

COUNTER/Weight 19: The Road You Take And Who You Take It With

transcribed by Riley @jaceaddax

AUSTIN [narrating]: The camera turns on with a hum. A close up on an eye, blinking with purpose, as punctuation to a muted lecture. The shot pulls back slowly to reveal the imperious visage of Ibex, the candidate of Righteousness, as he makes his presence known to the crew of the *Kingdom Come*. The shot pulls back further, and we see them too, in a cutaway of the ship. A dioramic view that reduces it in size, a reduction helped by the sheer force and presence of Ibex, which does not shrink as the camera zooms out, but grows. We see Mako Trig and Aria Joie laid up in the medical bay, AuDy, the symbol of the Iron Choir resting on their chest, at the ship's helm, and the lost Apostolosian, Cassander Timaeus Berenice, in the glow of the comms screen. And then, a shot of Cassander's face, just their face, determined. A wave of pale green static tides across this view, and the camera retracts further, now, revealing a second screen, watched by Orth Godlove, leaning forward in his chair, his suit too tight, his eyes straining. It has been a long time since he's seen Ibex, and he knows what he has to do.

It happens quickly. Moments after the candidate vanishes from the screen, Orth's face appears and makes it known with haste there's no time to argue, that the Chime needs to know who's gunning for them, and that they should meet him in Mesa, the dome that houses the majority of Counterweight's OriCon population. The flight is long, and by the time you arrive you are all awake and aware and concerned. Mesa is overcrowded and the BluSky Dome here does nothing to improve the cramped feeling this place has, nor do the final preparations for the upcoming ten year anniversary of the Golden War armistice. You're guided through side roads and alleyways, and eventually you find a door down a flight of stairs and a building at the end of an alley. Then you move through a set of door-lined hallways, each turn adjoined by a cough or a wheeze or a groan from behind one of the doors. And then you open a door, and there's Orth, seated among a set of five medical beds, four of which are empty, and in the fifth, Jace Rethal, pale and bearded and asleep, and with Orth's hand on his forehead. He explains the situation quickly.

"Righteousness and Ibex are threats, [MUSIC STARTS: The Long Way Around] and you must learn what it will be to face them when they arrive. The last time anyone did such a thing was a decade ago, and now you will find out how that happened." He seats you in the beds, attaches a wire here, a clamp there. And soon, your body isn't. You're someone else, someone then. You're Jace, or Addax, you're Orth himself. You're Tea Kenridge, Queen Captain of the Queen's Gambit. And you'll find out what happened.

[MUSIC PLAYS OUT - 3:27]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual-play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. We are as always presented by streamfriends.tv and runbutton.net. Welcome to our holiday special. It's happy holidays.

ALI: Yay!

ART: Yay!

AUSTIN: Everyone's happy.

SYLVIA: Hurray.

AUSTIN: Uh. The holiday in this case is the ten year anniversary of the Golden War armistice, right? That's what we're celebrating.

JACK: It's a war holiday.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's right, it's a w-

SYLVIA: Yeah, everyone's favorite holiday.

AUSTIN: Everyone's fa-

SYLVIA: The most cheerful holiday.

AUSTIN: Stand beneath the mistletoe.

ART: What does that mean? It's Veteran's Day, right?

AUSTIN: Yes! Basically, basically. Uh. Those are the voices of Jack de Quidt,

JACK: Hey there!

AUSTIN: Sylvia¹ Clare,

SYLVIA: Hi.

AUSTIN: Art Tebbel,

ART: Hey.

AUSTIN: Ali Acampora,

ALI: Hi!

AUSTIN: Uh, Andrew Lee Swan.

DRE: Hey.

AUSTIN: Who else talked just there? Keith, you didn't talk.

KEITH: [with a very sick voice] I didn't talk, I maintained silence.

AUSTIN: Oh, boy. Oh, Keith.

ART: Oh my god.

[All laughing in pity]

ALI: Oh my god!

SYLVIA: There's a reason why.

KEITH: Yeah, no, I'm a little bit... I have allergies.

JACK: Podcasting.

KEITH: Hi, I have allergies, and I have a Christmas tree in my house, and I'm allergic to it, and everything's okay.

[Multiple sighs]

KEITH: [kinda coughs] And I'm good.

AUSTIN: The good news is Keith...

ALI: Aw!

ART: Why do you even have a Christmas tree?

SYLVIA: Get a plastic tree.

KEITH: Eh... no... I like the regular ones...

[Everyone laughs]

DRE: Yeah, I feel that. You gotta have principles.

ART: Do you? *Do you?*

¹ The name in the audio is no longer in use.

KEITH: I do... no, it's good. Everything's good, and I'm safe.

ALI: So anyways,

KEITH: Hi, I'm Keith.

AUSTIN: Hi, Keith. So, the thing that we're doing today... uh, people who have been listening for a long time know that at the holidays we like to do something a little- a little different. Um, we like to mix it up a little bit. Uh, by bringing in a different sort of game to drop our characters into. Today, we are playing a game called Kingdom, um, which is a- it's another game by Ben Robbins, who made Microscope. Uh, and, we are, kind of, maybe not treating it with the nicest touch, I'll admit. Um. [laughs] I'm kind of hacking it so that it can fit six players, I'm also hacking it so there's a role for a GM, even though technically it shouldn't have one.

Kingdom, like Microscope, is a game about telling stories about the history of a thing or a place. I will quote from the book itself: "Kingdoms are all around us... Groups are stronger than individuals. In a Kingdom, we can work together to do great things. But we may not agree what path our Kingdom should take or what it should stand for. Can your vision of the Kingdom work with mine? Can everybody get what they want? Because if you're part of a Kingdom, it makes demands on you too. You're pressured to do what it thinks is right. The question becomes: do you change the Kingdom or does the Kingdom change you?" uhh.

So, traditionally, we're supposed to like decide what that Kingdom is together, we're supposed to decide who our characters all are, um, and again, I'm supposed to be playing as one of those characters; this is a GM-less game. But because we have more than the actual maximum amount of characters in this game, uh, which is to say that the max is five and we have six plus me. I had to make some changes to try to make this a thing that would actually be smooth and clear. Um, so. I think let's jump to what the characters are, and we can talk about who your characters are and who's playing as who. Um, everyone if you go into your- the handouts tab? Do you see where it says Kingdom characters?

EVERYONE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay. You can open those and see that there are six characters there. Uh, Addax; Jace Rethal; Tea Kenridge, uh who is, now you would know her as the leader of the Weightless, at the time she was the leader of the Queen's Gambit; Orth Godlove; uh, Natalya Greaves; and then someone who needs a name- Art?

ART: Uhh.

AUSTIN: Did you ever name what this Apostolosian character is going to be called?

ART: No, it takes me like hours to come up with names for my characters, I'm literally the worst at it.

AUSTIN: Jesus christ. Well, you don't have to play this character, because what's happening here is that you are basically playing your characters kind of like hooked into the past, hooked into this memory that Jace is eternally reliving in this like, simulation, in this like memory, like, matrix that he's in. Um. So, in some senses, you're not choosing characters as your characters, but we as the kind of directors of this game can decide who we think the system would hook you into. Uh, like for instance, I think Aria Joie is playing Jace Rethal.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think that that just makes sense to me. Like, that's-- that's been the dominant comparison, Addax even made that comparison himself. Um, but everybody else, that's up in

the air. Also, you'll notice- listeners will notice that everyone is here. Uh, and that, you know, Sylvia and Andrew don't have characters in the ground game of COUNTER/Weight, uh, but they are still being-- they are still going to be playing as something playing as one of these characters. In the case of Sylvia, you'll be playing as the loose consciousness of Jillian Red, who AuDy threw from the *Kingdom Come* about five or six episodes ago. Uh, we will see more Jillian Red in the future, but what you need to know for now is that is whose brain you are inhabiting, who then is in turn going to be inhabiting one of these characters. Um, Dre I'm not sure.

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: There's two things that I can think of, one is Natalya Greaves herself, who is in the current part of the game, is the person who is at Snowtrak like trying to fight against Rigour. But you could also just be Rigour, I kind of like Rigour jacking into this memory also. Um. There's something really interesting about that that we might get into some point in the future. It's up to you though.

DRE: Uh, I think I like the idea of Rigour.

AUSTIN: Yeah, this like weird like post-intelligence locking into this weird-- like, sneaking in through this, through some back door, in the same way that Jillian Red is. But everybody else, like who do you think on this list is who you would- is who this weird system would set you as? Let's start with AuDy, as the person who is not a human here.

JACK: Um, I'm kind of torn.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Because, uh, it seems like the system's obvious choice would be Orth Godlove, um, partly because they used to employ AuDy, or I guess still do? I'm not sure whether or not our employment contract with Orth is terminated.

AUSTIN: Mhmm.

JACK: And also they were the one that sold uh AuDy the ship the *Kingdom Come*, which I think is about to prove very interesting and important, and I don't know whether or not I should let you- I should let you govern it.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, that sounds good. Um. I can get with that. Does anybody object- does anyone have Orth, like, in their crosshairs?

JACK: Oh, but—

KEITH: Nope.

JACK: My—

AUSTIN: Jack, were you going to say something else?

JACK: My concern with that is... I'm trying to balance, uh, being a player and being a character, and I wonder [sighs] I don't know whether or not I would fall into the habit of playing another pilot. Um.

AUSTIN: I think you'll be fine, because this game just isn't that sort of game.

JACK: Okay!

AUSTIN: This is a game about broader choices, less about execution on those choices through dice rolls. Um, and we'll get into what this game is and how it works in a bit. But, but. So okay, lemme, you know what? I'm gonna go back and read, uh, who the currently chosen characters are and what our kind of character sheet for each of them says. There's no hidden information in

this game, this is a game where everything is out on the table the whole time. Uh, characters can have hidden information from each other, you know, what Jace knows is not necessarily what Orth knows, but we as the co-directors know it all and play it up in a way that is interesting.

So Jace, the description is “reluctant hero, ace pilot, and last slash best hope for OriCon.” He pilots the Panther Mark II, which is a rigger, a custom made rigger. Jace-- every character in this game has a Role, those Roles are Power, Perspective, and Touchstone. Characters who are the Power can make decisions, characters who are Perspectives can make predictions about what the decisions might bring, and Touchstones represent what the people in the Kingdom feel and think, and can reflect that to the other characters. Every character also has either a wish or a fear. Jace fears that the Kingdom will do more harm than good to the people of the Golden Sector-- the Golden Branch Sector. Uh, every character also has an issue. Jace’s is that he is certain that it will be his fault that his friends and loved ones will be killed, so keep that in mind, Ali.

ALI: Mhmm.

AUSTIN: And Jace has two bonds, one with Addax, and one with Tea- Tea Kenridge. The one with Addax is that “Addax, your formal rival, is cool and composed, you want to impress him.” And the one with Tea is “Tea is your former lover, she knows you better than anyone else.” Uh, Orth is Power, again, Jace was Perspective. Orth is Power. Orth is the captain of the *Kingdom Come*, and an up and coming OriCon commander. Uh, Orth fears that the Kingdom, which is to say this fleet of ships, which we’ll get into in a bit, will be used as a pawn in larger conflicts. His issue is that he knows that this assignment is a well-calculated suicide mission, meant to get rid of you, your troublesome crew, an Apostolosian heir, and a powerful divine. He has bonds with Tea and with Natalya. “Tea used to be your commanding officer before you rapidly ascended the ranks,” and “Natalya doubts your capacity, or your capability, to handle the ship that she designed.”

JACK: Yeah, I’ll play Orth!

AUSTIN: Okay. That sounds up your alley. Uh, who’s next? Does anyone else have like an idea that’s jumping out at them?

ART: I mean, I have like a weird, almost like a- the germ of the idea is because like what I last remember Cass being super into is not- is not caring for Addax,

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: But that wasn’t- we didn’t, he didn’t meet him, and so it’s a little weaker.

AUSTIN: It’s cool though, I kind of like- the obvious hit is that he plays- or that they play- Sokrates. Um,

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: Because like, oh Sokr- sorry, we named this Apostolosian character, it’s Sokrates Nikon.. uhh how do I pronounce this last one? Artemisioso? No, that’s wrong. Arte- Hm. Artemisios?

ART: Artemisios? Is it an S-H?

KEITH: Sorry, is this the unnamed Apostolosian traitor?

AUSTIN: Yeah, sorry, if everybody closes and reopens it, there should be a name there now.

KEITH: Oh, there it is, it just changed for me.

AUSTIN: The Apostolosian traitor is now named Sokrates. Sokrates Nikon, which is a good name. So yeah, I kind of--

KEITH: [laughs] He's a camera philosopher.

AUSTIN: Right...

[Everyone laughing]

AUSTIN: That's the obvious one, he loves-- listen, those exist, I can name them, I'm the worst. Shout outs to Susan Sontag and Barthes. Uh, alright.

[Everyone laughing, now at Austin]

JACK: I'm ending the call.

AUSTIN: Okay, bye. It's been nice everyone.

KEITH: Who was the second one?

AUSTIN: Uh, Barthes.

KEITH: Oh, Barthes. I thought you said Bart and I was like, who's Bart?

AUSTIN: [sarcastically] Oh, yeah, Bart. He wrote a book called, um, I think it's just called Camera Obscura that's really good.

JACK: It's called Gosh, Cameras!

ART: The negative of me playing Addax is that we've just taken our two riggers and our pilot and put them in the riggers and the pilot.

AUSTIN: That's not a bad thing, necessarily.

ART: Alright, I mean if this were-- if this were an anime, this is how it would go.

AUSTIN: Yes. Thank you, Art. That is a rule to live by.

ART: Is that-- is that a feature or a problem?

AUSTIN: Yes.

[Dre laughing]

AUSTIN: Addax--

KEITH: It's a featured problem.

AUSTIN: Yes. Addax, like Orth, is a Power-- note all of these Roles can change-- can and will change during play, or they should at least. Addax is Power. He is young, calm, and the loyal candidate of Peace. Addax believes fully in the Diaspora's perfection. He wishes that the Kingdom will end Apostolos's terror permanently. His issue is a thing that we've learned from Mako's trials recently, which is that Addax is constantly struggling to hold back Peace's darker side. He has a bond with the Apostolosian, Sokrates, which is that he understands the Apostolosian's true name, um, which is to say, knows the Apostolosian is related to the royal line. And then the second one is that Jace wants to impress you. As you can see, the bonds are shared across characters. Alright, so that's Addax. Remaining characters: Sokrates Nikon Artemisios, Natalya Greaves, and Tea Kenridge. Who thinks they can play a mean girl?

SYLVIA: Hi.

AUSTIN: Hi, Sylvia.

[Dre laughing]

SYLVIA: I could do that.

AUSTIN: You wanna be Tea Kenridge?

ALI: Hi, Sylvia.

SYLVIA: Yeah, sure.

AUSTIN: Uh, she isn't su- she's super mean in the future,

SYLVIA: I was gonna play her less mean than that, but still kinda mean.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Tea Kenridge is a Touchstone, again, meaning that her actions reflect those of the populace of the Kingdom. She is the leader of the Queen's Gambit, OriCon's most elite squadron of rigger pilots, she fears that everyday workers in the Kingdom will be ignored by the higher-ups, and she has an issue, which is that she commands the Queen's Gambit, who are sometimes, uh, bellicose individuals. They kind of like get out there and cause havoc now and then, but she has to keep them in line. As we've said before, Jace is Tea's former lover, she knows him better than anyone, and bond two is that Orth was a member of the Queen's Gambit before he leapfrogged you in rank.

JACK: Oh, dear.

SYLVIA: Okay. That'll be fun.

AUSTIN: Yep!

JACK: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Alright, Keith and Dre.

KEITH: I could be this traitor.

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah, I could see that. Uh, Sokrates, he, uh, actually, I'm not sure what... So I figured out what the pronouns are for Apostolos finally, but I haven't internalized them, so I think I'm gonna stick to "they" for this game. But in the future I will try to internalize them at the very least I can be on point with those. Uh, they fled Apostolos with knowledge of a weapon that threatens the entire sector. Sokrates wishes that the Kingdom will become a symbol of unity for the entire sector. Your issue is that you are secretly from the ruling family of Apostolos. I think that Sokrates is the older sibling of Cass, kind of the second child in line. Um, you sense that Natalya is good and noble, and also Addax knows who you are.

And I guess last but not least, a character who has come up in Dre's side of the meta story anyway, is Natalya Greaves, who is the head of Fairchild's large machines division. Natalya designed Jace's Panther Mark II and also the *Kingdom Come*. Uh, Natalya fears that the Kingdom's new tech will hurt the sector in the end. The issue is, Natalya Greaves is secretly an agent from the Rapid Evening and you need to send reports back to them regularly. Sokrates trusts you as one of your bonds, and the other one is that Orth can't possibly utilize the *Kingdom Come* to its fullest potential. I'm gonna take a second to read from-

JACK: As in I am unable to, or I shouldn't?

AUSTIN: I think unable to. Like a sort of like [scoffs] you're just a nobody.

JACK: Right. I'm just using it as essentially a car that goes in the sky.

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly [People laugh] and it could be so much more. I'm gonna read from the section that we're supposed to read from in this book now, and it's gonna be a little bit of a longer read. But, it's important, so. Crossroads. "Kingdom in a nutshell: Crossroads. We've got our Kingdom and we've got our characters."

Actually, let me explain what the Kingdom is in this case, actually. That seems important, to make it clear. Your Kingdom is an elite space unit comprising the allied-- some allied forces from OriCon, the Diaspora, and even some Apostolosian rebels. It is the Oricon frigate known

as the *Kingdom Come*, which you in the future, of course, know is not an OriCon frigate so much as like a little ragtag, like, mess of a ship [laughs] kind of; Peace, the divine; there's a kind of carrier called the *Seventh Sun*, S-U-N, which is where Natalya and the rest of Fairlight, where have like hangars where they maintain the OriCon riggers and other stuff; and an Apostolosian vessel which I don't know the name of 'cuz we didn't figure that out, Art? Did you figure out who this character's mentor was?

ART: No. The things I can up with as like example mentors are like, is it the person who taught you?

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Is it your parent? Is it- And it would be weird for this to be a parent, right? Because this is an act of treachery.

AUSTIN: But maybe this is one of those- yeah.

ART: [simultaneously] But that's like probably the best dramatic one, but we never named the old--

SYLVIA: It's Plato.

ART: We never named the old or current emperor... king?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I don't know.

ART: Fish king?

AUSTIN: Fish king. That's their name.

ART: The fish king of Apostolos.

JACK: This is — we're back to Duckberg again.

SYLVIA: Just look up, like, a fish stick, like, selling company.

AUSTIN: Right. Um. But yeah, I actually kind of like this as a- I could imagine this being a thing of treachery where it's like, my parent raised me to be this person and they're not this person. Right, like, the current ruler of Apostolos is not living up to their own, you know, their own morals.

Um, so that's the Kingdom. The mission that you have is-- is everyone on their Roll20 page? If you're looking at Roll20 right now, you'll see that I've redone this map to ten years ago? A lot of the planets have different names, they have names that they had when they were under Apostolosian control. Um, you can see that two of the planets, Sigilia and Apole — which in the future becomes Minerva — have been circled in red. The mission that this fleet is given-- that your Kingdom is given-- is that the Apostolosian traitor brought news that Apostolos is building a superweapon and it's doing so in this distributed fashion where half of it's being made in Apole and half of it's being made in Sigilia. Your Kingdom needs to get to one of those two places and intercept that half of the weapon. At least that's what you're told to begin with. Uh, I'm gonna move this, like, this ship that represents y'all as you move through this system, and I have some other little tiny rules about that, that we'll get to in a second, but that is like the basic mission that you have here.

As we move through our game of Kingdom, we'll be moving across this map and that will be what kind of cues your new Crossroads. Crossroads are the kind of heart of Kingdom.

"We've got our Kingdom, and we've got our characters. Now we're going to play to see how our characters shape the Kingdom and how the Kingdom shapes them. As players, we're going to confront our Kingdom and our characters with Crossroads: critical decisions the Kingdom must

make, decisions that may forever change the Kingdom. Does the Kingdom invade its neighbor? Does it outlaw the new religion? Crossroads are the major arcs of our game. They are the chapters of the story we are making. It's our job to make Crossroads that push the Kingdom and their characters into territory that interests us."

Uh, so, by default, we're supposed to come up with Crossroads as we play, but again, since we're going way over in terms of how many players are supposed to be here, I've pre-gen'ed Crossroads based on the different planets in this sector. Every Crossroad will represent where you are in space, and when you resolve a Crossroad, you'll be able to move up to two spaces away from the one— from the space you're currently at, that's like the way we're gonna handle this. Which, again, I apologize to Ben Robbins for completely ruining your game, uh, but we have special needs cuz we're a weird podcast. Um, the important thing though is if you think a Crossroad that I suggest is not good, I'm totally open to suggestions, if you think it's like eh, if this doesn't hit any of our characters, our characters don't have any stakes here, I'm one hundred percent open for someone to make a counter-suggestion. That's the sort of game it is. Um, okay. So, I'm actually gonna move you over to a different page, really quick. Bop. Okay. ALI: Oh, look at this!

AUSTIN: So. Scenes and cards. "Before we see the final decision the Kingdom makes about the Crossroad, we'll take turns creating scenes and roleplaying them together. We'll explore the Crossroad and see what our characters think and do about it. We might find out the situation is a lot more complicated than we thought. Each of the cards on the table is a countdown." So you see that there is kind of-- on the screen, for the people who are not seeing the screen, is, uh, it's actually a bunch of cards, but the ones to look at here are "Time Passes", "Crisis", and then the one that, there's a bunch of these next ones cuz I just wanted to pre-gen them and have them ready, but "Will the Kingdom ____? Yes or no". So, there's a Crossroads card, a Time Passes card, and a Crisis card.

"Each of the three cards on the table is a countdown. On your turn, you get to pick which to check and move closer to completion. When all of the boxes on a card are checked, we'll pause and play to see what happens. When all the boxes on the Crossroads are full, we'll play to see what choices the Kingdom makes and what the consequences are. When all the boxes on the Crisis card are full, we'll see whether the Kingdom survives the Crisis or is destroyed. Characters may even flee the Kingdom. When all the boxes on the Times Passes card are full, there is a break in the action where our characters can rest and reflect. Time will pass. When we finish a card, we start a new one." And I'm gonna go over the Roles and then a couple of other rules, and then we're gonna start up.

"Roles: each Role gives you a different way to influence the Kingdom and the Crossroad. Perspective: you can predict the consequences of picking different sides of the Crossroad. It's your job to show us what's really at stake." Uh, so during your scene, you can predict consequences of the Crossroad by picking either-- you pick either yes or no, so there will be a question. Again, like let's use one of their examples. One of their examples was "will the Kingdom outlaw a religion?" Right, if you're a Perspective, during your scene you can say "I'm going to make a prediction. If the Kingdom outlaws this religion, it's going to create—in response, some of the citizens are going to become violent." Right, um, and then if the decision goes through, if the Kingdom did decide to outlaw that religion, your result would come true.

Your job as a Perspective character is to complicate the Crossroad by predicting problems that we didn't expect, pressure other characters by predicting things they would want to stop.

Touchstone characters "decide how the people of the Kingdom feel and what they want. You can instantly define the Kingdom and show us how the people will react to what's happening." So when you're in a scene, you decide what the people feel. It's not just that you get to say "Oh, my character says that the people told them this," it's literally like, if your character is upset, that reflects that the people generally are upset. Unless you say otherwise. You can totally say "My character is quiet but they know that the people are upset." You know. And then finally, you as the Touchstone can opt to, instead of just checking one card, you can always check Crisis, if you think that the Kingdom is headed towards a Crisis.

Third is Power. "After seeing those consequences and hearing what the people want, you get to decide what the Kingdom actually does." So when you're in a scene, you get to make orders, that's your special thing. And you could also just like use your authority. So, if you're like the king of a Kingdom,

[Keith sneezes]

AUSTIN: Bless you, Keith.

KEITH: Thank you.

AUSTIN: If you're the Keith of a Kingdom,

[Everyone laughs]

KEITH: And I am.

AUSTIN: And you are. If you're the king of a Kingdom, you could totally just be like "I arrest this other character". You can't like remove them from the game, so if like you arrested a Perspective character, that Perspective character could still make predictions about the future of the Kingdom, and we'd still get scenes with that character but maybe they'd be in prison. The other thing you can do is make orders, where you can say "Okay, well, how about this. If we end up outlawing this religion, I'm going to give an order that says that, uh, that the military will get extra funding." So that will only come into effect- it's like a prediction of your own but relying on your authority, basically. So you can kind of threaten characters or reward them to come around to your side.

And then, when the Crossroad is resolved, when we finish hitting all those Crossroad boxes, you're the one who makes the decision about what to do. You'll note that we have multiples of each of these things, and there are subrules for dealing with that. So like, if two Powers don't agree, we're at a stalemate, and we'll figure out what happens there. If two Perspectives don't agree, then one person's predictions is going to be wrong and we'll work out why that is, and if two Touchstones don't agree then that means there is division among the ranks. Which in this se-

ART: Point of order, there is only one Touchstone.

AUSTIN: Nah, there should be two Touchstones. Someone might not have a thing next to them. Or I wrote Perspective twice by mistake-- I did. Uh, sorry. That's on me. I think... I think Sokrates is probably Touchstone.

JACK: Because they have an understanding of Apostolos, or?

AUSTIN: Because they have an understanding of people. They are like, a deeply empathetic

person. Um, and are also—like that's their whole thing, right, is like, Sokrates fled Apostolos because of their deep love of people, and wanted to stop the worst sort of war crimes.

Alright, uh, I think there's a little bit more for me to read and then we'll be good to go. So, uh. "That doesn't seem fair, does it? Only Power gets to decide what the Kingdom does? No, it isn't fair, but it might be balanced. Power makes the choice, but Perspective and Touchstone determine the consequences.

"Challenge and Overthrow: eventually, someone's going to do something to the Kingdom that you don't like. You can do something about it. You can change your Role if you want a different voice in the Kingdom, or your old Role doesn't seem like a good fit anymore." So if the king's advisor decides that the king is doing a bad job, they can say that they want to Overthrow the king, and then they become Power instead of Perspective, let's say.

You can also just "Challenge another character to stop something that they do or establish. If a Power arrests someone, bust them out of jail. If a Touchstone shows that people are angry, give a speech to calm the mob." And the way that works is very simple, you just say like "okay, you say that the mob is angry, but I wanna Challenge that, I want a scene where I Challenge that. Would it be okay if I gave a speech to calm them down?" And the person who established a thing gets to say "Yeah!" or like "Yeah, but only if not only do you give a speech, you also like provide them food and money." Um, and like, "Okay. Yeah, okay. My character would do that" or you could say like "No, they wouldn't" and so it stays the same. Um, and if challenging isn't enough, you can totally Overthrow people, like I said.

You could also just straight up change your Role. Right, so the king could decide that they've become too-- they're like sick of wearing the crown, right, they're sick of having the power, and they can remain the king, but they can become a Perspective character, the sort of king who retreats to their chambers to study and reflect on what the future holds, right. "These options are listed at the bottom of your Role card. But be warned: nothing can take a player out of the game. A character you usurp just picks a different Role and keeps influencing the Kingdom in a different way. Take away someone's Power and they might return as a Perspective and predict a dire future."

Everybody, how about this. We're gonna figure out turn order real quick. Everybody roll me like a d20.

KEITH: Ooh, a d20!

ALI: Ooh, this is my first time rolling a d20.

ART: Ah, youth.

[Ali and Austin laugh]

AUSTIN: I'm gonna set up this turn order sheet. Not sheet, just at the bottom of this page, it says--

ALI: I almost just rolled two d20, which...

KEITH: We need a tie-breaker between Dre and Ali.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's true.

ALI: Oh boy.

ART: Roll a D a million!

AUSTIN: Don't do that, it'll break the system.

JACK: Do it!

[Dre laughing]

AUSTIN: Please don't, please don't. Please don't roll a D one million! Keith! Keith!

[Ali laughing]

ALI: He's gonna...

KEITH: Hold on, I just wanna roll—look, it's just a thousand.

AUSTIN: Okay, that one's alright, [impressed] that was a good roll. 499.

KEITH: Yeah, it was pretty good, pretty high.

AUSTIN: I guess it's not, actually you did a bad roll.

JACK: [simultaneously] That was a terrible roll, that was a bad roll.

AUSTIN: Eh, five out of ten. [pause] Do okay. Um.

ALI: Dre, do you wanna do this tiebreaker?

DRE: Oh boy.

ART: "Break the system" it's a computer, it's a- it's a number generating machine.

KEITH: [in the middle of Art]: That was a bad roll.

JACK: Oh wow. Keith did th--

AUSTIN: That was a terrible roll.

ALI: Oh.

JACK: Keith rolled appallingly.

DRE: Welp.

KEITH: Yeah.

ALI: Dre wins.

KEITH: My roll was so bad,

JACK: Keith rolled a million,

KEITH: I rolled an eight and a half thousand out of ten million.

[Everyone laughing, Austin starts coughing]

AUSTIN: That's really bad!

JACK: Austin, can we just play the game with D-millions?

AUSTIN: Yes.

[Ali laughs]

KEITH: Oh, you know what, I don't think it goes higher than ten thousand.

AUSTIN: 'Cuz you just rolled another eight thousand on like, the highest number I've ever seen.

JACK: Or you're appallingly unlucky.

ALI: [laughing] Yeah, it doesn't go higher.

AUSTIN: Okay. Plus 62, Ali, huh?

KEITH: [shocked] 62?!

[Everyone laughing]

AUSTIN: I feel like that was cheating, I feel like that was-

KEITH: That's less than a percent!

ALI: I didn't type that out, that was just there!

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Yeah.

KEITH: That's a fraction of a percent.

ALI: [same time as Keith] Oh, I rolled two D ten... bajillion

JACK: Ooh, what happens if we do this.

AUSTIN: This is good, this is all good radio.

[Dre laughing]

AUSTIN: Um. Oh, wait, Orth. Wait, what? Okay, Keith. Who's Keith playing?

JACK: Oh, Jesus Christ.

ART: Hold on, I'll just paint a word picture for people.

DRE: Oh, no...

ALI: Jesus Christ.

AUSTIN: Thanks.

ART: There's a white background, black lines spring out from the-- from the computer void.

Numbers everywhere, as Jack rolls [pause] ten thousand d20s.

[Everyone laughing]

AUSTIN: You got a bunch of 20s in here.

ART: Sevens and twos and twelves and fourteens, everywhere.

AUSTIN: Oh, fuck *off*, Keith!

[Everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Keith rolled--

SYLVIA: I'm back, what did Keith do?

AUSTIN: [dejected] Look at the screen.

DRE: It's bad. I can't get to the bottom of the chat log. [pause, everyone laughs] There we go.

JACK: Keith rolled five d one million.

KEITH: I rolled two very big numbers that equalled out to being rolling, uh, I think- I think like one thousand d ten thousands?

JACK: Oh my god, okay, I'm gonna--

AUSTIN: No, you rolled—you rolled a hundred thousand d ten millions.

KEITH: Yeah, but it doesn't go that high on either end of it, I think.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see, I see, I see.

KEITH: That's very clearly not a hundred thousand numbers.

JACK: I'm gonna reroll a d20, I think.

AUSTIN: No we're all good, everyone, it's done. You're good.

JACK: Oh did you write it down? Okay good.

AUSTIN: Yes, your order is all here. I got it before the nonsense started.

SYLVIA: Jesus.

AUSTIN: So the turn order is: Addax, Sokrates, Orth, Natalya, Jace, Tea. I'm gonna write people's names next to it so I can remember who is playing who,

JACK: Oh I wrote the character's names, by them—

AUSTIN: Hmm?

JACK: I wrote the character's names on the character sheet, I wrote which character...

AUSTIN: Oh, oh yeah. I'm just doing it right on this screen so I don't have to open up any other side things.

JACK: Oh.

[Keith and Sylvia laughing]

KEITH: Before we restart, I just want everyone to know that I just rolled half a d1.

SYLVIA: Fuck off.

KEITH: And I got the highest possible result!

AUSTIN: Nice, good job.

ART: No you didn't, because all you can get on a d1 is one and you just got half of that.

KEITH: No, I rolled point five d1, I rolled half a d1.

ART: Right, but the only result you can get on a d1 is one. If you rolled one d point five, then you'd--

ALI: Stop.

AUSTIN: This is the worst, I cannot believe this is our--

ALI: Stop having the argument.

AUSTIN: This is our holiday special. I will turn this car around.

[Laughter]

KEITH: I will turn this sky-car around!

AUSTIN: I'll do it! [pause]

Alright, so, I'm going to reveal the first, uh, Crossroad. And we can start talking about scenes. Um, the first Crossroad. At the start of the game, we are at — you can see on the map screen, which I'll bump us back over to real quick — we are at space 0409. There is a Fairchild, like, space station out here where the fleet has gathered, and the first question is pretty simple: will the Kingdom take the route towards Sigilia or not? The opposite will be they'll be heading toward Apole. In other words, will you go through Diaspora space or Orion space?

Um, and I'll give you a little bit more of what's happening in both of these-- actually, I'll leave you here for a second. You can see on the right, the planet info is all different than the previous map, it's all updated. So you can peek at some of that stuff. The Diaspora stuff also includes what divines are where. And I also just wanna paint a few more pictures about what the galaxy is like that I figured out during the prep for this? So, one, even though there's this big black empty space in between the Diaspora and Orion, like kind of from 205 over to 405 and then down to 208 and 408, or like that whole black area? Apostolos can strike anywhere in there, because they have ships that can like- they have ships that can fly on starlight. They fly slowly, on starlight, but they can get where they're going. Orion and Diaspora ships can move up to two blocks at a time before needing to refuel, um, and they can't refuel anywhere there isn't a star. And there are only stars where there are planets on this map, basically. Which is not how it really works, probably, but for us it is.

The other thing is the way the Diaspora travel works, is that Diasporan divines, if there are two divines, they can create a sort of like gate between them and a third divine can pass through them. That is kind of how the Diaspora travels deep and far away, it's why like Sage is conquered. You can see on the map that Sage is a yellow planet, deep in Apostolos territory? Uh, but also, now, Sage is kind of out of, uh-- it's out of contact. That is only Patience there, there's not another divine there that could set up a gate to let Sage back through somewhere else.

Um, so that's like the kind of big picture stuff, the kind of like "oh, this is how the world works" thing. There is um, I'm gonna read that the threats to the Kingdom are, and these can help you figure out kind of what, how to do things like make predictions that are interesting and relevant. So there are three threats. There's an internal threat, which is that, um, though the orders came down from above that OriCon and the Diaspora are working together on this

mission, some members of the fleet resent needing to work alongside their historical enemies, and there is a desire to exert dominance over them. The Apostolosian ship is a mix of Apostolosian people and also Diasporan people. That ship is this kind of like this ship of love, where it seems like those are the people who care the most about keeping things together, but even there there are a couple people who are like “man, fuck OriCon. If they don’t want peace we don’t need ‘em.”

Uh, there’s an external threat, which is that the Apostolosian tracking the fleet, and their long history in the sector means that they could have allies anywhere, so between that and the fact that they can kind of attack you through deep space, they can always be a thing you can predict will come into being. And there’s an external threat, which is that though word has not spread of his treachery, the zealous Ibex and his divine Righteousness are using this war as an excuse to spread influence across the sector. And —

KEITH: Sorry, who’s doing that?

AUSTIN: Ibex, and Righteousness. Uh, who is set up-- you can kind of imagine that the Diaspora is cut in two, into north and south. Glimmer, Slighter, and Gemm are all under Ibex’s control, with Coral being kind of this weird middle ground. And then Wreathe, Vox, and Sage are technically where Grace and her side of things are in command. But, like, you know. We’ve seen some Ibex in the past; he is opportunistic, let’s say.

So, the first question for the Kingdom is: will the Kingdom travel the route through the Diaspora? And I will type that out. Art will have the first scene — Sage is way to the north on that map, Ali.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Here, I’ll bring you back over, real quick. It’s-

ALI: Also this map will be on the website.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we’ll put this map up.

KEITH: Sorry, what was the question?

AUSTIN: It is, will the Kingdom take the route through the Diaspora? Which also just means — or, the other way, but it has to be a yes or no question, right? So. And then you’re there, and then we’ll do this, and I will hop ahead to how to make scenes. Actually, there’s a handout that I linked everybody to, which is like, make a scene. So, when you make a scene, you want to show what your character thinks or does about the Crossroad. You read the Crossroad and the role aloud, you describe what’s going to be happening in the scene, you describe who’s there, and you describe where it is. Ideally I would like scenes to be between two or three characters, more than that can get a little hectic. We can have those four or five person scenes now and then, but mostly you want these to be kind of tight little scenes.

Um, and the locations are also on this big page towards the bottom. There are twelve locations in the fleet that I’ve written up, which are: the bridge, and that can be any of the bridges of any of the ships; the strange halls of Peace, which we got a little bit of in the last episode, where there’s just like weird hallways in there that can show things sometimes, it’s very strange. The communication chambers of any of the ships; the hangar bay on any of the ships; the *Seventh Sun* research lab; the officer’s lounge, which is probably also on the *Seventh Sun*, but—I don’t think the *Kingdom Come* has one of those, and the Apostolosian ship probably has it; the Apostolosian temple room. Uh, you can have a scene on the shuttles going between any

of the ships; the commissary on the *Seventh Sun*; in someone's private quarters; at a kind of Apostolosian observation deck, which is kind of a cool thought for me, it's just like a big window into space, um; and then just like the sort of anime cut-in cockpit scenes, where it's just like two people floating around in their mechs talking to each other or just like, wherever you can imagine that happening, that could be a place where you locate a scene.

So Art is up first. What sort of scene do you see Addax in trying to figure out the question of whether you take this route through Diasporan space?

ART: Yeah, huh. I mean, I do, I strongly feel that Addax does wanna go through Diasporan space.

AUSTIN: Is there anything that he wants to work out with anybody else... there? Or is there someone else's perspective he might like on that? Whether that means literally a Perspective or someone who might know what the rest of the fleet wants?

ART: Yeah, I think — I mean, it's trite, and maybe we should save it, but I do wanna talk to Jace about it.

AUSTIN: Okay, let's start there. That sounds good to me.

ALI: Hey. Hi.

AUSTIN: Where is that happening? And what are you doing, besides talking? Like, having just like a, "this is the action that's happening" is super useful for framing it.

ART: Is it in the hangar bay, and we're like, we're working on our respective vehicles? We're like—

AUSTIN: I think Peace is too big, like Peace wouldn't fit in the hangar bay.

SYLVIA: Working on Peace's foot.

[Laughter]

ART: I just assumed that because everything fits in the hangar of—

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: What doesn't fit in the *Kingdom Come*? I'm pretty sure it's basically...

AUSTIN: So in this case, actually, the *Kingdom Come* is really tiny compared to all of these other ships.

ART: Oh shit.

AUSTIN: The *Kingdom Come* is like a little tiny like baby ship, but it is where Orth commands the fleet from, which is interesting. So. I like the hangar bay thing, I like that notion of just like Addax and, um, Jace hanging out while Jace like runs tests on the Panther.

ART: Sure. And there must be some, I mean, if Peace was damaged, it would--

AUSTIN: Totally.

ART: There would be an ability to fix it, right, like —

AUSTIN: Totally.

ART: — there must be some diagnostic capacity somewhere on one of these ships.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: You know what, maybe they're docked, that's actually kinda cool. Like, just like, the ship-- whatever the-- the *Seventh Sun*, which is kind of the carrier ship here, is literally docked with Peace? Attached to its bottom or something? Uh, and then like it's hooked up through its diagnostic systems and it has weird drones going around it to work on it. So what do you talk about?

ART: It's weird that I keep going to like Top Gun for this, right? I'm like—

AUSTIN: No, that's totally appropriate.

ALI: [laughs] It works a little bit though. That is the setting.

AUSTIN: This is, yes, that totally works.

ALI: That is the setting.

SYLVIA: The role of Addax will be played by Val Kilmer!

AUSTIN: Mhm!

ALI: Oh boy.

ART: That makes it harder for Ali.

[Laughter]

ART: But it's that kind of cocky machismo way of like talking about something like dangerous without like being afraid, it's like.

AUSTIN: Mm, mhm.

ART (as Addax): You know, if we go through the Diaspora, there's a lot of — we could run into some divines that might not understand this peace of ours, if we go through OriCon, there's uh [pause] I don't know. There's bad stuff there too.

[Laughter]

AUSTIN: Yep! Good.

ART: [laughing] There is also military stuff in OriCon.

AUSTIN: Yeah, but there's not like fucking divines, right?

ART: Yeah but if one of those September graduates runs into us, they could ruin our trip real good.

ALI (as Jace): Listen, we have some tough stuff too.

ALI: Uh, god. But yeah I guess Jace's role here is being like, "yeah, that sounds risky, let's do it".

AUSTIN: Is like totally, is Jace interested in...

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So like the thing with Jace is that right now Jace is Perspective, which means Jace does have the power to make a straight prediction here. So for instance, Addax just said, "oh, if we go through into Diaspora space, we could run into a divine, and that wouldn't be great." That's not necessarily true. If Jace says it, it becomes a thing that will become true.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Because, it's Jace like, has the perspective on the world, like understands the world in a way that other people don't. Right now. Not forever, but right now.

ALI: Yeah, I feel like, like emotionally Jace would be like, "yeah I—if you're saying that—" like if Jace's thing is to impress Addax right now, it's to be like "yeah, if you think—oh, you wanna like throw down, and think we're gonna be in trouble, then sure." But I don't know if I wanna make that prediction, and that's not just me playing it safe,

AUSTIN: No, I understand.

ALI: But I think that what would actually happen there is that like some of the OriCon people would be super like not at ease...doing that? But um, yeah, I think Jace is actually—

AUSTIN: Do you wanna make that a prediction? Which is that yes, if we do this, the people of—the OriCon members of the fleet will not like this?

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay, I like that.

ALI: I feel safe doing that.

AUSTIN: Okay, that's—that can be the whole of a scene. We don't need to linger. This doesn't have to be our AIM roleplay sessions we've all had in our life. And we shouldn't, because otherwise we won't get anywhere tonight. But, there is a—

ART: Addax's eyes twinkle as he gazes—

[Ali laughs]

ART: "Wait, sorry, I—"

JACK: God.

ALI: Counterweight by way of Raiden.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly. Okay. Oop, lemme move that down. [pause] So then, after each scene, every player has the chance to do a reaction scene. Which is just a-- and you don't have to do this, but you have this opportunity to do a single sentence of like "while that's happening" or you know "after that happened, my character did this thing". It doesn't have be-- again, it's literally a sentence, it's like, it could be another character was in that room at the same time overhearing them. You know, you don't have to have one. Does anyone have one?

SYLVIA: I mean this is kind of obvious, but Tea is not very happy about going through Diaspora space.

AUSTIN: Okay. And therefore, you are--

SYLVIA: And therefore, she overheard like-- maybe someone within her unit overheard that conversation and told her that Jace was like, kind of not against it, and now she's mad at him.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um. And that reflects, again because Tea is Touchstone, that reflects at least that part of the populace.

SYLVIA: Oh yeah, no, the Queen's Gambit, they're not happy.

AUSTIN: Or not even just that, it's an even more sizeable thing than your five people. It's like, it could be a hundred people or something.

SYLVIA: Yeah, like.

AUSTIN: Also we should set that number right now. I think it's probably like 200 people are in this fleet, the majority of which are on the *Seventh Sun*, and then another big chunk are on the Apostolosian ship.

SYLVIA: So like what's the split of OriCon and Diaspora? 50/50 or?

AUSTIN: No I think it's probably... I think it's 50/50 to-- I think it's 100 OriCon to, um, probably like 50 Apostolosian and 50 Diaspora.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Maybe less than that. Maybe it's like... I don't know, maybe it's more like 130 OriCon, split between the different ships, and then like 50, 60 Diaspora, and then like a handful of Apostolosians, like 20 Apostolosians.

JACK: So we could in theory be pissing off a lot of the fleet, if we decided to go through the Diaspora.

AUSTIN: Right. That is currently one of the things that-- but again, so a thing is, we don't write down what a Touchstone thinks because it's easy to change that. If someone wants to change that, they could totally do that.

JACK: Sure, but Jace has also predicted that if we go-- presumably if we go through the Diaspora...

AUSTIN: You can even Challenge predictions.

JACK: Oh, okay, sure.

AUSTIN: And you can say "oh well how do I" you know, the other player will say "well how do you Challenge that?" and the answer in this case could be like "oh, I give a stirring speech that calms everyone".

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know? At which point Ali, playing as Jace, would have to say "oh, I think that's good enough" or could say "no, I don't think that would do it, I think you could do that if also you demonstrate your martial prowess somehow." You know, or something like that. Or, you know, you insult them, so that they hate you, but also they're like, they wanna show you up, something like that, you know. Anyway, that's a scene. Art, which box do you wanna check?

ART: I'll check a Crossroads box.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that sounds right to me, that feels what you, like, worked on here. Alright, Keith, Sokrates Nikon last name I don't remember how to pronounce.

KEITH: Artemisioso?

AUSTIN: Artemisioso-es-es-es...Yes. What do you--

KEITH: Art. Just call me Art.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay, Art!

[Everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Good. Great. So where do you wanna go, Art?

KEITH: Oh this is, I have the same question?

AUSTIN: Yes. Everyone has this question until we resolve this question.

KEITH: Okay. Yeah, I wanna take the route through Diasporan space.

AUSTIN: Okay but you're not answering the question, you're setting up a scene in which you are--

KEITH: Okay, so the scene which I wanna set up is, I want to-- I'll be in a scene with Natalya. At this point, are we after-- this is like, an amount of time has passed since Addax and Jace had decided--

AUSTIN: It could be simultaneous, it can be before, the- you know, they're not, yeah.

KEITH: Okay. But it also can be after?

AUSTIN: Totally. Yes. It could be after.

KEITH: So I'm thinking I've heard from just general rumblings, whoever told Tea Kenridge, that news just spreads, and I think that I would have a conversation with Natalya talking about how I think that, you know, as long as we're in this alliance it's crazy to not, you know, sort of utilize the resources of both-- of all sides of the alliance, and to draw those sorts of lines in the sand, between like whoa, whoa, whoa, 130 of us are Oricon, we don't even want to use this really convenient route.

AUSTIN: Okay. Where are you having this conversation?

KEITH: Uh, private quarters.

AUSTIN: Whose?

KEITH: Um. ...Mine? Natalya's.

AUSTIN: Okay, so that means you're-

KEITH: I think I went there to like.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool.

KEITH: To sort of be like "hey, what's up, what do you think?"

AUSTIN: Right, and that kind of fits with your general motive here too, right, it's like "hey, I'm gonna come to you, like, we're all in this together", you're not like "hey, visit me on my private ship".

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. [pause] And again, to remind you, in effect, you are now reflecting a different part of the population, and saying like "actually no, some other people are cool with that". Um. Natalya, what's Natalya doing?

KEITH: Sorry, am I Perspective or Touchstone?

AUSTIN: You are Touchstone.

KEITH: I think- okay, that's what I thought, okay.

AUSTIN: You are Touchstone, yeah, totally. Natalya, on the other hand, is Perspective. So it sounds like you're in Natalya's private quarters.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Go for it, what are you guys doing?

KEITH: Is-- where is Natalya? Natalya, where are you? Where are your private quarters?

DRE: Uh, that's a good question. So she's probably not on the *Kingdom Come*.

AUSTIN: No, she's probably on the *Seventh Sun*.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Also, I didn't realize that they rhymed, that's good. Good.

DRE: [laughs] That'll be fun, just to say back and forth.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

KEITH: And that's what the second half of this episode will be, will just saying that back and forth.

DRE: [to self] Just round robin...

KEITH: *Kingdom Come*?

DRE: *Seventh Sun*! Sorry, I blanked--

AUSTIN: There we go. Phew! Call and response.

[Laughter]

KEITH: Yeah, so. I think that I present my case to Natalya, just wait for her to tell me what she thinks?

DRE: So I'm imagining like Natalya is, like, basically running like, predictive intel simulations, like "what will happen if we go to these two different places?"

AUSTIN: Totally, yeah.

DRE: So.

AUSTIN: That's the opposite of Jace, right, like Jace is just like this gut feeling that's always right, whereas Natalya's like "oh I have these computers"!

[Ali laughs]

DRE: So I will say, Natalya says:

DRE (as Natalya): You know, I'm not opposed to going through Diaspora space, but I think if we do, we will run into Ibex.

AUSTIN: Okay, so specifically. Okay. That is a prediction.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Is there anything else there? Do you guys get up to anything else in conversation?

KEITH: No.

AUSTIN: Okay. That was a quick one. That's easy. Next up is Orth,

DRE: Oh, uh, he needs to check a box.

KEITH: That's wrong, something happened.

AUSTIN: Oh, yep, there we go. So where do you wanna check a box. That's probably Crossroad again?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, Orth.

JACK: In the same way that you can in Microscope, can we essentially throw extra characters into these scenes, like background characters?

AUSTIN: Totally. Absolutely, yeah.

JACK: Okay, so I would like to--

AUSTIN: Those characters can't do anything, of course, but yes. You know what I mean, like--

JACK: Yeah, they can just sort of be extraneous detail, right?

AUSTIN: And they can talk and stuff but like, for instance, there could be an admiral in this scene, who is technically the highest ranking member in the scene, and he would not be, or they would not be, have any Power, Perspective, or be a Touchstone. They would just be there, so.

JACK: Okay. I think this takes place in the officer's lounge, in-- where is Jace right now?

AUSTIN: Jace is wherever you need-- like, this isn't-- we don't have to do this in a linear fashion, right? Like this doesn't have to be--

JACK: Okay, sure. But previously the hangar bay was in the *Seventh Sun*

AUSTIN: That was in the *Seventh Sun*, but there is also a hangar bay in the *Kingdom Come*, so. I think every ship except for Peace has a hangar bay.

JACK: Okay so I think Orth is asleep in the officer's lounge of the-- of the *Seventh Sun*. Because they'd been working the previous and they just sort of fell asleep.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: And they're woken up by someone who says to them "Oh, pilot Jace might have a plan, you need to go and see them right now" And Orth just goes like [whispers] "Oh, Jesus Christ." [Everyone laughs]

JACK: And he just walks down to the hangar bay to meet Jace.

AUSTIN: Okay, we get like a nice-- I like the camera of that, of like Orth being woken up.

JACK: Like Orth is lighting a cigarette and then is just--

AUSTIN: Mhm. And his uniform is unbuttoned in a bad way, just like, yeah, love it.

JACK: Jace is the OriCon pilot,

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: And Addax is the-- yeah sorry, I'm just double checking.

AUSTIN: Mhm. And again, this doesn't have to be a-- it's not always two person scenes, if someone else wants to be in a scene they can say "hey"

JACK: Does anyone else wanna join in here?

[pause, no one answers]

JACK (as Orth): [Sighs] Pilot. Jace. I've heard that-- God, are we talking about going through the Diaspora?

ALI (as Jace): Yeah.

JACK (as Orth): [exasperated] Why?

ALI (as Jace): Addax suggested it and it seemed like a fine idea.

JACK (as Orth): Yeah but you know that all of OriCon is just gonna be super pissed, right? I'm not gonna fly an OriCon flagship through the Diaspora just like that, you know?

ALI (as Jace): I mean, the point of this is working together, right? We can't stay in OriCon the whole time?

JACK (as Orth): I'm not saying we're gonna stay in OriCon the whole time, I'm saying that you know, we have to make a coherent decision here as a fleet, and I wonder whether or not if our first decision is moving against essentially three quarters of our fleet, I don't know if that's a good i-- and I mean there's gonna be so much planning! There's gonna be so much planning.

ALI (as Jace): They're gonna get upset eventually.

JACK (as Orth): That's my least favorite way to do commanding, Jace.

ALI (as Jace): [pause, sighs] I'm not a commander. So.

JACK: Okay, right. So I guess that Orth just sort of like just turns around and takes a notepad out of his pocket? And just like immediately starts just desperately-- and his pencil breaks against the notepad, and he's trying to--

SYLVIA: Aw, buddy.

JACK: He's got a surface to write on... and he's probably walking back towards the shuttle to the *Kingdom Come* to try and make some sort of future plan... which, so I guess Orth's thing is that, um, if we take the route through Diasporan-- this isn't a prediction because I can't make predictions.

AUSTIN: Right, but you can make an order.

JACK: Oh, I can make an order right now?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. So let me just read the order thing, like an order is a thing you make as a way of kind of encouraging or discouraging a sort of-- other characters and what they might want.

JACK: Okay, sure. So I'm going order, simultaneously, I'm going to order my draftsmen and navigators to, you know, move to the navigation bays in the *Kingdom Come*, and I'm going to order, just like, so many pots of coffee.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. That's not what I thought you meant when you were going to make an order. I thought you were going to make an order like "if we go through Diasporan space, then no one gets-- everybody has to work a second shift" or something, but ordering coffee is an Orth-like thing to do.

JACK: I'm getting everybody into a room,

AUSTIN: It's an Orth-like solution.

JACK: And I'm going "okay, we're going to be awake for a while."

AUSTIN: [laughs] You could literally say like "nah, everyone has to do-- everyone has to take this coffee, that's my new rule"

[Laughter]

JACK: No, I'm just getting all the navigators in a room, I think.

AUSTIN: Okay. To what end?

JACK: To begin drafting movements-- this isn't [sic]-- to begin drafting movements into the Diaspora. Because Orth knows OriCon space, presumably, and has absolutely no idea how to steer through--

AUSTIN: So, in a sense, are you making order that says "if we go through the Diaspora, then we will use this plot to that makes it, that is like, the safest route through"

JACK: Yes, yes.

AUSTIN: Okay, I like that.

JACK: And I think "safe" is open to interpretation here,

AUSTIN: Totally. Sure.

JACK: But I think yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, any reaction scenes to that?

[pause]

AUSTIN: Okay, um, Natalya. Oh also, what are you checking?

JACK: I think I'm going to check... yeah I'll check the Crossroads, because I feel like making maps, or having those maps and things is--

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. Uh, and again, whoever was Touchstone, whoever is a Touchstone afterwards, one of the things they can always do is they can also mark Crisis if they think we're moving into a Crisis. I don't think we are, right like, I think it's soon for that,

SYLVIA: This coffee is bad!

[Laughter]

JACK: It's the *Kingdom Come*, what do you expect?

AUSTIN: Constant Crisis? Yeah, okay. Uh, Natalya?

DRE: Um, I feel like I need to get something in this "no" column here.

AUSTIN: Mm, mmhm.

DRE: We don't have anything there. Um.

AUSTIN: Which would be the equivalent of saying "if we go through OriCon, then this would happen."

DRE: Um. I think I know what I want my no to be, so I'm trying to figure out the scene to get to it. I think my no is going to if they go through OriCon space, then the Rapid Evening learns about the September Institute.

AUSTIN: Ooh, that's really good.

DRE: Um, so maybe, um, Natalya's just in the hangar bay and walks upon, like, I don't know, a poker game going on between some pilots, and overhears one of them mention some rumor they've heard about a new OriCon installation.

AUSTIN: Okay, so it's just you in this scene?

DRE: Um,

AUSTIN: In fact, is that the whole of the scene? That can totally be the whole of the scene.

DRE: I think so, and maybe, I mean if we like really wanna get real, like, wink wink nod nod, maybe one of the players involved in this poker game is our old friend Chet Wise from Sage.

AUSTIN: Oh man, like before Chet shows up there?

SYLVIA: Oh, yeah. I'm into it.

AUSTIN: I like that a lot, actually. Um. Okay. Sorry, I'm moving stuff around on our screen so that we just have more space.

JACK: Oh my god, after this thing, everybody's gonna be so miserable.

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh huh. Everything's gonna go great.

ALI: Yeah, this is a holiday episode, what?

AUSTIN: Yeah, what did you think? It's like you forgot who I was!

DRE: We had such a good run with these so far.

SYLVIA: Because last year's was so happy.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we are-- no one has been murdered yet, this is all a plus as far as I can tell. [Dre laughs] Uh, okay. [pause] And you're checking Crossroad, I'm guessing?

DRE: Uh... yeah.

AUSTIN: Jace?

ALI: Hi! Yeah, uh. Am I allowed to have scenes that are like... like they're all about this issue, like I couldn't resolve my thing with Tea right now, right?

AUSTIN: Those things probably aren't going to resolve ever. Issues don't resolve, they're like your cross to bear, or your long-term benefit, right?

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: And you don't get anything, there's no like reward for-- but you can use them to-- they're kind of narrative positioning, right, like. So if you wanted a scene in which something was, you wanted to work out something that only someone who knew you closely could help you with, that would help. That would be a good--

ALI: Oh, I didn't mean it, like-- her reaction specifically to the Addax/Jace scene was that she was like mad at me.

AUSTIN: Oh, sure, yeah. You could totally have that scene.

ALI: Okay. Okay. I think that's a way to flesh out Jace's perspective a little bit more, because I guess like, he was kind of showboating for Addax, and then now everyone's like "okay Jace made this decision" and now that's kind of weird. [half-laughs] Where like, Jace is actually a little bit pensieve about this?

AUSTIN: Mm, okay. Where do you meet up with Tea?

ALI: Do you think that this is an anime cut-in cockpit chat, Sylvia?

SYLVIA: I don't know, how would the context of that be?

AUSTIN: Like, you're out on patrol together?

ALI: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: And like far away from where other people could listen in.

ALI: Right, yeah, exactly.

SYLVIA: Yeah, okay. Anime cut-in.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Good. Okay.

SYLVIA: I'm glad we're the two doing the first anime cut-in.

AUSTIN: You can also, as always, just invent shit that you need, you know. This could be like somewhere-- so like for a while I had locations that weren't just places in the fleet, it was like "oh, an asteroid belt", but like whatever, we can just put this also in an asteroid belt, you know.

ALI: Right. No, because I kind of like the idea that they wouldn't really be hanging out with each other, but it's like let's move far away and then like have this conversation that neither of us really wanna have but have to have.

AUSTIN: Totally.

[Ali laughs]

SYLVIA: Let's have this awkward as fuck conversation.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. So how'd that-- what's that conversation look like?

ALI: I was gonna say that I think Jace kind of tries to continue playing it cool, and being like [deeper voice]

ALI (as Jace): Hey Tea, so what do you think about, like, where we should go?

ALI: Even though he totally knows what she thinks, but like wants to hear her say it

SYLVIA: She immediately would see through his bullshit there, because she knows when he's bullshitting. And, uh, I think her response would be like

SYLVIA (as Tea): Why don't you go ask your buddy Addax about it? Why don't you go chat with him, since he seems to be the one you're going through for all your tactical advice lately.

ALI (as Jace): [sighs] Okay, great. Nice talk.

SYLVIA: Yeah, no. She's pissed.

[Ali laughs]

SYLVIA: I don't think that's the end of the conversation, but I think that's her immediate response--

AUSTIN: Do you think this conversation gets to a resolution?

ALI: No.

SYLVIA: Maybe not then. I don't know, I had her being-- I had an idea for a conversation between the two for my scene that was a different context.

AUSTIN: We'll get there, we'll get there.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Time Passes? Or?

ALI: Yeah, Time Passes.

SYLVIA: I think that's--

AUSTIN: It sounds like Time Passes to me, yeah. So who's next?

SYLVIA: I am.

AUSTIN: Uh, I am. What do you wanna do?

SYLVIA: I actually kinda have like a continuation for that scene.

AUSTIN: Oh, then, you can just keep tagging it on to that same scene instead.

SYLVIA: It's not-- I think it's a little later, after Tea has kinda checked in with like her unit and with like the other soldiers. And I'd say it's like at Jace's quarters but like she's just like banging on the door. [Ali laughs] Because like now she knows the whole situation, I think, she knows that like-- before, when they first talked, she just knew that Jace and Addax made a decision

regarding where they were going and now she knows it was-- and that just sorta like slighted her, because she was so used to being the person who Jace would come to about that stuff. And now she knows that he made the decision to go through the Diaspora space, and that is--

AUSTIN: Okay, I like it.

ALI: Worse?

AUSTIN: So what's, what is--

SYLVIA: Uh,

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

SYLVIA: I think like once Jace opens the door she goes

SYLVIA (as Tea): What the fuck do you think you're doing?

ALI (as Jace): What do you mean?

SYLVIA (as Tea): We can't go through Diaspora space.

ALI (as Jace): [sighs] Why not?

SYLVIA (as Tea): Jace, we can't trust them.

ALI (as Jace): No, we can. That's why we're here.

SYLVIA (as Tea): No, we're here because we're fighting the Apostolos, that doesn't mean we can trust the Diaspora for a second.

ALI (as Jace): [sighs] We're gonna have to if we're gonna defeat them, right?

SYLVIA (as Tea): Look, I'm fine with using their soldiers and them helping us out in battle, but I'm not fine with having them call the shots here.

ALI (as Jace): [sighs] I'm not here to stop a war to continue a different one. So if we have to play nice, we're gonna play nice.

SYLVIA: And she like, like kinda clenches her fist and looks like she's gonna like slap him or something, and she doesn't, and she just sighs and takes a step back, and just is like

SYLVIA (as Tea): Just be careful around him, okay?

SYLVIA: And like, clearly referring to Addax, and just storms off.

ALI: [laughs] This is great.

AUSTIN: It sounded like Addax-- or sorry, Jace-- was making a prediction, that was if you don't go through Diasporan space you'll end up, like, stoking the flames of the old conflict. Was that an actual prediction or just a thing Jace felt? And also it's hard to distinguish those two, with Jace especially.

ALI: Right, yeah, I don't know, cuz that feels [pause] I don't know if it feels in direct competition to, or it actually kind of plays into the last one but on the opposite side, right?

AUSTIN: Right. [pause] Well, like one of them is about the fleet, and the other one would be about a broader relationship, right? The previous one you made is that the OriCon members of the fleet will not be pleased, this will be that, um, or maybe it's actually still a yes, but more broadly it will create a sense of unity.

ALI: Right. Yeah.

SYLVIA: I'm also trying to figure out whether that was-- I think that might've been more Crossroads.

AUSTIN: That's Crossroads, that's definitely Crossroads-- uh, or Crisis.

SYLVIA: You think?

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: It's up to you, but I could totally see it going either way. Or both ways, cuz you're a Touchstone and can do that.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think, well, like, it kind of influences both, because that is very much the-- I don't think it's for every single member of the OriCon military, obviously, but there is a majority that are not comfortable with this alliance, because they've been fighting for so long.

AUSTIN: Yeah, let's mark it. Totally, alright.

SYLVIA: So, I think it could be a mix of the two.

AUSTIN: Let's wrap back around to-- oh, so, again, any reactions scenes there? Again, single sentence.

ART: We need to get better at reaction scenes, don't we?

[Everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Well, eh, yes and no. It's only cuz we have so many people that it feels like it's so quiet, like if we were playing with three people it would be way more obvious, like, oh yeah, no. Move on. But with this many,

ALI: Right. Those were also two weirdly personal scenes.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But you can be reacting more generally to this stuff too, it doesn't have to just be like "Oh, and then I overheard it, and this thing happened" it can literally just be like "I feel the tone in the ship change, and so, whatever" But it's completely unnecessary, like it's not a thing that you *need* to be doing. Keith you were saying something?

KEITH: Oh I was going to have a reaction to mark a Crisis box but Sylvia already did that.

AUSTIN: Okay, yes, yes.

KEITH: So, we're good.

AUSTIN: We are good.

JACK: Alright, could I run to the bathroom real quick?

AUSTIN: Wait, you're asking Art to do that?

JACK: No! Oh my god, this is my accent!

[Ali laughs]

JACK: Could I run to the bathroom real quick?

AUSTIN: I thought you said "Art, could I run to the--"

JACK: Nope!

[Everyone laughing]

AUSTIN: Yes, you can run to the bathroom really quick

ART: I also think you should be able to.

[More laughing]

JACK: Thank you.

AUSTIN: Thanks.

KEITH: Also, my character, nicknamed Art, thinks you--

AUSTIN: Also, Art, is your scene going to be with Jack?

ART: No. I actually have a very quiet scene that,

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: I, who even knows if it's appropriate.

AUSTIN: Let's hear it.

ART: I want like-- can I get a cockpit scene that isn't a chat scene?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

ART: I sort of want like a scene of Addax trying to like placate Peace.

AUSTIN: Mm.

ART: You how like Han Solo's always talking to the Millenium Falcon, but what if the Millenium Falcon--

AUSTIN: Could talk back?

ART: Had a chance of, yeah, of deciding he was angry.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

ART: It was angry. She was angry?

AUSTIN: Mm. They? It? I don't know. Th- it.

ART: It's not they, it would be it.

AUSTIN: Well the Millenium Falcon is definitely it, it's not conscious, right? Peace is they.

ART: But we use she for boats.

AUSTIN: Eh, do we?

KEITH: No, none of us do. None of the ones here do.

ART: Well I don't think many of us are talking about boats very often.

DRE: You don't know my life.

SYLVIA: I mean, we've had this talk in the faction game with regards to some of the other divines and it's kind of on a divine by divine basis.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I've been thinking of Peace as they for a long time.

KEITH: Well, we use they for Audy and I don't consider Peace to be any less conscious than Audy.

AUSTIN: Oh no, all the divines have personal pronouns. With the exception of Righteousness, Righteousness does not. Anyway, that's a whole side thing.

ART: But what about the Millennium Falcon?

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: The Millennium Falcon is divine, but is not *a divine*.

[Laughter]

ART: That's what you think, you haven't read my fanfiction.

AUSTIN: I haven't seen the new movie yet.

ART: Han Solo comes to the Diaspora.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

KEITH: I don't know you guys, I'm pretty sure that the Millennium Falcon is a hunk of junk.

SYLVIA: If someone doesn't write that fanfiction now, I'm gonna be really upset with our listeners.

ALI (same time as Sylvia): But Han Solo is already from OriCon.

ART: I had like an idea for a Friends at the Table fanfiction this morning and was like wait a minute, I could just make that happen. I am involved in the creation of Friends at the Table.

[Laughter]

AUSTIN: So this scene is just-- what does that look like? What does calming Peace look like?

ART: I think it's like going through, like, you know, the process, like, okay, I'm making sure all the stuff works, but it's also like soothing, like soothing voice. Like, "okay, we're gonna do this, we're gonna, you know, we're gonna go,"

KEITH: You gotta ASMR your robot.

ART: Yeah, you gotta ASMR the robot.

AUSTIN: Nice, nice.

ART: We're gonna go shut down this weapon, the war is gonna end, you know, we're gonna have a good long period without any conflict, and everything is gonna be great.

AUSTIN: I like that. Are you advancing this-- this clock? This Crossroad?

ART: I don't think that advances the Crossroad.

AUSTIN: So you don't, yeah, I guess that's not-- it doesn't have to.

ALI: But it could, right?

KEITH: It has to if we wanna get to the next Crossroad.

AUSTIN: My thought there is that you are actually like working at this broader thing, of like "it's time to go, I'm gearing up."

ART: So I guess, then, yes, I am doing that.

AUSTIN: Alright, is Jack back?

JACK: I am. Hello.

AUSTIN: Hey Jack, hi. Alright, it is time to resolve a Crossroad. So, resolving a Crossroad has eight steps.

SYLVIA: [under breath] Jesus.

AUSTIN: It's fine.

SYLVIA: Okay.

[Laughter]

AUSTIN: Step one, do we want to end the game here?

[Everyone laughs]

DRE: That's a wrap everybody.

AUSTIN: It's been good.

ART: War, over!

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's it, and that was the story, and now you're ready to fight Righteousness.

ART: Turns out that weapon just didn't work, it was an engineering problem, and the war ended, they just gave everyone on this thing credit cuz they didn't wanna be like "yeah we fucking got lucky on that war".

AUSTIN: [laughs] Good luck Kingdo-- good luck, Chime, cuz there's nothing to learn from this. Alright, reactions. Er, sorry, not reactions, resolution. So, yeah, the game's not over, that's good. Step two is that we have to frame the Crossroad, um, and so to do that it's just like what does the final decision look like, like who is doing what, um, during the decision to go or not go.

ART: It's Addax dragging Orth, kicking and screaming, into Diaspora space.

SYLVIA: Spilling coffee everywhere.

AUSTIN: Actually, "set the stage" is "read aloud the Crossroad and all of the items in the yes and no column to remind everyone what is at stake." you can see this but I'll read it for the audience. Will the Kingdom take the route through Diasporan space, if yes, the OriCon members of the fleet will not be pleased, you will definitely run into Ibex, um, order-- Orth has

made an order that if you do, you will take a safe route, the safest possible route, um, and that broader unity will be worked towards. If you don't, the Rapid Evening will eventually learn about the September Institute. Um, decision, power. Each player with a Power character declares whether they are making the Kingdom decide yes or no in the Crossroad. No one else gets to vote. Describe how your character makes it happen. If you can't explain how your character uses their power to affect this decision to make this outcome, you can't vote." In this case I think everyone can vote. "Count the votes, the majority wins. Unless someone changes the outcome by interrupting to Challenge someone's vote, change their Role to Power, or overcome someone's Power, the Crossroad is now decided: there is no going back, circle the answer on the card and cross out their column, everything on that side is mute-- is moot, not mute." Is anyone-- so Orth and Addax, how are you voting?

JACK: Addax, do you wanna make a vote first, since you were the one who initially proposed this?

ART: Well I mean, this was here when we got here, but yeah, I would like to vote yes.

JACK: Um, okay, I'll also go yes? Yeah, I think I'll go yes.

AUSTIN: Okay. Good. I like that, that helps. And no one else is interfering with this, in a way that would-- is anyone interfering with this? I guess is the question, at this point.

KEITH: No, I'm on board.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, okay.

JACK: So I guess--

AUSTIN: I can hear Sylvia, considering it.

SYLVIA: I'm like debating it, but no.

AUSTIN: Maybe not yet, right? Like this is one of those things.

SYLVIA: They'll follow orders, but they're not fuckin happy about it.

AUSTIN: Okay. Step four, order's power. For each order your Power put in the winning side of the Crossroad, the Power player that controls it decides whether to let it happen or cancel it. If you cancel it, describe what you do to stop it, if you do not cancel it, show your character seeing it happen. So how does the plan to take the safe route come into effect, Orth? Like, what's the one sentence of Orth seeing that happen?

JACK: Um, it is that the-- so we're, we have made this decision?

AUSTIN: Yes. You are going through, yes, totally.

JACK: So I think that the flight deck of the *Kingdom Come* has just got paper everywhere, and staffers writing, and all the bright overhead lights are on, and Orth just sits down in the thing and turns all the lights off so that there's just the cockpit lights.

AUSTIN: Oh, nice, I like that.

JACK: And calls up the coordinates that everybody has drawn up over the long couple of nights, and makes the first tiny movement in comparison to the other ships that begins to angle the *Kingdom Come* towards Diaspora space.

AUSTIN: I like it. Alright, so next, predictions. For each player on the winning side of the Crossroad, the Perspective player who controls that prediction resolves it. Decide whether you want your prediction to come true. You cannot change your prediction or make a new one, you're simply picking *yes* or *no*. Things might've happened that changed your mind. You can

point to something we've already seen that averted this outcome or simply say that you were wrong. If you don't have Perspective anymore, you don't have control over your predictions anymore either. Okay, so is anyone changing their predictions? I wanted to say prophecies, but I think that's a little figurative.

[Laughter]

JACK: That's the season one version.

AUSTIN: Right. Yes. So no? All the predictions are coming true?

ALI: No. Yeah. They add up.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Because the people in OriCon are like nervous but then it's fine? So.

AUSTIN: Right. Totally. Or they're not happy with it, certainly.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: [on roll20] Circling... Let me fix that circle. Yes, nope. Bad circle. Yes, yes. Okay. Oh, boy. Next. "If your prediction does happen, narrate your character seeing your prediction come true right now. Say where you are and what you see, do not describe some new outcome that you did not predict, what happens should be what you said would happen." So Jace, and then Natalya. Jace, the OriCon members of the fleet will not be pleased, how does that show itself, like immediately?

ALI: Do y-- ahh, I don't know. Do you think that there's maybe like a slight argument between Diaspora and OriCon people like as they're kind of going through it?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: And it's not like anything, like, serious,

AUSTIN: No, no, yeah. Totally.

ALI: There's just like whispers and weird looks and like, things under breath. Like, yeah.

AUSTIN: Is there a way that then you also show that broader unity? How does that show itself?

ALI: I think that shows itself in the resolution, right? Where like--

AUSTIN: Mhm. What's the visual? Like, is there-- what's the shot on-screen for the show? You know what I mean? What's the visual metaphor used to show that?

ALI: Well I think the visual metaphor is like, it's the beginning of the mission where OriCon people are initially like, you know, if something happens it's your guys' fault or whatever. But then like the end of the, like, next scene is like this sort of mission ended and they moved across and they were like fine and it's like, everyone's sitting in like a cafeteria or whatever, and things aren't like, great? But at least everyone's like alive, right?

AUSTIN: Okay. Alright, so. Natalya, how do we know that we're gonna run into Ibex?

DRE: Um, I have two thoughts on this, we can kind of go with whatever one people think is better.

AUSTIN: Sure.

DRE: Um. Either, um, Ibex's divine Righteousness can just like, somehow be like-- picks up whatever is going into Peace's like, navigation computer.

AUSTIN: [excited] Ooh, uh huh.

DRE: Or, um, amidst that like huge mess of paper that Jack described, there's one person who like, is basically like leaking all of this to Ibex.

AUSTIN: Okay. I like, I kind of like either of those... um.

JACK: The second is--

AUSTIN: I think I like-- go ahead.

JACK: The second is interesting because it establishes spies in the fleet, or more spies in the fleet.

AUSTIN: Yes,

DRE: It's Trumpet Greg!

[Sylvia laughs]

JACK: Definitely, as a player, I'm pro-as many spies as possible.

AUSTIN: You're pro-spy. Totally.

JACK: In fact, it would be an ideal situation if by the end of this game we are all spying for separate people.

AUSTIN: Okay, good.

[Everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: So then spies. So there's definitely, love it. Okay, so I'm gonna move you to Gemm on the map, did I move you guys to the map? Can you all see the map?

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Okay, I'm gonna move the spaceship, which I'm pretty sure is the Normandy from Mass Effect 2...

JACK: I'm really disappointed it's not in a group of chickens.

AUSTIN: [Sighs]

ALI: I know!

AUSTIN: I know, I'm sorry.

ALI: I thought you were gonna fill all the boxes with chickens too, like--

AUSTIN: Aw, that would've been pretty good. So you're at Gemm now, and it's time for a new Crossroad. This one's going to be maybe a little bit tougher, let's say.

ART: Should you turn around and go back to OriCon.

AUSTIN: Should you go back to, yeah that's it. You got me. Saw right through it.

[Everyone laughs]

JACK: So Gemm's capital has been devastated by Apostolos but they have survived.

AUSTIN: Yes, that is correct. And the divine there is?

JACK: You changed the screen, I don't know.

AUSTIN: Oh, it's Fortitude.

ALI: Oh.

AUSTIN: The divine Fortitude is at Gemm.

JACK: Do we know who Fortitude's pilot is?

AUSTIN: No, not in-game or out of-- not like, in-character or-- I guess Addax would, but I don't. I mean certainly, I haven't named them. But they're there for us to, like, if that's a thing you want to explore. So the question is *will the Kingdom take on refugees from Gemm?* As you arrive at Gemm, you know, the planet is devastated, as Jack just read, and for the reasons I described before. Apostolosian ships can go deep through the darkness of space and not just on, you know, traditional trade routes. And kind of a deep strike fleet that launched probably some time last year arrived and tore into Gemm which was not well defended. It was the first time this

capability of Apostolos showed itself. They were completely unprepared. They were like “oh, we’re nowhere near the front line, so no big deal!” And just, like, lots of death-- like, a staggering amount of civilian death, as Apostolos wrecked this place. It had previously been an industrial hub and a population center, so the Diaspora is really feeling this. And there are lots of refugees here, who would like to move to a place that is better and safer than this. And the first scene is Keith’s.

KEITH: Hi. I would like to have a scene with Orth.

JACK: It’s not Art’s?

AUSTIN: No, Art just had a scene, Art finished, with Peace.

JACK: Oh wow, so we roll--

AUSTIN: Yeah, the cycle continues going, yeah yeah, it doesn’t restart with Art every time. Um, with who did you say? Keith?

KEITH: Orth.

AUSTIN: Just Orth?

KEITH: With at least Orth, if anybody else wants to be in the scene, they can.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Um.

AUSTIN: What’s the scene? Where is it and what are you doing?

KEITH: Oh, I guess I have a question about like what my position is on-- in the fleet?

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: Like I know that I’m-- like I told everyone about the weapon, that’s why I’m here. But like, did they give me a position? Am I just like a person of interest?

AUSTIN: That’s a good question, and it’s a question probably worth-- I think that’s probably a question that Sokrates has themselves. Like, who-- like, what am I here?

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: I think you have some kind of weird civilian consultant role, technically, but that’s not really hammered out nicely. But you are kind of the de facto captain of this ship, that has some military power, at the very least.

KEITH: Which ship?

AUSTIN: You have your own ship, you have an Apostolosian ship, that is yours, and you are the de facto captain of that ship. So, you’re sort of one of the four captains, I guess, if that makes sense.

KEITH: Okay, so I’m one of the four captains and I’m some sort of civilian liaison?

AUSTIN: Sure. Yes.

KEITH: Or at least advocate for the Apostolosian people.

AUSTIN: For the Apostolosian rebels, at least, right? The ones who are rebelling against the current leader, yeah.

KEITH: Yeah. [laughing] The twenty of us.

AUSTIN: Yes, all twenty of you. There might be more.

KEITH: What a force I have!

AUSTIN: Yes. You ready to go?

KEITH: So I guess I wanna have at least Orth in the officer’s lounge.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: On the Apostolosian ship?

KEITH: I assumed that the officer's lounge was on the *Kingdom Come*.

JACK: Oh, the *Kingdom Come* doesn't have an officer's lounge.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think there's one in the three ships that aren't the *Kingdom Come* and they're probably very different. I think that the one on-- or sorry, the two ships that aren't-- Peace does not have an officer's lounge, Peace has a weird hallway that's real scary to be in.

KEITH: The location here just says officer's lounge.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah. So there's one on the Apostolosian ship, which looks like whatever the officer's lounge in the Apostolosian ships look like, and then there's one in the *Seventh Sun*, which is like the big carrier ship, and Orth was asleep in that one.

JACK: I kind of picture that one as being like almost like you know lounges in ferries? Just like, lots of kind of bench seats with weird tacky leather on chairs, tables, and--

KEITH: I picture Sokrates sort of as the guy who always has to like, go to where other people are to yell at them or to talk to them, so I guess I'll do this at the officer's lounge where Orth is, maybe he was sleeping again.

[Austin, Jack and Keith laugh]

AUSTIN: Yeah, good. I also like that this is the first scene of the second episode, right? Is Orth is again asleep, top shirt button unbuttoned.

KEITH: Maybe like some sort of reading thing, he was reading something and then he fell asleep.

AUSTIN: Yes. What is Orth reading, Jack?

JACK: Um. Oh, uh, he is reading-- he was reading essentially the equivalent of wikipedia pages about the Diaspora,

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Except he eventually moved on to like, Diasporan, like situational comedies, bizarre Diasporan, you know like, some weird like background Diasporan detail, like a Diasporan museum, or something.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JACK: [under breath] Oh god, how did I end up here this is-- and then he fell asleep.

AUSTIN: Perfect, good. Good.

KEITH: So, I don't know, I'm gonna wake him up and say

KEITH (as Sokrates): Orth, we gotta take in these refugees.

JACK (as Orth): Sorry?

KEITH (as Sokrates): The refugees?

JACK (as Orth): From, um? From the--

KEITH (as Sokrates): The planet. We have to take in the people from the planet.

JACK (as Orth): Where are we going to put them?

KEITH (as Sokrates): On the ships that we have. We have the ships.

JACK (as Orth): But where?

KEITH (as Sokrates): In other bunks, my one has a lot of uh-- they could go in my one.

JACK (as Orth): Okay, right.

JACK: And I just sort of like start walking out of the officer's lounge and I guess Sokrates follows me?

KEITH: Yeah. This is a forced walk and talk.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes.

KEITH: And I'm just always like-- like, he's walking at a normal pace, but I sort of seem like always a little bit too slow to not need to-- like I have to kind of take double steps sometimes, like "c'mon, come back!"

JACK (as Orth): Okay so these, these refugees, their city has just been destroyed?

KEITH (as Sokrates): Yeah.

JACK (as Orth): By your army.

KEITH (as Sokrates): Well,

JACK (as Orth): And you want to put them in the bunks on an Apostolosian ship.

KEITH (as Sokrates): Now I see where-- I see what you're getting at.

JACK (as Orth): Yeah? Mhm? Yeah.

KEITH (as Sokrates): How about some of the other people go into my ship, and they can go into one of the other ships.

JACK (as Orth): Sure, alright. Well, you got some um-- the OriCon army is not tremendously enthused about the d-- oh, Jesus Christ.

JACK: And Orth just like opens up his like, wrist communicator and has to check the heading to make sure the ships didn't, you know, change direction in the night.

JACK (as Orth): Look, how many refugees are you thinking?

KEITH (as Sokrates): All of them.

[Austin laughs]

JACK (as Orth): Okay, fine. That's-- There are too many people, we can't do that.

AUSTIN: [still laughing] There are millions.

JACK (as Orth): Yeah, we can't-- [sighs]

KEITH (as Sokrates): Okay,

AUSTIN: Let's say--

KEITH (as Sokrates): We have a certain amount of a space and a certain amount of food, I say we take as many as we can without compromising our food supplies or, uh, like, beds-- bed space.

JACK (as Orth): That is no people.

AUSTIN: It's a couple hundred, is what I would say. You could take another couple hundred. Also I think you're probably docked with a Diasporan space elevator space station here, like refueling and stuff.

JACK (as Orth): Okay, look. I'm not gonna make any promises, but I'm going to talk to people and I'm going to see what can be done. It's real bad that Gemm has been-- it's real bad, it's real bad, but I'll see what can be done.

JACK: And we've just reached, like, the shuttle, and Orth just steps into the shuttle back to the *Kingdom Come* and closes the automatic doors.

AUSTIN: Okay. No, uh, Orth you're not making any orders here?

JACK: No, I don't think so.

AUSTIN: Okay, sounds good. Well guess what, we're gonna find out what Orth does next, in this next scene. Keith are you marking Crossroad?

KEITH: I am marking Crossroad, yeah.

JACK: Okay, so--

KEITH: Can I also mark Crisis?

AUSTIN: You're a Touchstone?

KEITH: Yes.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can totally mark Crisis.

KEITH: I'm doing that.

JACK: Orth turns around in the shuttle and Tea is sitting on the seat.

[Sylvia laughs]

AUSTIN: Good.

JACK: And Orth goes

JACK (as Orth): Oh, uh, fine, Commander, hello. Everything's well, I suppose?

SYLVIA: I think she's like, reading something, and like doesn't look up and just says

SYLVIA (as Tea): Godlove, good to see you.

JACK (as Orth): Look,

JACK: And Orth sits down next to her then stands up and sits on the bench opposite her.

[Everyone laughing]

JACK (as Orth): Look, the Apostolosian wants to bring refugees on board, and, and, and listen, I didn't get into the military to ignore refugees, this is-- I didn't-- but there's something I have to tell you. I've done the math, and they have not put us on this ship to complete this mission.

SYLVIA: She actually puts down what she's reading and just kinda looks at him like "continue"

JACK (as Orth): This is going to be really, really hard. This is going to be-- we're talking, we're going to lose-- the first thing we're going to lose is engines and the second thing we're going to lose is armies. Um, we are in a mess here, Tea, and look, I'm beginning to wonder whether or not I might've been promoted for a reason, so, I just-- [whispering] what do we do? What do we do? I don't want to bring people on board if in three week's time we're going to get exploded and the Apostolosian rebel army is going to look at me like it's somehow my fault.

SYLVIA: Um, I think she like kinda like puts her hand up to get him to calm down for a second.

JACK (as Orth): Okay, alright, fine.

SYLVIA (as Tea): Orth, you have maps, right? You have charts?

JACK (as Orth): I have like a great deal of those.

SYLVIA (as Tea): What is the next planet we're going to be stopping on?

JACK: I can't actually see the map screen, so--

AUSTIN: I will put it on, one second-- uh, you'll have a choice, actually.

SYLVIA: Okay.

JACK (as Orth): Well, about that,

AUSTIN: It's either Slighter or Glimmer.

JACK (as Orth): So we can either go to-- haha, oh dear.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. What's up?

JACK: Aw, no. Who lives on those planets, Austin?

AUSTIN: Uh, so Glimmer is a tropic-- okay, let's start with Slighter. Slighter is an isolated server farm and library, in the future it's like this weird, abandoned archive, and Integrity and Reason are there, the divines. And, uh, let's see Glimmer is a tropical world with millions of islands and Empathy is there and also Righteousness.

JACK (as Orth): So, listen, we can go to Slighter, it's like, um, there's books, there's libraries. And then there's Glimmer which is just, like, really, I think Glimmer might be our best bet. It's just beautiful.

SYLVIA (as Tea): Okay, so--

AUSTIN: Excuse me?

JACK: Does Orth know that Ibex--?

SYLVIA: I don't, yeah, I was gonna say, I don't think either of them know about Ibex.

AUSTIN: No, no that's--

SYLVIA: I think they just see a place with a lot of space for them.

AUSTIN: Um, okay, yeah, agreed

SYLVIA: Like, in character-- out of character I'm like "wow that's a terrible idea", but in character, you know. I think she's just like

SYLVIA (as Tea): Okay, first of all, breathe for a second. You're doing that thing again where you just talk a lot and don't breathe.

JACK (as Orth): Okay, okay.

SYLVIA (as Tea): Can't have you passing out on me because then I'll have to fill out a report and that's no fun for anybody.

JACK (as Orth): Yeah no, that's-- no.

SYLVIA (as Tea): Regardless of whether we are set up to fail or not, and we're talking about this later, by the way-- we're not done that conversation. Regardless of that, we need to-- [pause] we joined the military to help people, right?

JACK (as Orth): Yes. Well, I joined by accident, but--

[Laughter]

SYLVIA (as Tea): You stayed to help people though, right Orth?

AUSTIN: [under breath] Jesus Christ.

SYLVIA (as Tea): Work with me here.

[Keith laughs]

SYLVIA (as Tea): We're gonna help people.

JACK (as Orth): Okay.

SYLVIA (as Tea): We take who we can, we take people who are-- have been hit the worst, maybe. And also--

JACK (as Orth): We've got room for about 200.

SYLVIA (as Tea): Okay, so we find families, we take families, if we can, and bring them to Glimmer, and we can get robot boy, Addax, to do some work, we can get him to flex some contacts, see if he can get people to come here to pick up more refugees. It's not huge, but it's something, right?

JACK (as Orth): Yes. I think that-- thank you commander. Thank you.

JACK: And then I think that the shuttle still has about 45 minutes to go?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Oh boy.

JACK: So I think we just sort of sit there, in silence.

AUSTIN: Good.

JACK: And I'd like to make an order?

AUSTIN: Yeah?

JACK: Uh, which is that, yes, we will take on refugees from Gemm and we will attempt to drop them off at Glimmer. So it's in the column yes and it's I guess like "we will take on as many refugees as we can and drop them off on the tropical paradise--"

AUSTIN: I think it's probably just the second bit, which is-- or, I guess, yeah, we will take as many as we can *and* drop them off is definitely okay.

SYLVIA: [laughing] I really like Orth. He's so different from how he is now.

AUSTIN: Oh, you know, times change.

SYLVIA: No it's so good.

JACK: There's probably a reason for that.

SYLVIA: Yeah, no, totally.

AUSTIN: Hey, maybe we'll get there.

SYLVIA: I love young, inexperienced Orth, it's great.

AUSTIN: Ah god [pause] young, and yet still a captain of this like-- Orth is technically the leader of this thing. Addax is Power because Addax has a divine, and you know, that's power, but Orth is the one that's theoretically in charge of this operation. Uh, anyway I'm guessing that's a mark on Crossroad?

JACK: Yeah, totally.

AUSTIN: Okay. Natalya?

DRE: Um. I think Natalya is going to call Orth on his personal communicator?

AUSTIN: This is like the Orth episode, I love it.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's like an episode of West Wing, this is--

SYLVIA: I was gonna say.

DRE: Because in my head Sokrates came to Natalya after his² conversation with Orth when Orth was still like "I don't know if we're gonna be able to do this", and Natalya was like "oh, fuck no" like, listen. This bumbling doofus is gonna take on these refugees.

AUSTIN: Okay, well, so, wait, do you wanna involve both Sokrates and Orth in this scene?

DRE: Oh, maybe she's like, calling him on speakerphone and Sokrates is just standing there.

[Laughter]

AUSTIN: Keith, are you will to do that?

KEITH: Hi!

JACK: Wait, so who's calling whom?

AUSTIN: Natalya is calling Orth, I think? And Sokrates is just in the room with Natalya?

KEITH (as Sokrates): Hi Orth!

JACK (as Orth): Oh hey, uh, Sokrates. I've got some good news. I think we might be able to bring on a number.

KEITH (as Sokrates): How about people though?

² Sokrates uses they/them pronouns.

JACK (as Orth): Yeah, that's, yeah.

KEITH (as Sokrates): I gotcha good.

JACK (as Orth): Yeah. ha.

[Laughter]

DRE (as Natalya): Orth. Here's what you need to do.

JACK (as Orth): Oh, hey.

DRE (as Natalya): Take all non-essential personnel, move them over to Sokrates' ship. You can rearrange part of the cargo hold to serve as basically a temporary living space for these refugees.

KEITH (as Sokrates): I'm agreeing to the terms.

JACK (as Orth): You're proposing that we take on board more refugees.

DRE (as Natalya): Listen, I built this ship, I know how many people it can fit, and I know you can take on more than you're saying you can.

KEITH (as Sokrates): Oh, is Orth-- Orth, are you being slippery with me? Only one of us is the fish man here.

[Everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh boy.

ART: I'm sorry, with the voice, it's giving a real Zoidberg quality to Keith.

AUSTIN: It is!

[More laughter]

AUSTIN: Oh, jeez.

SYLVIA: Holy fuck.

JACK (as Orth): Okay, which rooms do I need to gut?

AUSTIN: So you-- go ahead.

KEITH (as Sokrates): Is gut still part of the fish joke?

JACK (as Orth): No. No it's not.

DRE: Austin, what were you gonna say?

AUSTIN: It sounds like Natalya is making a prediction that you can actually take more people. Is that true?

DRE: Yeah, but I don't know what that would fall under.

AUSTIN: I guess it's not really a prediction, that's a-- hmm.

DRE: My-- where I was gonna go with this is that like, because originally when Sokrates was talking with Orth, like Orth was like "well, I don't know, people are gonna get upset if I tell them to move onto an Apostolosian ship" Um, and I think maybe Natalya ends the call with

DRE (as Natalya): Orth, if you don't start putting your foot down, your people are no longer going to listen to you.

AUSTIN: Yep, that's good. That's good.

JACK (as Orth): Right. Okay, sure. as many people, as many people as possible. I'll get them onto it just right away.

JACK: Am I still in the room with Tea?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Good.

JACK: So Orth is just turning to Tea and is just like shaking his head really slowly.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

DRE: Uh, I think that prediction goes under *no*?

AUSTIN: Which was if you don't do it, Orth will lose control of the fleet?

DRE: Or at least, like, of the *Kingdom Come*.

AUSTIN: Okay. Well so, Orth again is-- the *Kingdom Come* is like *Orth's* ship.

JACK: It's the flagship, right? Basically.

AUSTIN: It's the flagship, yeah.

JACK: It's a tiny, useless flagship.

AUSTIN: Yeah, like there are probably 12 people on that ship total.

DRE: Maybe the prediction is "there will be growing distrust in Orth as a commander".

AUSTIN: Okay, love it. And that sounded like you're marking Crossroad? I'm guessing?

DRE: I was thinking Crossroad or maybe even Crisis. But I guess this is probably more Crossroad.

AUSTIN: I will, not warn but like, crises should be big. Marking Crisis should represent that there is active, kind of, something bad is actively happening, like it's a failure at a structural level in the Kingdom. At this point, again, you can totally do it, I don't wanna take that away from you as a thing you can do, but I don't know that this, that the scenes we've seen so far-- like the ones that we've seen so far that have marked Crisis I think have been right, where it's like, oh, there's a clear split already, but this was just like, oh, there's people talking about a split that could happen, you know.

JACK: Yeah.

DRE: So yeah, let's check Crossroad.

AUSTIN: Okay, uh, who's next? Jace.

ALI: Me! Hi.

AUSTIN: Hi. What are you thinking? You can also start thinking about what predictions you think you might wanna make, either way.

ALI: Yeah, that's where I was trying to go.

AUSTIN: And as always, think about the predictions you think are interesting from a directorial stance, not just what Jace would want.

ALI: Okay, yeah. Um.

AUSTIN: Which could be, you know, a good reason to say no, a bad reason to say yes.

ALI: Right. Yeah, cuz I was thinking that Jace's, like, feelings here, are probably like, Jace is a person who definitely has a lot of anxiety about, like, losing people on this mission, so I think that Jace is probably coming through it where like-- I don't think Jace knows about the conversation that Orth and Tea had but like, hey! If we get shot at and there's people here, that's like a huge problem. Um, so I think that it's probably-- I think the scene there would probably just be Jace alone, just kind of like thinking about this sort of stuff?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that-- is Jace-- go ahead.

ALI: Do you think they would be like grounded on-- um, what planet are we on?

AUSTIN: You're on Gemm, I think.

ALI: Gemm. Uh, where like, grounded enough that he would like see the people and be like--

AUSTIN: Sure. That's an Amuro Ray-ass thing to do is like, sneak away--

ALI: Be looking over the crowd and just being just like “oh god”

AUSTIN: Like this is a lot of people to take on? And like--

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And in some weird way they might be safer here?

ALI: Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: So is the prediction then yes-- under yes, if we take on people they will be hurt? Or is it not as hard as that?

ALI: Um...

AUSTIN: Again, as Sylvia pointed out, that's a thing that can then be changed based on activities that other characters perform going forward.

ALI: Right, right, exactly. Um. I don't know that sounds like such a harsh prediction, I was gonna say like-- I kinda wanted to put something in the *no* column just to sort of have it there.

AUSTIN: You could always create a prediction in a reaction scene later, or in a reaction scene to som-- you know, like that's--

ALI: Yeah, my hesitation is that I don't want all of Jace's, like, weird anxieties to be external, but that's the point of like the role of this game, so, then yeah, so--

AUSTIN: And that's part of why Jace is currently a Perspective, right, is that those anxieties are literally are things that Jace is seeing in the world. If Jace changes to be a Touchstone or to be a Power, then that-- those will stop being things that Jace is projecting, or like, that Jace is-- that the world reflects in Jace, and will start being things that Jace can do something about or that is reflected in a different way.

ALI: Okay, yeah. So, I'll put it in the yes column instead.

AUSTIN: [typing] So if yes, refugees will be hurt. Okay I like that scene too, of Jace walking the streets of Gemm, with like-- probably under the beanstalk of what's called in the Androids universe and the Netrunner universe, but like the space elevator, going up. Probably like took a day's leave, or probably snuck away-- who knows what Jace would do.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Alright. And then that sounds like marking Crossroad?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Tea?

SYLVIA: I think that Tea is gonna go try and talk to Addax about this, actually.

AUSTIN: Ooh, okay.

SYLVIA: Mostly because she doesn't trust Orth to do it himself.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Just seeing the state that he is in.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: And, figured, she doesn't like how he piggybacked him, but she does have a degree of empathy towards the guy,

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: So if she could take a tiny bit off his plate and also just cut straight to the heart of this matter--

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: With the Diasporan representative, she's gonna do that, so--

AUSTIN: Art, you're up for that scene?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And where is that at?

SYLVIA: Well, where would Jace kind of be like--

AUSTIN: Wait, Addax or Jace?

SYLVIA: Sorry, not J-- Addax.

AUSTIN: It's okay.

SYLVIA: Where would Addax be hanging out where he would be accessible to people, do you think?

ART: Uh...

SYLVIA: Cuz like--

ART: I mean, a lot of these places, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah, um,

ART: I mean I guess a lot of these locations are OriCon places which is probably not where Addax would be hanging out, just because that sounds awful.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yeah, so, I would say the Apostolosian bridge, the strange halls of Peace--

SYLVIA: I was gonna say, how about we do it on like, the observation deck.

AUSTIN: That's cool.

ART: Yeah, absolutely.

SYLVIA: Cuz that's a cool-- like, looking down on the planet, and like Addax could've been hanging out there when Tea kinda comes up to him. Does Addax have a title, or anything, to go with his--?

AUSTIN: Candidate.

SYLVIA: Candidate Addax?

AUSTIN: Candidate. Candidate Addax, of Peace.

SYLVIA: So I think Tea walks up to him, does a little salute, and addresses him as, um--

SYLVIA (as Tea): Candidate Addax, if you have a minute, I'd like to talk to you about something.

ART (as Addax): Of course.

SYLVIA: She's kinda clearly like a little on edge talking to him cuz she just doesn't trust his, like, intentions with Jace, cuz she thinks he's getting him into trouble, so, like, she's very professional with it.

SYLVIA (as Tea): I don't know if Orth has talked to you yet, but we're debating taking on refugees from the planet below and I know that, well, they're your people, technically speaking. Anyone from the Diaspora is your people. And, uh, we were trying to figure out a way to get them safe from what's happened, and-- do you know people on Glimmer who could come--

SYLVIA: I got the planet right, right? Its name is Glimmer?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: The tropical planet?

SYLVIA: Yeah. Um.

SYLVIA (as Tea): Do you know people on Glimmer who could come and help evacuate people who need evacuation from Gemm while they are rebuilding? We can only take on

a certain amount of people, we can't really rescue an entire planet's worth, but we wanna [sighs] do a sign of good faith towards our new partnership with the Diaspora here, and try to help as much as we can, and I think your cooperation here would really help with that.

ART: Does Addax know about Glimmer? And what's-- what lies in wait there?

AUSTIN: Yeah... so I think what Addax knows is that there's a divide in the Diaspora right now between two different perspectives-- Righteousness and Ibex think that this is an opportunity for the Diaspora to move into a more advantageous position, and the case that Ibex has made to Addax in the past, and you'll have to decide if this is convincing or not, is that the best thing for the Golden Branch Star Sector, the best way to obtain peace is through increasing Diasporan control, whereas Grace's faction is very much about maintaining the status quo. You know, when that attack hit Gemm, Righteousness and Ibex communicated that this is proof that waiting and trying to do things equally with OriCon is not going to function-- is not gonna help. This is like, this is the cost of trying to obtain peace through passivity. That in fact, to obtain peace, what you need to do is pursue it actively, and briskly, for a short amount of time, and then once you've achieved it, then you can have peace. So I don't know what Peace thinks about that-- or what Addax thinks about that.

AUSTIN (same time as Art): Or what Peace thinks about that.

ART: None of us know what Peace thinks about that.

AUSTIN: I mean, you can tell me. You can-- you and I can talk about what Peace thinks. I think we've already kind of talked about that, considering Peace's anxiety around a lot of this stuff. So--

ART: I think the charitable read on this is that Addax hopes that a display of OriCon and the Diaspora working together to save these refugees could sort of soften Ibex about--

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: --about his views? And that hopefully that could happen. Of course that's absolutely not what I would say to Tea.

AUSTIN: Right. And also, you're not a Perspective so you can't make that prediction.

ART: Right. No, I'm not-- that wasn't a prediction, that was a hope.

AUSTIN: Right. Yes.

ART (as Addax): I think that's a good idea, I think we could easily accommodate a not insubstantial amount of refugees and get them to Glimmer. I think it's very important--

ART: And this is gonna be an order, but uh--

ART (as Addax): --that we do not send advance word to Glimmer. [pause] We have to-- We don't have time to play diplomatic games, we just have to move.

SYLVIA: And Tea like smiles at that, because that's totally what she would do. She's like--

SYLVIA (as Tea): Sounds good to me, Candidate. Thank you for your time. I'll go let Orth know that you said that.

KEITH: Wait did you call him Canada?

SYLVIA: Candidate!

KEITH: Oh, okay.

SYLVIA: I don't just say Canada, just cuz I'm from Canada, Keith! You don't gotta generalize like that.

[Laughter]

AUSTIN: Oh boy. Okay, what are you marking?

SYLVIA: I'm gonna mark Crossroads, and just as a Touchstone thing, I think that the people are kind of seeing Tea kinda go over Orth's head are making them a little less confident in him.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. Interesting.

SYLVIA: And that's not at all her intention there--

AUSTIN: But that's what's happening.

SYLVIA: But that's what's happening.

AUSTIN: Do you see that just through, like, people like salute Tea in the hallways in a way that's very like "captain", but they don't say captain, but they do say like "commander", or something like that.

SYLVIA: Yeah, and I think it's more like with the actual, like, soldiers, and less with the, like, engineers and stuff? I think she's got-- like she's getting more sway with them than with, like, say, like, the navigators.

AUSTIN: Right, right. Are we back around to Addax?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What's good?

ART: I have a really good visual, but I don't know who to be talking to.

AUSTIN: What's the visual? Let's start there.

ART: So, so Jace was among the people, right? Because that's what Jace is, Jace is someone who wants to know people and stuff like that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, [sarcastically] What a weirdo.

ART: But Addax is a symbol. Addax isn't down with the people. Peace is flying in the air above the same streets Jace is--

AUSTIN: By the way, I realize we're hours in now and have not talked about what these characters look like or what their ships look like or anything? We've talked about the *Kingdom Come* a bunch before. I think the thing with Peace is Peace is gigantic. We learned that a couple episodes ago with like its big form kneeling, that's the size of a dome on Counterweight, which is to say like it's as tall as a skyscraper. It might even have like a spaceship mode? In my head, it's a transformer, right, or it's like the ship in Macross, where it's just like "oh, it's a big robot that's also a spaceship".

ART: It's Starscream, I hear you.

SYLVIA: It's a [sic] or something

AUSTIN: It's Starscream.

KEITH: Like an Iron Giant.

[Ali laughs]

AUSTIN: Like an Iron Giant, like a Starscream, like a Transformer, like the ship Macross. Yeah, any of those. Is it in ship form, or is it in--

KEITH: Matlock (?) form.

AUSTIN: It's in Matlock (?) form.

[Laughter]

ART: Yeah, it has to be right? Because that's the more inspiring-- no one's like "oh, there's a ship", but like, there's Peace.

KEITH: Some people do that, I've done that.

AUSTIN: Right, right. But what Art just said answers the core question of this entire game, which is "we could have made them look like anything, but we made them with human faces".

ART: To be comforting, that's the answer. Season over.

AUSTIN: [noncommittal] Eh. It might be.

KEITH: No, I've been inside that robot, it was not comforting.

ART: (same time as Keith) This has been Friends at the Table, a presentation of Streamfriends and Runbutton,

AUSTIN: Yeah, good.

ART: I'm Austin Walker. I'm at GiantBomb.

AUSTIN: That's not true.

ART: at austin underscore walker,

AUSTIN: That's not also true. None of this is true.

ART: Come hang out with me.

AUSTIN: That's what I say all the time.

ART: [laughing] Come to my house and just knock at the door.

[Laughter]

AUSTIN: [voice breaking] Don't do that please.

ALI: Next episode, Jacqui and Aria's first date!

AUSTIN: No! That's also not-- you're a different person! What-- okay, what is-- is there anyone else there, or is it just an Addax scene? It's totally fine if it is.

ART: I don't want it to be an Addax scene because I think we need a few more predictions here?

AUSTIN: Mm, okay.

KEITH: Sorry, what's the scene?

AUSTIN: Addax is flying over the remains of Gemm and like trying to-- like as a symbol of the Diaspora. So is this happening in Peace then?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: But I don't know who would be on Peace? Or I mean we could do the cut-out--

AUSTIN: I mean you can invite anybody.

KEITH: It could be a cockpit scene with Jace and Panther.

AUSTIN: It could be.

KEITH: [laughing] Flying together holding hands.

AUSTIN: No, no, no, it can't be, kind of the setup here is that Jace is on the ground while this is happening. Like, the visual that Art described was the shot of Jace on the ground panning up to Peace in the sky, away from people.

ALI: Yeah, I was think that-- so like, Jace is probably like in the crowd as people react to Peace. SO the prediction there would be--

AUSTIN: Oh, that's good.

ALI: Yeah. Um, that like, if we don't take the refugees, then it will make the people of Gemm will feel betrayed by the Diaspora.

AUSTIN: We actually should make it bigger than the people of Gemm, right? Because like, you're gonna move on from Gemm,

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: It should be that the people of the Diaspora, will feel-- or some people, a substantial amount of the civilian population of the Diaspora will feel betrayed, or-- what's another word here?

ART: Abandoned.

AUSTIN: Abandoned.

ALI: Should it be more specific? Cuz like--

AUSTIN: No. We need to paint in broad brushes, or it's very easy to not care about the results. Because we're not gonna come back to Gemm, right?

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Gemm is gonna be done when we move on, and--

ALI: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean?

ALI: Well, what I mean is, it would--

KEITH: It would go viral.

ALI: Would they-- [laughs] would they feel betrayed by the Diaspora as a whole, or like, by Peace specifically, who's like this war hero, like, the number one guy.

AUSTIN: That's up to you.

ALI: Okay. Because I feel like that's probably more interesting?

AUSTIN: Sure, yeah. Including main characters is definitely--

ALI: Okay.

ART: Yeah, I like that as a scene that like, we get that information, it doesn't have to be like talking, but that's the juxtaposition? I like these shots more than I like any dialogue we would've done.

AUSTIN: Totally fine, that is how some good shows work. Okay. And Art, what are you checking?

ART: I'm checking Crossroads.

AUSTIN: Well, that's a scene. That's a Crossroad. Step one. [pause] Is the game over?

JACK: No. Probably for a large number of people.

[pause]

AUSTIN: Step two. Set the stage. Read aloud the Crossroad and all the items in the yes and no columns to remind everyone what's at stake. Will the Kingdom take on refugees from Gemm? If yes, there is an order in place from Orth, which is we will take as many as we can and drop them off at Glimmer. There is a prediction, which is from Jace, which is refugees on board will wind up hurt. And another order, this one from.. Addax? Is that right? Yeah. Which is do not tell Glimmer that the refugees are on their way. Under no, there is a growing distr-- so if the Kingdom decides not to take on refugees from Gemm-- there will be a growing distrust in Orth as a commander, and similarly, a growing distrust of Peace and Addax, people will feel betrayed by them. So. Decision, Power. Orth and Addax, yes or no?

JACK: Yes.

ART: Yes?

AUSTIN: Uh huh. That seemed pretty... halvesie.

ART: Yeah, I mean, I-- yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um. Step four, orders, from Power. Give me a shot of the thing you gave an order for coming true. So Orth?

JACK: So I guess we haven't arrived at Glimmer yet, but--

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: You know, um, engineering officers and, you know, low-ranking soldiers board escape vessels and like pilot ships and vessels and things and peel off from the side of the *Seventh Sun* and the Apostolosian ship, Peace—drop down towards Peace on the planet below, like one little tiny ship drops off—actually no, maybe the *Kingdom Come* drops down to the planet to pick people up themselves. And inside, Orth is just like standing in the portion of the command module of the *Kingdom Come*, just like holding a file, and a cabinet, from one thing and just start pushing it to one side, and putting stuff into overhead lockers and things.

AUSTIN: I like it. Order, do not tell Glimmer that they're on their way. How are we gonna show that, Art?

ART: It's a scene of Addax kind of like, you know, refugees are coming on, he's hurrying them on, you know, we see him later—

AUSTIN: Nice.

ART: He's pushing, there's haste, he wants to get moving. He's like clapping his hands, he's pointing forward, He's-- Peace is flying out ahead. Like, people have to keep up.

AUSTIN: Right. Alright. [pause] Predictions. For each prediction on the winning side of a Crossroad, the Perspective player who controls that prediction resolves it. Does that prediction come true? Jace.

ALI: Probably?

AUSTIN: Decide whether your prediction comes true, you cannot change your prediction or make a new one, you're simply picking yes or no. Things might have happened that have changed your mind, you can point to something we've already seen that averted this outcome or simply say you were wrong. If you don't have this Perspective anymore, you have no control over the prediction, blah blah blah. If it happens, narrate your character seeing the prediction coming true right now. Remember, like, we're working at whatever scale you want. So this could be any time during this upcoming traveling, you know?

ALI: I mean "hurt" can also be vague in a weird way, where like Glimmer wasn't expecting them, so maybe they're not in the place to be able to take on all of these people, even if it was only a few hundred.

AUSTIN: Right, right, sure. Uh-- Mm, that's the thing that's tough about that I would say, is that like, a few hundred might not be enough to where it's— I also, I don't know, I feel like they might need to get hurt. My GM gut says like, don't let you off without an explosion happening, also without like, a fight scene, that you get to describe.

ALI: I mean do you think that, like, stuff would pop off here?

AUSTIN: You know, we've kind of established that that's the thing Apostolos can do. Right, the thing with their fleet is at any time that you're moving, they can hit you. [pause] It doesn't mean they all die or anything, but it might mean that they get hit pretty hard.

ALI: Right, like, they at least-- a battle happens while we are doing this, right?

AUSTIN: Right. In fact, maybe it happens during-- how about that, like, maybe it happens during the loading process of like-- Apostolos-- Apostolosian agents catch wind that shit is popping off,

or that things-- that they're being loaded, and they're like "nah", like "this is a moment for us to attack and hurt them".

KEITH: Yeah, they're probably still close by.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Right, they're still close by and, like, they're-- they kinda wanna make that show?

AUSTIN: Right, totally. On the other hand, there is not growing distrust in Orth or in Peace and Addax, so maybe you guys all handle it really well.

ALI: Yeah. Fair enough.

AUSTIN: Also there's just like a really cool-- I just like the notion of a really good fight scene around a space elevator, like, around sunset? You know, that seems right.

ALI: [laughs] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. Sorry, I have to keep these things marked up. Um, and then, popular reaction: Touchstone. We should've done this last time, I just realized. Each Touchstone decides whether everything that's happened during the Crossroad resolution has brought the Kingdom closer to disaster or calmed the situation down. Show what your character thinks about what has happened, say where you are and what you think, this shows us what the people of the Kingdom feel. We should've done that last time but I completely forgot, my bad.

KEITH: Are we gonna do it for last time, retroactively?

AUSTIN: No, let's do it for this time, let's just go forward here. So, Touchstones?

KEITH: I was wondering what my job was supposed to be!

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's on me, that's totally on me.

SYLVIA: Do you wanna go first Keith?

KEITH: Um, yeah. I think um-- I think that it brings the Kingdom closer together--

AUSTIN: Okay, let's just talk about what Sokrates is doing and feeling. Because that is like-- instead of just being like "oh, this is what's happening with the people", show us a scene with Sokrates, and that, in effect, illustrates the everyday person.

KEITH: Uh, I think that-- I guess a part of it is specific to Apostolos, the Apostolosians that are with me, I guess is seeing, you know, warships from my former empire coming and just like killing a bunch of civilians so they can't esc-- specifically because they were pissed off at someone tried to escape, and feeling kind of bummed out about that, and bummed out that, you know, their rescue mission was maybe even a few minutes too late to be as effective as possible, but also feeling glad that we did get a few hundred people onto the ship and feeling good about, you know, feeling good that everyone involved can feel that they saved somebody.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Okay, what about Tea? No, is Tea Perspective or is T-- no, Tea is Touchstone, yeah.

SYLVIA: No, Tea is Touchstone. I think I kinda touched on this at the end of my last scene. I think it generally brings people closer together, just because it's a like, one, because it's a good decision to try and help people, and two, like, I think that the, like, OriCon soldiers who had second thoughts about the Diasporans having to fight alongside them, because I think this is the first ,like, big fight that this coalition force has had, really.

AUSTIN: So you think this has been generally a unifying event for the group?

SYLVIA: I think so, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: I think specifically, like, seeing people like Jace and the Queen's Gambit fighting alongside a divine has been a real moment of like "oh, this thing could work", and it also reminds them who their real enemy is.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: So yeah, I think it unifies.

AUSTIN: So when two Touchstones-- it feels like you guys are in agreement? Is that true, basically?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah...

AUSTIN: So that means the things that the things that you're showing are not just true for your own private little groups. Like, everybody-- it might be the Apostolosians who we first see with that feeling of like "I fucking can't believe that this is happening to us", but actually everybody in the fleet feels that way, or it's the general overwhelming feeling. And the same thing for the feeling of being brought together, is that like, the Apostolosians in the fleet do feel closer to the others now. In other words, we're not moving closer to Crisis here. That would be-- if you disagreed, we would increase our Crisis count by two. You can also increase the Crisis count if you think that's true. Like, you can make that choice of saying like "this event has pushed us closer to Crisis", do either of you think that?

KEITH: No?

SYLVIA: No, I don't think so, I think we probably handled it okay.

AUSTIN: Okay. Reflection... one at a time-- sorry I just realized we skipped like the final three things here that we should've done last time.

[Art and Sylvia laugh]

AUSTIN: Step seven, reflection. One at a time, read your wish or fear aloud. Is that still what your character is thinking about? If not, you can change it to a different wish or fear, including a change from wish to fear or vice versa. Plus, what made your attitude change? So, let's start at the top with Addax. What is your wish or fear?

ART: My fear-- or, my wish is that the Kingdom will end Apostolos terror permanently. Yeah, I'm still wishing that.

AUSTIN: Okay, Jace?

ALI: My fear is... uh... that the Kingdom will do more harm than good to the people of the Golden Sector, that still stands.

AUSTIN: Okay. Tea? Uh, sorry I'm looking at the list in the Kingdom's characters thing, not at the turn order, which is--

SYLVIA: My fear is that the everyday workers in the Kingdom will be ignored by the higher ups, and I think that's still true but can I add a bit to it?

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVIA: She's additionally worried after hearing this about the suicide mission from Orth that the people-- the higher ups have deliberately sent them to their deaths, and she's just worried about-- worried about that, obviously, she's worried about her people dying.

AUSTIN: Right. Orth?

JACK: My fear is that the Kingdom will be used as a pawn in larger conflicts. Absolutely.

AUSTIN: Okay. Natalya?

DRE: My fear is that the Kingdom's new tech will hurt the sector in the end, I think that's still true.

AUSTIN: Okay. And Sokrates.

KEITH: My wish is that the Kingdom will be a symbol of unity for the whole sector, that's also still true.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. And we will check Time Passes. Right, check a box on the Time Passes card, every Crossroad brings us closer to a break in the action. Sorry, I will actually go back and re-check another one of those for the last time, when we skipped that by mistake. So now we're up to three Time Passes. So, lemme paint a picture for the start of the next one. So, the fleet, the Kingdom, arrives at Glimmer.

JACK: So we're going straight to Glimmer?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you fly over Slighter, or around it or something, to Glimmer. You kind of uh-- what's the word I'm looking for-- patched up the ships and the people who were injured. You probably lost some of the refugees in that attack, but overall it was a successful defense. And despite the fact that they were hurt, I think the refugees have generally decided that you are trustworthy and a good thing, and hopefully they will spread that forward. When you arrive at Glimmer, your question is-- actually I'll set it up a little better than this. [sigh] You arrive, with the refugees. You're allowed to dock, but no one is allowed to leave the space station, or like, the kind of like, terminal, including the refugees-- they're not allowed out yet. And it becomes very clear very quickly that Ibex is willing to let the refugees stay, but on a condition. And this is where I'm going to completely hack this game and start issuing my own prescriptions-- not prescriptions, Jesus Christ--

[Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: My predictions. Oh boy.

ALI: You're gonna taste some of your medicine.

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly. I need some medicine.

SYLVIA: I mean yeah, everybody here is sick, so--

AUSTIN: Which is will the Kingdom admit Ibex and Righteousness to join? [MUSIC STARTS: The Long Way Around]

JACK: Oh my god.

SYLVIA: Oh god.

AUSTIN: If yes, the refugees get to stay on Glimmer.

JACK: Okay, Austin Walker.

AUSTIN: The situation is like this, the situation is such. Ibex knows that it's one thing to kind of have a difference of opinion with someone like Grace and her candidate, but it's another thing to, like, move into their territory. But if Ibex gets to say that Righteousness and Ibex are part of your group, then he gets unfettered access to the rest of the Northwestern part of the Golden Branch Sector, and that's what he would like, in exchange for giving these people a home. Let's take a quick break, while we think about how to respond to that.

ART: There's no no?

AUSTIN: I'm-- that's not-- we'll figure out what the no predictions are, together.