

## COUNTER/Weight 29: Three Conversations

Caitlin (@celloandbehold) [0:00:00-00:51:13]

Glen Campey (@campey\_g) from [00:51:13].

AUSTIN: An excerpt from the final letter to Attar Rose, five years before the creation of Weight.

“When you say that what I’ve built so far is an achievement, I’ll shut up and take the compliment. But it isn’t enough that the program is just up and running. People need to understand what we’ve found here, what the Strati really are.

[The Tower, As Built By The Candidate Chital] by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

I hate that they call it fogging; it’s a misnomer. Yes, the machines that they touch grow confused... but for the Strati, things become much more clear. When they connect consciousness to Mesh, they reach beyond the gauche facade of that realm, the neon links of chain-gate ice, the glowing levlines of information, the aviary of chirping data... all of these give way to a vision of the Mesh that is more personal, more fundamental to the general human experience. It is a mistake to think the graduate of the new stratus program is merely a weapons platform or some sort of fantasy pulled from the neurovids. They are the embodiment of a new mode of being. In time, they’ll reveal not only the secrets of corporate labs, not only the workings of your holy divines, but the interiority of interiority itself.

I can dress it up as much as I want, though. I know it falls on deaf ears, and I’m sure that you know me well enough to know that what I really want to say isn’t just, “my research is exciting.” You know that what I want to say is: “Don’t go. When we left, we were young and stupid, but we came here and we learned so much and we made a life of our own on this rock. You don’t have to give yourself to that thing just to help people. We can do so much good from right here, from home. Please. Don’t go.” But I know you as well as you know me, and you always were a little self-righteous, so... I love you, Attar. That will always be who you are to me; no candidacy can change that.

Yours always, Maryland September.”

## Intros [00:02:22]

AUSTIN: Hey everybody, welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical world building, fun interaction between good friends and smart characterization... I got those in the wrong order, but that's OK.

KEITH: Yeah, you went 1, 3, 2.

AUSTIN: We're just gonna roll with it because we are working on borrowed time today because I don't have, umm, a computer that works so I'm just kind of using a laptop. Also, I don't have a way to charge that laptop because everything in my life is falling apart right now, so... so we're just going to jump into it. I'm Austin Walker, find me on twitter @austin\_walker. Joining me today, Ali Acampora.

ALLi: Hi

AUSTIN: Where can people find you, Ali?

ALI: You can find me @ali\_west on Twitter.

AUSTIN: Keith Carberry.

KEITH: Hi... you can find me @keithjcarberry on Twitter, or youtube.com/runbutton.

AUSTIN: Art Tebbel.

ART: Hey! You can find me on Twitter @atebbel.

AUSTIN: Mmm... hmm-hmm... And Jack de Quidt, I was drinking coffee... (Art laughs)

JACK: Hi! You can find me on Twitter @notquitereal, and play my game on Steam called Dr Langeskov, the Tiger, and the Terribly Cursed Emerald.

AUSTIN: Thank you all for joining me so much. Today we are going to continue playing our game of The Sprawl, and there's been one really big thing that happened since the last time we played this game, which is that The Sprawl is out for purchase. You can go buy the game we've been playing for the last few months. It's really great and I would love it if you went and supported Hamish, who is the game's writer. You can find it on drivethroughRPG.com, you can

find it on Twitter at @thesprawl\_rpg. I think that's right? The Sprawl, one word, underscore RPG. I'm pretty sure.

ALI: I believe so, yeah.

AUSTIN: So go do that. Like definitely, this game would not have taken the turns that it has without us switching to The Sprawl, I think. Mech Noir was really cool, we had a good time with it, but for the game to shift in the way that we wanted it to, it was definitely imperative that we move to a system that was something we were really comfortable with and that really loaned itself to our best behaviors. And for me as a GM, that gave me some of the tools that I needed to kind of lasso and kind of bring things in... corral things a little bit. Lots of cowboy metaphors.

Anyway, let's start really quickly by going over where we're at and what's going on, kind of mechanically, actually. I wanted to talk about personal directives before we do anything else. Oops I'm on the wrong map. Because it's been a while since we talked about personal directives, and I want to make sure that everyone's still makes sense for who they are. I think some of them may not, because some of you are different people than you were before.

ALI: (laughs)

KEITH: Is that a hint that one of us has definitely become a replicant?

AUSTIN: Yeah, one of you is totally a replicant.

KEITH: (laughs) You're different... you're people but you're different people.

AUSTIN: Right. So let's start with Aria. Aria Joie. What are your personal directives?

ALI: Um, my personal directives are "When you value heroism over the mission, you mark experience," and "when your desire for fame draws unwanted attention to the mission, mark experience."

AUSTIN: How do those add up to where you think Aria is right now?

ALI: I think those both still work?

AUSTIN: OK.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I don't really have a dog in that fight so to speak, but I wanted to make sure those were still where she was at, or that those were still specific enough for what she believes in, if that makes sense.

ALI: Yeah... I think that the ways that I'm gonna have to end up applying them are gonna change a little bit?

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: Cause the way the world has changed, are gonna change her, who she's gunning for I guess?

AUSTIN: Yeah, as she becomes kind of famous - inadvertently maybe - for being tied to the Righteous Vanguard's revolution, you know... that's a way to be famous and maybe that's not exactly what is good for her sometimes, or for the party. So, that'll be good.

ALI: (laughs)

AUSTIN: Uh, Mako.

KEITH: So right now as it stands, mine are "When your lies about your identity or your past put the mission at risk, mark experience" or "when adhering to your persona hinders the mission, mark experience." I think I wanna combine those into one and have something that doesn't hinge on me fucking things up just to get experience.

AUSTIN: (sighs) That would be cool. Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah. So, I was thinking, like, to combine them just sort of something more broad, like "when my mouth gets us in trouble."

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: When that hinders the mission, like a thing that I have said that I shouldn't have said.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think "when your smartass mouth ruins the ... endangers the mission" is totally fine.

KEITH: (typing and copying Austin) When my smartass mouth ruins the mission.

ART: So we've just decided that Keith gets infinity XP, is that what we're doing here?

AUSTIN: This is the problem with this is, so often the case his smartass mouth, for whatever reason, ends up going into a roll he succeeds at, which means he probably won't get experience from it.

(Art and Jack laugh)

KEITH: Right, yeah. Cause I've only gotten experience from those two directives I think, one time ever? And now we've just combined them and made it a little bit broader. And I had an idea about what to do for the second one, but I had some computer problems and recently had to wipe my whole computer, so I don't have that note anymore. But I'm gonna try to remember that, what that was.

AUSTIN: OK. My gut is, you know, I think we still want something about the September Institute here, in some form? Or else maybe something about Larry or hacking or... I don't know. Think about it. Try to come up with something by the end of the session, not necessarily that we have to say is forever but just something to work with so that we know how to mark it for this session, or for this, kind of adventure. Umm... let's do Cass next.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: What are your current personal directives?

ART: Uh, there's the one we should probably change, which is "when you put the advice of Koda ahead of the mission, mark experience." I just think we're never gonna see him<sup>1</sup> again.

AUSTIN: I think never is strong.

ART: I mean, if we keep it we can shoehorn it, right? But it doesn't feel...

AUSTIN: Right. I mean, it would require you to be reaching out to Koda more often, to let that be a thing. And I think you're right, that there's a point at which, at least for the next adventure,

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<sup>1</sup> Koda uses they/them pronouns.

that's just not gonna come up. You know? So, do you have ideas about maybe what else could go in there?

ART: Uh, I don't. I'm...

AUSTIN: Let me... um... So the ones that it suggests for soldier are behavioral? Describe your ethical code; when adhering to your code hinders the mission mark experience. There's filial, which is the one you have now with Koda. Financial, when you hinder the mission for a chance at extra profit mark experience, and prudent, when you resolve a charged situation without violence mark experience. Uh... I don't know that that's super Cass, but there are more, obviously. So, there are also a bunch more towards the back, if I recall, towards the back of the book that are just like... Here they are. Here are all the ones that they're suggesting. And we can also just make our own, because that's the way games work.

ART: Sure. I guess it's not... I want to take a moment while I'm trying to find this PDF and/or re-downloading it, that the other directive, "when your former membership of the Apostolos royalty hinders the mission, mark experience" is probably still good. We might want to, re, like... re-word it a little bit, but it's... we all know what that means, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, we know what that means. I think that that's fair. And that comes up now and then, and I kind of like that it comes up. So I would like to keep that in.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... while you look at these, Art, let me go forward to Jack, who I think probably is in the strangest place.

JACK: Hello.

AUSTIN: How is AuDy doing?

JACK: Badly, I guess, and also in a sort of Schrodinger's way, exceptionally well.

AUSTIN: (laughs) What are your personal directives right now?

JACK: AuDy's personal directives are: Revealing "when I discover more about the cause of my sentence, mark experience."

AUSTIN: (laughs) You should go ahead and mark an experience for that cause you didn't do that last time.

JACK: I probably should, huh?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Also, that one's gone, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that one has to be gone.

JACK: I mean, to be honest...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Well...

JACK: The question is kind of still there but...

AUSTIN: Right, it is.

JACK: But it is so far beyond the remit of the game that we might as well be asking, you know, what causes the Big Bang or something.

AUSTIN: I think there's still questions to be answered there, right? I think you could get experience points for that this session, if you asked the right questions. You know, like, there's still the question of why is AuDy the thing that AuDy is and not something else. You know?

JACK: Yes, that's true, that's true. Maybe we should keep that one for the time being?

AUSTIN: OK

JACK: Cause... yeah.

AUSTIN: But the laws of robotics is now, so you had the laws of robotics, whenever you follow them and it hinders the mission, mark experience. And...

JACK: (overlapping) So...

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

JACK: What I'm kind of thinking with this is, I just pulled out the notes we took during the Tower game.

AUSTIN: (laughing) Yes!

JACK: And I'm wondering whether or not we could find some sort of modified one of the laws from the Tower?

AUSTIN: What's the first one?

JACK: Continually broaden horizons.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: Too vague, I think.

AUSTIN: I think it's too vague for us, but I think that it's... usable here, which is just like...

JACK: I feel like, yeah, the thing that we ought to be expressing is the thing that powers a divine, which is like, what are they for? What is the divine for? In the same way that Ixex sort of...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Well, this is... there is already an example personal directive for this. It's behavioral, which is: describe your ethical code, when adhering to that code hinders the mission, mark experience. In this case your code is Liberty and Discovery.

JACK: Yeah, which we expressed in the Tower game as "continually broaden horizons" and "look for hidden things."

AUSTIN: Are those the ones that you want to keep from that group of rules?

JACK: We had "I'll never use OriCon equipment again" and unfortunately I'm flying one, so...

(ALI laughs)

AUSTIN: Yup.

JACK: Can't do that one. We had "cultivate saplings" which is interesting... um... and then we had "remember you have beaten your worst days."



AUSTIN: (sighs) God... I think I kind of like... almost like a trinity of laws here representing this behavioral code, which is "always expand your horizons," what was the second one?

JACK: Look for hidden things

AUSTIN: "Look for hidden things" and "cultivate saplings."

JACK: Yeah... And I... I mean... (sighs) How do I take experience for those things?

AUSTIN: Maybe I don't like "cultivate saplings" actually. Maybe I like "cultivate saplings" as a thing Chiital believed but is not intrinsic to either Liberty or Discovery.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: (sighs)

JACK: I mean...

AUSTIN: It's up to you.

JACK: (overlapping) I mean, Divines learn from their candidates...

AUSTIN: They do.

JACK: But maybe not a great deal (laughs).

AUSTIN: I guess that's the question is, this is where we're at with Liberty and Discovery/AuDy now. (sigh) We'll have to find out in play a little of what they are cause it's...

JACK: I'd be happy to go with "continually broaden horizons" and "look for hidden things" and then we'll just see how we feel about "cultivate saplings?"

AUSTIN: Yeah, that sounds good.

JACK: We can always alter these as we go.

AUSTIN: Totally, totally. So yeah, it's a behavioral code, so whenever you adhere to those things and they get you in trouble, and the mission in trouble, mark experience.

JACK: OK, yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, let's wrap back around really quick. Art or Keith, do you have anything for that other one before we move on to the game?

ART: I could pitch you on vengeful?

AUSTIN: OK?

ART: As like...

JACK: (overlapping) Oh no...

ART: Yeah. There's a really bad vengeful I could, like the vengeful that jumped at me was "when you harm a Divine or their interest, mark experience."

AUSTIN: I kinda like that a lot.

ART: I think that's who Cass is most angry at.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that a lot. Let's use that. I like that too cause there's this vision of focused anger in Cass suddenly, whereas, for a long time we had this kind of like bubbling frustration. I like that being a little more focused here. And Keith, anything with Mako, or do you just wanna keep thinking on it?

KEITH: Uh... I'll keep thinking on it. The closest that I've got is like when he's still having to deal with the things that he was running away from.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Um... but that seems sort of boring.

[00:15:01]

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's not, maybe, the most novel thing but... keep thinking on it. Alright. So, when we last left off, a call was coming in to AuDy in the cockpit. AuDy had also just kind of woken out of their month-long daze. I don't know where anybody else... where is anybody else on the ship, on this day, right now? Aria?

ALI: I don't know, there's not... we've already done all the repairs and stuff and we're getting closer to September, so she's probably, like... weapons-testing in the Brilliance?

AUSTIN: Uh huh, yeah. Mako?

KEITH: I want to be sort of grumpily doing a chore (Ali laughs).

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Good, good.

JACK: A space chore...

AUSTIN: You're like, rearranging the food rations in the kitchen alphabetically, because Orth demanded that an alphabetic kitchen is the most organized kitchen and it's just... the worst.

KEITH: (laughing and off mic) Alphabetic kitchen, oh my god...

AUSTIN: Yeah! (Ali laughs)

JACK: And All we have is like space food.

KEITH: (overlapping) I can't imagine a refrigerator with condiments in different places because they start with different letters.

AUSTIN: Yes, yup. (laughs) Cabbage...

KEITH: The relish is nowhere near the aioli!

AUSTIN: So cabbage and then ketchup because it's Orth's ketchup, which means it's catsup, and then eggs and then... way down at the bottom is mayonnaise. It's great. It's good. Cass, where are you at when this call comes through?

ART: I think I like that it's you see that shot of Mako organizing the condiments, you pull back and just sitting at the table is Cass eating a gross bowl of super salty pasta...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Good.

ART: Reading the space news on his<sup>2</sup> [sic] tablet or whatever.

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<sup>2</sup> Cass uses they/them pronouns.

AUSTIN: Right, good. Arlight. I think Orth is probably overseeing weapons testing with Aria and Jacqui, and he kind of just walks around the ship, like... because he doesn't have anything to do. This isn't like... you don't need a co-pilot for this ship, for this maneuver, you're just going straight for a long time and then slowing down for a long time. It's not... this isn't a difficult trip. So, he's just kind of trying to make himself feel useful? It works. It works... [skeptically] He totally feels useful and not totally inadequate. Our precious boy. So the call comes through, AuDy. It's Ibex.

JACK: (sigh).

AUSTIN: And he says the thing he said, a couple of weeks ago now I guess... which was effectively, stumbling over his words for a few seconds, saying that there were things that you two needed to talk through but that he was glad that you, Liberty and Discovery, were back with us.

JACK: I guess... does the rest of the crew know?

AUSTIN: About?

JACK: That... that I'm Liberty and Discovery?

AUSTIN: Nooooo. No.

JACK: (sighs) Oh boy. OK. So I guess... I guess... (sigh).

JACK (as Audy): Please wait a moment, Ibex.

JACK: And I turn on... I close all the doors to the cockpit and I turn on the intercom and I say:

JACK as AUDY: Due to unstable atmospheric conditions...

JACK: Unstable, what do you call it when there's like, winds, in space?

AUSTIN: Turbulence.

JACK: (immediately) Nooooo. (Keith and Art laugh).

ART: (overlapping) Solar winds?

KEITH: (overlapping) A fiction book?

AUSTIN: (laughing) A fiction book!

JACK: (laughing) A fiction book... Here we are, in fiction. (laughs)

JACK (as AuDy): Due to unstable solar wind, please remain in your cabins.

JACK: And then I just nudge the stick very slightly so that the ship maintains its course but begins to spin slowly on its axis. And then I walk back to the cockpit.

JACK (as AuDy): Ibex, are you still there?

AUSTIN (as Ibex): I'm here.

JACK (as AuDy): How long's it been?

AUSTIN: Actually, AuDy, how long has it been?

JACK: Since AuDy and Ibex spoke or Liberty and Discovery?

AUSTIN: Since Liberty and Discovery and Ibex spoke. (pause) How long has it been since AuDy has been in their body?

JACK: I reckon about... eight or nine years? I imagine the robots get replaced.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That adds up, I think. So it's been, probably a decade since you've spoken to Ibex then, right?

JACK: Yeah, probably.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): Almost ten years, now. It was just after...

JACK (as AuDy): It's been ten years. Strange to see you again. Look, about Jerboa... (sighs).

AUSTIN: He gives you... he leans forward on one hand, resting his chin on it.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): (heavily) Yeah.

JACK (as AuDy): I didn't know what I was doing and you know that. And I think you also know that if I did, if I had known what I was doing? All of this could have gone differently.

AUSTIN (as Ibex:) Yeah. It's funny because I can't decide whether I'm mad at you or not. (sniffs) You know... he sided with Grace.

JACK (as AuDy): Oh... I'm sorry to hear it!

AUSTIN (as Ibex): Yeah. You know, I told him if he ever needed me, he could... let me know. So I heard... and we came. We came.

JACK (as AuDy): You know, Ibex? What I need to know about you now, after ten years, is whether or not the fact that Jerboa is no longer in the picture is something you've chalked up as a good thing.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): No...

AUSTIN: And he struggles for a second, and it's hard to tell what he's struggling against.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): It hurts, a lot. But there's part of me that's happy he called for me. And that's miserable. Don't get me wrong. You wouldn't understand this probably, but it's nice to be wanted - really needed. I convince a lot of people that they need me but it's... it's something else. This is ridiculous. Why are we doing this?

JACK (as AuDy): We're at a strange place, Ibex.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): We should be speaking face to face.

JACK (as AuDy): (laughs uncomfortably) I don't know if that's going to be possible.

AUSTIN (as Ibex:) I mean, just open the door. I'll be right there.

JACK: OK, I think I'm going to end the call and then I'm going to right the ship and call everybody to the cockpit. (laughs)

ART: What is the ship spinning feel like? What are we? Oh... cause you were simulating turbulence. I get it, nevermind. I was like, is he? We're not like, banging against shit or anything. (Ali laughs).

JACK: No, I think it's just a maneuver that would incentivize you not to be moving around the corridors and things. (laughs)

ART: Right, but non-lethal.

JACK: No, absolutely. Nobody here is dead.

AUSTIN: So does everybody show up? What's the call? Is it just like, is there a klaxon that fires? What is the...?

JACK: I think it's just, you know when you're on a ferry or something and there are the safety announcements and they're like, "when there is a significant issue, you will hear this sound." (makes pinging noise) (Ali laughs) I think it's just something like that.

ALI: I mean, none of us have spoken to AuDy for like, a month now...

JACK: Correct.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) No.

JACK: So I think they know some is weird, probably. (laughs) So is everybody turning up or?

ART: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: Yup.

JACK: And Orth?

ART: Oh, poor sweet Orth... (Ali laughs).

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think Orth shows up. (Art makes a sad "awww.") He's kind of like -

AUSTIN (as Orth): What's?

AUSTIN: Is everything... people are walking past him quickly?

AUSTIN (as Orth): Yup, I'll... uh... I'll be right there. (Ali sad "awwws.")

ART: He's gonna take this really hard. (Jack laughs.)

AUSTIN: Yeah, I don't... Yup, uh huh.

JACK: Just, I think there are some Divines who would keep who they are secret, and I don't think Liberty and Discovery is one of them.

AUSTIN: No, me either. Discovery, right?

JACK (as AuDy): Well, thank you all for coming. I hope you can make yourself comfortable. I'm sorry that, you know, the cockpit's not too great... just take a seat. I'm just... uh... gonna stay here if that's OK with you. I've got some news that I think some of you (pauses) are not gonna be very pleased with. Well. I'm a Divine. And I have been for... about 80,000 years.

ALI (as Aria): Um, what?

JACK (as AuDy): I know it's quite hard to come by, but I've weighed it over in my head I thought that it would be a lot better telling you than you finding out yourselves. I can understand this makes some of you... I can understand that some of you... Look. This is very strange for all of us, but I think if we all just work together as a crew at this point, we're going to be able to move forward. In space... and time.

KEITH (as Mako:) Yeah, I'd already kinda figured it out.

JACK (as AuDy:) Right, that's all I'd wanted to say.

KEITH (as Mako:) (overlapping) I knew it the whole time.

JACK (as AuDy:) Also, I'm thinking about -

AUSTIN (as Orth): Which one?

ART (as Cass): Yeah, that's a good question.

AUSTIN (as Orth): Which one are you?

JACK (as AuDy): Well, I'm two.

KEITH (as Mako:) (overlapping) That's an easy question. Go ahead, tell him.



JACK (as AuDy): (laughing) Yeah, Mako?

KEITH (as Mako): Yeah. (a pause)

JACK (as AuDy): I'm the divine -

AUSTIN: (at the same time as Jack) Did we ever decide if Mako tried to, uh...

JACK: (overlapping) Oh god...

AUSTIN: To fog AuDy ever?

JACK: I don't think he did

KEITH: (overlapping) I did... I... uuuuuuuuh

AUSTIN: (groaning and laughing) Oh there's a difference of opinion (Ali and Jack laugh).

KEITH: I remember saying that I was going to. I... just, yeah I did, I did!

JACK: What happened?

KEITH: It was when we were dealing with that other robot that we gave the gift of sentience and then stole it back away?

ALI: We, like, **joked** about it. But you didn't fog AuDy.

KEITH: We **did** joke about it...

AUSTIN: And I mean here's the thing, though. Even if it didn't happen on screen, my question is - did Mako ever try that?

KEITH: Ahhhhh...

AUSTIN: If so, take an experience point.

KEITH: I do... Do you guys remember what I'm talking about, though?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. That exchange - there was definitely a joke, and I think Ali went back and listened and was like...

KEITH: (overlapping) OK, cause what I thought happened is I **did** do it and then someone asked if, if AuDy liked that? And then Austin, you said...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) OK, so -

KEITH: (as Austin) "Yeah, Audy, did you like that?" and then he was like (as AuDy) "no, I *hated* it." (Jack laughs)

AUSTIN: That was you doing that to JM, or to another robot and AuDy being really upset about it.

JACK: (overlapping) Oh yeah that's right.

AUSTIN: And then I asked at that point, "Huh, I wonder if Mako's ever done that before?" And I think Jack's response was a very quick, like, "he better not have." (laughs)

KEITH: (overlapping) Ooooooh yeah.

ALI: (at same time as Keith) Yeah, uh huh. Keith was like -

KEITH: (overlapping) Yeah, I do remember that.

ALI: (as Keith) "Yeah, Mako did it drunk at a party once."

AUSTIN: (emphatically) Yes.

ALI: Jack was like "If he had done that, he would not have his arms." (Jack laughs) So...

JACK: (sighs) OK. So, Keith?

KEITH: I'm gonna say I didn't do it.

AUSTI: (overlapping) OK.

KEITH: That is, that is a "wookie losing at chess" threat. (Austin and Jack laugh). Not interested in it. (Ali laughs)

JACK: OK.

JACK (as AuDy): Cass, Orth - I'm the Divine Liberty and the -

KEITH: (overlapping) and Discovery.

JACK (as AuDy): Divine Discovery. (a pause) Yeah. Those.

KEITH (as Mako): Knew it.

ALI (as Aria): Wait, you're *two* Divines? (Jack sighs)

KEITH (as Mako): Yup!

ALI (as Aria): You discovered religion two months ago, and now you're **two** Divines? (Austin laughs).

JACK (as AuDy): I've been two Divines for 80,000 years. There was a period of about ten years ... when I wasn't.

KEITH (as Mako): You... you weren't and then you were again?

JACK (as AuDy): Yup.

KEITH (as Mako): Or you were the whole time and then forgot?

JACK (as AuDy): (makes a thinking noise?) I wasn't.

KEITH (as Mako): OK. I guess that's more understandable. It's really hard to forget something like that. (Ali laughs)

JACK (as AuDy): It is.

KEITH (as Mako): (overlapping, imitating AuDy) "I spent ten years, I forgot that I was two people and that those people were robot monsters."

JACK (as AuDy): Mako?

KEITH (as Mako): Yeah?

JACK: Oh, does everybody know what the September Institute does now?

AUSTIN: No, uh...

ART: Like everyone in this room?

AUSTIN: (overlapping) What do you mean?

JACK: That they're, that they're built to kill Divines?

AUSTIN: (thinking sound) I think so. I guess we never really talked about that.

KEITH: I, well, they were always built to **stop** Divines.

AUSTIN: Right, but I don't know how public... is that like saying, "Oh, the CIA stops international terrorism" or is that like saying "Oh, there's a division of the CIA that's built to deal with AI threats, like, that no one knows the name of."

KEITH: I think it's, I think it's somewhere in between. It's more like "how many... how many weird plots do the CIA have that nobody knew about?"

AUSTIN: OK, OK.

KEITH: Like, some people kind of know but there's no way of actually confirming it.

AUSTIN: OK.

(Jack sighs)

JACK (as AuDy): I need to know right now whether or not I'm in any danger.

KEITH (as Mako): From... the September Institute?

JACK (as AuDy): From everybody in this room.

AUSTIN (as Orth): I mean, are **we** in any danger? AuDy, goddam! This whole thing has been about getting us out from under the thumb of Liberty and Discovery, and now here you are in the flesh, so to speak.

JACK (as AuDy): That could make things easier. (Ali stammers) There is another matter we need to address. (a pause)

AUSTIN (as Jacqui): That's a lot of matters.

AUSTIN: Says Jacqui!

ART: I think Cass is just dumbfounded. I think Cass is slack-jawed, looking at the floor, like...  
Cass is trying to think too hard right now.

[00:30:04]

JACK (as AuDy): We have found ourselves in a unique position going forward. (Mako scoffs) It would be very easy -

KEITH (as Mako): (overlapping) The unique position of being with two Divines the whole time?

JACK (as AuDy): That is unique. It would be very easy to bring Candidate Ibex onboard the ship, now, and parley.

ALI (as Aria): What?! AuDy, we came here to **stop** him. He said he would kill Cass. Do you forget when he said he would kill Cass?

JACK (as AuDy): A lot can change in a few weeks. (Aria sighs)

KEITH (as Mako): AuDy's right, I don't think Ibex is unreasonable, just angry and crazy. (Ali laughs)

JACK (as AuDy): I don't think he's either of those things. (pause) You have my word that Ibex will not directly harm **anybody** while he is onboard this ship.

KEITH (as Mako:) What about indirectly?

JACK (as AuDy): That is very hard to promise.

ART: I look Orth just like, dead in the eye, like I'm just looking for Orth -

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Uh huh

ART: For like any, what... like, give me a reaction from Orth.

AUSTIN: Jack, what's Orth do?

JACK: Uh... he just goes and sits in the tiny co-pilot's chair we've made and swings it around, away from the group. (Austin makes a sad "awww.")

AUSTIN: Oh, honey.

KEITH: Can I whisper to Cass that -

KEITH (as Mako): (whispering) I didn't, didn't really know that he was a Divine. (Ali and Austin laugh)

ART (as Cass): Yeah, I know buddy. (Austin, Keith, Ali and Jack laugh)

AUSTIN: Oh, it's good.

ART (as Cass): I say we do it.

JACK (as AuDy): Cass, I'm going to need you to promise me that you're not going to do anything... stupid.

KEITH (as Mako): Hold on. Speaking of stupid stuff, why don't we just sock him one right in the jaw? (Austin laughs) If he's gonna be onboard, we could just, why don't we just... clobber this guy?

JACK (as AuDy): That would be a very bad idea.

KEITH: (overlapping) And I punch my fist.

JACK (as AuDy): Do you know what's happening on Counter/weight?

KETH (as Mako): Yeah, they're... he's gonna go try and take it over?

ALI: Do we know that? (Jack laughs) That happened like ten minutes ago in-game.

AUSTIN: It did happen like ten minutes ago. Well, you saw him landing a month ago.

ALI: Oh, OK.

JACK: (overlapping) Presumably, yeah...

AUSTIN: No, but wait... no no no no. No. Everyone saw his speech. His speech, like, rang through, remember?

ALI: OK.

AUSTIN: Because of - (Jack laughs) - because of the way he did that.

JACK: Art, you know I can read the chat, right?

ART: Yeah. (Austin and Jack laugh) I just thought it was -

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Art says -

ART: Gauche to say it out loud, but....

AUSTIN: Art says in chat "How good are Divines at knowing if people are lying? I plan on lying."  
(Ali and Jack laugh) Time to make a roll!

ART: What, it's Cool?

AUSTIN: I think it's Style.

ART: (overlapping) Am I acting under... Oh, it's Style? I'm bad at Style.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's Fast Talk.

ART: Hold on, let me see if I have anything that helps that -

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Let's actually...

JACK: This is one hell of a lie, right?

ART: No, you're asking me to promise -

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Well, I mean...

ART: That nothing will happen and I can just say "Yeah, I promise."

AUSTIN: (overlapping) The thing is -

ART: And I do not intend on keeping that promise. (laughs)

AUSTIN: The thing is this move just actually doesn't come into effect here, right? Like, Fast Talk is when you try to lie to someone to get something from them. And I don't know that you're trying to do that? I guess you are. What is... is there an implicit threat here, AuDy?

JACK: Uh, I think it's that... I'm trying to think. Have we seen...

ART: (overlapping) Oh yeah, this might be AuDy Playing Hardball at me?

AUSTIN: Maybe? But I think it's actually Fast Talk for you to convince, to convince AuDy to let you... not have to leave the room, right? That you're gonna be cool and that he doesn't need to take.. Or that they don't need to take precautions against you.

ART: Oh, I thought they were coming to the ship.

AUSTIN: They are.

JACK: Oh, they're coming to the ship.

AUSTIN: I'm just saying that you might have to go sit in a room somewhere.

JACK: But we don't want that. This should be a negotiation.

KEITH: So... I'm unclear on how much Mako has learned, like for sure, about Ibex's involvement in the September Institute.

AUSTIN: You know that September... Maryland September, wanted Ibex's help in setting up the September Institute. Um...

KEITH: 'K.

AUSTIN: And that he was involved. That's about... and that you're, that there's a personification in **your** head of something that looks like Ibex.

KEITH: Right, OK. (pause) And I know how Righteousness works (chuckles).

AUSTIN: Sort, of yeah.

KEITH: I know the general -



AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yes. You know of how Righteousness works because of the memory stuff with Jace. Yes.

KEITH: Yes. OK. Um...

ART: So am I fast talking or is AuDy playing hardball?

AUSTIN: It's up to you guys, really. Like, are you... AuDy, if he lies, what would you do? If you caught him lying, is there an actionable threat here? I don't mean physical violence.

JACK: (overlapping) No, I don't think there's an actionable threat, I think... I guess what AuDy is saying is we have been handed a really great opportunity. Don't fuck it up.

AUSTIN: (chuckles) OK. (Ali laughs) Then yeah -

KEITH: I just real quick wanna go back to why we don't just clobber him?

JACK: Are you asking that? (laughs)

KEITH: Yeah, yeah yeah.

KEITH (as Mako): You said it would be a bad idea, but I mean... you just... rough him up.

JACK (as AuDy): Because he's a... Because he's a Divine. He owns almost every company that manufactures everything onboard this ship -

KEITH (as Mako): (overlapping quietly) Well, *he's* not a Divine.

JACK (as AuDy): And he's planning a war. (Ali laughs)

KEITH (as Mako): Yeah, so we clobber him. He's by himself. Throw a punch...

JACK (as AuDy): Mako... Mako. You are not clobbering the Divine Candidate Ibex. (laughs) You are not doing that.

KEITH (as Mako): You killed his brother!

JACK (as AuDy): Well, we've talked about that.

ALI (as Aria): To be fair, all of us are owed like one shot.

JACK (as AuDy): Nobody here is clobbering Ibex.

AUSTIN: AuDy, when was the last time that you saw Jerboa as a child?

JACK: Oh, I guess.. When did Liberty and Discovery part ways? Comparatively recently on the... Liberty and Discovery and Righteousness part ways?

AUSTIN: A decade ago.

JACK: Up until then, they were the same Divine?

AUSTIN: Oh oh, no no no. I see what you're saying. No. A long time ago.

JACK: (overlapping) Thousands and thousands of -

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Thousands and thousands of years ago. 70,000 years ago, 80,000 years ago, right? It was a brief moment that they were the same Divine. But, but Liberty and Discovery...

JACK: (overlapping) I think probably... I think probably Liberty and Discovery... how much older is, are they? How much older is Ibex than Jerboa?

AUSTIN: It was, I think like a decade? I was imagining Jerboa as being like, low twenties? Low to mid twenties, I guess? Originally I had actually imagined him as younger than that, but I had said he was - I did the age thing wrong when I first talked about it but I think he was like 22 or 23 when you killed him, and Ibex was like a decade older than that, in his thirties.

JACK: So I guess Liberty and Discovery went to his high school graduation with Ibex.

AUSTIN: OK. I like that a lot. (groans) (Ali groans) I just like Liberty and Discovery texting Jerboa like "Good luck, champ!" And then transferring some money into Jerboa's paypal account.

JACK: Yeah, instantly, like at the beginning of... uh, Tales in the Borderlands, just like (makes beeping sound)

AUSTIN: Yeah, and remember, Jeboa wasn't... the plan wasn't for Jerboa to be a *candidate*.

JACK: No. (laughs). Everybody in space is sad.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: OK, I think -

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah, I think you're right. I think it's... Cass in the chat says "I think it's AuDy rolling fast talk to get what they want." And yeah, I think it's that.

ART: Cause he's trying to convince me to do what he wants, or it wants, with promises, lies or bluster. (reading from the rule book) "10 plus, I choose whether to do it or not. If they do, they mark experience. If I don't, they must act under pressure to go against your stated wishes." I think that is...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Though, again, to go against your stated wishes at this point, are like... it's not... I don't know if there's a roll here at all. Cause like, what does going against your wishes do for AuDy? That's not... I don't think that you're an obstacle from stopping AuDy from doing this, or it doesn't sound like that's the case?

ART: No, it's not that I would stop him from doing that, it's that I would... I would shoot him in the face when he got on our ship.

AUSTIN: I see what you're... OK. Yes, then make that roll.

KEITH: (overlapping) That's a better idea than clobbering, I think.

JACK: (exasperated) Nobody is killing anybody today.

AUSTIN: We'll see.

ART: (overlapping) We'll see.

AUSTIN: Make that roll.

JACK: I get to roll cool -

AUSTIN: (overlapping) You do.

JACK: For this cause I have Iceman. (rolls) Partial success.

AUSTIN: That's an 8. On a 7-9 for PCs, choose one: If they do what you want, they mark experience, or if they don't it they must act under pressure to go against your stated wishes. Right, OK. So we'll see if Cass does what you want.

ART: Wait, I think that's... Jack chooses one of those.

AUSTIN: Oh. Right now or just in general?

ART: (very quietly) I dunno.

AUSTIN: Let's see. (pause)

JACK: Oh, that would make sense.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Oh yeah, totally. Yes. So Jack, you choose one of those.

JACK: Umm... I'll give Cass XP. (laughs)

AUSTIN: OK. So if you do what AuDy wants, mark XP.

JACK: I don't know how that's done in the narrative. I... (laughs) like, I... I don't think Cass really cares whether or not AuDy's like "Well done! Thanks so much for not fucking up that negotiation."

AUSTIN: It works cause it's like when someone asks you to do a tough thing and you manage to do it, sure, mark experience... you know?

JACK: Yeah, OK. Yeah, that makes sense.

KEITH: Is that AuDy slyly tossing Cass 1 XP chip? (Austin and Ali laugh)

AUSTIN: No, it's not that.

JACK: (overlapping) Sliding it across the table.

AUSTIN: "Good goin' champ!" Flip!

KEITH: Redeem this at the RPG store! (Austin laughs)

AUSTIN: It's the future!

ART (as Cass): Fine.

ART: And Cass walks out and goes to his [sic]<sup>3</sup> quarters, closes and locks the door. I mean, I'm sure AuDy can -

KEITH: (overlapping) It's OK, I'll -

AUSTIN: So you did walk out? You're, in fact, not taking this XP.

ART: No, I said "fine." And then I walked out.

AUSTIN: OK...

ART: I think I get to choose if I'm doing it later.

AUSTIN: Sure. Gotcha. (Jack laughs)

JACK (as AuDy): OK. Orth?

AUSTIN (as Orth): Yeah.

JACK (as AuDy): You're good?

AUSTIN (as Orth): Yeah.

JACK: Alright. Then I guess I'm just going to open the gate and summon Ibex.

AUSTIN: So I think it's like... there's like... it feels like the room gets dimmer, but not all at once. Like, it starts getting dimmer at the floor and the ceiling and then the light kind of, like... continues to go down in a vertical close... closing blind kind of motion, where like eventually the whole room is equally dim.

And then, in the doorway from the cockpit to the rest of the ship, the kind of... the empty space there becomes light, and it opens as if on a hinge. And in walks Ibex, in his red, with his just-shaved face and his, like... sparkling eyes. And I think this is the first time anyone in this room except for Orth and Liberty and Discovery is actually seeing him in person? You've seen him in Jace's memory, but that was filtered, right, like through Jace's memory. And he's older

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<sup>3</sup> Cass uses they/them pronouns.

now, and carries himself less aggressively, and that gives him more confidence, and so in a way it's actually a more powerful pose. And he looks around the room.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): I appreciate it.

JACK (as AuDy): Hope we didn't interrupt anything?

AUSTIN (as Ibex): I called you. Orth, it's been a minute. How you holding up?

KEITH: Is Orth still facing the other direction? (Ali laughs, Jack groans) In his chair? (Jack laughs)

JACK: Do you think Orth turns around or? No, Orth absolutely has to turn around, there's no way Orth has any... there's no way Orth has any real, applicable power in the face of Ibex, right?

AUSTIN: I don't know... he left high, right? Like... he left with his head held high and -

JACK: (overlapping) That's true.

AUSTIN: And then he mobilized this group specifically to strike back at Ibex.

JACK: Yeah, but there's one thing, you know, writing up plans for how to kill the monster under the bed but another thing going down under the bed, finding it there.

AUSTIN: And it saying "Oh hey, how you doing?" (Ali laughs)

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: "How you been?"

JACK: (sighs) Uh, OK.

AUSTIN: So no, the answer is no -

JACK: (overlapping) Yes.

AUSTIN: Orth just stays facing the other direction?

JACK: Yeah. I think sort of like, just like, folds and unfolds his hands in his lap.

ALI: But there's also the fear of coming off as petty, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: I don't think that past this point, I don't know if Orth -

KEITH: (overlapping) If he... the thing he would need to do to come off as petty is to, like, make a fart noise (Ali laughs) at... every time he takes a step. (Ali and Jack laugh) That's petty.

JACK: "Blah blah blah."

KEITH: Which is the thing. Maybe Mako should do that...

AUSTIN: Good, good.

JACK: (laughing) He's gonna get an experience point, isn't he? (sighs)

AUSTIN: Someone's gonna get socked in the face, it's true. (Ali laughs)

AUSTIN (as Ibex): Well, I'm glad we could speak person to person.

JACK (as AuDy): I'm afraid that, uh, our Apostolosian crewmate has decided for the moment not to uh... not to involve himself.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): That's fair. I did have Righteousness send him a... harsh message. It's fine. I think we'll be better off without that heat.

JACK (as AuDy): You know, person to person, uh... you know, we had offices down the hall... you're not gonna kill him are you?

AUSTIN (as Ibex): No, no. I like this ship a lot. I wouldn't ruin it.

JACK (as AuDy): (scoffs) Yeah, 'K... I've heard about that. (Austin laughs) So I guess...

AUSTIN (as Ibex): Let's go meet. Let's go sit somewhere. We shouldn't have this in a cramped room.

JACK (as AuDy): So we're going to -

KEITH (as Mako): (at the same time as Jack) We mostly don't have chairs onboard.

AUSTIN: Wait, say that again?

JACK: (at the same time as Austin) Well, we're going to the ... bridge, aren't we? To the lounge?

AUSTIN: Yeah, there's chairs in the lounge, is where you like, eat food.

KEITH: I was bluffing.

AUSTIN: Oh...

JACK: Do we... do we have any chips? (Austin laughs)

[00:45:02]

AUSTIN: Did you...

JACK: (overlapping) Mako?

AUSTIN: Did AuDy ask that?

JACK: No, ah (laughs and claps)

KEITH: He is very concerned for **our** hunger.

AUSTIN: Oh boy.

JACK: Oh dear. (sighs)

JACK (as AuDy): Ibex, I think you've probably got something to tell Aria, right?

AUSTIN: (long pause) I'm actually not sure... **Austin** isn't sure what (Ali laughs) you're mentioning.

JACK: (incredulously) That Aria is just the voice of Ibex's revolution?

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Oh, yeah, but not real, not intentionally.

JACK: It was playing out of speakers on -

ALI: (overlapping) That was -



AUSTIN: (at the same time as Ali) Yeah, no, cause people were listening to it.

JACK: Oh, sorry, I read that as the speakers out on, like, the poles.

AUSTIN: That was me trying to evoke the very real feeling of being in New York in June and only hearing a Rhianna song (Ali laughs) every time you go outside forever. (Jack laughs)  
Which is, like, a thing, right? That's like -

JACK: George Orwell wrote that. (Austin laughs)

AUSTIN: Yes, that's exactly! He's a big fan, actually, it's very strange. Yeah, but it's unintentional. Ibex did not, like, maneuver that into place. That was a happy coincidence.

JACK: Ah, OK.

AUSTIN: He does, however, say -

AUSTIN (as Ibex): Miss Joie, I really like that new song you have. It's good to see you performing again. (Aria groans uncomfortably) Now, seats. Seats are important. Orth, I'd appreciate it if you sat with us, at the very least.

(Keith makes fart sounds. Austin, Ali and Jack laugh)

JACK: Ah, OK. I guess Orth comes and sits over.

AUSTIN: OK. Jacqui leans on a wall and crosses her big chrome arms. She doesn't sit down.  
(Ali sighs)

KEITH: **She's** the one who should clobber him.

AUSTIN: Yeah, she's with you! (scoffs) Cass, you hear people moving around and sitting down?

ART: Yeah, I think he has to, like, do that, like, crummy thing where -

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Walk of shame? (Ali laughs)

ART: You storm off and then realize "Wait, now I can't talk to anyone about how mad I am."  
(Austin and Ali laugh) And sort of, like, you know, huffily walks back in and slinks down in a chair and crosses his arm and is just kind of, like, grumpy.

KEITH: Yeah, I need Cass back in this room because the the only other person that's on my side about this whole thing is Jacqui, and she's a **criminal**. (Austin laughs)

ALI: I'm on your side.

AUSTIN: Not like you.

KEITH: (overlapping, emphatically) Uh-uh, you weren't vocal about it.

ART: (overlapping) I want to make an "I love it when a plan comes together" roll for this for, for *The Assassination of Ibex*, but I don't have enough, I don't think there was enough time to plan anything.

AUSTIN: That's really good. Yeah, no I don't, I mean, if you have a really good -

ART: (overlapping) There's definitely not a gun taped under this table is the problem, really. (Ali laughs)

JACK: You could have a gun taped to your back, Bruce Willis style.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean, you could just have your gun with you though.

ALI: He stormed off to get his gun. (laughs)

AUSTIN: Yeah, right?

ART: My gun is an assault rifle, it's not like... I can't hide it, be like walking in with an assault... that's a big...

AUSTIN: No...

ART: That's a big aggressive move.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): Mr. [sic] Pelagios, I'm glad you could join us. (Keith as Mako grunts.) I'm not, I'm not kidding. I'm glad you're here. This is a big conversation to have.

KEITH (as Mako): Listen, just because you're not kidding doesn't mean your reasons for him being... the reasons for you being glad he's here aren't weird.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): It's a weird time, so I feel like we should get used to it and move on.  
(Jack sighs) (Keith as Mako makes a sound of disgust.) So, you're headed to September?

JACK (as AuDy): That was the plan.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): What for?

(a long pause, Jack sighs)

ALI (as Aria): Mostly to stop you from killing us?

AUSTIN (as Ibex): (quietly) Oh god... I'm in the middle of an invasion, there's a coup happening... have you seen the domes are gone? We have like, eight of them... gone. I don't have time to swat flies. We send those messages out all the time. There's an algorithm, it plugs in names, it develops threats specifically to upset people so they'll get in line. I don't make (chuckles) personal appearances very often. I'm very busy.

ART: Oh, this fucking asshole (Ali laughs).

KEITH: I fucking hate this guy...

JACK: (overlapping) Wait, so was his assassination, was his assassination threat to...

AUSTIN: (cutting in) Yeah.

JACK: Was that just an algorithm?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Even though his face was on there? (Ali laughs)

AUSTIN: Absolutely.

JACK: So do you... (sighs)

JACK (as AuDy): Cass?

ART (as Cass): Yeah? (Ali is still laughing)

KEITH (as Mako): God, it's like everyone loves you and everyone hates you at the same time and it's the **worst**.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): You're telling me! Here's the thing... it... (groans in frustration). You have to be this person to get the world right. And I have to be this person so I can be that other person in public. (sniffs) Because there's been other people like the way I am in public and they don't get things done. What they do is get their heads shot off. What they do is get elected once and then never again.

JACK (as AuDy): How many times do **you** want to be elected? (Austin as Ibex sighs)

AUSTIN: He sighs the way someone who's been shot sighs?

AUSTIN (as Ibex): I think my term is coming up soon.

JACK (as AuDy): (sighs) Look, we're at a strange place now where... I think, based on what you've just said, we can assume that - at least in the traditional sense - you don't consider us much of a problem.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): I don't. But... well, if only I could make that decision myself. (pause) Here's what I need to do. There needs to be an equilibrium, and then it can be fine. I need you to do something for me and then we can call it off. (Jack laughs)

ALI (as Aria): (sharply) What?

KEITH (as Mako): (overlapping) No! What are you talking about?

JACK (as AuDy): This is coming from a place, Ibex. This is coming from somewhere.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): There's someone I need to find. (voice breaking) I haven't seen her in a decade. She's somewhere on September, and we... I don't know what happened. We lost contact. Not just to her, but to September. I have agents on September, and... (pause) Something is happening there and I don't know what it is, and I don't have time to go myself.

JACK: Oh god... do I know what it is?

AUSTIN: No... how would you?

JACK: Well... I just spent the last month...

AUSTIN: But you don't know it's here. How could it be? [Ali laughs nervously] You left it...

JACK (overlapping): Oh yeah... that's true.

AUSTIN: All that... many years ago. I guess though, actually: you know, like... Liberty and Discovery would know exactly what happened to Rigour, which is, like... there was eventually another fight, right? The Diaspora left, and then... you were gone; eighty thousand years ago, let's say? Thirty thousand years ago, you hit that first bridge. We talked about this before, if you look at the bottom-right of our map, there are those bridges of, like... where the two arms of the galaxy have stars running between them. And Liberty and Discovery was there the first time that Rigour found that bridge, and was probably there when someone had to make the decision to, like... destroy those trillions of stars to prevent Rigour from getting any closer.

JACK: Hmm... like building a fire break.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly. That's exactly what it is; yeah. And then was there the next time, when Oricon did the same thing, back to the Diaspora, who were looking to colonise it. And now we're at the third bridge, right? And there is no going back. At this point, the two arms become one arm, and there is no... if that happens again; it's bad.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): Here's what I'm saying: go to September... find Maryland... and get her off of that planet. You tell me anything about what's going on there? I'll pay you extra. And I'll pay you *well*. And then we're even. I don't even mean even in the way that's, like... we're even, and then you'll get caught up in the war. I mean even, like... you can go sit on an island planet somewhere for all I care... I'll never look at you again if you don't want. Or...? I'll get you a new job. Orth... they've been misusing you. You're better than being some bureaucrat. All our history; you know I'm not lying to you.

[Art (Cass?) scoffs]

AUSTIN: He's not rolling, cos he's not lying.

JACK (as AuDy): I think it's going to be hard to get some of the crew to work for you, Ibex.

KEITH (as Mako): We really don't like you, at all.

JACK (as AuDy): He really doesn't like you at all.

KEITH (as Mako): I don't like you at all.

AUSTIN (as Ibex): That's fair... a lot of people don't like me. Lot of people don't like medicine [Ali and Keith laugh]. They still take it.

KEITH (as Mako): You can't just say shit! [mocking tone] "A lot of people don't like me, a lot of people don't like meh...h..." [blows raspberries] that doesn't mean anything!

AUSTIN (as Ibex): People like you starve to death, eventually... because you're so alone! Cos noone wants to be near you!

JACK (as AuDy): Ibex; stop.

AUSTIN (as Ibex, overlapping): People like **me**, would starve to death...

JACK (as AuDy, overlapping): Ibex...

AUSTIN (as Ibex): except... we move towards new people all the time.

JACK (as AuDy): You're not delivering a speech.

KEITH (overlapping): I'm gonna hit him in the face [Jack laughs].

AUSTIN: What did you say?

JACK: He said he's going to hit him in the face!

AUSTIN: Alright, go for it.

KEITH: Alright.

JACK: Can I roll to Interfere please?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can roll to Interfere.

ART: Can I roll to Aid?

JACK: That's...

AUSTIN: Sure! [Jack laughs]

KEITH: Hold on... Let me take a second to think about what I actually want to do to him.

AUSTIN: You said you were going to hit him in the face... that would be...

KEITH: That would be Mix it Up...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Mix it Up...

KEITH: Which I am not good at...

AUSTIN: You said you were gonna hit him in the face.

JACK: What were your exact words earlier? "Sock him one..." or something? [Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: "Clobber him."

KEITH (overlapping): "Clobber him?" I did say that I would sock him one, yeah... sock him one in the jaw.

JACK: Are you socking him one? Or clobbering him?

AUSTIN: Either one is Mix it Up.

KEITH: I'm gonna sock him one in the jaw.

AUSTIN: Yeah?

KEITH: With my bad Meat.

AUSTIN: That's... that's... that seems honest.

JACK: Do I roll first?

ART (overlapping): Yeah, Aid and Interfere has to go first.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Ah... yes. Correct.

JACK: OK... so I just roll 2D6.

ART: Plus your Links.

KEITH (overlapping): can other people Aid?

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: Plus my Link?

ART: Your Link with the person.

JACK: OK, let me check that... I don't... oh god!

AUSTIN: You have...

KEITH: I have two with Cass, and one with AuDy.

(Art and Austin together)

ART: It doesn't... it's the other way.

AUSTIN: It's the other way.

JACK I have none with Mako...

AUSTIN: Alright, so you just roll 2D6, and Cass, you roll...

ART: I have plus two with Mako.

AUSTIN: Good roll.

JACK: Oh no!



ALI (overlapping): Goodness gracious...

AUSTIN: Jack, you do not... in fact, Jack, because you fail, that means you are open to... ah... to Harm in the interim here. Same thing, Cass; you will also be... you will also be, like... open to the repercussions of, like... whatever happens here. Cass rolled a seven, AuDy rolled a six.

ART: I'm gonna give plus one forward.

AUSTIN: Mako... [exhales] Mako misses...

ART: Plus one forward!

AUSTIN: Oh! Nice! Plus one: nice! Mix it Up...

JACK: No! Don't say "oh nice!" [Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: Mix it Up says, uh... "when you make a seven to nine, choose two: you make too much noise, advance the relevant mission clock..." that doesn't happen here... "you take Harm as established by the fiction; an ally takes Harm as established by the fiction; or something of value breaks." Choose two.

KEITH: Uhh... do I get to choose who takes the Harm?

AUSTIN: No... it would be Cass.

KEITH: OK...

AUSTIN: Cass and you would both take Harm in this, because Cass aided you? So no matter what, if you take Harm, or if you choose an Ally takes Harm, Cass would be taking Harm.

KEITH: OK. So I, basically, am choosing two of: I get hurt; Cass gets hurt; a thing breaks?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART (overlapping): Wait... isn't AuDy also...?

KEITH: OK, so me and Cass...

AUSTIN: Yeah... AuDy is also... totally... AuDy could also take... could also take Harm. It's just, like... hard to think about AuDy as an ally since they rolled against... but yes: AuDy could also take Harm here.

KEITH: OK. Then I'm gonna choose: I take Harm and an ally takes Harm.

AUSTIN: OK. Umm... huh... You swing, like... harder than you knew you had it in you? And you catch him in the jaw? And it breaks. And there's a sharp metal sound, and his skin is cold. And he lifts you with one hand, and throws you - with an incredible force – the sort of force that you'd normally only see in AuDy, into...

KEITH (overlapping, whispering): He's a robot!

AUSTIN: Into Cass. You both take one Harm.

KEITH (as Mako): It's so annoying that you're a robot! [Ali laughs]

AUSTIN (as Ibex): Like I said: I have to be a lot of places.

JACK (as AuDy): Ibex...

ART (overlapping): Wait... how does Harm work?

AUSTIN (overlapping): His jaw is hanging... Ah... just take a Harm, just mark... and then... what's your...?

ART: Oh, I have armor. Is that...?

AUSTIN: You don't... are you wearing your armor around the ship?

ART: Am I wearing my armor to a confrontation with Ibex? Yes I am, sir!

AUSTIN: So... did you go back to your bedroom to put on your body armor?

ART: Yeah!

JACK (laughing): Oh, that's so good!

ART: And I couldn't hide my gun... an assault rifle in it; so that's why I was mad!

AUSTIN: So... yeah...

JACK: How did you Aid him?

AUSTIN: Yeah, how did you?

JACK: Did you yell "sock him!"

ART: I imagined that I was Aiding him by stopping AuDy from Hindering him. That was how I...

AUSTIN: Oh, that works... I like that.

KEITH: OK.

JACK: Oh yeah; that works.

AUSTIN: You guys should also both make the Harm move. Which is...

KEITH (overlapping): What is that?

AUSTIN: You roll 2D6 plus the Harm you just suffered?

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: Given that, let's make AuDy make that roll too. Because... now that we have that... fictional positioning.

JACK: OK.

AUSTIN: Low is good.

ALI: Guys... Just get along!

AUSTIN: Uhh... Keith, you needed to add one, cos you took one damage.

KEITH: I also have armor.

AUSTIN: You were not wearing armor...

KEITH: I have like a force field style armor?

AUSTIN: You weren't wearing your armor around the ship for the thirtieth day in a row!

KEITH: That's probably true... It comes from my little... it comes from my little... little hover board thing.

AUSTIN: Right. On the other hand, AuDy is a small gang.

ALI (laughing): Oh god!

AUSTIN: Because he is, and that... so he<sup>4</sup> does not take damage there. Art doesn't take... or Cass doesn't take damage here.

KEITH (overlapping): So mine is plus one then...

AUSTIN: That's a seven, which means either: you lose your footing; lose your grip on something that you're holding; you lose track of someone or something that you're attending to; someone gets the drop on you.

KEITH: Uhh... I...

AUSTIN: I'm just going to choose you lose your footing, you just... it's MC chooses...

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: You just fall over, it's not... I think that's pretty simple.

KEITH: He threw me...

AUSTIN: Yes

KEITH: And I happened to not rebound.

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<sup>4</sup> AuDy uses they/them pronouns.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): I'm not here to fight.

AUSTIN: And there's... a strange... [pause]. There's a strange quality to his voice? Because it sounds like it's still coming from his mouth even though his weird metal jaw is detached? Like... it still sounds like he has a mouth that he's using. It is not echo-ey and metal.

ART (as CASS): You didn't come here at all.

KEITH (overlapping): Is the jaw, like... totally still? Or are the gears still trying to move the half of the jaw that works?

AUSTIN (overlapping): I think they start doing... they start trying to move at first? And then, like... at the very least, AuDy picks up that he shuts that down.

**[01:00:00]**

JACK (as AUDY): Are you done, Mako?

KEITH (as MAKO): No... No! This guy sucks!

ALI (as ARIA): We're done for right now.

AUSTIN: Ibex sits back down.

JACK (as AUDY): Thank you, Aria. I'm sorry about that, Ibex.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): I... I deserved it. It's fine.

ART (as CASS): It didn't happen... he's not here!

KEITH (as MAKO): He's not here! You said he was coming, and he didn't come, he sent a robot!

AUSTIN (as IBEX): What are you talking about?

JACK (as AUDY): It stings a little, Ibex, that you wouldn't... [Ibex scoffs] that you wouldn't come in person... oh... [AuDy laughs].

AUSTIN (as IBEX): This is it, man...

JACK (as AUDY): You're not there anymore, are you?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): No... I tried really hard [pause]. I tried **really** hard to hold it back. I'm still trying. It's all I've got left to hold it back. I won't let it let me go until this is done.

Righteousness is... you know, there's a thing: I don't like Oricon very much... you know that. But there's a **thing** I like about it a lot, which is you recognize that your Riggers are just Riggers: they're just machines. They're just very advanced machines. We got it in our heads that these things are gods, man! [pause] But I won't let go of this thing until I use it for all the good it can do.

JACK: I guess AuDy doesn't really know what to say to this? Because he's essentially just being, like... "Divines suck!"

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK (as AuDY): Why do you want Maryland?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): She doesn't deserve to be... she had really good ideas. **Really** good ones. Like... [pause] inspiring? You know? And... all Righteousness could hear was: "How do I use those ideas?" And soon all I could hear was: "How do I use those ideas?" And I don't know what's happening on September, but... rightly said, a lot of those people deserve to die, probably. But not Maryland.

JACK (as AUDY): Ibex, if we're going to do this for you, and... I'm not necessarily saying we're going to...

KEITH (as MAKO): I'm saying that we're not.

JACK (as AUDY): He's saying that we're not. We need to know that it's Ibex talking to us right now, and not Righteousness.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): Mako, stand up.

KEITH: Alright, I stand up.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): Can I touch your head?

KEITH (as MAKO) (petulantly): [exhales sharply] Yes [Ali laughs].

AUSTIN (as IBEX): That was quick. I expected... he nor... is he...?

ART: Cass stands up and, like... eyes him. Like... he's [sic]<sup>5</sup> like standing behind.

KEITH (as MAKO) (overlapping): Do you want to touch his head too?

ART: You know... he's menacing.

AUSTIN: He reaches out and touches Mako's head, and like... it's cold? His hands are cold. And... he, like... runs his hands through your hair as if he's looking for something. And he finds it, and rests his forehead on yours. And suddenly you feel it too? It's... like... you've been carrying something for a long time? Like... weight that you had been so used to carrying around? That it stopped feeling like weight. And so, now, he's lifted that off of you, and he steps back.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): You still can do the things you do, but... my word to you: I couldn't stop you from doing them to me right now... not like I could've a week ago; not like I could've ten minutes ago. Trust me on this.

AUSTIN: The ship shakes, and the lights stutter.

JACK (as AUDY): Is this you?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): No...

JACK: OK, I'm gonna... how far are we from the cockpit? Can I run back and look out the front?

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<sup>5</sup> Cass uses they/them pronouns.

AUSTIN: Totally. Uhh... you can see September coming into view in the distance. But you don't... you don't see anything that would cause that shake.

JACK: Is there... can I do a detect... a detect... what do you call it?

AUSTIN: "What here is evil?". That's what you want.

KEITH (as MAKO): It's probably just those solar winds you were telling us about. It's probably just those.

JACK (as AUDY): I was lying to you.

KEITH (as MAKO): Oh my god!

JACK (as AUDY): I was lying to you so I could... telephone... [Austin laughs].

KEITH (as MAKO): Sorry... you were what? Two robots? [Ali laughs] Two robots that we thought was one robot? You were doing what to us?

AUSTIN: Assess. Did you want to Assess? Or do you want to...?

JACK: I want to, yeah... Assess, right? That's the one that lets me answer...

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: Ask questions... I want to do What Here Is Evil?

AUSTIN: Go ahead and roll Edge.

JACK: OK... Boop? [pause]

AUSTIN: That's a seven.

JACK: There we go... OK.

AUSTIN: That's not bad. So "you get one Hold and you can spend it on any of the following questions: What potential complication do I need to be wary of? What do I notice despite an effort to conceal it? How is blank vulnerable to me? How can I avoid trouble or..."



JACK (interrupting): Uhh, sorry, that... oh no, sorry: I mis-read the thing.

AUSTIN: OK.

JACK (laughing): What are the questions? Sorry, I was too busy panicking that I'd got it wrong!

AUSTIN: That's fine... "What potential complication do I need to be wary of? What do I notice despite an effort to conceal it? How is blank vulnerable to me? How can I avoid trouble or hide here? What is my best way in, way out, way past? Where can I gain the most advantage? Who or what is my biggest threat in this situation? Who or what is in control here?"

JACK: Uhh... ooh... that's like a smorgasbord of... [Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: It's a lot.

JACK: I think I'm gonna ask: what potential complication should I be aware of here?

AUSTIN: You know that sound, Jack?

JACK: Hmm-hmm?

AUSTIN: [sharp intake of breath] [Ali laughs] Yeah...

JACK: Oh no! Oh, this is very bad news, right? Cos Liberty and Discovery definitely recognizes that sound.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Liberty and Discovery definitely... and... you can tell by the way that Ibex moves that, like... he doesn't quite. Like... Righteousness is freaking out right now. But, like... Ibex doesn't quite get it. How could he?

JACK (laughing): Oh god... oh god... OK.

JACK (as Audy): Alright, everybody listen up. I need you to shut off all networked devices. I want to power down our radar, I want to power down anything that would be receiving a signal as much as possible. Obviously... Ibex and me... can't really do anything about that... Ibex: do you remember Rigour?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): [pause] I wh... wh... no...

JACK (as AUDY): He's<sup>6</sup> here...

AUSTIN (as IBEX): Whnn... nn... no, he's dead! There's...

JACK (as AUDY): That's what I thought... Can you hear him?

AUSTIN (as IBEX) (incredulous): He's on September?

JACK (as AUDY): He's on September.

ALI (as ARIA): What are you guys talking about?

JACK (as AUDY): OK... [pause]. Do you know how many Divines there are?

AUSTIN (as IBEX) (overlapping, bluntly): I have to go. We have... gnuh! [sound of a heavy impact] [Mako and Aria audibly flinch].

AUSTIN: He slams his fist against the table.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): We're this close! Ugghh! It's... Are you kidding me!? [Jack laughs uncomfortably]. It's gonna ruin everything...

ALI (as ARIA) (impatiently): What are you guys talking about?

JACK (as AUDY): Do you want to tell them?

KEITH (as MAKO): I'll tell them. I don't know... I'm sorry [Ibex laughs].

AUSTIN (laughing): He laughs... he laughs! [Jack laughs].

AUSTIN (as IBEX): You're alright... you're alright! So... uughh... How much do you know about... Biology... animals and such?

ART (as CASS): What a weird question!<sup>7</sup> [Ali laughs]

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<sup>6</sup> Rigour is it/its.

<sup>7</sup> A lot of this conversation is conducted as if in character, but it's hard to imagine some of it in the fiction! For clarity, it's largely transcribed in character.

KEITH (as MAKO): I'm gonna say...

JACK (overlapping): "How much do you know about animals?" is... [laughs]

KEITH (as MAKO): I know more about some animals than others...

ALI (as ARIA): I spent a lot of time in the Joy Park Zoo?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): OK, that helps, actually.

KEITH (as MAKO): I don't know a lot about bugs, but I know a lot about... I really like stoats. That's my favourite animal.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): Those are pretty good.

ALI (as ARIA): Wait, stoats? Isn't that a kind of beer?

(CASS, IBEX, and MAKO more or less together)

ART (as CASS): That's a **stout**.

AUSTIN (as IBEX) and KEITH (as MAKO): That's a stout...

AUSTIN (as IBEX): That's a stout.

ALI (as ARIA): Oh...

KEITH (as MAKO): A **stoat**, that's like a marmot?

JACK (as AUDY): It's like a weasel.

KEITH: Ah! Hold on: it's not like a marmot, I'm sorry... that was, like...

AUSTIN: That was a **deep** Runbutton cut. [Ali laughs] It's, like... the **deepest** Runbutton cut.

KEITH (overlapping): That was a deep Runbutton cut... A **really** deep Runbutton cut that I'd forgot, but Austin reminded me of, like... a few months ago.

AUSTIN: It's really good.

JACK: The problem is, I don't really know what a marmot is? So it might as well be a... I'm going to Google a marmot...

AUSTIN (overlapping): What does it sound like?

KEITH (overlapping): It's like a ground squirrel? A marmot is a ground squirrel. A stoat is like a weasel.

AUSTIN: What's a ground squirrel?

KEITH: A ground squirrel... it's like a prairie dog... they're in the same genus as squirrels, but they don't live in trees.

AUSTIN: I see.

JACK: I saw a raccoon for the first time the other day.

AUSTIN: Those are nice.

ALI: Yeah...

KEITH: You saw... that's your first raccoon experience? It's great, right?

JACK: We don't have them in England. Yeah, it was super great: it ran away, and it hid from me, so I chased it. Or rather: I walked into the bushes thinking I wouldn't be able to find it, and then I turned round and it was **staring** at me.

ALI: They're really scary: don't mess with them.

KEITH (overlapping): They're not the friendliest...

ART: Yeah, they'll fuck you up.

KEITH: They look very cute, but...

JACK: There was a body of water between me and it.

KEITH: OK.

JACK: I'd have been fine.

JACK (as AUDY): So we know those animals.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): In the old days... in the old days, there used to be **bigger** animals. Much bigger. And...

KEITH (as MAKO): Bigger than a marmot?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): **Much** bigger.

KEITH (as MAKO): Holy goalie... [Ali chuckles]

AUSTIN (as IBEX): And some things happened... some things happened where... it turned out that the bigger animals weren't stronger than the small animals. The smaller animals didn't need to eat as much; they could live through colder temperatures; they were communal, while some of the bigger animals were solitary. And the thing that happened was, it got very cold. So those little animals; they lived. The problem is, eventually, they forgot that it was the cold that killed the big animals, and started telling themselves it was them [Art laughs]. So, now it's warm again, and the big animals are back. The biggest one.

ART: For someone who is so scared, this is an **insane** way to tell us this information!

AUSTIN: Listen...

ART: Like... "We gotta go! But first: here's a really long way to communicate this information..."

AUSTIN (laughing): It is 11pm, I've been working since 10, it has been a long fucking day! [Ali and Jack laugh] My computer is broken...

ALI: It's **incredibly** in character.

AUSTIN: It is. Remember, he's the one... the dude that knows about old animals... we've talked about this before.

JACK (overlapping): It's the most Ibex way to describe things.

ART: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Ibex is the guy that's interested in weird old animals!

JACK: If a volcano was erupting?

AUSTIN: Right! Yes...

JACK: Uhh... OK...

AUSTIN: Also, I think his point stands. [Ali laughs].

JACK: Yeah, his point super stands.

JACK (as AUDY): You all got what he meant by that, right?

ART (as CASS): Kind of? There's a big animal?

KEITH (as MAKO): Yeah, it's: "We're Back! Dinosaurs..." The cartoon that I loved, growing up...

AUSTIN (as IBEX): It's the First Divine.

JACK (as AUDY): The **Oldest** Divine. We can't fight Rigour. There is no way we can fight Rigour.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): [stumbling] We have to...

ALI (as ARIA): We have three Divines now! [AuDy laughs]

AUSTIN (as IBEX): That doesn't matter...

JACK (as AUDY): Oh... we are so tiny in comparison to him.

KEITH (as MAKO): Like... physically?

JACK (as AUDY): I met him once? Uh, that... and also, yeah... the last time I met Rigour... ah, Mako? You know something about that... [sighs] Could we use Grace?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): [pause] She and I aren't on great talking terms these days.

JACK (as AUDY): Maybe you don't need to be...

AUSTIN (as IBEX): What are you thinking?

JACK (as AUDY): Maybe we could kill two birds with one stone.

AUSTIN: He, like... slowly nods his head a little bit.

JACK (as AUDY): Now, I don't know how we're going to do that... but maybe we need to talk to her?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): No... I won't... I won't use her like that. She's wrong about where we're at right now, but... no. I'll talk to her. Swallow my goddamn pride.

JACK (as AUDY): In the meantime...

AUSTIN (as IBEX - overlapping): Cass?

ART (as CASS): Yeah?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): [laughs] Oh... it was always coming to this... Fuckin'...

KEITH (as MAKO): I don't like when you think things are funny...

AUSTIN (as IBEX): How you getting on with your brother [sic] these days? Sokrates?

ART (as CASS): I... we haven't spoken since the war.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): OK, well... if you could send them a letter, that would be good.

[stumbled] Don't... I'm not... just let them know that there's... something big. I don't think he'd<sup>8</sup> be a big fan of Rigour.

ART (as CASS): Fine...

KEITH (as MAKO): Who pilots Rigour?

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<sup>8</sup> Sokrates uses they/them pronouns.

JACK (as AUDY): Rigour doesn't have a Candidate.

KEITH (as MAKO): So he's<sup>9</sup> just, like... a big robot?

JACK (as AUDY): When we encountered him in The Tower, he had... people were with him. Almost like a...

JACK: What's the word I'm thinking of here?

KEITH: Thralls?

JACK: Yeah... I pictured them more as just, like... they came down on ropes from inside the robot. But as far as I can tell, I don't think they're pilots? I think that they're... I think... yeah.

JACK (as AUDY): Rigour needs people.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): But it can't... You know... we have Candidates because... even Righteousness believes that humans need to be involved in this process. Of course, there's occasionally some disagreement on that fact.

AUSTIN: And he nods at Liberty and Discovery.

JACK (as AUDY): Right...

AUSTIN (as IBEX): But Rigour... Rigour doesn't believe that. Rigour devours people, but that's about it.

KEITH (as MAKO): AuDy, do you devour people?

JACK (as AUDY): No.

KEITH (as MAKO): OK.

ART (as CASS): What a weird...

KEITH (as MAKO): Well, you're the only other one that doesn't have a pilot.

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<sup>9</sup> Rigour is it/its.



[01:15:02]

JACK (as AUDY): I murdered my first Candidate with a saw.

JACK: I'm not saying that... but that's what happened!

AUSTIN: OK... Good... I'm glad you didn't say that!

ALI (overlapping) (laughing): OK!

JACK: No, I'm not saying that!

KEITH: Wait... AuDy's not going to say that?

AUSTIN: No!

JACK: No!

KEITH: Listen... AuDy does a lot of being dishonest... [Jack laughs].

JACK: I think this is a pretty good reason...

JACK (as AUDY): Ibex, you can't expect us to land on September.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): Things have changed, I guess... I... we need to know what it is that it's capable of, and... you **cannot** let it get control of the September Institute. That'd be **it**.

JACK (as AUDY): Yeah... Mako?

KEITH (as MAKO): Uhh... listen... all of this seems really bad.

JACK (as AUDY): Correct.

KEITH (as MAKO): So, like... we want to go to the September Institute, but then Ibex wants us to go there, and... but we don't want to help him... but now there's this big... even **worse** guy? And that guy's a robot with guys living in him... I don't like it.

JACK: Liberty and Discovery just turns and looks at Ibex.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): Yeah. That's all right; he's not wrong.

KEITH (as MAKO): No, I was just recapping.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): It's complicated.

KEITH (as MAKO): It's complicated, so... listen: the September Institute shit's really dangerous. If there's a big, mean thing on it, we should probably stop it. But it doesn't mean that we're helping Ibex, it just means that... I don't want to be used by Rigour if that's what ends up happening.

ALI (as ARIA): At the end of the day, what's our next move?

KEITH (as MAKO): I could clock this guy again...

JACK (as AUDY): No don't... no don't do that... I think... I think we've got to land on September... right?

JACK: How close are we to a stable orbit?

AUSTIN: You could be in one in the next few hours, probably. You're hours out.

JACK: Oh boy...

KEITH (as MAKO?<sup>10</sup>): Is it going to know that we're coming?

JACK (as AUDY?): It knows... it already knows... I mean... It probably... I don't know if it knows that we're a threat yet? Oh, it probably...

KEITH (as MAKO? - overlapping): Are we a threat? You said that we weren't a threat...

JACK (as AUDY?): Ah... we're more of a threat to it than, like... a box of... than a shipment of goods, or whatever.

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<sup>10</sup> Difficult to tell which parts of this exchange are in character.

AUSTIN (as IBEX?): Right...

KEITH (as MAKO): Right, OK. So...

JACK: Austin, can it detect Divines?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. But it needs to be looking for them, and it needs to be, like... You did the right thing by immediately shutting down all of your communications stuff, right?

JACK: Yeah... Yeah, so we're just not broadcasting anything that might give us away.

AUSTIN: Yeah, right.

JACK: And I assume that, for pretty obvious reasons, Ibex and Righteousness' signal is quite well masked?

AUSTIN: At this point, yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): I need to go back.

KEITH (overlapping): How at odds is... Ibex and Righteousness right now?

JACK: At odds?

AUSTIN: Uhh... based on what he described? Like...

JACK (overlapping): Fairly, I think...

AUSTIN: It's a mix, right? I think... It's a weird mix. And it's hard to discern, like...

JACK: I think the fact that he gave us the capacity to take... or at least he **said** he gave us the capacity to fog a Righteousness Divine...

AUSTIN: Right...

JACK: Is... valuable.

AUSTIN: And shows that it's him, yes.

KEITH (overlapping): We asked him to prove that Righteousness wasn't in control, and to prove that, he kind of, like... bonked me.

AUSTIN: Right... Well... he didn't bonk you, he unhooked Righteousness from your brain, like...

KEITH: That's true...

AUSTIN: But at the same time, it was probably Righteousness that said we shouldn't use Grace. Right?

JACK: Yeah, yeah...

AUSTIN: Ibex would have **totally** said: "Cool, let's use Grace." But again, there isn't a divide: there isn't two people. This isn't two consciousnesses, it's one that's in... contestation with itself.

JACK: Yeah... but he needs to go?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): I have to... there are all sorts of maneuvers, and plans, and... we have to start getting food.

KEITH (as MAKO): How many of you are there?

AUSTIN (as IBEX): I just meant my organization... But a couple.

AUSTIN: He smirks.

JACK (as AUDY): Cass?

ART (as CASS): Yeah?

JACK (as AUDY): You're the best tactician we have. Would you be willing to support a descent onto September? [Cass sighs]

KEITH (as MAKO): He<sup>11</sup> [sic] sounds... disinterested...

ART (as CASS): Yeah... Yeah, I guess... I don't know what to do or where to go anymore. I run, and they find me.

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<sup>11</sup> Cass uses they/them pronouns.

JACK (as AUDY): Aria?

ALI (as ARIA): Yeah... I mean... we might as well, right? [Jack laughs]

KEITH (as MAKO): So, we are calling Grace, and we are calling your brother [sic]? Who I like a lot, by the way...

JACK: I think Ibex is going to call Grace, and Cass is going to call Sokrates? Or message Sokrates? Postcard Sokrates?

ART: Should let Ibex do it; he's seen him more recently.

AUSTIN: You saw him at the funeral, you just didn't talk very much.

JACK: Also, something about the way Ibex said it suggested he specifically wanted you to do it?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. I think Ibex was asking that favour, totally. Of Cass...

JACK: Uh god... can we make maneuvers on The Kingdom Come without opening channels? Does the thing just... I mean... in landing, are we just going to...?

AUSTIN: No, you'll make... it'll be a roll, for sure. So... Ibex says:

AUSTIN (as IBEX): If we open this door back, there will be a blip, and Rigour will look for you. He<sup>12</sup> won't see you right away. Between you and Orth, I think you could probably pilot this thing under its nose, but... fair warning.

JACK (as AUDY): OK. Good luck with Grace.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): Yeah... it'll be fine.

JACK (as AUDY): Don't let it get to you.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): I missed you.

JACK (as AUDY): Thank you.

AUSTIN: He smirks.

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<sup>12</sup> Rigour is it/its.

AUSTIN (as IBEX): The rest of you are incredibly capable; all of you. I should make house calls more often [Ali laughs].

JACK (whispering): He's such a villain!

AUSTIN (as IBEX): I miss people. Alright...

AUSTIN: And he kind of, like... nods. And... AuDy, do you open your side of the thing back up?

JACK: I guess, probably... if we're anticipating the blip, we probably go to the cockpit before doing it.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Get into position? Yeah... that's a good idea. Yeah, in fact, it has to be like... I think Orth probably pipes up and says:

AUSTIN (as Orth): We'll have to do it at the same time... we'll have to make the maneuver at the same time you open the portal. It's the only way it'll work. I did something like this back... [stumbles] during the war; the first war. It was a similar technique. Pretty easy, all said. I mean, not easy: incredibly difficult, but surprisingly simple.

JACK (as AUDY): I trust you. Let's do it.

AUSTIN: Alright.

JACK: So I'm going to open the portal, and then I'm going to make the roll. What do you want me to roll, Austin?

AUSTIN: God... what **do** I want you to roll? I think it's just Act Under Fire, right? I think it's just... but with your vehicle, obviously.

JACK: OK, which is... how do I roll that with my vehicle? Act Under Fire plus...?

AUSTIN: I think it's plus... Power plus Cool? Let me see... One second... additional moves... Uhm... yeah: Cool plus Power; Cool plus your vehicle's Power.

JACK: OK...

AUSTIN: WHich I think is pretty good, if I recall. Two Power, yeah.

JACK: Here we go. Two... so I'm going to roll this, plus two. Here we go...

AUSTIN: Whoo!

JACK: Oh! That's not even plus two yet...

AUSTIN: No, you got it: you got it pretty well.

JACK: I rolled a 15.

ALI: Damn...

AUSTIN: What's this look like? I think it's...

JACK: I guess it just doesn't look like anything at all? Like... the signal is invisible, right?

AUSTIN: Right, but what does the **maneuver** look like? Is it just, like... entering orbit at a certain time? So that... when the signal opens, some interference blocks that the signal has... the transportation door has opened?

JACK: I feel like it feels like one of the Kerbal Space Program maneuvers, where we're just counting an extra four seconds as we're burning...

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Or we're not burning for the same amount of time, or whatever.

AUSTIN: Oh, I need someone to make a roll, by the way. I think it's either AuDy or Cass, based on what just happened. Someone has to Get the Job. [Ali laughs]

JACK: Cass is very good at Getting the Job...

ART: Yeah...

AUSTIN: And he agreed, so...

JACK: Yeah, and also I feel that there's a real irony to Cass...

AUSTIN: Yeah, me too. So... Get the Job: roll Edge.

ART: I have succeeded partially.

AUSTIN (overlapping): That's a 7, OK. "Choose one from the list below: employer provides useful information; employer provided useful assets; the job pays well; the meeting doesn't attract attention" - I won't hit you with that, given that you just made a different Act Under Fire to avoid it...

ART (overlapping): Oh, I was going to pick that, a hundred percent!

AUSTIN: Yeah, I won't hit you with that. Or "the employer is identifiable."

ART (overlapping): It's Ibex. I know that one.

AUSTIN: Or do...? Yeah, it's Ibex... [Ali laughs]

ART: Umm... do people just want the money? If we're gonna get gone, do we...?

KEITH: Wait, can you read the first couple again? Besides the money one?

ART: Intel or Gear.

ALI: He only promised us **so much** money...

AUSTIN: Intel, Gear, job pays well.

ALI: Intel and Gear is probably what we want, cos we were promised...

JACK (overlapping): Yeah, we really want Intel and Gear.

KEITH (overlapping): He could have lied about the money, but that seems like the one thing he wouldn't lie about.

ALI: We were promised as much money as we want.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think he's giving you, like... I have a number in my head [Ali laughs], it's a big number... It's the biggest number...

JACK (bluntly): Six! [laughter]

AUSTIN: Oh no... it's bigger than that! He promised you, like... tarp money [Ali laughs].

ART: Oh my god... like... Troubled Asset Relief Program?



JACK (overlapping): That never made it onto the podcast, so...

KEITH (overlapping): There's a whole lot of things I could cover!

[Ali laughs loudly]

ART: I'm bailing out our banks! Alright, so... I'll take Gear.

AUSTIN: OK. Umm... I think he gives you, like... before he leaves, he transfers over some information about September and some other stuff. Among that, he gives you the location of a cache of equipment that should still be there, from one of his agents. So that's your Gear, which you can recover...

KEITH (overlapping): A cache of equipment? That sounds great...

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's pretty good.

JACK: I bet it's just... in a snow field. I bet it's not even, like...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Huh... we need to talk about...

JACK: I bet it was just dropped.

AUSTIN: So... do you want to talk about landing?

JACK: Uhh... [Jack and Ali groan]. Yeah, alright: let's talk about landing. Oh... I bet the mood on the ship is so, so weird right now...

AUSTIN: Oh yeah... oh yeah...

JACK: It's got to be really bad...

AUSTIN: Oh, so I should give you Directives, by the way. Right? That seems like a thing you need? Directives?

JACK: Yeah?

AUSTIN: Uhm... so, the first one is: Get the Job. Good job, you did that one. That's a good one, right?

JACK: Thanks Cass.

ART: You got it. Take an XP everyone.

AUSTIN: When you accept a mission, mark experience. When you obtain actionable information on Rigour, mark experience [Ali and Jack chuckle].

KEITH: Sorry, what was that one?

AUSTIN: When you obtain actionable information on Rigour, mark experience.

KEITH: OK.

ALI: That's easy enough.

AUSTIN: When you secure Maryland September, mark experience. If you each escape September alive, mark experience.

ART: Is that one each, or one if all of us get out?

AUSTIN: It's one if all of you get out.

ART: Oh fuck!

KEITH: This is sounding like Mass Effect 2, you guys... [Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: And when the mission ends, mark three experience.

ALI: Oh! OK.

JACK: You know, if we get there and we're not dead.

AUSTIN: If you succeed, you'll get twenty credits each.

ALI: Damn!

JACK: That's a lot of credits... that's a lot of credits!

ALI: Oh boy... That's all the money!

ART (overlapping): That's enough to retire if we had enough advances.

AUSTIN: It would be.

JACK: It's about a week of Constellation Coffee.

KEITH: It's not quite enough to buy an island planet.

AUSTIN: It's not.

ART: He didn't say **buy** the island planet, just live on it.

JACK (overlapping): No, he didn't say we'd buy the island planet.

AUSTIN: He did, he said... yeah... he just wants to...

KEITH: You can live on any planet with no money if you're resourceful enough [Ali laughs].

AUSTIN: Oh my god...

JACK: Alright, let's move on then...

ART (overlapping): Well we still have to roll, and that could end up anything...

KEITH: By the way, I assume an island planet is a planet encompassed entirely by water?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's just water. He's basically, like... "you can just go fuckin' drown..." No, he's not... that's not what he said... [Ali laughs]

So... the planet, September, is appropriately named, because it's just, kind of... it has an autumnal look from above? Like... as you're coming in, it looks like the whole planet - not the **whole** planet - but it looks like the landmasses on the planet are in, like... full bloom of autumn? That it's, like... the oranges and yellows and stuff like that. It has ice caps, and it has water, it has, like... big oceans and stuff. And as you kind of come into atmosphere, it's not like it's super populated, it's just, like... some small towns and a couple of cities, and then there's the city where the September Institute is at itself, and that is, like... all of those buildings are this really beautiful, like... pocked sandstone that is just gorgeous. And you realise that it's actually... they're buildings that the original Apostolosians built here.

[01:29:55]

We talked before about how Oricon tended to, kind of... pave everything over and then rebuild new stuff on top? But here it's very clearly taken the more Diasporan approach of utilising the architecture that's already there. So it's a mix of, like... the Diasporan swooshes and curves and color, with the kind of traditional architecture of September - sorry; of Apostolos. So it's these sandstone buildings that have kind of a mix of... of... kind of classical design and neo-classical design? I imagine this as looking a lot like... The September Institute itself looks like old, established universities? You know what I mean?

JACK (in agreement): Ummmh.

AUSTIN: But everything is in this nice tan color. And you also realize, as you come down, that the reason it has, like... the oranges, and browns, and reds, is because, like... there are just these big weird sandstones quarries across different parts of the planet, that are not being actively mined anymore? But they're all this different color, from different depths coming up into the sky.

And Mako, as you land, you realize that... I mean, I don't know: I'm curious as to what is going on in your head. It's the first time you've been back here in a long time, right?

KEITH: Yeah... I almost feel like Mako probably hasn't ever even had a good look at the planet?

AUSTIN: Yeah...

KEITH: As a thing?

AUSTIN: Yeah; I like that a lot. So when Mako escaped, it was just, like... get into a tin can and get the fuck out of here! Not looking back...

KEITH: Yeah, yeah... no windows, no doors, like... stowaway-style escape from the planet that he grew up on.

AUSTIN: Right. The thing you notice as soon as you step outside, is that it's colder than it should be.

[Music - *The Long Way Around* - begins to play]

AUSTIN: It doesn't get cold on September; it's like it's Fall all the time. Except for at the polar ice caps, which... god, there's something weird about those...

I think that's where we call it here, with the ship landing outside the city, maybe within a little wooded grove, near the coordinates that Ibex gave you, where there was a secure location.

It, like... takes you down? That's what it does: it takes you down - there's like, a landing pad - it takes you down into a basement, and it covers up the roof, or what used to be the ground. And down below, you walk into an open base, and there's a hangar there. There are no Riggers in the hangar, but AuDy: you immediately recognise the design of it [Jack chuckles]. And you find a little control room, and it's running an old... outdated model of the Liberty and Discovery system.

JACK: Oh no...

[Music plays out]

JACK: Great. I love space. Space is just... Everything's going fine. This isn't just a horrifying... uh god... [Jack sighs]

AUSTIN: Cool! Cool, cool, cool... Where can people find you guys?

JACK: My name's Jack de Quidt, and you can find me on Twitter @notquitereal.

ART: I'm Art Tebbel, you can find...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Ali? Oh... Art...

ART: Oh... sorry [Ali laughs]. I didn't know you were doing introductions, Jack didn't get introduced, I was just going...

AUSTIN: I was waiting for anyone else to talk, and no one was, so...

ART: Alright, well I'm Art, you can find me grumbling in my room about the events of today's episode [Jack and Ali laugh]. Also on Twitter @atebbel, where I will probably **also** be complaining about the events of today's episode.

AUSTIN: And just the events of today in general.

ART: Yeah, today's been a weird day... it's Super Tuesday.

AUSTIN (overlapping): It's Super Tuesday.

ART: Not when you're listening to this, but...

[Ali sighs]

KEITH: Super Tuesday! That must be better than Tuesday?

AUSTIN (bluntly): No.

KEITH: Super Tuesday; sequel to Tuesday.

ART: Mako makes a bunch of fart noises. That's... yeah.

KEITH: Yeah, it's been a really bad day.

JACK: It's the **worst** Tuesday.

ALI: I am Alicia Acampora, you can find me @ali\_west. I am going to use my plug-time to shout out the [COUNTER/Weight Wikia](#), which people are putting in work on. Thank you everyone.

AUSTIN: Yeah, people are great!

JACK (overlapping): It's a great wiki.

AUSTIN: The art on the front from... Hadrian.

ALI (overlapping): @hadrian.

AUSTIN: I don't know what Hadrian's real name is, which makes me a bad... Corey?

ALI (overlapping): It's Corey.

ART (overlapping): I thought it was Hadrian?

AUSTIN: Something with an S... It's Corey and then something with an S. Which, again, makes me a bad person for not remembering that. Great! The work there is really good. Also shout-out to Cody... Cody? Something else with a C... who did incredible Cass artwork over the weekend.

ART: Oh yeah, that was amazing.

ALI: Yeah!

KEITH: Oh, did I miss that? I don't think I saw that...

AUSTIN: Right, I want a live reaction...

JACK: Get ready, Keith.

AUSTIN: Get ready... holy hell! Does anyone have a link to it?

ALI: I'm getting it. It's, uh... Cody AJ Simpson on Twitter.

AUSTIN: Cody had previously also done some really good Ibex art. [twitter.com/codyajsimpson](https://twitter.com/codyajsimpson).

KEITH: That is so good!

AUSTIN: Right? Look **closer** at it, cos, like... It **goes**. Like... There is a coin on the thing that's connecting the cape? And each coin is one of the different Eidolons from Apostolosian culture?

KEITH: Yeah... yeah! Uh...

AUSTIN: The same thing with the belts? Like it's all good... it's all so good!

ALI: It's so good...

AUSTIN: It has retroactively made me want...

KEITH (overlapping): It's super good. I did see the Ibex one.

AUSTIN: OK. It's made me want to retroactively say that, yes, all Apostolosians have cool, like... scales on their face? Cos this just looks too good. It's so good... Anyway. Uh... Jack, where can people find you?

JACK: I've done me. I went.

ALI (overlapping): Jack went. It's Keith's turn.

AUSTIN: Keith?

KEITH: Hi. My name is Keith Carberry, you can find me on Twitter @keithjcarberry. You can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton. You could also check out contentburger.biz for some hot sclusies.

AUSTIN: The hottest sclusies... Some Shenmue sclusies.

KEITH: As hot as they get. Shenmue's so good... I played Shenmue for the first time in two months yesterday. Or... not yesterday, the other day.

AUSTIN: It's very good. I'm Austin Walker, @austin\_walker on Twitter, giantbomb.com, other stuff... friendsatthetable.net, that's where you can listen to this podcast. And you can go to iTunes and rate us, and give us thumbs-up, that would be really great. Give us stars. Give us all your stars, because that helps people to find out about us. And tell people to give us a listen.

It really does feel like there's been a batch of amazing artists on Twitter over the past couple of weeks, Carey Pietsch also.

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Who are all just putting in such good work; it's amazing. And it's one of those things, where I feel, like... I don't deserve this! [Ali laughs] We play a goofy game! But I guess it's doing work, so that's good.

ALI: Thank you everyone!

AUSTIN: Thank you everyone, and tune in next week for more fun times...

Alright; let's time-dot-is.

[end]