUSTIN: So you know there are at least three hundred, in character you have to know there are at least three hundred.

[Ali laughs]

JACK: *[cross]* Oh, do I know in character?

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Yeah, the Divine Fleet had three hundred at its height, you know that that was the case for 30,000 years.

JACK: Well, I knew that, I didn’t know if Fourteen Fifteen did.

AUSTIN: Okay, that’s fine if he doesn’t, that’s really— or that they don’t, that’s really funny if they don’t? But.

JACK: *[cross]* Yeah, yeah. No, I know there are three hundred.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Okay. Okay.

JACK: Or at least the number that we’ve been told is three hundred.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Oh...

JACK (as Fourteen): Yeah, a hundred and fifty?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Your boy* is wrong twice.

AUSTIN: He shouts out to Tender.

[Ali groans]

AUSTIN (as Corrective): Three hundred in the Fleet. I took twenty-seven, which I've said before. There's more than three hundred. There's always been more than three hundred. Consider sometimes people have views you don't have. And I don't mean beliefs, I mean they got vistas. You haven't heard or seen or dealt with. Hm?

JACK (as Fourteen): Yes?

AUSTIN (as Corrective): That's all. I've seen it go bad. This is alright for now, but I've seen it go bad.

AUSTIN: And he stands up, and walks over to the holo like, computer again.

AUSTIN (as Corrective): I'll be right here if you ever want another conversation, worker.

AUSTIN: And he hits a button, and the door opens. And he puts the bottle back up above the shelf.

JACK: I'm just going to, I'm going to leave without saying anything, but... the moment I'm outside, and I'm out of the thing of the window, I'm going to just start writing questions in my notebook.

[laughter]

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* "How many divines..." Signet, how's the chess room going?

JANINE: Have they gone back to playing chess?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: And like they don't... I wanna say, you know, you've dealt with people a lot, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And like, people come to you with problems. They don't even like, realize they're playing chess? They're not like, they're doing it like breathing. They're doing it because it feels like it feels involuntary to watch them do it.

JANINE: Huh. Okay. Um... I think Signet is taking this in, and the way she is taking more of it in because it, there's like an offness to how they're playing compared to how she knows, like how she's played? I think she walks up to the side, is it on a table? I don't even know if it's on a table, it's on a table, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's like a wooden— It's like on a big, super thick table.

JANINE: Yeah, okay. I think she sort of walks up beside the, the table and is like,

JANINE (as Signet): So what's this game that you're playing?

AUSTIN: She's like, pretending, right?

JANINE: Yes. No, she's played it before.

AUSTIN: The, right right right. Soft Stone says

AUSTIN (as Soft Stone): Three Kings chess.

JANINE: Does anyone else say any— okay.

AUSTIN: No one else responds, no.

JANINE (as Signet): How do you play?

AUSTIN: [*cross*] It's just Three *King* chess, not Three Kings. Soft Stone says:

AUSTIN (as Soft Stone): Hm. There are lots of ways to play. I play...

AUSTIN: And then like, the orb twists in its socket to like, as if to like look at one of the other competitors and then the other, and then twists like— it's featureless, it's a featureless chrome orb in a weird socket that you can see on the neck, and then it like turns you and then like quietly reverberates like,

AUSTIN (as Soft Stone): I play by sacrificing the weak in order to put my strong in a better position.

AUSTIN: And then I don't know how a chrome orb winks...

JANINE: It like makes a little ting sound.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly, yeah that's good, exactly, from inside. Ting! And then turns back and then like, moves another pawn, which in this game, in this version of the thing is just like, a group of people into a new position, and then leans back very satisfied with themselves.

AUSTIN (as Korrin): They're very predictable.

AUSTIN: Says Korrin Kim, who is the black woman with the rings around her neck.

AUSTIN (as Korrin): Their whole thing is they keep sacrificing their pawns and then counter-attacking with their heavier equipment. It's a bad look.

JANINE (as Signet): Then how do you play, Korrin?

AUSTIN (as Korrin): Every piece counts. Every single piece counts. You don't lose anything. And if they take something from you, you make them pay for it, but not by sacrificing another piece, that's how you lose.

JANINE (as Signet): What about you, Blueberri?

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): This is my first time playing, I'm just kinda... I've never really...

AUSTIN: And then like, absentmindedly moves the queen into like, puts something in check. Puts another one of the kings in check. But it's kind of like, a thing that happens a lot in this game, cause there are six— or nine kings on the table at any point? And the kings are all... unique. You've never seen these specific kings before, even in like, weird virtual holographic versions? Korrin's kings are like, big black humanoid mechs. With these like, gold, super-angular helmets with muscles, with little like, there, it's like metal and plastic in design, but they have like a very humanoid musculature to them? And there are little cords that run from point to point all over the body. Like tense, like taught cords that connect like the pec to the neck, and then from the neck up to the chin, and then from the chin up to the head, and then all down the arm, it's like there's a wire mesh of cords across all the kings' bodies. And then also like, it breathes and moves and then like, when it takes another piece, one of these cords comes out and like slashes or lashes out and like, crushes tanks and, you know, grabs people up.

Blueberri, which is spelled with an l at the end, and Jin, spelled like j-i-n... Blueberri's like, kings are big spider mechs? That shoot huge black and white lasers from their mouths? And like, scurry around in weird directions. And then the, the mechs that Soft Stone has are like, just little versions of Soft Stone? That walk around by themselves and then when they get into like, counter-attack position, they turn into big like, weird old rusty metal like, pokes out from the shawl? And like, becomes huge stilt legs? And they like, also kind of spider-like but a different sort of spider like, Blueberri's spider is like a big tarantula, right, like their legs are thick and, and there's only four legs, it's not a spider legs, but it's four legs. And they're big and thick and like metal and heavy metal and like, they look like an Armored Core mech. This looks like a weird thin spindly spider leg? But made of rusted metal. And it kind of like, pushes itself up, or

themselves up and then like, impales seven virtual dudes when it's time to counter-attack a pawn or whatever. Or just like, slashes through tanks, things like that.

And I think maybe there's even a roll that like, the, you know how you can, you can kind of exchange pieces in chess? If you get a king to the opposing side's end, then they turn into that other version permanently, and are like, basically they're turned into queens who're super powerful versions of themselves. That do all that cool stuff at range and not just in a counterattack mode. And... I think at some point Blueberri says like,

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): *[sighs]* I hope we don't get another stalemate.

AUSTIN: And Soft Stone says:

AUSTIN (as Soft Stone): It's unlikely that we would get twelve in a row.

JANINE (as Signet): I mean I would say if you've gotten twelve, if you've gotten eleven in a row... unlikeliness is, is pretty much on the table.

AUSTIN (as Soft Stone): I'm not sure that's how probability works.

JANINE: *[laughing]* I don't know that I want to get into a probability discussion with a robot, but also...

AUSTIN: *[laughing]* With a robot who has a weird spider underneath it? Yeah, good.

JANINE: Yeah... I mean, the thing I'm, I'm trying to like, do I'm trying to like Analyze, I guess.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. That is what that sounds like.

JANINE: *[cross]* Here. like I'm trying to very specifically like, get everyone to say a thing, so I can consider them.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think that that's... is that Analyze or is that Probe?

JANINE: I feel like that's Probe, but Probe is like, one person, right?

AUSTIN: No, you could use Probe to do—

JANINE: It says "someone's reactions."

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'll give you, I'll give you the group, that's fine.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Or, I mean like, I'll let you have Analyze for the situation, if that's like, for the larger situation? You know, I think that either of those— what's key is that, is that Signet is like paying

attention, right like, Analyze is when you use what you have at your disposal to assess a place or situation, and Probe is when you pay attention, study, or examine someone's reactions.

JANINE: I think—

AUSTIN: So the question for me is then are you interested in them, or are you interested in the situation?

JANINE: I think I'm interested in them. Probe sounds—

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Probe sounds more true to what's actually happening here, which is specifically...

AUSTIN: About them.

JANINE: Literally probing. Not literally, but like figuratively probing these people's reactions.

AUSTIN: Yes. Alright then go ahead and give me— how're you feeling? How is Signet feeling during this?

JANINE: I think peaceful. I think there is that moment of fear coming in, but now it's just like, talking to people.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Alright, mark peaceful and gimme a roll.

JANINE: Oh...

AUSTIN: That's a, that's a seven. That's not... terrible. You get to hold one so you get to spend one for one, so you get one of these questions.

JANINE: Okay... Wait, sorry, what does, sorry, hold, hold one and then spend hold one for, okay.

AUSTIN: So that's the thing where like, if you again, the thing that just happened in that other scene where like you can ask other questions, and then at any point spend hold in that exchange to ask one of these special Probe questions which are—

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Are you telling the truth, what are you really feeling, et cetera. I'm also gonna say through this conversation you should take components on some of these people.

JANINE: I'm maxed on components, though.

AUSTIN: Okay. Well you could trade out, if that's a thing you want.

JANINE: Yeah, I've been thinking about that so much because you started me with two components, and it's immediately like, well, *[sighs]* You started me with two really important components for two people we're not dealing with anymore.

AUSTIN: Well, it's just cause you're in this one little mission, like.

JANINE: Yeah... It's, it's just, it's tough, it's tough to know. Three is such a low number.

AUSTIN: Three is a low number.

JANINE: Yeah. Three is especially a low number when it's like in the Onomastic's case it's not like, generic ammo, it is specific—

AUSTIN: Yep. To a person.

JANINE: Precise ammo it's, that's frustrating. I don't, yeah, okay. I think what I wanna ask is... Do I have to direct the question at someone or can I just ask it broadly because I'm probing the group?

AUSTIN: I think you can ask the group. I think that's fair.

JANINE: I want to know what they're all really feeling.

AUSTIN: Blueberri Jin is very scared. Just like, incredibly frightened and is deep in a hole of like, this is my fault, I can't believe I got everybody stuck here.... You could like, a lot of moving the conversation back around to like, what a fuckup they are when playing the game, do you know what I mean? Like a lot of like, I made a big mistake, or like, there's a point at which Soft Stone loses a piece that Korrin takes, and then Blueberri like, says "I'm sorry, that was definitely, I totally left that open, my bad."

Korrin is very frustrated and upset and is mad at you for leaving the door open, but is like... just fundamentally looking for something or someone to blame? For everything that goes wrong, but especially this current situation, and it's very much like I've done everything that I'm supposed to do. I've done everything or I, I've done it, I've done everything my handler has said, you know, this place is supposed to be good, this place is supposed to be like, a positive safe place for rehabilitation, I know I fucked up, I shouldn't even be here.

And then Soft Stone is like, completely detached. Not because they are a robot, but because they are actively not, running those like, that part of their personality effectively? Like they are in this tactical mode, this, the mode that they are in in the game right now, which is like, completely detached and willing to sacrifice people to get what they want is also just like the

mode they are in as people? And right now, the thing that they clearly are doing is trying to figure out if there is a way to get out themselves, even if it costs the other people being stuck in here.

Tender. And I guess Fourteen and Sho... how're y'all doing?

ALI: I think we're like walking down this hallway and Tender's like:

ALI (as Tender): So there were three hundred divines... *[Austin laughs]* There was the Divine Fleet that started with three hundred of them.

JACK (as Fourteen): When were— when were we told this?

ALI (as Tender): Like, every day?

JACK (as Fourteen): I don't— I always... maybe it's, okay maybe—

ALI (as Tender): I guess like, I knew a bunch of prayers and I like, grew up in a church or whatever, but you went to school, right?

JACK (as Fourteen): Yeah, I mean, I was... I was definitely taught it. *[Ali laughs]* You lose things, you know, and like, the number of divi— it's a hundred and fifty, three hundred, I got like half of them, right?

AUSTIN (as Sho): Which ones did you forget?

AUSTIN: Says Sho.

ALI (as Tender): Yeah!

JACK (as Fourteen): Well... That's a trick— that's a tricky one to answer, isn't it, because it kind of... I've forgotten them.

ALI (as Tender): Okay, well let's go down the list. There was—

JACK (as Fourteen): Okay.

[laughter]

JACK: We're just walking down this long corridor and you're listing divines to me and I'm alternately going "Yes." And like, "Nope."

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Never heard of that one.

JACK (as Fourteen): How would I forget a hundred and fifty?

ALI (as Tender): That's such a specific number to forget. I— where is—

JACK (as Fourteen): Well it must've—

ALI (as Tender): Where's Signet?

AUSTIN (as Sho): She went down the hall. The other one? The other room.

JACK (as Fourteen): Do you wanna go back for her?

ALI (as Tender): Yeah, I mean, I wanna tell her about this weird cloud.

AUSTIN (as Sho): We should tell her they don't remember all of the divines, too.

JACK (as Tender): No, no, no. No, no. No. No.

ALI (as Tender): *[cross]* We'll tell her after...

JANINE: *[laughing]* I love Sho, she's perfect!

JACK (as Fourteen): It's— she won't like that fact. Also, um.

AUSTIN (as Sho): Do you forget other things? Cause this is a big one.

JACK (as Fourteen): Yes.

AUSTIN (as Sho): Hmm.

JACK (as Fourteen): Well, it's... after a certain time, the difference between the big stuff and the small stuff? I, you know. It's like a case of, it's, you know, I can't name the one hundred and fifty that I've forgotten, and I can't name whether or not the other things were big things or small things. Please don't tell Signet.

AUSTIN: She nods.

AUSTIN (as Sho): *[sighs]* I need to practice patience and tolerance. I need to practice *patience* and *tolerance*.

ALI (as Tender): Yeah!

JACK (as Fourteen): Look, I mean, I think you're being... Tender. I think you're being unfair on yourself in that I think patience and tolerance is something that we, we can all stand to practice. *Tender*.

ALI (as Tender): I'm sorry, are you directing this at *me*?

JACK (as Fourteen): No, I'm just saying that we... Tender, we have to give a good example.

[Ali and Austin laugh]

AUSTIN (as Sho): It's fine, I'm... let the student become the teacher.

ALI (as Tender): *[cross]* Yeah.

JACK (as Fourteen): Well... let's go!

AUSTIN: And then she like, steps and she like, turns around and steps back towards the hallway, leaving this other hallway behind to walk down towards where Signet is.

ALI (as Tender): I'm *great* at patience and tolerance.

JACK: *[laughs]* I'm just gonna like, skip to catch up with her to make sure she doesn't just like...

AUSTIN: Uh huh! And just as a reminder, she like has a hand on a big fucking sword the whole time that's like sheathed at her side?

[Ali laughs]

JACK: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah just like, just to be clear.

JACK: And also I forgot a hundred and fifty divines.

AUSTIN: Right. So, yes, exactly. And then we turn the corner and you come down the hallway, and all of, there are just like a bunch of, again it's a long red carpeted hallway with little gold like, CF for Contrition's Figure in the, in the... on the carpet. There's really nice furniture and vases, and there are some paintings that have like, all the portraits of all the people in them, and then you hit a point, and the paint is like, progressively getting pulled away further and further, like it's like it's been dissolved? And so like, it's a human face except the face is like, slowly being pulled downwards. And then you go to the next painting, and it's pulled downwards further. And then further. And then further. Inside the room, there is a knock on the door.

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): Who— who is it?

AUSTIN: Says Blueberri.

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): Open the door and hold it open!

AUSTIN: What did you say in response to that, Signet, do you remember what you exactly said?

JANINE: I didn't say anything, I don't think.

AUSTIN: Okay. The door, the like, the door slowly begins to open, and I think it's at that moment that the other group comes around this last little corner of the hallway, and at this point all of the, all of the, the paintings are just completely empty canvas, or like, empty canvas, and then the canvas is pulled away? And then the frame is broken, and then they turn this corner and see the door opening and this just like... goopy black like... again there's a sort of musculature there of the person slowly opening the door, and like the foot— there are like, there's like a stream of painted footsteps walking to the door and like pulling it open, but their fingers are slipping and like, breaking cause their fingers are made of paint, that they can't quite get a hold on the door? And then it's just like, paint is splattering onto the ground and kind of getting glooped back up into the body of the, of the paint person. And are like, pulling at it closer and closer and trying to open the door. And...

JACK: We see that from our perspective?

AUSTIN: You see that from the back, and then from the inside, you just see those same eyes that were looking at you before, Signet, just staring at you.

JANINE: Cool. Wait, the eyes from the paintings or the eyes from the vision? Okay.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah. It's the eyes from the— well.

JANINE: Yeah. That's, I mean that's yeah, that's why I'm asking, cause yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. And then the mouth begins like, there underneath the eyes there is just like a mix of all the paints so it's this muddy, gross color. And then it opens up and you can see very bright, sharp teeth, and it says... It, imagine paint talking, I guess.

JANINE: No!

AUSTIN: And it says:

AUSTIN (as the paint monster): We are the river, and it is the sea. Run to it, or run dry, but all will run.

AUSTIN: And then it opens the door a little bit more—

AUSTIN (as the paint monster): We are the river, and it is the sea. Run to it, or run dry, but all will run.

AUSTIN: And then like another face at the bottom of it, like it's this goopy, it's almost like again, it's like a dress, it's actually probably in the shape of the dress that you had before in that vision, and another face had fallen off of a— of one of the portraits and begins saying the same thing from there. And the door slowly opens more and more, and the, Blueberri like retreats behind the table and Korrin like stands up and grabs her chair, and Soft Stone like, turns in their seat and just watches.

AUSTIN (as the paint monster): We are the river, and it is the sea. Run to it, or run dry, but all will run.

AUSTIN: And the door opens. And they like, flood in. Like, splash in and then reform. The door is like, the top part of the door is off it's hinge. What do you all do?

JANINE: *[cross]* So, it's open now, huh?

AUSTIN: Oh, it's open.

JANINE: Okay...

JACK: Can I try and shoot it, please?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Oh, fuck.

JACK: I wanna try and put a bullet through its shoulder.

AUSTIN: Okay. How do you— like what's the, you just pull out your gun and pull the trigger, this is not an ultimatum, this is, this is...

JACK: No, no, Fourteen just comes around the corner, sees this thing chanting opening the door, and just immediately draws on it.

AUSTIN: Okay. So then this is Neutralize, when you use force to attempt to neutralize a threat, take control of a situation or maintain hold of something, you have with the chance of taking harm yourself, roll plus ten, you generate three hold and take no harm the doing. If you get a ten plus. How're you feeling?

JACK: I'm scared.

AUSTIN: Fair!

[Janine laughs]

JACK: This is not the fear of like... this is not fear that I'm feeling, that I, Jack, am feeling right now of the paint monster, which is a sort of, which is a sort of... slow fear?

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

JACK: This is the same fear that I'd have if like, something jumped out in front of me and I was like "Oh!" So I'm just gonna roll scared. What's scared opposite?

AUSTIN: Scared is opposite powerful, I believe.

JACK: Um... And now I'm gonna roll scared.

AUSTIN: Hey, that's a ten! Look at you bud!

JACK: Oh, that's not so bad.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so you generated three hold. When you— you can then spend that in the scene to inflict harm, to take away advantage, which requires two hold to be spent, to suffer little harm, to force a change of location, or to impress, dismay, or frighten your opponent.

JACK: And I can, I can spend all three at once?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Or you can save it to spend throughout the scene and reroll to get more.

JACK: Okay, I'll start by dismaying them, please.

AUSTIN: Okay. The... so like, the shots fire and I guess in this case it, maybe the bullets just pass right through them? Because you didn't inflict any harm. But, it like, turns and splits into two. And, and like moved towards the sides of the wall, like they kind of like splash down into two forms that're a little bit smaller and then like, hug the wall and like, put their arms up against the pages of the books and like, *[hisses]*, slide up the wals as if they were, had sticky hands, you know, as if you had like a torch or something.

JACK: So this is like a sort of like, this is absolutely like a Studio Ghibli monster, right?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah.

JACK: *[sigh]* Okay. And I think that's all I'm gonna do, I'm gonna keep my other two for the moment.

AUSTIN: Sounds good. Signet and Tender, what are you doing?

ALI: Is there a way that I can like, try to dissolve whatever like, digital effect this is? Do I feel like I have that sort of power over it?

AUSTIN: You're in the digital realm, right, do you have a move that would do that? Like, what's that look like?

ALI: Um... I, I'm torn on if that's like, Lift the Veil, or if that's Reconfigure and I'm just trying to get rid of it? I feel like I'm trying to like... trace it.

AUSTIN: I mean, I'm not sure that that's not just neutralize.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: If you're like, trying to neutralize them as a threat, like. Reconfigure might work, but it feels like it's supposed to be the environment, it says the digital environment not...

ALI: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Not things in the digital world, right?

ALI: Yeah, I feel like what I'm trying to do is like, pull the mask off, though.

AUSTIN: Mask off, right, yeah. *[Ali laughs]* That's... fuck it, mask off, I think that that's probably— um, that would be, maybe that would be Lift the Veil. I don't, hmm. Lift the Veil says...

ALI: Cause that's piercing a constant illusion, but of the veil.

AUSTIN: Yeah—

ALI: But search for information, recall something you may be privy to, like I feel like she's like... ready for this.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, okay, she's not, she's not trying to hurt them, she is trying to figure out what they are, then yeah, that's lift the veil. When you pierce the constant illusion... so what's that look like? What's, what's she do to do that? Is it visualized in any way? Is there an action?

ALI: I think that she kind of like, reaches a hand out and like kind of like, puts it in like a coinpurse thing to kind of like, as if she was grabbing it and actually pulling a sheet off, you know?

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, totally.

ALI: And that's... I'm gonna roll...

AUSTIN: How's she feel, yeah?

ALI: Hmmm. I think I'm still mad.

AUSTIN: That's fair.

JACK: Are you like, independently mad from the previous conversation or is this still...

ALI: *[groans]* I, yeah I think that like, she's very frustrated by these Earth people and like.

JACK: Yeah. Do you think that this is related to them?

ALI: No, but like, she's having a bad day and like... I think that like, the knowing that like, this is all done by someone who like, read a poem by some fucking guy that she hates? And is now like terrorizing people is like deeply frustrating. I still failed that roll, though.

AUSTIN: Hey, so— you did! Hey can you remind me real quick—

JACK: You rolled a five.

AUSTIN: Can you remind the— no, you know what, don't say anything. I have your sheet in front of me.

ALI: *[laughing]* Okay.

AUSTIN: I'm good, actually.

ALI: Yeah, you, you do what you need to.

AUSTIN: Mhm! So. I think a couple of things happen all at once.

ALI: *[laughs]* Put that on a t-shirt.

AUSTIN: Uh huh! Yeah, right? Uh huh. The first thing that happens is... you remember when we first came in here I kind of asked you to help me define it because what happens is that when, whenever the Architect enters a digital environment, they can frame the scene because they are the person who— it's their subconscious is helping to contribute to what the place looks like. And the thing that happens here is I think the, one of the, when you Lift the Veil, the illusion that goes away first is not the paint creature. It's the size of the virtual war table. And suddenly you're not looking down at the virtual war table, you are in the, the By and By, the flattened By and By of Declan's Corrective's poem.

That is, so there were two poems, right, there is, there is the poem that you already got the name of from Declan's Corrective, which was, which was... the Second Street Drifting, right? There's also a second poem called Our Guilt, Mine. Which is about this, this game of Three Kings chess, and those two poems blend. And suddenly you're in this flattened version of the By and By where a war is happening all over? But it's also like, all of the people from the city are there now too and are like, babbling in a weird language that you can't understand. It's just nothing, it's just sounds over and over again, just like "Ah! Ah! Ra! Raaa." Like over, and over, and over again, all around you all. So that's one.

The second thing that happens is... that the, the scale of that place is also just completely wrong. It's like everything is way bigger than it's supposed to be. The By and By is already the biggest— I think we've talked about this, maybe like Seance is as big or bigger, but it's one of the biggest population centers on the, on the, in the Fleet, but here like, every building is twenty times bigger, and every, you know, thoroughfare is wide enough for an army to pass through, which is fortunate since there are armies passing through it now. And destroying it even further than it's already fucked up.

[1:00:00]

The third thing is that the paint creature falls to the ground, and reforms in front of you. And... what's Open Metal look like?

ALI: So she's a woman with kind of like... tan skin? And she has like, tattoos like, white ink tattoos of clouds on her shoulders that, they kind of start at her shoulders and kind of like swirl up towards her neck? And she's completely bald, you can kind of tell that her hair was shaved down because there's like, the like five o'clock shadow of teal hair, and her like, eyebrows are teal as well, obviously. I think that she... is... she's probably wearing like, her religious garb? That like Tender used to wear?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* What's that look like?

ALI: And I think that that's kind of like a... It's like white, sleeveless robes that are kind of really flowy and long and full. And then, there's kind of different patterns that look like they're almost stamped onto the fabric kind of, overlaying on top of each other and... kind of randomized throughout the fabric? The, the look that I'm kind of going for here is the looks that were in, in the Fall 2007 Dries van Noten show? Where he did a lot of that kind of thing, where it was like, like a skirt with a floral print that had like, these like circles printed right on top of them as if they were like stamped on. And I think it's like that but with like, seven different distinct patterns? Kind of, they're not always like, overlapping, there's definitely like, parts where you can kind of see the edges of where the pattern itself is, but there's definitely some overlap and I think that that's kind of the same kind of thing where it's like, a lot of different kind of patterns that are like geometric shapes, and there's like, you know those like belts that are like corsets but they're like belts?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: *[laughs]* I think that like—

JANINE: I think those are just literally called corset belts, also.

ALI: Yeah! Probably.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. Sure.

ALI: But they're, you know, they're like two inches high and they cinch together, kind of like right at her waist in like a... deep green, yeah. That's what I've got right now.

AUSTIN: So, I think that's what she looks like, except, that's not what this is. The black goopy, the black and like, red goopy paint creature that is the Iconoclast here, like redraws itself or re— like, you can see layers of paint getting added to it until it's a painting, it's a painting, it's a portrait of her and also you, leaning like, heads tilted in on each other, and where your heads hit, the, there is like, there's just a— there's no skin or bone there, it's your brains connected, and you're both smiling, and you have like your fingers up in peace signs. And then they talk— you and she talk at the same time.

JACK: *[cross] [quiet]* The fuck is this?

AUSTIN: And they say:

AUSTIN (as Open and Tender): We are the river, and it is the sea. Run to it, or run dry, but all will run! We are the river, and it is the sea. Run to it or run dry, but all will run.

AUSTIN: And it gets bigger, and bigger. And like, the, the whole of the city begins to like, take on this painted atmosphere, this painted like, coloring? Or texturing, and the paint then begins to drip from things, and so it ends up being just kind of a wireframe city as the paint begins to fall closer and closer into the Iconoclast. *[Ali laughs]* How's everybody doing? At this point, I think Korrin is like, drops the chair, and then like, sprints out, down one of these city streets.

JANINE: Oh right, they can just leave now, can't they?

AUSTIN: I, yeah, they can quote unquote "leave," they can go somewhere, I guess.

[laughter]

ALI: We helped, we helped them.

AUSTIN: So. Signet. The Iconoclasts are here. What do you do?

JANINE: *[sighs]* Okay. So. I think when they first showed up, her instinct was to stand in front of Blueberri, because she already knows Blueberri is fucking terrified.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: And maybe doesn't completely understand the... completeness of that terror, and is curious, but... for the most part, is like okay well, these other people seem fine. Blueberri is... is not fine. So, she moves to stand in front of them, kind of with her arm out, because Iconoclasts are fucking serious business.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: Uh... God, the shooting doesn't—

AUSTIN: And then as the world like, and then as like, the gun goes off and the world becomes this weird virtual—

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: War table mixed with the other city from the poem...

JANINE: Yeah. It is actually probably a relief because that gives her a chance to raise her arm and shoot out her kinetic sash, which... I still feel like my kinetic sash description is kind of cheesy, but I also feel very strongly that like, you can punch with something you shoot out, which is a very, not very precise but a relatively precise action, but also it's a piece of cloth that should have some ability to also just like, spin or something? Or like arc?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I'll note—

JANINE: Which is like a different kind of attack?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I will say that here you should feel a lot more flexible regarding this stuff than you would even at, like, in a traditional fight? Because we are in the mesh, right?

JANINE: True, yeah.

AUSTIN: And again like, the move that I read at the top is just kind of a background move that's always in effect is when you defy the constraints of reality within a digital environment, make moves as usual and beware the Veil. So. You know, who knows what that means, but like.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What just happened is beware the Veil, right?

JANINE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, as much as it is the subconscious of Tender mixing with the stuff that's happening here.

JANINE: So I think the thing that Signet wants to do like, when she raises her arm and throws out that fucking... weirdo sash with the, with the smashy ends, is she wants to like whip up these paint people like eggs, basically? Like just fucking smash shit up 'cause we've got a more open space now.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Good, yeah.

JANINE: Like, I can probably afford to get a little messy.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah totally. Uh huh! So yeah, is that, is that Neutralize? That sounds like Neutralize to me. You're attempting to neutralize a threat, take control of a situation or maintain hold?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so how're you feeling about that, about this?

JANINE: Powerful.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Yeah, this is definitely like a powerful like, I'm not just gonna like hit them, I'm gonna fucking... whisk them. Briskly. Until they form peaks. Like...

AUSTIN: Sounds good. If this was Tech Noir they might end up with "Whisked."

[Janine laughs]

JACK: Brackets: "Briskly."

AUSTIN: Alright, so that's a nine, which means that you get... I think, was it two hold on neutralize? Yeah, two hold. And you will take harm in the doing. So, spend your hold one for one during this scene to inflict harm, take away an advantage, suffer little harm, force a change of location, or impress, dismay, or frighten your opponent.

JANINE: I want to take away an advantage. Does that make sense? Or does that specifically have to be like a... okay.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, yeah totally, so in this— No, so in this case what I would say is actually the advantage that they were about to get was by being super big, right? They were turning themselves into like, a giant paint monster.

JANINE: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so you managed to like, cut them down and whisk them until you, until they are just like, regular form sized again? But there's like, there's still a bunch of them? But they're not gonna have advantage on their roll. Or like, you're not gonna be at a disadvantage to roll. If you had failed that roll, the next roll would've been that they are this big paint monster, and everyone is at disadvantage because they're just so much bigger than you.

JANINE: Well, hooray.

AUSTIN: But, but no yeah, you totally stop that from them. For them. But they're still around. And are all like... yeah there's just a lot going on now, they're all still chanting their chant about river and, and seas. And then... they are also like, swallowing up the other people here? Like, they're again, cause you're in both poems, basically. And the random people in the streets are

just walking around repeating this kind of babble sound. And the Iconoclasts are like, consuming them bit by bit. You also hear the sound of thunder, at this point.

JACK: My gun has reload as a tag?

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

JACK: Can I fire it again without reloading?

AUSTIN: Yeah, if you failed a roll, I might make you reload, do you know what I mean, that's kind of the way reload works.

JACK: Oh I see, it's like a, it's like a possible problem.

AUSTIN: Yeah, in the same way that like, unreliable for something is, or something like that.

JACK: Okay. I have, I have two hold remaining. I would like to... try and get up close to one of these Iconoclasts? And shoot it, properly, to inflict harm. But my thinking—

AUSTIN: Oh, briefly, sorry I just realized that Signet should take one damage, also.

JANINE: Oh, it's armor, so.

AUSTIN: From the Iconoclasts. Yeah, I actually— we need to figure out if armor works that way here. I don't know if it does.

JANINE: I have, I have like physical armor but then I also have weird... weird armor, remember?

AUSTIN: Oh your um...

JANINE: My faith armor?

AUSTIN: I think your faith armor works here, but your physical armor does not.

JANINE: Okay, so then do I have to do a...

AUSTIN: How does it, how does it work? Yeah, you have to describe—

JANINE: How does it work or what happens?

AUSTIN: What happens, yeah.

JANINE: Okay, so how would they be doing harm is the thing I need to know.

AUSTIN: I think that they are like, so... what they would be trying to do is like, as you slash the apart and whisk them, they like, start coming up your sash to like, your sash gets covered in it. And so when the sash comes back to you, it's like trying to paint over you and like, retexture your body as paint.

[Jack and Janine groan]

JANINE: Okay, I know exactly what happens, then. You know those like, Youtube videos of someone like, putting chocolate sauce on a sneaker? And it just like can't stick because it's got—

[laughter]

AUSTIN: Nah. Nah, actually, I super— I'm gonna be honest, Janine, um.

JANINE: *[cross]* *[laughing]* No, it's like— It's like a commercial for that like, for that like waterproofing spray that you can use?

AUSTIN: Oh! Yes. Yes.

JANINE: So it's just like they do all these demos of oh like, we put caramel and chocolate sauce and ice cream and a four course meal on these shoes and it didn't stick at all! I think that happens with the sash, where the paint is trying to climb it, and it looks like it is, and then it just starts like falling off really weirdly and just splattering to the ground.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Gotcha. Right. Yeah, so this is, this is from Armor of Faith, which is the thing that says basically, you have the benefit of one armor, and when this armor is the deciding factor in preventing harm, instead describe the inexplicable circumstances that causes the harm to not befall you, cool, awesome. Good. Okay. Great. So you're gonna shoot them, Fourteen Fifteen?

JACK: As far as, as far as I'm concerned, the reason that when Fourteen fired the gun, they weren't trying to dismay, they, you know, they were just trying to inflict harm but what actually happened was they, they dismayed them?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: So my thinking is that I'm gonna try and get as close as I can and maybe try and shoot them in what might be a head?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. I mean you spent that hold to do it one for one, right?

JACK: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Alright, and you'd rolled a ten before, so you're fine. So yeah. That's, you, describe that sequence, what's that look like, cause you do successfully do harm to them.

JACK: So I think it's, it's close over Fourteen's shoulder as they step forward towards one of these Iconoclasts. I'm not sure what form they're in right now, are they just like a paint monster again?

AUSTIN: Yeah, they're a group of paint monsters now.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: As they take over these other digital people, like, who are in these city streets, you can tell the difference between the key kind of Iconoclast who, who was the one that opened the door, like the ones that are from that body and the ones that are being painted over. The painted over ones like, feel like someone retextured, you know, a character in a VR game or something, do you know what I mean? Like they literally look like, they look and move like not— like CG characters. Whereas the, the actual Iconoclasts move with a physicality that is rarely apparent in this sort of world, even like, I think Tender can make things that move this way, but most digital inhabitants do not move in the sort of like, weird organic splashy-ness that they are moving around and it would be, it's not a normal thing.

JACK: So, yeah. Close over my shoulder as I step forwards to one of these Iconoclasts, and then suddenly, a wide shot of the street that we're in and the loud report of the, the handgun firing.

AUSTIN: Cool.

JACK: And kind of echoing, echoing across these buildings.

AUSTIN: So I think one of them drops, and then you see a bunch of the other people that this one had taken over just kind of like dissolve along with it. And there are four of these Iconoclasts left.

ALI: I would also like to engage?

AUSTIN: Sure. What's that look like?

ALI: So I, I have this thing that I haven't been able to use yet, which is a like... it's a lot. It's a, like a halberd but it's also like a big staff?

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: And I think it looks like... you know those like, glow sticks that like, when you move they make like a “whooo” sound? Like you had as a kid?

AUSTIN: I don't. I'd like to try it on.

JANINE: Are those glowsticks, or weren't those like, big like, ribbed tubes that you like, swung over your head?

ALI: No no no, I have a youtube video. I'm gonna just link it really quick.

AUSTIN: Okay, welcome to Friends at the Table, we love Youtube here, apparently.

JANINE: How much chocolate sauce can you put on it?

JACK: So like, I've, I have not encountered these as glowsticks, but I have definitely encountered an object that makes the sound that Ali is talking about?

ALI: Well sometimes they glow, but they're definitely like, transparent and there's like a thing in there?

JANINE: Oh.

ALI: And then when you move the thing, yeah.

JACK: Yeah, yeah yeah.

JANINE: It's like a long version of one of those cow cans.

AUSTIN: Oh, I— *what?*

ALI: I feel like I've seen one of these—

AUSTIN: The *fuck* is a *cow can*?

[Ali laughs]

JANINE: You know, it's like one of those little— it's like a little cow with the holes in the top and the bottom and you turn it upside down and it goes *[deep moo]*.

JACK: Oh, yeah yeah yeah!

ALI: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: I've never seen one of these cows, I know these sticks, I don't, I didn't know that they glowed.

ALI: I feel like I've seen versions of them where like, when the thing moves that there's like a light attached to it? And it goes "reeow" and then the light moves?

AUSTIN: I, yeah. I don't like that this one is called "Shaking Groan Tube."

ALI: *[laughs]* Sure don't! I also don't like that. But it's, it's like one of those but with a knife at the end? And also it can like shoot the light thing but that's neither here nor there.

AUSTIN: Okay!!

ALI: *[laughing]* Essentially! Um, cause the blade is concealed, and it's concealed right now. So it can conceal, it's not out. Anyway, so I wanna like swing it at one of these guys? Mostly just to like strike it, and like hope that it like...

AUSTIN: Is it the one that looks like you and Open Metal?

ALI: Yeah, I was—

AUSTIN: Or is it the one that's closest to you at this point?

ALI: Yeah, I would like to just like, swipe it down at the like, the like connection between us? Like I'm like cutting that in half?

AUSTIN: Sure. Yeah.

ALI: And as she hits it it makes that like little "wreew" sound.

AUSTIN: "Broooooow"? Okay, well give me a, give me a Neutralize.

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: How're you feeling?

ALI: Yeah, exactly. I like... I don't know if this is like, her being even more mad that she's having a now even worse day? Or like, if it's starting to lean towards scared? *[sighs]* But I don't, no no no, I don't feel like this is like, terrifying in the way that it would be for someone else, cause like she gets that this is just like, a digital like, like thing?

AUSTIN: No, no, no, I wanna be clear— it does not feel like a digital thing.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: That's what I was saying before. This, they are not moving like they are digital things.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like, I— You especially as the person who knows how, I think you and Signet both, Fourteen is probably the only one here who doesn't like, Fourt— sorry, Signet you've dealt with them in the real world before, for sure. And recognized how they move and what they want and like, but you've never seen them in this digital space that makes them feel a little bit more even, unlatched? Where they can do more than they normally can. And Tender, you've dealt with weird shit in here before. But seeing something that does not feel... We do a lot of talking about how in this setting, the digital and the real, or and the physical are both the real, right? And that's true for the world. Like, I, I am saying that that is a true thing for this setting, what happens in the digital space is just as important, it is not fake, it is not phony, it's just two kind of layers of reality. They make you— they move in a way that *could*, if Tender is that person, make you doubt that that is true about the world. They suggest that physical reality, in the way that they move here, is somehow dominant in a way that the digital is not. So, I think you could be mad or scared, but I wanna be clear that that, that that is not like... this isn't just, "Oh, it's another day."

ALI: *[cross]* Yeah. Right, right, yeah, I feel like yeah, that probably ends up, cause I feel like that was more of a response to her first impulse being "oh, I could just get rid of this," but since she like—

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

ALI: Really failed at that, I think that it's probably scared.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* She *did* really— that's true, she also rolled a five. That's true, so.

ALI: *[laughs]* So.

AUSTIN: So yeah, gimme a scared. Hey, that's an eight.

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Alright, so... again, you get two hold to do the stuff from Neutralize, but also you... we'll talk about, talk through it, but you're going to take damage from doing this, too.

ALI: Okay. Let me, let me just...

AUSTIN: Unless you choose suffer little harm, unless you spend one of them for suffer little harm.

ALI: Then yeah, I'll, I'll inflict harm and suffer little harm in return.

AUSTIN: Okay. So, describe to me what happens how do you, how do you cut them, you just cut them in half down the middle?

ALI: Yeah, I think that like, when she hits them, it kind of dissipates? And—

AUSTIN: Could it like, steam a little bit? Like I want them to fall to the ground and like, the smell of burning paint comes up.

ALI: Sure, if you want a like crazy like, God what's that movie? Anyway.

AUSTIN: Roger Rabbit.

ALI: Yes. Yes.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Yeah, that's totally the effect, it's totally the terrible end of Roger Rabbit where the asshole who is bad, I'm not gonna spoil the end of Roger Rabbit, but let me just say, there's paint dissolving and stuff it's gross.

JANINE: "The asshole who is bad gets his" isn't really a spoiler for that— for most movies.

JACK: That film... I saw that film when I was much, much too young to see it.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JANINE: *[cross]* Same. Yeah, I think most people, yeah.

ALI: *[cross]* Yeah, everyone does.

JACK: *[cross]* Scarred me.

AUSTIN: Twenty eight, way too young for me! I was just— *[laughter]* I saw it when I was younger than twenty eight, don't message me. Don't at me.

[Ali laughs]

JACK: Still very frightening. Still very scary.

AUSTIN: Yeah, absolutely Cool. And yeah like, I think that they reach up to try to grab you, but they don't manage to, so now there are only three. So to get into, to kind of describe this situation, the buildings that are like half destroyed from the tabletop game are like flickering on

and off with the versions that are totally full, and that's the same thing with the statues of the divines. I think that maybe all of this is happening in front of Contrition. I don't know what Contrition looked like. What did Contrition's body look like, does anybody have any ideas? What does a god of repentance and doing better look like?

JACK: I wonder whether or not in the same way that our statue of libra carries scales, and justice wears a blindfold, I wonder whether or not there's something symbolic and almost ritualistic about a gesture, or about—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Or about... something to do with hands welcoming and also like, like a hand or something.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah.

JANINE: *[cross]* Yeah, I think that like, palms up or something?

AUSTIN: Well like, I like, what if there's like a statue that is like, palms up but then the actual body of the divine that is not just the statue is like, not humanoid at all, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Is like... I don't know what that actually looks like, necessarily.

JANINE: Like the spine of a book but there's no actual book or something?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that a lot. And I just, then you're like, under this weird book spine that's like, running above the city street from where it was killed by, by Declan's Corrective. That's good. That's a good image. And then like, it flickers between that and a statue of a person with open hands, or like hands up, you know, offering, you know, contrition. So there's another sound behind all of this too that you notice, and there's just like, over all of this there is a stringed instrument being played. Somewhere in the distance. We'll get to that at some point later, but I just wanted to add that little extra little bit of something that's happening in this weird digital poem. And also the thunder is getting louder and the white cloud above is getting wider. But it's staying white, it does not turn to a dark cloud. But there is thunder and the first drops of rain. What are you all doing? There are still three more of these Iconoclasts. Which are... at this point I think probably fanning out to surround Signet?

JANINE: So to be clear, the... all the fallen divines are statues, right, they're still statues?

AUSTIN: No, they're flipping between those two things, they're between statues and the corpses of the divines.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: They're literally flickering like, because the kind of, the war map from the second poem has been placed over the city map of the first poem. Like the, the vibrant living city, and it's kind of flickering between those, digitally flickering between those two places at the same time.

JANINE: Right.

AUSTIN: So sometimes it's this flat version of the By and By that is like.. Really... I mean I'm just, I'm just gonna show you this, the picture that I've been using for inspiration? It's not exactly this at all, but there's kind of like, you know how the By and By has the, the spine of the Anticipation as the elevator?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Instead of that, there is a, like a white like, cloudy river that is down the middle of it that is as if, as if the spine is laid down on its back, and then as if each layer is unfolded and placed side by side, right? So instead of being, "oh this is a floor," the floor is turned on its side and next to another floor which is, extends the entirety of the city as this long flat thing, but there's still this like, white river that runs from north to south. And there are all these massive statues all around it, and there are a bunch of different buildings and towers and skyscrapers off into the distance. And it's, it flips between this very dense version of it where all these buildings are like, big and they're people.

And here's a thing you'll just, you've noticed, there are people even in the middle of this fighting who are just walking in and out of the buildings like. Not just going about their day, but like... there is something robotic about their motions, there is something like... I'm gonna say Tender you've probably programmed something like this before in your life where like, oh the, you wanna create an effect of a place feeling like it's inhabited right, so you kind of do like the GTA thing of there's just a bunch of NPCs who walk around in circles? And they don't ever go anywhere, they don't have needs, they don't have wants, they're just there to, except this virtualization has way too many of them so it's super obvious that there are too many of them?

And they do a thing, here's a thing I really love about, about how open world games are designed is one of the things animators and kind of programmers have to do is make sure that there are multiple animations for any given action? So like, if you have an NPC who's just like, "I'm gonna eat a hamburger!" They make sure that the NPCs aren't eating the hamburger at the same exact time in the same exact way because otherwise it completely breaks the illusion? And in this, those things are not set that way. This is like a rough-shod like, poor simulation because a lot of the NPCs are literally going like "Ah! Ah!" At the exact same time, and like with a crowd open—

JANINE: It's a crowd in a mid 2000s WWE game?

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly like a crowd in a mid 2000s WWE game, yeah, you got it! But as all that's happening like, they're walking past the Iconoclasts, which is how they're getting like, devoured by the Iconoclasts, who you can tell, so I think two of them maybe have Signet, kind of moving around Signet looking for an opening, and the third one is like, trying to get another, is trying to build its own force back up and repaint some of the people with the paint that it's— with the coloring that it's pulling from the, the textures of the walls.

JANINE: There's so many moves...

AUSTIN: There are a lot of moves.

JANINE: There's so many moves that I don't feel like I know them yet.

AUSTIN: As always the best ones are probably just the ones started on the basic and peripheral reference sheet, because that way you don't lean into like, Leverage Giri, like I don't think that's gonna come up with these Iconoclasts. I'm, who knows.

JACK: They're not super into that, are they?

AUSTIN: Maybe, I don't know! If you can get faith on the Iconoclasts, then things have gone well. Or terribly.

JANINE: Yeah, jeez.

JACK: I still have one more Neutralize hold.

ALI: Yeah, and one of those holds is to force a change of location?

AUSTIN: Yeah, but Jack only has one, which means I get to decide where it goes?

JACK: So you get to— *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Yeah. Which is fine!

JACK: Okay!

AUSTIN: That's fun.

JACK: Yeah, I'm up for that.

ALI: Yeah, or one of us could roll and try to get two.

JACK: I'd be up for, I'd be up for that. I think... I think... Fourteen fires their gun in the air and just sort of aimlessly shouts "Move." And, and is not clear what direction they're pointing in, or where they intend to move to? And I think that where people end up moving to is, is GM's choice?

AUSTIN: Uh huh, that is how the rule works, certainly! So the first thing that happens is you do that, and then the like, "Ah! Ah. Ra. Dra." The people who are just in the street just like turn to you and then begin walking past you, and like, one of them gets consumed by an Iconoclast, just like walks literally into the painted Iconoclast, the painted man, and just becomes one with the painted man. They just completely absentmindedly, lemming style walk past you down a side road. But then the Iconoclasts go in the opposite direction, so they're like running through this marching of people? So the regular citizens are walking kind of south on this road, and then the Iconoclasts run north and are like, splashing through people as they go that direction. Are you chasing them? Are you letting them go?

JACK: *[cross]* I'll— yeah, I'm chasing them.

AUSTIN: I guess, I guess move location suggests you'll follow, right?

JACK: Yeah, and I think that like... leave no corner unshadowed, nope, the opposite of that, leave no corner shadowed, in shadow. And also, I can't die.

AUSTIN: I just realized I should put you here— that's true! You can't die. So they're leading you to... a... alright so, they're leading you to a— actually I'm gonna give you a choice because this means that I, this is, this is more interesting. You can tell that they are going north towards that skyscraper that moves, that goes all the way up to the cloud. There's also in this moment, now that everyone's moving, I think that everyone moves, all the people clear out, and you can hear them in the distance. And when you hear them, you notice that they're not all just making nonsense noises. It's like "Ah, ah! Ruh. Ruh. Aunt! Aunt! Igua!" And eventually they're like, their sounds all blend and you can hear them saying "Aura Antigua. Aura Antigua. Aura Antigua." And then like, the random NPCs of this world are all marching southward while kind of... independently saying bits of this person's name. Also the sound of the stringed instrument is coming from that way, which you can hear now that the street is cleared. And so like, you can go north after the Iconoclasts, or you can go south after this person whose name you've just heard.

AUSTIN (as Sho): We need to help them!

AUSTIN: Says Sho.

AUSTIN (as Sho): Also, I'm scared of the painted people.

JACK (as Fourteen): Yeah, they're uh... they're... there are a lot, huh? Tender?

ALI (as Tender): Mm?

JACK (as Fourteen): Where are you going?

ALI (as Tender): I'm following you, we've gotta— we've gotta get out of here.

JACK (as Fourteen): We can't leave Signet here.

JANINE: Wait, are they— hang on.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Signet, who is right here next to you?

JANINE: Are the Iconoclasts just like running in a direction away?

JACK: *[cross]* Are the Iconoclasts leaving? Yeah.

AUSTIN: They're running north towards that tall tower that connects up towards the cloud that reaches up towards the cloud.

ALI: Oh, wait.

JANINE: Aaah!

ALI: Yeah, no, wait, oh wait!

JANINE: Okay, okay, okay. Fuck.

ALI (as Tender): Me and Signet should go after the cloud?

JACK (as Fourteen): Sho and I will go for the, for the thing?

AUSTIN (as Sho): Yeah, that sounds like— yeah. You take care of the, the, weird paint people.

ALI (as Tender): Yep!

JACK (as Fourteen): Yeah...

JANINE: How's— has Blueberri run off, what's? Where's the robot?

[1:30:00]

AUSTIN: Blueberri— or robot, which one left? Robot left right away. Blueberri is like, hiding behind a fruit stand? Maybe in this moment you see Korrin had kind of tried to fight some of them and like... is not in a good place. Korrin is...

JANINE: Oh no.

AUSTIN: She got painted and then the paint on her started to dissolve.

JANINE: Ew.

AUSTIN: And is not a good— she's like laying on the ground. Her hair, which is like, was up in this wing shape before is now like flat against her head, down. One of the rings around her neck is broken. And she's like, hard breathing?

AUSTIN (as Korrin): Wasn't even supposed to *be* here. This is some bullshit.

AUSTIN: And is like, struggling to stand up but like, can't do it.

JANINE: Well, I have to go help her. That's just what has to happen.

AUSTIN: Okay. So where is— you're going to help her. Tender is...

ALI: I'm going for this tower.

AUSTIN: Tender's going to the tower. Sho is going south to where the sound is, the, the instrument is.

JACK: And I'm going with her.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool.

ALI: I'll wait for Signet. I'll wait for Signet.

AUSTIN: Okay. You sure? Okay!

JANINE: Uh, hey, ah. *[sighs]* Can I tell Blueberri to help Korrin? That's a thing I need to do cause we have to go stop the paint people cause that's yeah, that's kinda on me if stuff goes bad there. But I definitely don't wanna leave Korrin, and Blueberri's really fuckin scared still.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: So I think, you know, Signet does her like, once-over of the situation and walks really briskly to that fruit stand and like, gathers both of Blueberri's hands in hers, and like, clasps them together and says...

JANINE (as Signet): My divine was a divine of healing and helping. And I believe in every situation where someone can be healed or helped, someone must step up to do so. In this situation, I can't do my duty in the way that I would like to. Can I trust that duty to you?

AUSTIN: Give me a sway.

JANINE: I'm going to say that's definitely a... peaceful.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's a nine, so. Choose two things, either you're going to owe them serious cred, you owe faith, your own faith is in question now, so they'll get faith on you, you're going to give them something now or later, you're going to need to give them something now instead of later, rather, you're going to need to do them a favor first, or you need to give them a piece of yourself, body or heart. I can tell you one thing that they want.

JANINE: Mhm?

AUSTIN: Which is... They say like:

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): Promise you'll visit me. I don't get any visitors, promise you'll visit me.

JANINE (as Signet): Absolutely.

JANINE: Probably don't say it in that tone, but just like, yes of course.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* *[laughs]* Absolutely, now I'm gonna kill those paint motherfuckers!

JANINE: *[cross]* Absolutely is the Adaire tone that I'm trying to, to bury in a hole this season.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. It's hard! It's hard to switch.

JANINE: It is tough.

AUSTIN: You'll get there. Okay, so then what's the other thing?

JANINE: I think it's, I think it's actually quite appropriate to, to for this to be a faith thing.

AUSTIN: They just look up to you and they're like,

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): And— and you owe me. For this one.

AUSTIN: Like, I'm gonna assert myself, you know, like? And they...

JANINE: I think Signet like, smiles in a kind of fond way even at that, of just like, like that's probably not a thing that, when, when faith, faith debts come into play, a lot of people aren't hooray about that, but like, Signet is...

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Signet is clearly just like, yes. That's...

[MUSIC — The Twilight Mirage]

AUSTIN: Yeah, like, there is, you should feel really good about this. I think that is maybe, a feeling... there is something in the system, in the simulation, there is an echo of Contrition that... as an excerpt maybe you're attuned to feel. But like, that is what Blueberri needed. The thing that those people didn't have was any notion of like, not just helping each other, but willing to have faith in each other or to give faith of themselves or to demand faith from somebody else, to demand that sort of long standing relationship of exchange, of, of trust and compassion, like. They were people who didn't want to make any real connections and that was what they were in here working on, which is why they were grouped together and you just get this moment where it passes through you that like, this was a positive step. Blueberri's not like getting out tomorrow, but like this is the first real connection that they've made, and that means something.

[MUSIC — The Twilight Mirage ends]