

The Road to PALISADE 02: HOUNDS Pt. 2

Transcriber: anachilles#0191 (Live at the Table version); thedreadbiter (recap and edits)

Austin: The Road to PALISADE is a show about war, politics, religion, revolutionary violence, and the many consequences thereof. For a full list of content warnings, please check the episode description.

Jack (as Véronique): What happens when we disagree on something? On the right course of action.

Art (as Fealty): It really depends.

Jack (as Véronique): I know we've been together for a long time, and... c-can I trust you?

Art (as Fealty): Of course you can.

[["Permanent Peace"](#) by Jack de Quidt starts playing]

Jack (as Véronique): You're not going to tell the Principality something that I tell you in confidence?

Art (as Fealty): I would never violate our oath to each other.

Jack (as Véronique): I don't think we can tell them about it. From what they've told us about it, and from how hard they've been looking for it, and... [nervous laughing] It doesn't seem like anybody else has seen it. I don't think that this is something for them.

[cut]

Jack (as Véronique): How did we--how did we take out our own Hallows?

Art (as Fealty): You're the pilot, Anchor.

Jack (as Véronique): They're--they're *our* team, they're *our* soldiers! We're the divine Fealty! How did we do that?

Art (as Fealty): We are a collection of many oaths.

[cut]

Austin (as Gucci): You shouldn't have built a throne. My people, they just don't like 'em.

Jack (as Véronique): Alright! I'll go, I'll go. Let me get back to my divine.

Austin (as Gucci): I don't think we can let you do that, Véronique.

Jack (as Véronique): You can't kill me.

Austin (as Gucci): We can keep you here. And we *could* kill you, but I understand your point. Frankly you're worth more to us alive. They want you *bad* out there. They say you're a traitor.

Jack (as Véronique): I can't be. They're making a mistake. I am the elect, Fealty. And my loyalty lies with the Stel.

[cut]

Art (as Fealty): I have oaths that predate the Principality and I intend to honor them.

Austin (as Fortitude): Whatever you are keeping from us could be used to save us.

Art (as Fealty): I owe a debt older than the Principality. I owe my fealty to the people of the Mirage.

["Permanent Peace" concludes]

Austin: Welcome to Live at the Table, an actual play livestream focused on critical world-building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I'm your host, Austin Walker. Joining me today, Arthur Martinez-Tebbel.

Art: Hi. You can find me on Twitter at [@atebbel](#). I don't have a shtick today. Sorry.

Austin: It's all right, no worries.

Art: I thought I had one, and I don't.

Austin: We already did a bunch of shtick in the pre-game. Also joining us, Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hi. You can find me on Twitter at [@notquitereal](https://twitter.com/notquitereal), and buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

Austin: Today, we are going to continue our game of HOUNDS by Tyler Crumrine, which is available at Possible Worlds — by Possible Worlds, and I think it's at Possibleworldsgames.com? I just typed this out. That's right, possibleworldsgames.com/games. And hey, before we jump back into this story, I just wanted to shout out that we have a new Bluff City arc going up, starting today, the first episode of which is character creation for the game Mall Kids, which I'm sure that I say, who made — Matthew Gravelyn, right, in the episode itself I'm sure I shout that out. Mall Kids was extremely fun. I'm going to tell you right now, this is a longer arc than you might think. You might think, “now, they're just going to play a short little game about kids hanging out on the pier at Bluff City.”

Jack: Oh my god.

Art: Oh my goodness.

Austin: But what if you, what if every... you know how sometimes, I'll be like, “oh, I think we're going to wrap up soon?” And then we go for like 7 hours longer?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: What if that's just how we all were for this entire game, and we just — I mean, at least we're very honest, I think, during this game, that we know very clearly that we don't have a good handle on how long a session is going to go for.

Jack: Here's what I'll say about this Bluff City game. At several points during the opening of this game, you will think, “ah, this is what this arc is about.” And I promise you, it is not about any of that stuff. There is a point in episode one where Art pitches an idea, and you can see the horrible goblin light enter all of our eyes. [Austin wheezes]

Austin: And at that point, I still don't think it's clear for sure that's what it's going to be about. And then, we also end up having, I just want to say... if you like horse content, there's some great horse content, including a live reaction to some true Americana horse content, some true

American classic horse content that Jack didn't know about, coming up. I think that'll probably make it into the episode, if it doesn't, it'll be in a clapcast, but I'm pretty sure it's too — it's a load-bearing conversation, I would say. So I suspect it'll make it in.

Jack: Get the second, our second official Bluff City horse after the excellent horse in season one.

Austin: Right, yeah, that's true.

Art: And you're saying that's —

Austin: No, no, no.

Art: That's not in the one that's out today.

Austin: Definitely not. Art, that was like one of the last things we introduced to that story. That story was long.

Art: I don't, I don't remember what that was from. It was among the funniest things that's ever happened to me, I don't wanna like tease it too hard.

Austin: There was something that happened in the first full game session that absolutely broke me. I don't remember what it is anymore, but I'm excited to find out again. But I remember just laughing the hardest I've ever laughed —

Art: Oh, I know what you're talking — I can only help you a little bit, and of course I won't say it here —

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Art: But I do, I do know the moment you're referring to. It's a —

Austin: Do you want to type something in the chat for me to —

Art: I think it's, Keith has a want, and the table really comes together to frustrate that want.

Jack: Yes.

Art: [laughing]

Austin: [laughing uproariously for some time] I remember now, uh-huh. It's really good. Oh, fuck. It's a good, it's a good arc. I hope people enjoy it. If you're listening to this —

Jack: It is, without a doubt, the stupidest arc of Bluff City we have ever made.

Art: Uh-huh.

Austin: And if you are listening to this in what will be the main feed of the podcast, and you're like, "what are they talking about?" Well, we have a Patreon where you can go support us at, at [friendsatthetable.cash](https://www.patreon.com/friendsatthetable), and as part of access to that, you get access to monthly live games, to a campaign called Bluff City, to a bunch of behind-the-scenes stuff like Drawing Maps — again, a kind of monthly, kind of running post-mortem on the season, that's what it is right now. It may also go back to being a little bit of preparatory stuff, as it was before PARTIZAN for a little while, and you can get access to most of that stuff for like 5 bucks. And for 1 dollar, you can get access to the clapcasts, which are, if you love it when we have weird diatribes about Russian literature and the nature of time, and horses, one buck gives you access to stories like that or conversations like that.

Art: And if you're listening to this in the present. You could, I mean, the present in the future, the future's present.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: What?

Austin: My favorite New Earth Hegemony character, Future's Present.

Art: If you're listening to this on the main feed, there's a really good chance is that the Bluff City we were just talking about is already out.

Austin: 100 percent, will be. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That'll be done by the time this hits the main feed. So you can just go join up, listen to all of Bluff, and the whole arc we're talking about will be there, so enjoy that.

Art: Yeah. Sorry you missed this.

Austin: Wait, what?

Art: Sorry that they missed this live, because they're in the future, we already recorded.

Austin: Oh, sure. But they, there will be other non-PALISADE related lives happening.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And I should say this to the people listening now, we are going to still intersperse some other lives probably as we do The Road to PALISADE. The Road to PALISADE games will go in the main feed. We, we — you know, we've talked about this with The Road to PARTIZAN. It was like, there's such important world-building stuff and fun world-building stuff that we want to make available for everyone who listens to a main campaign, we don't want to cut that off. So this is really like, super early access. And you know, sometimes people say something in chat and we go like, "oh yeah, you know, it's fun to hear you get shouted in a chat," or it is for me, when this happens for me with other things I support. But the other live games tend to stay in that live Patreon feed. That's not going to change any time soon, probably, because we think it's a really good bonus for folks who can support us. All right. I think we should probably get back to it. Do either of you want to summarize the... both of you want to help summarize what happened last time we played HOUNDS? Who are you, who are you playing?

Art: We stacked some great dice.

Austin: We did, we did. It's simply true that we did, huh?

Jack: So this is the story of a Divine called Fealty, who is a divine of, at least nominally, Stel Nideo, on the side of the Curtain, following the events of PARTIZAN. And their Elect, a young woman called Véronique, who used to be a jock but is now a child soldier, in the grand tradition of elects.

Austin: Is an adult at this point, but was a child soldier, right?

Jack: Yes. Véronique is like 23, 24, but sort of entered the elect program when she was I guess 16 or 17?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh... we have discovered the location of a way into the Twilight Mirage.

Austin: It's worth — go ahead, I'll let you finish your sentence, you finish your sentence and I'll jump in.

Jack: Recognizing that this is information of sort of transformative, potentially dangerous significance, instead of returning it to the Stels, we have fled with this information, causing a sort of system-wide manhunt to begin, of the two of us.

Austin: Yeah. The thing I want to add is, two clarification points. One is, of course the Principality knows where the Mirage is. It's big. We've talked of it as being big —

Jack: It's like knowing where the ocean is.

Austin: It's like knowing where the ocean — well, like, you know, there's parts of the world where like, I wouldn't know how to get to the ocean from there, you know what I mean? But the Mirage is big enough that like, and it's inside of Nideo territory, you know. It's like being able to have a helicopter in Manhattan, and not being able to place where Central Park is, right? Like, no, you can tell, it's the part that has no buildings, that's where Central Park is. What makes Palisade, which is this world on the kind of very edge of the Mirage, literally the Mirage kind of laps at it like a shore, uh... or in some cases it swallows it whole, I imagine it kind of happens in ebbs and flows, uh, uh, waxes and wanes, whatever you want to use. Palisade is at a point, and gives a sort of staging ground from which further exploration into the Mirage would be possible, and potentially invasion, by the Principality, specifically by the Curtain, who is, who is chasing you currently. Uh... I just wanted to make that clear, because it's silly to be like, "oh, they can't find the Mirage." They know where the Mirage is. But getting into the Mirage has always proved difficult, and time-intensive in the past. So, they want a quicker way in, and believe that Palisade, this place that they left 5,000 years ago, or 4,900 years ago, or whatever, for some reason has access, or could at least allow access into it more quickly. So that's one clarification thing. The second thing is... Art, do you want to talk about who you're playing, what Divine you are?

Art: Yeah, I'm playing the Divine Fealty, which is an old Divine.

Austin: Right.

Art: I've written for form — beautiful and terrible as the Cheesecake Factory.

Austin: Love it.

Art: Yeah, which, uh, if you're just joining us now, isn't going to make a lot of sense.

Austin: And, you're an old Divine, in the sense that you've come from between the eras of COUNTER/Weight and the Twilight Mirage, right?

Art: Mm-hm.

Austin: Which is interesting, because, a thing that we talked about briefly means that, and use this to color your relationship with the Mirage however you want. Either, you were part of the Divine Fleet, died, and were resurrected post-Twilight Mirage, or, you weren't part of the Twilight Mirage Divine, you know, that culture, until after Twilight Mirage. You were somewhere else in the galaxy, and then came to the Mirage. And I don't know what the answer there is. But we know this because, and I guess I'll say this right now, we're going to probably continue to spoil COUNTER/Weight and Twilight Mirage and PARTIZAN as we do PALISADE stuff. I think this is the first time in the Divine cycle that we've been like, "you should go back and listen to the other stuff." You should at least go back and listen to PARTIZAN. It's really freeing to see that in this space, because we've never had a season where I've had that as like a, outside of like the Hieron continuum, right? That's not the official name of the Hieron seasons, I think it's just called the Seasons of Hieron... the Hieron continuum.

Jack: [laughing] The Hieron Continuum.

Austin: Uh, ha-ha, but, you know, it was expected that by the time you got to Spring in Hieron, you'd listened to Autumn and Winter and Marielda. That has not been the case for PARTIZAN for the Twilight Mirage. We really wanted those to be places you could just jump onto if you wanted to. Now, did we succeed at that? I think we did for PARTIZAN. I think PARTIZAN is a really digestible show. I think Twilight Mirage is like a fucking beast, but I've come around on it quite a bit and really love it. And at this point, like, I want to make a show in this universe where we get to be as grounded in the setting as we can. And so, given that, at the beginning of Twilight Mirage, we know, there are 8 Divines left in the Divine Fleet. None of them are Fealty. Uh... [laughing] and we know what happens to those Divines. And so either, Art, as you play today, you can think about what Fealty's relationship was there. Was Fealty one of these Divines that was part of that fleet of 300 who died at some point? Uh, somehow? And then was brought back, somehow retaining the memory? Or, was, was Fealty someone who existed elsewhere in the galaxy, and then was drawn to the Mirage for some reason? I wanted to clarify those two world-building things, because I think those were... as the, one of the things that is kind of my

job to do, I always reference this, is, in both Action Movie World, and in Worldwide Wrestling RPG, they have these great lines about how the job of the GM or the director or whatever the name in Worldwide Wrestling RPG is for the GM, is to make sense of things after they happen, and to run wild — sorry, allow players to run wild, and then find contexts that situate those inside of the fiction after the fact, and make it seem as if it was planned the whole time. So in this case, it's super interesting to me that Fealty has, which you revealed at the end of the episode, an oath to the Mirage. I, Austin Walker, have no idea what that oath is, or when it began. Art might have some ideas about that, but I wanted to situate —

Art: Absolutely not.

Austin: Okay, well, we'll figure it out as we go, right? Uh, so, just wanted to situate those things, and see how it, how it goes. Uh, we have crossed out two of our numbers in HOUNDS. I'll bring us over to the HOUNDS screen. Actually, you know what? There's something more important, Art. Art, it's time for you to make some more choices. [anticipatory gasp] What table are we playing with today?

Art: Yeah?

Austin: Unless, Jack, do you want to make these choices this time, since Art did last time?

Jack: Uh... uh, could I have screen share, and then I'll see how I feel?

Austin: Oh, yes, I keep forgetting about, yeah, because you're not able to load into the game, right? Uh, screen, Tabletop Playground... boom. Is that working? Yeah.

Art: I don't see the game on the join...

Austin: Well it's not launched yet, I'm still making it.

Jack: Oh, lord, okay. Can we have Green Bay's oblong-shaped table?

Austin: Poker table. Yes. And now we need a second here. We used Station last time. What are you thinking here? Given the events, at the end of the last session, Véronique and Fealty came to the gate of Partizan, which, if they could get through it, they'd be able to get past the reach of the Curtain, disappear into Orion space, and maybe not live happily ever after — I don't know what their lives look like after that, but, reach some sort of safety. Uh, they were turned away in violent combat with the Divine... Fortitude, is that right?

Jack: Another old Divine, a COUNTER/Weight era divine.

Austin: Yeah, a COUNTER/Weight era divine. Fortitude, right?

Jack: I think it was.

Austin: I think it is.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Okay. And so, you now, that was where we left. You are fleeing without your statuary, right? Your autonomous statuary. And Gucci Garantine is still being held within you inside some sort of prison, or... maybe not a prison, maybe just a room. I don't know, you tell me. So that's where we are. What fits the vibe here, as you, as you go on your escape, Véronique?

Jack: I think it might be square?

Austin: Square. You like square? All right. I'm going to hit play. All right, let's... yeah, okay. Oh, this is kind of nice. It's still just a big picture.

Jack: This is very... Kesh.

Austin: Yeah, sure, sure sure sure. Art, this should now be available under the same name and password as last time, let me know if you need me to paste that to you again. It should just be in our chat, though.

Art: Yeah, I was just going to scroll up.

Austin: In the meantime, I'm going to drop... some dice.

Jack: If you missed the first part of the this game, I recommend going back and watching it, because it's a really good game. But in short, what we are trying to do is stack an increasingly precarious tower of dice, with narrative consequences happening when the dice tower falls.

Austin: Mm-hm. Uh... does anyone remember whose turn it was last time? [dice rolling noises]

Jack: I think that this is as much a narrative decision as it is, I think it should be either Art's as Fealty in flight —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Or it should be yours, Austin, embodying Fortitude and the, sort of the pursuing force.

Austin: Yeah. Ada says, "I thought it was more between COUNTER/Weight and TM. The 30k was just the continuous Divine Fleet culture." That's correct. It's 20,000 years between COUNTER/Weight and the beginning of the Divine Fleet, then 30k from the point at which the Divine Fleet begins, a point of time that's so incomprehensible to us that a single society could maintain itself, that you might start to feel like, yeah, somewhere in the middle there, people would be like, "yeah, maybe we are a utopia." And yet, also a drop in the bucket in the arc of human history, even just all of the human history that already exists, not counting the 150,000 years or whatever between now and COUNTER/Weight. So... or longer. Because we have no idea how long it is between us and Chital, between us and Animal Out of Context. We have no idea.

Jack: Like an impossibly long time ago.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. We have no idea, I guess. So yeah, I guess if you, if you count between now and then as part of the COUNTER/Weight and the Divine Cycle timeline, maybe it is a million years? I don't, I don't know.

Art: I mean, we seem to have discovered that we can do about...

Austin: 11, right?

Art: 11, yeah.

Austin: Hey, do me a favor and hit control, and then mouse reel up exactly once, and tell me what your number says. I think it'll say 11.

Art: 7.

Austin: 7. It went up to —

Art: To 11?

Austin: No, no, no. It went up to 7 just now?

Art: When I scroll-wheeled up it went from 6 centimeters to 7 centimeters.

Austin: Okay, then let's stay at 6. Okay, I must've gone way up by mistake. All right, we're good. Uh... just wanted to make sure that we're locked. All right, so Jack, I believe it is —

Art: Oh, wow, that is... I did a 3 there.

Austin: A 3 what?

Art: I stacked two, and the third one fell.

Austin: Oh, incredible.

Art: We might get to 6 if that happens.

Austin: Uh-huh. Uh, so yeah, I guess that's the last thing we're going to say is, uh... do we want to say, we're not going to play until 6? To 6 full failures? Do we want to pick a lower number, given that we don't want to go until 11 PM tonight? 11 PM Eastern.

Jack: Probably, right?

Austin: Yeah, I think so.

Jack: Begin with a lower number, and then if the tower starts falling extremely quickly, go —

Art: Yeah, we could always say, "well, one more," but...

Austin: Right, right, right.

Jack: Shall we aim for 4? Shall we say —

Austin: Yeah. That if we hit 4... so, for people listening, and as a reminder for HOUNDS, there's a tracker at the bottom of this that has 123456. Whenever the tower falls, the highest — the number that has the most, uh, the most dice that have fallen over... so if there are mostly ones, you would cross out 1. If there are mostly twos, you would cross out 2. If there's a tie, you go to the highest one. If the highest one is already crossed out, you go to the next — sorry, if the most, if the number of dice that has most — the number that has shown up the most on dice has already been crossed out, you go is to the one that has shown up the second-most times. If that's already crossed out, you go to the third. If all of the ones that show up are already crossed-out, then hey, you failed, but you got out by the skin of your teeth, and you don't have to take more stress. So, yeah, I think let's say, let's say the total is 4 of these crossed out. Uh...

we're at two now, so we're halfway there. I think that that probably should give us, that should give us a reasonable amount of something. So... so, Jack, I think it is your turn.

Jack: I think that it just like, this episode opens on like, the, the... the body of the Divine with all its statues gone.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Just sort of tumbling through space at speed, in almost, you can't really have like freefall in that sense, but it's just, it's absolutely in flight. Uh, and inside is Véronique, kind of grimly holding onto like a loose strap or a piece of metal or something that came loose from the, the, the attack by Fortitude. And I think we've, how long do you think we've been going for, Art? How long do you think Fealty would just turn and run for?

Art: Uh... do you mean since... since, since this last thing, or since the beginning of this game?

Jack: Oh, since the attack by Fortitude, sort of the escape from that.

Art: Sure. Uh, I mean, we could really draw, I think the only limitations we've already like established, that like, food is a...

Austin: Mmm...

Art: Resource, that we need.

Austin: True.

Art: So we can't be like, it's been 3 months, which is like, where I immediately went to. But like, it's 3 months, you're both dead and I'm just...

Jack: But it's like days of moving at speed, of, of, going at almost like a full run.

Art: Mm-hm.

Jack: And I think Véronique is, has been sleeping like, fitfully, you know, getting an hour and waking up. And I think that she and Gucci are both looking pretty haggard. Uh... and I think there comes a point where Véronique just sort of says —

Jack (as Véronique): Anchor, we have got to stop.

Art (as Fealty): We have to outrun them.

Jack (as Véronique): We can't outrun them forever, they're going to keep coming.

Art (as Fealty): Okay, Anchor. Where do you want to go?

Art: I'm not doing this voice right and it's bugging me. I'll get it, don't worry.

Austin: You were close, that was almost it, that was almost it.

Jack: You've got time. Yeah, we're near the, we're near the beginning.

Jack (as Véronique): I don't know, all the, all the outputs of the displays are, are off, and I can't read the direct output anymore. What are we close to?

Art (as Fealty): I mean, the nice thing about space is, most of the time you're not close to anything.

Jack: [laughing] Oh, great, okay. Uh...

Jack (as Véronique): Can you send out a signal? Is there anything, is there anything nearby? A place we could stop and get food, a place we could hide, somewhere we could fortify? Do you want to make another kingdom and try that again?

Art (as Fealty): No, I think we need a new idea.

Art: That's a little too HAL-9000.

Austin: This sounds like an obstacle to me.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: What if we take it one step further, where it's like... something I've been thinking about a lot is like, the way police make those blockades that uh... they put up like several at once, you know? Anticipating that if you get through one, you won't be able to get through the other?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Uh, like, is there the equivalent of a police car trap or something being set up down the line? Has word gone through gates ahead of us?

Austin: See, that to me feels like what comes after deciding where we're going. I mean, I guess we could hit it right now, but, but, because no matter we go, we're going to run into it, right?

Jack: Going to stumble into a trap.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, I'm wary of just being like, "let's look for food again," because that's kind of what we did in this — debris field.

Austin: Well, I don't know that it's, "let's look for food," again. It's, "where are we going?"

Jack: It's like, "let's find a position."

Austin: Yeah, or it's, yeah, "where do we take a moment of breath?" And I guess it is look for food again, but it is also like, "where do we lay low for a second?"

Jack: I've got an idea for a place we could —

Art: Where do we hide our giant robot?

Jack: Where we could hide our giant robot.

Austin: Uh-huh?

Jack: What about like a space hulk? Have we had like a massive, dead spaceship?

Austin: I feel like that was part of what was happening in the debris field, but we didn't say in that sense, right? So yeah, I think we could do that.

Jack: Like a prison ship or something, some just, like a ship... I'm thinking of like the Planet Crackers from Dead Space, almost. What if we notice, on arrays, or on signals or something, that there's this ruined ship, uh, surrounded by kind of —

Austin: Some like abandoned terraforming station or something, massive.

Jack: Yes. You know, it makes Fealty look small.

Austin: Right.

Art: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, and the obstacle is, what is this, who does it belong to, is it safe, and can we find something there to sort of make defensible or get resources from?

Austin: Uh, my suggestion is, I don't know how, you'll have to tell me, how, how Gucci would have overheard this, uh, but she says she knows a place. She floats like, straight up, given all of this still, floats —

Austin (as Gucci): We have a base near here.

Art: No, no.

Austin: We'll see what the dice say. I mean, you'll have to make a decision, also, Jack, but...

Jack: [laughing] Sure, yeah. Okay. My approach is, uh, we land Fealty inside the hull of the terraformer, so its shape obscures our own. And, uh, Gucci and I, uh, leave. To explore.

Art:: Can I, uh, can I amend that idea? Oh, why don't we cross that bridge when we get there?

Austin: You have a third one.

Art: I have, uh, uh, I think I have, if we do that idea, I have a follow up.

Austin: Mm.

Art: I like that one, is the thing.

Austin: Mm-hm. Swing wide, swing big, make some other wild-ass bullshit.

Art: Yeah, uh... okay, what if, instead of exploring the ship, we turn the ship into like, camouflage? Like, what if we like, had Fealty, wears the ship like a suit, and we just keep flying —

Jack: Oh my god. [laughing] okay, yeah.

Austin: [laughs] all right.

Jack: And if there are resources on the ship, we're taking them with us, so, you know.

Austin: Right, right.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: All right. [dice rolling]

Art: Well, mine is a —

Austin: Yours is a 6, so it's a 3. Mine's a 3, so it's a 2.

Art: 6. Slash 3.

Jack: It does seem like it would be quite difficult.

Art: And I'm rolling...

Austin: All right, so, Jack, yours is a 2, Gucci's is a 2, and Art's is, Fealty's is a 3.

Jack: Let's, let's board the ship. I cannot see Véronique being like, "all right, Gucci, lead us to your place." She'd just radio the, she'd make a, a call to one of the Stels and be like, "yeah, we've got them here, and we're going to hold them until you arrive. We'll trade you your Divine back to you."

Austin: [laughing] uh... all right.

Art: All right, I'll do the stacking?

Austin: Art. I guess so; yeah, do you wanna? Here we go. It's only two. This will be easy.

Jack: This is nice and easy, yeah.

Art: I feel like our drop is higher, though.

Austin: I don't think it is. 6 isn't higher than where it was. Also, wait, that's only one. You start with one. So you need one more here.

Art: What?

Austin: Yeah, we start with one.

Jack: Yeah, you start with one.

Art: Bullshit.

Austin: 100 percent, I promise. If you don't want to do it, I'll do it.

Art: Whoops. That was a lag issue, not a...

Austin: You're coming in real hot for a second there, Art. There we go.

Art: I think that's higher. But it's fine. A quicker game is not... the end of the world.

Austin: Right, sure. All right, so tell me what happens here. You come to land at this massive facility. Art, was was your suggestion?

Art: Oh, that Fealty should slowly take the scrap of the ship and use it to make more of those bodies.

Austin: Ahhh, mmm. That's happening in the background while the exploration happens?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: That's fun. And there are just way more, I mean, the other ones were metal also, but are these ones as smooth, or do these reflect their DIY nature?

Art: I think they reflect the DIY nature, but they get polished over time.

Austin: Sure. So Jack —

Art: Whatever forces exist here.

Austin: Yeah. Talk to us about what this, this exploration looks like.

Jack: It's like, it's, I think that, uh, there is... Véronique is recognizing that having a second pair of eyes here is useful. And also, knows that Gucci isn't leaving this place without Fealty, and if Véronique doesn't come back — Gucci is trapped on this ship as much as she's trapped on Fealty. So, with a degree of caution, brings Gucci out into this hangar to explore.

Austin (as Gucci): Is this another one of your bases?

Jack (as Véronique): No, I have no idea what this is.

Austin (as Gucci): [scoffs] Then why did we land here?

Jack (as Véronique): I'm hungry. Are you hungry?

Austin (as Gucci): [sighs] Yeah.

Jack (as Véronique): Though at Millennium Break, I suspect you're quite used to being hungry.

Austin (as Gucci): [wry chuckle] Is this, is this your character?

Jack: What?

Austin (as Gucci): You throw jabs at someone who's only marginally lower than you in the eyes of the Principality? [pause] [sighs] Anyway, you know where food is. Let's go.

Jack: There's just like, there's, this ship is ruined. There's emergency lighting flickering in corridors, there's oil pooling on the floor. A big banner on the side of the, uh, — so, Fealty is, how big did we say Fealty is? Like a classical Divine, like a big Divine size, right?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Big, big Divine.

Austin: Big Divine. Order size.

Jack: Uh... and is just, you know, crouched in this landing bay. And there's still so much room around. And on the side of the landing bay, painted in massive letters, you know, each letter the size of a Divine, is the name of this ship, which is Baker-Miller. And, there's like, light flickering above it. Uh, and, I shine my torch on one of the door passages, and find a way pointing towards the canteen. And I say to Gucci —

Jack (as Véronique): Come on, this way. You go first.

Austin: Uh, she does that thing where she kind of lowers her head and looks up at you at an angle, and then walks past you, her eyes like sweeping back at you before whipping her head forward again. It's very Rihanna-like motion, is what I want to say.

Jack: [laughing] Sure.

Austin: Uh, and then continues to walk towards, following the signs, you know? Uh...

Austin (as Gucci): So, where are you from?

Jack (as Véronique): I'm from the Stel.

Austin (as Gucci): The Stel is large. Also, which Stel? Nideo, Kesh?

Jack (as Véronique): What do you think?

Austin (as Gucci): You remind me of someone who I knew from Kesh.

Jack (as Véronique): I don't know what that's supposed to mean. I have a great deal of respect for our brothers and sisters in Kesh, but...

Austin (as Gucci): Oh, she's not with Kesh anymore.

Jack (as Véronique): How about you? How did you end up in the, you know, ass-end of nowhere?

Austin (as Gucci): It's a long story. You find me food, and maybe I'll share some of it. I think you'll be surprised. You... when you speak... which school did you go to?

Jack (as Véronique): I, I, I — I went to several schools. But I spent most of my time at Artwait.

Austin: She begins to laugh.

Jack (as Véronique): What?

Austin (as Gucci): You studied languages under Mister Prosper?

Jack (as Véronique): Oh, come on, what? How do you know Mister Prosper?

Austin (as Gucci): Mister Prosper was my languages teacher. Based on your age, I'd say probably a decade before you. You didn't think I was born in a backwater, did you?

Jack (as Véronique): What was he like back then? 'Cause he was a real piece of shit when I knew him.

Austin (as Gucci): [laughs] Uh... he was a real piece of shit who probably had higher hopes. He thought he'd be called up to one of the universities. He never was.

Jack (as Véronique): Well, he's dead now.

Austin (as Gucci): Hmm.

Austin: Doesn't say more.

Jack (as Véronique): Hold on. You went to a Nidaean school?

Austin (as Gucci): Of course.

Jack (as Véronique): So when did you think that, uh... switching sides was the best idea for you, then?

Austin (as Gucci): Oh, I didn't switch sides. Uh, I was always committed to making the Principality something better. My family's been committed to the cause for generations.

Jack (as Véronique): You're a, a... a spy, within Millennium Break?

Austin (as Gucci): No. Millennium Break grew out of my dream.

Jack (as Véronique): You don't sound like a revolutionary.

Austin (as Gucci): I get that a lot, would you believe it?

Jack (as Véronique): Yes, I would. I'm surprised that they let you get to the place that you are. Aren't they all about that, "oh, enough of you rich people. Enough of you Artwright scholars."

Austin (as Gucci): Millennium Break, like any organization, needs leaders. Educated leaders. Committed leaders.

Jack (as Véronique): Well, of course.

Austin (as Gucci): Uh... and frankly, I... I bristle at the revolutionary name. I think it's propaganda that the Principality uses to convince good people that there's no place for us in this war. Now, the Pact, they allow for. The Pact, they sign treaties with. With us, I think it comes from fear. They know that we speak to something more true.

Jack (as Véronique): Well, but I mean, it's one thing to hear you say that, but you look at the records of the bombings and things, and it's hard to take Millennium Break that seriously.

Austin (as Gucci): It's the bombings and things that make them take us seriously. We tried other ways. I wish we could still try other ways. I think if — if things were different... we don't have many Divines of our own, you know. And so... the bombs are an equalizer.

Jack (as Véronique): Of course you don't have many Divines of your own. Millennium Break could never hope to wield something like a Divine.

Austin (as Gucci): Oh, you believe that... [laughs] when we get back, you should talk to your Divine about how many Divines there have been. Just, just ask them, of all the Divines that have been, how many have been loyal to the Principality? I understand they're very old. I'm sure they'll have a good answer.

Jack: There's like a vending machine at the end of the corridor, and Véronique breaks the glass on the front of a vending machine with a fire extinguisher. Uh... and it lets out this horrible alarm, which then dies down, and inside the vending machine are like, you know, packets of freeze-dried rations... chips. And then on the way back, I think it's just like, awkward, awkward silence through this ruined ship.

Austin: Yeah. Art, what do we find with Fealty when we get back?

Art: Uh, I think the process of turning the scrap into things is like starting, and it's probably kind of weird.

Austin: Yeah. I believe it is your scene. I think Gucci just sits at your feet, you know, and opens a bag of chips. They're stale, but they're food.

Jack: They're Baker-Miller branded chips. Everything on this ship is stamped with the ship name.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah. Yeah.

Art (as Fealty): Hmmm. Everything's going so good, why don't we just... stay here?

Austin: [laughs] We could. They could find us. I mean, maybe that's the thing. I think Gucci probably says that. You know —

Austin (as Gucci): Once your Divine is done repairing themselves, we should get moving. The Principality is very —

Austin: Actually, she would say —

Austin (as Gucci): The Curtain is very good at finding people, identifying possible locations they could lay low, and eliminating the places entirely. This station won't be here in a week.

Art: And I don't think it takes very long to get the scrap up to like a, a sustaining place.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Like, where Fealty can move. And so it's, it's honestly probably just a matter of hours, maybe an overnight, if we want to get, we want to leave space for the slumber party. But just like...

Art (as Fealty): I think we have enough supplies. I think we can go.

Jack (as Véronique): Do you have a destination in mind, Anchor?

Art (as Fealty): We should make for the Mirage.

Jack: That's like saying, to a human, that is like saying, you know, "well, time to go to Heaven," right? If you're from Nideo, it's like —

Austin: Yeah, nearly, at least, right? It is, uh, it is a place no one you know has ever been to. You know, you certainly maybe have been sightseeing, and been like, "and out your left window, that's the Twilight Mirage. We came from there." You know, that is our Eden in our kind of self-mythologizing. But it is also a real place that you know, you've never gone to because, to go

to it would be to breach something sacrosanct. So, yeah, maybe Heaven is the right comparison.

Jack (as Véronique): We can't go — we can't go there, can we?

Art (as Fealty): Of course we can.

Jack (as Véronique): Well, we can't bring her there.

Art (as Fealty): No, we can't, Anchor.

Austin (as Gucci): Don't leave me here.

Jack (as Véronique): Why not? There's plenty of resources.

Austin (as Gucci): I'm a resource. I'm a greater resource than anything you could find on board. Do you know the patrol routes?

Jack (as Véronique): You're not making a very good case.

Austin (as Gucci): Do you know the patrol routes? Do you know the safe spots? Do you know the weaknesses of every single Hallow the Curtain fields? You struggled to find us —

Art (as Fealty): You've betrayed us twice already.

Austin (as Gucci): You would have done the same to me.

Art (as Fealty): Evidently, I wouldn't.

Austin (as Gucci): Hm. Trust is a hard thing to come by. And it is hard-earned. I had not seen you... fight tooth and nail with a Divine before. I'd seen you kill a Heresy Squad. And I know exactly how disposable human lives are for the Curtain. They don't think that way about Divines. I will not betray you again. That is... that is my word, on my house.

Jack (as Véronique): What house did you say you were from?

Austin (as Gucci): Garantine. Loyal to Brightline. Servants for millennia. We have fought the Branched just as we have tried to reform the Principality.

Art: Kind of an interesting point here, because I think just, injecting Gucci into the next season is fun.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: But, trusting Gucci right now is a choice only, only a, a, very stupid person would make.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Also the idea of like, not just trusting Gucci, but it's like, let's make Gucci Garantine one of the first three outsiders to reenter the Twilight Mirage.

Austin: I mean, who knows if she gets there from here.

Jack: I don't think Véronique believes that she is... I think Véronique thinks... Oh god, it's so weird, right? It's like, Gucci does not behave like a Millennium Break agent.

Austin: 100 percent.

Jack: And I think that there is a bit of Véronique that doesn't — that thinks she's a double agent, that thinks she's with the, uh, with the Curtain.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, which makes her just as dangerous, because it means, you know, we're being pursued by either party, then. But I think that in terms of Véronique's decision making, there's a version of this, especially given our whole like, we used to, we could have been old schoolmates given 10 years, and it's like... everything she says, you know, "oh, trust is a hard thing to come by," and... she's, she's speaking like uh, like someone from the Stels.

Austin: Such is Gucci Garantine, still someone from the Stels. Would probably be more comfortable in the Pact, if not for personal feels of, of just being on the wrong side of the fight, you know? If they'd come to recruit Gucci instead of coming to recruit Clem, so much would have gone differently, maybe.

Jack: Better? Who could say.

Austin: For who, I don't know, yeah.

Jack: Uh...

Art: It does sound like this is the obstacle, though, right? I'm —

Austin: I think you're right, I think that that's right, though.

Art: Thanks, Tyler.

Austin: So yeah, I think the solution I'm making is — Tyler in the chat says, “sounds like what to do with Gucci is the obstacle,” yeah, good point.

Art: Always listen to the person who made the game, fair.

Austin: Yeah. Uh, yeah, and I think Gucci's thing is, bring me along and, and let me have, you know, let me be part of this in a real way. That's Gucci's suggestion.

Jack: Gucci's also making the pitch to the person who's like, person A is like, “we don't really want you to be in the band,” and person B is like, “I can play every genre of music you've ever heard on the piano. I can play jazz really — “ she's like, “I know every patrol route. “ it's like, “you're Gucci Garantine.” You might have a good shot at this. We're piloting a Divine, Gucci.

Austin (as Gucci): And you're running. How much experience do you have running? Because I have a lot.

Jack: I was a track star. I don't say that, but... I have a great deal of experience running.

Art: [laughs]

Austin (as Gucci): That's a different sort of running, Véronique.

Jack (as Véronique): Shows what you know. Uh...

Austin (as Gucci): You ran with fear? Were they nipping at your heels? Hm. Maybe I had you wrong.

Jack: My plan is, leave Gucci on the space station. Maroon her.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Mm.

Jack: God, then Gucci and her best friend will have both gone through “being marooned” arcs.

Austin: Mm-hm. God. Her best friend and rival.

Jack: [laughs]

Art: My solution is... I guess, a solution is like, kick it down the road.

Austin: No, but we could play with time here, right? So like, if we pick a solution that involves a next step, and you pick it, that next step will happen, you know?

Art: Sure.

Jack: Or it's like, dock at a, a base, and drop Gucci off or something.

Austin: Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: Yeah, I guess that's it. It's, have Gucci help us to the next checkpoint, and that's where we leave Gucci.

Austin: And then just drop her or escape pod her or whatever.

Art: Yeah, don't let Gucci into Palisade.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. All right. Time to roll dice. I have to remember how any of this interface works. All right. Here is, bring Gucci onboard. It is a three. That's right. It would be very stressful. It's a 5, which is a 3. Art, yours is a 2, that's a 1.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Jack? Also a 1.

Art: Is actually a 1. This is my pick, right?

Austin: It is.

Art: Well it's not 3. I'm not doing 3 right now, that's...

Austin: [laughs] Mm-hm.

Art: Uh... I don't know, what's more interesting? It's more interesting to just leave her, right?

Austin: Leave her, Yeah, yeah, yeah, I think so, I think that that's fun. Real enmity growth there, right? I guess that's the question, right, is: what does Gucci — who knows if Gucci gets out, if Gucci is marooned here? She's brought up already, they will just come blow up any place that you could lay low in. Uh, they won't even investigate it. So, leaving her here could kill her. Uh, if it doesn't, she will know that you left her here with the knowledge that it could kill her, which produces an interesting future interaction, potentially, down the road, or even just, she gets a message back to Millennium Break about Fealty, right? I think the other one.... and it's like, don't trust these people, no matter what, you know. No matter, even if they are the enemy of our enemy, they can't be trusted. They left me to die. The second... the other version of it, I think, is a lot more, well, this is an understandable thing to do. Who knows if our paths cross again. If they do, well see what it is. I think that's the interesting version, and like, which of those conflicts is more interesting?

Art: I think I'm going to go with that one. I think.... I think just like, in terms of how I want the rest of this to go, I don't want it to be about...

Austin: Right.

Art: Gucci's revenge, you know?

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That makes sense.

Art: So here we go.

Jack: Gucci's revenge was their 2016 Fall/winter season. I did not like it.

Austin: [laughs] Oh my god, Art, that's very, very shaky

Jack: Ooo, hoo hoo hoo.

Austin: Uh, but it sticks, it sticks. All right. So what's it look like? What's the drop look like?

Art: I think, you know, Gucci does as promised and helps us past a patrol or two.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: And in a day or two we get to the next station or however long, maybe a week. I mean, how, how big is this part of space?

Austin: I mean, the thing we've talked about that's weird is that like, we know that you still have to use space, the Divine, the portcullis system, to jump from place to place. And so, to some degree, that technically only opens once a, once a week. But then we've said that you've been able to inspire things in the past to open them earlier than that, that that's within your capability. So I imagine it's about risk management there. Sometimes you don't want to do that, because there will be record that it happens, and then they'll know that you just passed through that gate, right? And other times, you maybe want to do it to get away quick. But between all that, I'd say, yeah, let's say it takes a week and a half before you find a place that's like, okay, we can just let you off here.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And I think there's no, yeah, no harm no foul thing. I mean, I do think that that's how it's done. I think that she says, uh, uh —

Austin (as Gucci): Well, this was quite an interesting diversion. Travel well, Véronique... Fealty. [pause] if you do run across any other members of the Break, tell them Saint Dawn sent you.

Jack: I think it's just, it's very, it's very formal, from Véronique, of like,

Jack (as Véronique): Okay. Yep. Good-bye.

Art: [laughs] And later we'll talk about how using your own nickname is really —

Austin: [laughs]

Jack: What's Gucci's mech called?

Austin: Uh, the Noblesse —

Jack: Oh, yes.

Austin: It's not the Noblesse Oblige, it's the Noblesse — fuck, it's very close to that, though. It's a play on it. What is the play on it?

Jack: It's like it backwards, right?

Austin: It's a bad pun. Yeah. It's... fuck, someone in the chat is going to beat me to it, for sure.

Jack: Transgress Oblige.

Austin: The Transgress Oblige, yeah, yeah, yeah. There you go.

Jack: I suppose we're lucky that she didn't have it, but also, we're a Divine.

Austin: Yeah, you would have — that's not a fight. It's not, like — I mean, it's a fight, because she's... strong —

Jack: It really only got hairy when we were fighting a Divine that was older than us.

Austin: 100 percent. Yeah.

Jack: Okay. I think it's your scene, Austin?

Austin: It is. Uh... so I think that you, you mange to, you know, you do this — where is this drop-off at? What type of place is it, that it feels safe enough to do this? Uh, is it a place that is not 100 percent controlled by the Curtain? Is it a... is it just like a free, is it like an Orion-held space station even though we're still in Nideo space? Which we know we're still in Nideo space, because you did not get into Partizan, and you have to get to Partizan to break off and go to a different part of space, a different one of the arms. You've just kind of retreated elsewhere in Nideo space. But it's still —

Jack: I like the idea of like a painfully neutral zone, however small that is —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Around some sort of a, a space station, or a, a, ring, or something.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Where everybody is like, moving like sharks, and trying to avoid looking at each other in a way that could be construed as —

Austin: Oh, you know what I like? What if it's like, actually just outside of one of the arms, and a little too close to the galactic core than people like to get, and so it's a really good — I'm going to run with this a little bit. It's like a really good spot for keeping your head down, it's not quite the Skarnoc debris fields, because there is some legitimate business that gets done here. But it's like one of those... it's like a little bit too close to the Bermuda Triangle type of thing, right?

Perennial is at the center of the galaxy, still. And, no one likes to get that close. Especially because maybe like, when the Perennial Wave hits, it hits harder. And speaking of, uh, you're on your way back to the gate here, and Fealty, you feel an incoming wave from Perennial. As a reminder, Perennial is a Divine that we saw in the Armour Astir game of The Road to PARTIZAN, who took over a powerful New Earth Hegemony, a New Earth Hegemony kind of infinite power array, a billion, billion, trillion nanomachines surrounding the galactic core and drawing energy from it. Little dots in the air. Uh, and, she then used that to kind of project the Perennial Wave across the galaxy, which destroyed a ton of technology and set a sort of high bar in terms of technological complexity and miniaturization and other shit. Uh... very, you know, science fantasy shit, but it works for us. And these waves happen periodically, knocking things out, uh, damaging things. Divines tend not to be hurt by it in this way, and in fact, we've seen some Divines gain a mastery over it. But we haven't ever talked about the Divine, the kind of phenomenological experience of being hit by a Perennial Wave as a Divine, like what the conscious experience is. And I want to propose that this one particularly, hits you — however it hits you normally, it hits you harder. And, and partly that's just proximity. And you certainly wonder, partly, is this because the part of you that the Divine Principality, the part the Divine Principality puts in you to like, protect you from that, whether that's part of the kind of immortality that the Principality grants Divines, using stolen power from another Divine, that we talked about at the end of Twilight Mirage. You see, I'm still like, I still don't want to spoil stuff. I'm still like, in that mode where like, I could say the name of the Divine whose innards have been replicated and spread around to ensure immortality of Divines. But I just don't want to do it, because I've trained myself this way, I've disciplined myself this way. Uh, but, uh, whether that's been turned off, or if that's just the proximity, or is Perennial specifically reaching out to you right now? But I feel like, I think the wave, that sense of like the Perennial vines begin to like, crawl up your, your leg, effectively. Uh, uh, Fealty. Between the new bodies, the new statuary that you've built, really touching you directly, as if to, to, not drag you, but, but, guide you, or invite you to the core of the universe. And I truly believe this is an obstacle. This sense that like, Perennial wants an audience, is the call. I don't — and I think my obstacle, or my solution is, “yeah, sure, let's go talk to Perennial. Let's get closer to the most profane, let's get closer to the adversary.”

Art: Mmm..

Austin: And I think for you, Véronique, that like, if you have a Walkman, it shuts down, right? The Divine stuff is fine. But if you have non-Divine tech —

Jack: Yeah, we're like listening to music in the, uh, in the cabin, in the cock-pit, you know.

Austin: Uh-huh, yeah —

Jack: And it just, you know.

Austin: [Powering down noises]

Art: Whatever the future version of jock jams are.

Jack: [laughing] But I think I have like a, I have like a, a lamp, as well. I like the idea of the Divine cockpit having, you know, like, uh, uh, lights external to the Divine in, or whatever.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And they also all just go down. But the Perennial Wave, despite being unsettling, because stuff is shutting down, doesn't have a physical effect on people, does it?

Austin: Not, uh, not people who are only flesh and bone.

Jack: Yes.

Austin: But anybody who has — we've talked about this — anyone who has, for instance, electronic prosthetics. If they're not hardened correctly, or if they're at a certain complex level — I think we talked about this with Jesset City, for instance. Those, there were prosthetics that Jesset could use safely with high Perennial, like at high tide, and ones that he couldn't, uh, and he had to make sure he had both of those available. Or he had, he was lucky enough in some instance, right, that he had, at a certain point, saved up enough money for the more complex one after working for a long time, we talked about that last season. For, for, uh, we know that there were members of the Columnar who died when the first Perennial Wave went out, and that, and that, you know, their frames have to be built a certain way. We talked about something like Agon Ortlights, who has little kind of almost like droid companions —

Jack: Oh, support, support drones.

Austin: Support drones. Uh, do those, there are certainly people in the world who similarly have support drones that get knocked out by high tide Perennial Wave. And, people who are able to have ones that don't get knocked out by the Wave. And mostly, people have adjusted over the

last 3,000 years, or whatever it's been, since whatever that millennium was called. I don't remember off the top of my head the —

Jack: The one before the perfect millennium?

Austin: I mean, it was more than the one, because it was quite some time ago. I would say that was the earliest one that we — I'm checking. The Miraculous Millennium. That was the Miraculous Millennium. Between then and now there has been the Victorious Millennium. Uh, the, uh, I believe that that's, yeah, that's true, I just double-checked. There are people that have basically adjusted in terms of just like, finding the level of complexity in their technology that will not be hit by the wave, and kind of standardizing to that model. So, so I would say like, Agon probably has like, drones and stuff that like, don't get knocked out, because they've been built to not get knocked out. But, you know, once every 5 years, is there an especially strong Perennial Wave? Probably. So...

Jack: I think my proposal is that we use this, uh —

Austin: [appreciatively] mmmmm.

Art: Mmm.

Jack: It doesn't affect me. I have been trained to anticipate that it won't affect my Divine. I don't know how it's going to affect Fealty. I think that this is our opportunity to punch through space that we might find more treacherous than we would otherwise, because we know our adversaries will also be being affected by this, probably, in a way worse than us.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: Maybe this is how we enter the Partizan system.

Austin: We're going the opposite direction, if we're going to the Mirage at this point.

Jack: Oh, I misunderstood earlier. I was also thinking, earlier, “are we going the wrong way?” When you talked about Partizan. But you didn't mean that as a way to get down into the Mirage.

Austin: No, I was explaining, I was saying that we know you're still in Nideo space versus Orion space or something.

Jack: Oh, right, yeah.

Austin: Because you got turned away from — I mean, I guess I'm looking at it, and maybe you could have gotten into Kesh space from here. I'm now looking at this map again. But, uh, uh, you're still in Nideo space, and the Mirage is in Nideo space, so you'd have to turn around and go that direction.

Jack: Yeah, uh, no. In short, we ride the Perennial Wave into enemy territory.

Austin: Yeah. Art?

Art: Uh...

Austin: So, yeah, we've got talk to the devil, and we've got use the devil as cover.

Art: Yeah, and I've got to say, again, these are both great.

Austin: [chuckles]

Art: What about like just, get behind me, Satan. Like —

Austin: Yeah, rebuke.

Art: Rebuke, yeah, whatever happens there.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: [laughing]

Art: I'm sure it's good.

Jack: This would be Fealty acting, right? Because Véronique would, as someone who, uh, understands and fears Perennial, and recognizes that they are a much smaller entity than Perennial, would not rebuke the devil in that way.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: But that feels like a very Divine thing to do.

Austin: It is. And in fact, I will say this — one of my favorite things about Armour Astir, is that it has this notion of approaches. These are like the ways in which you do combat. You think of them almost like Pokemon types. Uh, there's five of them. Or like rock, paper, scissors, right? Or like, think about Fire Emblem has the sort of weapon triangle. There's sort of a weapon pentagon in, uh, Armour Astir. And as written, it is, mundane beats arcane, arcane beats divine, divine beats profane, profane beats elemental, and elemental beats mundane. And, uh, I think I actually pitched this with a single change last — or two years ago, or a year ago, or whatever. But now I'm pretty sure it's, mundane beats the Kal'meria particle. The Kal'meria particle and Kal'meria tech beats Divine tech. Divine beats Perennial. As I said, the Perennial Wave does not beat, does not hit Divines the way it hits everything else. There's a lore reason for that. Perennial beats the Branched, which, it's a shame for the Principality that Perennial ain't on their side. That war would be over real quick if... if she wanted it to be. Uh...

Jack: Oh, Perennial loves the Principality.

Austin: [laughs] And the Branched, uh, Branch tech beats mundane stuff. Which is part of why this war has gone on for so long, is that like, if you're just fielding troop units, and infantry, the Branched just have answers for that, open and shut. And the Branched and the Divine don't have direct, one beats the other, relationship. They're equally effective against each other, and so the Branched have continued to win that, indefinitely. Uh, but, but, so in this particular case, Art, Fealty being able to beat Perennial that way is even represented, or rebuke Perennial that way, is represented in the upcoming Armour Astir mechanics, which is very fun. Uh, so yeah, those are the approaches. Yeah, Thomas Whitney says, "I've got to redraw my chart, I guess." Yeah, I really, I thought about it long and hard, and I really sat with the playbooks, and thinking about how the playbook moves worked and stuff. I ended up swapping arcane and elemental, basically, or Kal'meria and Branched. Also thinking about, like, I think, seeing the Branched played by Keith with Phrygian last season really made me think about that in more elemental terms, and the arcane stuff, the sort of like, woven, magic is almost technology, is what Broun was doing with, with all of their research, and the Kal'meria particle end. Hallows, hallows would be Divine, correct. A Hallow would be blessed by a Divine, so yes. That's why it's a Hallow and not a hollow. Hollows would not be Divine. Anyway, time to roll dice. I'm going to roll mine. [dice rolling]

Jack: This is chat to the devil.

Austin: 1. Very easy. Chat with the devil, simple. Low stress.

Jack: That is Perennial's bargain.

Art: That is, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: 1, for rebuke the devil.

Austin: Rebuke the devil, uh-huh.

Art: And I'll roll for... [dice rolling]

Austin: 1.

Art: It's all ones!

Austin: 1, for use the devil. I think I'm going to —

Art: You know what's easy? Messing with the devil, it seems.

Austin: It seems, Perennial, yeah —

Jack: That's his trick. He makes it very easy to mess with the devil.

Austin: [laughs] Yes, because the devil always wins.

Art: I feel the devil in these dice rolls today.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. And I think this is the thing, is, I think that Perennial is kind of amused by any of these, in a sense, right? Any response is a response. You have to situate yourself to the devil no matter what, and that's a win for the devil. And in this case, I think I'm going to pick, because it's my turn, still, I'm going to pick, use the Perennial Wave to get you forward. I like Véronique taking the lead on this, and we'll see how it goes. It's only one die. I'm going to grab this one die, I'm going to move it closer, I'm going to change my camera.

Jack: Now it's starting to get a little scarier, though, isn't it?

Austin: I hate how this dice looks. So we're at four, and the top one is not centered for me.

Jack: No.

Art: No, me neither. It's a very, I mean, I think you've got to try to, try to bring it back, you know?

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: Don't center it on this die, try to be a little more over here.

Austin: Yeah. Okay. Maybe this is lower than before. No, see, you said this was higher than before.

Art: I think this is higher.

Austin: I think it's lower.

Art: I — [excited] Oh!

Austin: We're good. It shook a little bit. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. We're all right.. And I brought it back over a little.

Art: I don't think this thing needs the 5 seconds, because I don't think it has that, like, delay.

Austin: Yeah. Uh, if it's really tall, it seems like it might, but you're probably right. Anyway, I think you do it exactly as you thought, right? Uh, you take whatever path you'd already planned, adjust it a little bit for the stations you know, or like the areas you know have maybe older tech. One of the nice things about being in the middle of Nideo space is, this is not where they keep their most advanced technology, right?

Art: Right.

Austin: That's at one of the fronts that they're fighting. Uh, or, maybe it's at the edge of the galactic arm that faces the Apostolosian arm. Obviously there's nothing but dark space between the two of them, but we know that Apostolos has ways of getting places, what being tied to motion, the concept, not the specific Divine, at this point, and all. So, so I think it's like, that front, that hypothetical front has a bunch of super high-tech, or, I guess I'm saying, super hardened stuff, stuff where couldn't, it would be bad if it went down. There and up against the Branched. But not here, not this kind of inner core, or like the inner side of the arm. And so you're able to

like, zip past patrols. At some point, a couple of fighters kind of like, try to get behind you, but like, their afterburners blow up when they try to hit them. You're able to get to the next gate, and convince it to let you through. And it like, evens is it opens up that way, it kind of shudders, and you go through the liquid, and by the time you go through the liquid, the regular tech that's built into this thing falters. And, the Divine part of it's fine. But like the navigational tech, the stuff that's tied to just, like, life support systems and lights, begins to shudder, and they have to like, deal with that for a bit, instead of dealing with the Divine part of it. And you're able to get kind of, get free, get through scot-free, and get to a different sector. And I think it's fair to say, at this point, they're not on pursuit, their not pursuing you at this point. They're looking for you, but they're not like, behind you by three days the way they were, you know, this time last week. And now we're back around to you, Jack.

Jack (as Véronique): Are you there, Anchor?

Art (as Fealty): Always, Anchor.

Jack (as Véronique): Back there where we were fighting Fortitude... you had said that you had sworn your oath to the people of the Mirage.

Art (as Fealty): Yes, Anchor.

Jack (as Véronique): Do you have, do you have any loyalty to the Stel?

Art (as Fealty): Of course I do.

Jack (as Véronique): Then why not, why not turn around?

Art (as Fealty): I feel that this oath is very important right now. An old oath, a powerful oath.

Jack (as Véronique): When I was with Gucci, in the Baker-Miller, she said to ask you how many Divines there have been that haven't served the Principality.

Art (as Fealty): And are you asking?

Jack (as Véronique): Well, yeah, I suppose so.

Art: Uh... what, I don't even — what's the answer to this question? I don't —

Jack: It's like, thousands, right?

Austin: What was the question, one more time?

Jack: How many Divines have there been that don't work for, that haven't served the Principality?

Austin: Thousands, most of them, in the history of —

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Well, I guess the question is, how many Divines are there now? But, if you were alive, if you were alive, pre-Twilight Mirage, at the height of what we described as, wars between people and Divines, at the time, thousands, right?

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, because they were coming off having constructed themselves for generations, right?

Austin: They were, yes, they were exactly doing that at that point, yes.

Art (as Fealty): Uh... untold thousands, Anchor.

Jack (as Véronique): So we're the — so I'm the outlier here.

Art (as Fealty): You're the present.

Jack (as Véronique): [pause] Will they... they'll let us in, right? They'll let you in. Will they let me in?

Art (as Fealty): Yes.

Jack (as Véronique): But I'm from the Stel.

Austin: [chuckles]

Art (as Fealty): I don't think that's going to matter.

Jack (as Véronique): Should we call ahead? Signal them? Let them know we're coming? They say that the edge of the Twilight Mirage is heavily defended, impassible. I don't know what weapons they have, but I've heard they're terrible.

Art (as Fealty): They won't stop us. We are invited guests.

Jack (as Véronique): Invited by whom?

Art: I'll tell you, I meant to say honored guests. [laughs] uh...

Austin: [chuckling]

Jack (as Véronique): Honored by whom?

Art (as Fealty): By the people of the Mirage.

Jack (as Véronique): This doesn't feel good, Fealty. I... I don't think that the people of the Mirage will look very kindly... on either of us, really. Look, I'm — put it this way. You swore an oath to the people of the Mirage, fine. We swore an oath to the Stels, and we've spent the last few weeks destroying their ships left and right. We took out a Heresy unit. What do our oaths mean?

Art (as Fealty): I don't recall swearing an oath to the Stels.

Jack (as Véronique): You, you said, you said, that you have loyalty to the Stels.

Art (as Fealty): I do.

Jack (as Véronique): Well, and, and, surely you must have sworn an oath.

Art (as Fealty): Not that I recall.

Jack (as Véronique): Well, surely when you were manufactured or consecrated or something, they — they don't tell us what happens to Divines before they get Elects, but I have to assume that you went through some sort of program. I had to swear on oath.

Art (as Fealty): I was not manufactured by the Stels.

Jack (as Véronique): Okay, well, I didn't —

Austin: [laughing]

Jack (as Véronique): It sounds like you took offense at that. I didn't, I didn't mean it like that. I, what did it look like from your per — I don't know, it feels weird to ask this. I was chosen to be an Elect, and then there was training, there was months of training and ceremonies, and I signed an oath, and then we met. What were you doing all that time?

Art (as Fealty): At that time, I was Fealty.

Jack (as Véronique): Yeah, but what were you doing?

Art (as Fealty): I was doing all the things we have done together, but, but separately. With my previous Elect.

Jack (as Véronique): Right.

Art: Would Fealty know that person's name? Yes. Do I? No.

Austin: Name a plant.

Jack: But a sort of loyal plant.

Art: Okay, hold on. Loyal...

Austin: Okay, here we go.

Art: Plant...

Austin: I just realized, actually, this is probably wrong, because we talked about the plant names being about this millennium, it doesn't have to be a plant, it probably shouldn't be a plant.

Art: But, it was probably less than a millennium ago.

Austin: Well, no, the Perfect Millennium. Well, you're saying — was this your first Elect?

Art: No.

Austin: Oh, oh, oh, okay. Sorry. You meant before, just immediately before. Then yeah, it would be a plant.

Art: Right. Let... oh, there's a company called Loyalty Plant. It ruins this whole thing.

Jack: [laughing] Loyalty Plant is what Véronique thinks Gucci is to Millennium Break.

Austin: Oh, the flower that symbolizes loyalty the most is the Veronica.

Jack: Yes! But —

Art: Oh, we've already done that one.

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: Oh, no worries, one of the other ones is the chrysanthemum, so Chrysanth. No? Weird, huh. The scylla?

Jack: Chrysanth, having the world's most antagonistic Elect/Divine relationship.

Austin: [chuckling]

Art: I have something I like, but I'm going to warn you, this is Latin, so I have no idea if I'm pronouncing it correctly.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: Go for it. They can't stop us.

Art: Yeah. Come at me, Romans. [pause] Carex.

Austin: Ooo, that's fun.

Art: [spelling] C-A-R-E-X. The plant it is, is kind of boring, but I like — the word has an X in it, which is always, makes a fun word.

Austin: Yeah. Love that.

Jack: Mmm. This is... very uncomfortable for Véronique, to talk about a previous — because the relationship that a Divine and their Elect has is special, and I think it'd be very easy for the Elect to get themselves into a headspace, maybe it's necessary for them to get themselves into a headspace, where they're like, "we're the only ones that's ever been."

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I mean, maybe for older elects, actually, maybe they're able to have that continuity, and respect that continuity better. But I think for a young elect, it's like, wasn't it always... and did Carex know? I think Véronique says — I don't think Véronique can bring herself to say their name.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: I think she says —

Jack (as Véronique): Did they know about your oath?

Art (as Fealty): Of course not.

Jack (as Véronique): How long were you planning on keeping it a secret?

Art (as Fealty): Until it was relevant. If I told you everything I've ever known, it would take... a hundred lifetimes.

Jack: I think this is the obstacle. I think Véronique thinks, “you can go to the Mirage, but I can't.” Véronique firmly, you know — I think what Véronique has figured from this conversation is, if... She is inferring that there is a function to their relationship. And the function is, there's the Divine Fealty and then there's the Elect, and the Elect is the person who has sworn the oath to the Stel. And I don't think that, Véronique does not think that is compatible with the Mirage, with being allowed to go to the Mirage, at this point. So, the obstacle is Véronique saying, “we, we can't go,” or, “drop me off somewhere and leave me.”

Austin: What is your proposed solution?

Jack: Fealty takes a risk and provides an assurance, other than just their word, provides an assurance, maybe from the Mirage, that Véronique will be safe.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: If that's even true. I don't even know if the Mirage — well, if we stack the dice and it goes badly, we'll find out.

Austin: Yeah, right, we'll find out, right? Yeah.

Art: It's hard, because we're at, we're at... dice fear hours.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: But I do think that —

Art: What we — go ahead.

Jack: I think that a young Elect of loyalty, going, "I am not allowed to go there," is like, when, if not now, is the moment for dice fear hours?

Austin: Right. Here's my proposed solution. Deep in Véronique's mind, they... they solve this, and say it doesn't matter, if I get, if I'm allowed. It's important that Fealty gets there.

Jack: And I have to go with Fealty, because that's how it works?

Austin: And — that's how it — and I owe it, I owe this to Fealty. Committed and impulsive. I'm committed to Fealty. If this is what Fealty believes, whether they let me in or not, I will bring Fealty there.

Jack: We are going here together.

Austin: We are going here together.

Jack: Yep. I get killed on the doorstep, we've made it to the doorstep.

Austin: We've made it to the doorstep, that's what I, yeah, mm-hm.

Art: And my solution to this is, Fealty makes a vow to Véronique.

Austin: Not an, I'll protect you, but a spoken vow.

Art: A spoken vow that they will not... they will not enter the Mirage without her.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: So we've got, get some insurance, we've got, if I die, I die. And we've got, I'm going to make a Divine vow that either both of us get in or none of us do.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Okay.

Art: No, the vow isn't that both of us get in or none of us do. The vow is that Véronique will get in.

Austin: No, I thought it was, the vow was, I thought you said that I would, that you wouldn't go in without Véronique.

Art: Oh, sure, yeah. Uh-huh.

Austin: Okay.

Art: I'm just giving us all of the outcomes.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. All right. Uh... let's roll them. Mine is a 5, so a 3.

Art: Mine's a 1.

Austin: Easy. And Jack —

Art: Jack...

Austin: Also a 1.

Art: Also a 1. Whose scene was this?

Austin: Jack's, I believe. I believe?

Jack: Oh, boy. Okay, let's do... let's do a little ceremony. You want to make a Divine vow, Fealty?

Art: Sure.

Austin: Stack those dice, then. Or that dice, that one die.

Art: Hold on, I've got to take a lay of the land.

Austin: Yeah, you want to do this one, right? This feels like part of the oath, to me. We're at 5.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: You are climbing a nearby watchtower, to —

Art: [pause] Do you think it's over here again, or do you think it's dead-center?

Austin: I don't know anymore. I — I look at it from just the top —

Jack: It's frightening from there, isn't it?

Austin: It is. I think it's — you know what we need, Art? We need the North Queen.

Art: Mmm, yeah. Bring in the Queen of the North.

Austin: Fuck.

Art: Uh-oh. That's an inauspicious...

Jack: [laughing] oh, no.

Austin: There we go. I don't want it to be on the field, I don't want the queen on the field. [pause]
I like this leather work. I like the, the —

Jack: I was about to say, I really like the implication here, which is, we have an extremely expensive poker table, and we're just piling dice in the middle of it.

Austin: Yes. Look at these little bits that like, made it into the felt.

Art: So I think south, slightly southwest.

Austin: Southwest?

Jack: Galactic south.

Austin: Ah, yeah, sure.

Art: Like, like here.

Austin: Like here. Yeah, I see it. I see it. I see the vision.

Art: But I think I might need to approach from the opposite direction.

Austin: I don't know what that means, but okay. I'm going to move this die out of the way of the view here, and then... okay...

Art: Well, because it's — well, I guess, no, I guess I approach from right here because of the pop, you know?

Austin: Yeah, the pop, yeah.

Art: All right, let's go. I'm going to bring it over and then I'm going to readjust.

Austin: Tyler says, “a bold move, from a bold player.”

Jack: [laughing]

Art: I'm going pro on this. I'm leaving the show, and I'm going to play this, for money —

Austin: Uh-huh. World series of HOUNDS, yeah.

Art: Yeah. No, that's too severe an angle.

Jack: How would you hustle stacking dice?

Art: It's a confidence game.

Austin: Yeah, you — all right, I'm going to be quiet while this happens. This feels good. This feels good.

Art: How do you make it to Carnegie Hall?

Austin: It's good, it's good, it's good. Stable.

Art: I'm going to live forever!

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: We're up to six. Now let's get an oath, you two.

Jack: This is a twin cer — okay — can I make a proposal, Art?

Art: Of course.

Jack: We do this like a, we do this like a, it's like a twin ceremony, where Véronique is abandoning the oath to the Stel. To Stel Nideo. It's like a way of shaking off one thing, while another oath is being made.

Art: Yeah. But that's not sort of the reality that Fealty has presented. Fealty has presented that multiple oaths can exist, you just have to know, you just have to have like a hierarchy contained in your head.

Jack: I don't think that a human who, whose whole purpose is to serve as the elect of the Divine Fealty, like a 21-year-old, can conceive of the fact that I can have both these things, that things can be good and bad at the same time.

Art: Mmm. I was just thinking earlier today about how utterly unprepared for everything you are until you're like, in your late 20s. I was remembering an event from when I was 25, and just the, like, the obvious answer was just to communicate what was going on better.

Austin: Mmm. Mm-hm.

Art: And instead, I just have been mad about it for 12 years.

Jack: [laughing].

Austin: Yeah, there's stuff I'm not prepared for yet, even, and I'm... I'm 12 years older, I'm 11 years older than you were then.

Art: Yeah, uh-huh. Anyway. Oh, go on.

Jack: I cannot enter the Mirage. I cannot get close to entering the Mirage without making some sort of ceremonial abandonment of my previous oath, at great spiritual cost. And I think that we could do it together, as a sign of faith in each other. [pause] unless you want —

Art: Can a Divine — can a Divine lie, to their own... I don't mean like a consequential lie. I meant like a lie that's like, oh, yes, this is an ancient Fealty oath-breaking ceremony. When like, it's just made up for you.

Jack: I think that, if the ceremony was us doing it together, Véronique genuinely wouldn't mind if it was being done impromptu.

Art: Okay.

Art (as Fealty): Okay, Anchor. What does this ceremony look like to you?

Jack (as Véronique): Well, when I made the first one, it was in a big hall. They brought the news cameras down to my school, and we did it there. It was very exciting.

Art: Oh my god, it was at your school, that's really depressing.

Jack: Really brought people into the war effort, huh?

Jack (as Véronique): And the Princept was there, and obviously, obviously, the Princept can't be here. I feel like I should... tell them. That we're leaving them behind. But in a way that doesn't mean that they send another Heresy Squad after us, leave them a message in some way, or something. And in the original, there was a flag on a 10-foot-tall pole, but we don't, we can't do that. How do you make oaths?

Art (as Fealty): Uh... with the solemn dignity of the people I'm talking to. Society has changed a lot in my life. How an oath is made changes as well.

Jack (as Véronique): Let's send them a message. And put it on a beacon or something that delays sending it until we're far from here.

Art (as Fealty): That's very clever.

Jack (as Véronique): Thanks. Okay.

Art: And I think that we get like a lot of, like, weird pageantry, right? Like I bet Fealty just has a bunch of just, stuff for this, right? Like... you know, costumes, like whatever the dress uniform is.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Yes, like wearing dress uniform.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And like, do you launch your, your, statues as if they're knights, you know, attending the function?

Art: Yeah, except for like —

Jack: They're weird, ruined statues, right?

Art: Uh-huh. Well, I mean, they're getting there. [laughs]. And one's like the cameraman.

Austin: [laughing] uh-huh.

Jack: Yeah, there's a version of this that's very much like the... videos of revolutionaries saying, like, “we're making a stand here and sending this message out to so-and-so.”

Austin: Right, but there's also a version — or you're saying that's not the version that you're making?

Jack: What were you going to say?

Austin: Are you saying this looks like that, or are you saying this doesn't look like that?

Jack: I'm saying that it has a feel of that in some sense, where it's far out on the fringe of something or another, a message is —

Austin: Oh. But also you're two people, uh, so to me, it also has the feeling of, either... the thing of the Holy Roman Empire that had 2,000 titled lords at one time, but only 200 of them actually meant anything, so you just had wandering lords that would come into, you know, a hunting lodge, or a city, or a small town, and be like, “this is mine, now. This is, I'm the king here, and you should all bow to me.” Or, it also really has the feeling of a child playing pretend, to me. It's very important you say all the words right, because if you say them wrong, it'll be wrong. And you line up all your action figures to be part of the big event. And I'm not taking away the solemnity of it — or I am, I am — but versus —

Jack: Oh, no, but those sit together, right?

Austin: Versus, we've seen what the oaths taken by revolutionaries look like, and they tend to happen after a bunch of people have died in service of an ideal, and I don't know what Véronique believes in besides their relationship with Fealty, and, “I would like to keep living.”

Jack: Yes. And, you know, well, I think, like — Véronique is a young Divine pilot, and Divines have been told, “you are here to serve the entity that you work for, and that oath is what you

are.” And so I think this whole thing has been this like, crashingly incoherent experience — it's why she kept saying that she didn't know how they had managed to kill the Heresy Squad, because it's like — this is impossible, for us to do.

Austin: You're internalizing that the things that you thought were natural laws are social laws instead.

Jack: I think that's absolutely it. Yes. There is this real child's play vibe to it. But also, I think what she's trying to do is sort of con her brain into being like, “how can I move forward from this?” How can I free myself from this ideology, that's like, no, you are Stel Nideo's force of Fealty. How do you rid yourself of that? And I think it is, you know, it's like, get married or getting divorced. When it comes down to it, there's a lot of pageantry, but it's also, like, you say a series of word. It's a speech act. You say a series of words, and then what you believe about something has changed meaningfully.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: So I think she just plainly renounces the oath that she made. I think she gives the date and the location. And then it's sort of like, okay. It's done. Sort of expecting the earth to move, and not really feeling like it does.

Austin: No, but like, this will have — if this gets out, when this gets out, this will have waves. Because that's the thing, right?

Jack: Oh, this is what I meant by it being a hostage — not a hostage, a revolutionary declaration. Because it's like, imagine that you're on a station somewhere and you receive a message, even if you're in the opposing army —

Austin: Right.

Jack: And you're like, “oh my god, the Divine of Fealty for Stel Nideo has just resigned and given up?”

Austin: Right. This is, this is, to me that's not a revolutionary speech, that is a white flag being waved, or is footage of a great tragedy — not tragedy, but it's a demoralizing effect. I guess similar, we've presented the Principality as being so dismissive of revolutionaries at this point,

whereas I don't think that's what — this feels differently than Millennium Break declaring itself. This feels like oh, we bleed, you know?

Jack: Who's the we in this situation?

Austin: The Principality, the Curtain.

Jack: Oh yeah, no, oh, no, absolutely.

Austin: It's a different sort of, you know, it's a different sort of failure.

Jack: It's not Véronique's failure, though, this is Véronique trying to get herself into a position.

Austin: I mean for the Curtain, yeah.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: What, uh, what's the actual new oath look like, that's what I'm really interested in.

Jack: I'm not making one, I'm abandoning —

Austin: No, I mean from Fealty.

Jack: Oh, oh, as Fealty.

Austin: Remember, Fealty, the thing that we agreed on was that Fealty would make a new oath.

Art: I think it follows in a lot of ways. I think it's very similar. Fealty draws the solemnity from the existing thing, and so it's like... [pause] I'm trying to think of like the...

Art (as Fealty): Véronique, I, Fealty, of the Principality, formerly of the Fleet, formerly of... uh, formerly of the Collective, formerly of... the Army against the Heretic.

Jack: Like a shy grin from Véronique, like, “what is going on?”

Art: And this goes on longer than I would care to make up affiliations.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: I already feel like I've painted something into the past.

Jack: Names that we've never heard before on the show.

Austin: Yeah, 100 percent.

Art: Groups that no one's ever heard of. You know, Hunters of the Space Grail. You know, all sorts of things.

Austin: We have a question in the chat, "do you go back as far as the Diaspora? The Autonomous Diaspora?"

Art: Yes. But I think this is like, literally, this is 10 minutes.

Austin: Right, right. Sometimes it's just like an individual, it's a different individual, right?

Art: Yeah. You know, the... yeah. You know, Darth Vader. It's Darth Vader once.

Jack: Hold on!

Austin: Time is long.

Art: We've explicitly said that this is in the future, so it can't be Star Wars.

Austin: Right, right, right, yeah, that's true.

Art: But you know, yeah, just like, an endless string of affiliations that I'm making up.

Austin: Right. Lily Evans in the chat says, "the Order of Eternal Princes."

Jack: No.

Austin: Not that one. Not that one.

Art: Well, it's super-fans of the TV show introduced in COUNTER/Weight that became an army.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: It's really foreshadowing what's going to happen with Star Wars.

Austin: In real life, yeah. Uh-huh.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Miserable.

Art: Oh yeah. 10 minutes of that. And then back to the Diaspora.

Austin: Right.

Art: So [under breath] Véronique, I, blank, blah-blah.

Art (as Fealty): Swear to you, on all that I am, the embodiment of the concept, that I will not go into the Mirage without you.

Jack (as Véronique): Great. I believe you.

Art: [laughs]

Jack (as Véronique): That was very sweet. That's a lot of... you remember all those people, all those oaths?

Art (as Fealty): Every one of them.

Jack (as Véronique): Hoo. Okay. It feels like a weight's been lifted off my shoulders.

Art: [chuckles]

Jack: All right, who's up next?

Austin: Art, I think? Or was that... it's very hard to remember.

Art: We need to, we need to start —

Austin: I was Perennial, I did the Perennial thing, you get away. Jack, I think, does the oath, right? That's immediately after. So now it's you, Art.

Jack: Yes.

Art: Okay. [pause] We drift for a while, we go through a couple — maybe we go through a couple gates. And I think... I think eventually we have to get like, caught up with. We have to bring the, we have to bring the, the galaxy back into this a little bit. And I think we have just...

who would be taking advantage of this? It's got to be like, and maybe we're hearing about some... the war that's started, because —

Austin: Yeah, right?

Art: Because Fealty left, right? And it's like, this is some... you know, a group of mercenaries trying to... [pause]

Austin: I mean, you don't think it's Millennium Break has just immediately swung this into propaganda material?

Art: I guess I was trying to keep Millennium Break out for a minute —

Austin: It could be the Pact.

Art: Because they were like the last group.

Austin: It could be the Pact, right, it could be Apostolos and Columnar being like, you know, reject tradition embracing modernity, effectively. That is who they are, is like —

Art: Sure.

Austin: Look, the symbols of the old order are falling. Even Fealty has turned its back on the Curtain, you know?

Art: Sure.

Jack: What's great here is like, the inciting event for this, the fact that we're carrying the location of the Mirage, is not something that they know about at all.

Austin: No.

Jack: And so there's this, there's this weird other thing where like, they are making, they don't know why we've done this.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And I imagine that their spies are thinking, what is something big enough that could make... the Divine Fealty renege, right?

Austin: A thing worth saying is, the last intel anybody had on you is, you had captured Gucci Garantine, one of the leaders of Millennium Break.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Presumably, everyone still thinks, the majority of people would think, if Gucci managed to get to safety, you quickly, and keep her head down, that you still have Gucci. That's very fun to me.

Jack: [laughing] They think that this is a play potentially about Gucci Garantine, when in fact it's that we hold the key to Twilight Mirage?

Austin: [amused] Mm-hm.

Jack: Great. Yeah, I think also, um, the leader of the Pact is Dahlia, right?

Austin: That's like the leader of the — that's the Principle of the Pact. But the leadership of the Pact is the Pact, you know? The Pact was, the Pact was originally the holders of Past, Present, Future, Motion, and Space. And they were the ones who signed the Pact of Necessary Venture. Rye, the Elect of Space, is still part of the Pact. We know that Future is now in Nideo's hands, not a member of the Pact anymore. We know that Past is in Clementine Kesh's hands, not a member of the Pact anymore. And we know that Motion is dead. And Motion's last Elect is dead. So that puts Rye and then puts the Elect of Present, uh, whose name I'm forgetting off the top of my head. Who was it? What was — was it Gallica? Gallica, are both still in —

Jack: Oh god, Gallica.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, are both still in control of the Pact. Hyacinth, dead, Plumeria, dead, Myosotis, dead, I believe. Gur killed Plumeria, and maybe Myosotis? I don't quite remember. Yeah, Gur Sevraq killed Myosotis when stealing Future, and I think also killed Plumeria. Gur Sevraq did not fuck around.

Jack: Gur "Heresy Squad" Sevraq.

Austin: Uh-huh. The trick is just getting to the people. Uh, Jack, what is the weakest point of a mech? That's what Gur learned. Studied their history. So, yeah, the Pact, long-term, sees the world as a collection of 5 independent states, instead of 5 Stels. The, the — Dahlia is still —

Jack: Music to their ears.

Austin: Right. And I think Dahlia is not opposed to that, in a certain sense. We just haven't — we, Dahlia has been offscreen, you know. And Dahlia truly —

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Is still just fighting the Branched. For Dahlia, the Branched is as im... The Branched and the sort of public... I don't want to go too much about what Dahlia's internal psychology is. People should go back and listen to the Road to PARTIZAN Dahlia stuff if they want that, that's what I'll say. Anyway.

Jack: So the Pact.

Art: But yeah, someone coming up on this and trying to find out about Gucci is like someone busting down your door because they think you stole a pack of gum from them, and you have the Venus de Milo in your bathtub, right?

Austin: [laughing] uh-huh. Kind of, what if it's the opposite thing? I know this is your turn, Art, but let me pitch you this: what if someone tries to join up?

Art: Mmm.

Austin: With you.

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: Yeah, what if a ship shows up with —

Jack: But they're another defector?

Austin: You know, 50 people on it, or yeah, or like, a little mini, not a fleet, but like a little convoy of ships shows up, or something?.

Jack: From whom?

Art: From like just, from just out there?

Austin: From people. People live out there, you know?

Art: Yeah. We don't even know where we are. We're doing a terrible job of —

Austin: Yeah. People, you know, the sorts of people who we saw on Partizan, just living lives. The sort of people who maybe would have joined up to Millennium Break or the Pact if they had had the opportunity to. Because, we're in the middle of Nideo space. It's not like there's a lot of, you know, we're not at the heart of conflict here. So you can definitely imagine there being people who are like —

Jack: Oh, these are people like, but not, Kalar's family.

Austin: Right, 100 percent, Yeah, yeah, yeah, right.

Art: And they just like hail us, with like, “hey, can we come, too?”

Austin: That's my pitch.

Art: I love it.

Austin: Or just like, we, we, you know, we saw the... “we saw the video, of the oath.” You know, “we...” this is a group of — hello — one second, I need my name list really quick, let's see if I have a name list yet for this that I haven't used all of yet. Because I want this person to feel like a person, you know what I mean? Uh... okay, take a look here. God, this document's too fucking big. I need a new document for this season. I need to not just reuse this PARTIZAN one, it's too long. Uh... used most of these. Used this... have I used this? I'd love to have a name that's just fake, so I can just do a search, and be like, if this is used anywhere, I used it. Fuck, I did.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: Hate that, hate that. Uh... very important we get this.

Art: Yeah, this could be...

Austin: Uh... this is, so you get a message, the person who's sending it to you is uh, is Columnar. And I think, Fealty, at least, you're able to be like, this is an Equiaxed person, which is to say, someone who is primarily robotic, but has organic parts along with them. And they are named Pressure Cove. And they say —

Austin (as Pressure Cove): Hello, this is Captain Pressure Cove. I am here with a group of refugees. Many of us are Equiaxed, but some of us are just objectors to what the Principality's been doing, what the Curtain's been doing. And we saw your, your broadcast. They didn't want us to. But we passed it around, we got a copy of it. I think I've watched it a thousand times. And we decided to, you know, follow the leads and hope — and I don't think any of us thought we'd actually find you. But even if we found nothing at all, it would have been better than to continue living under the Curtain. But we found you, and that has to mean something. So we're wondering, what are you doing, what are you building? How can we help? Over.

Jack (as Véronique): Message received, over. Please hold.

Austin: [laughs]

Jack (as Véronique): Are we building anything, Fealty? These people have the temerity to approach a Divine... in a cruiser.

Art (as Fealty): Yeah, it hasn't... I haven't seen anything like this in... thousands of years. They shouldn't come.

Jack (as Véronique): Well, no, of course not. We can't trust them.

Art (as Fealty): That's not... well...

Jack (as Véronique): We landed with Gucci, and she betrayed us. Then she betrayed us again. We've been ambushed twice, by a Heresy Unit. Well, three times. The Hallows, the Heresy Unit, and the Divine. I'm sure these people have good intentions, but it's a risk that we simply can't take, right, Fealty? [pause] Fealty? Uh... Please hold. Over.

Austin (as Pressure Cove): We're holding. Uh... we're happy to take an oath ourselves, or if you need... just... just let me know. We'll be patient. Over.

Jack (as Véronique): They don't know how to make oaths like we do, Fealty.

Art: [laughs] This exceptionalism is very...

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: Uh...I thought we were going to be on the other sides of this, I was. Uh...

Art (as Fealty): No, of course they can't. But you should never refuse the loyalty of someone. It's a valuable tool.

Jack (as Véronique): Well, that's as may be, but you, you said yourself that we can't — what did you mean?

Art (as Fealty): Maybe they can't... enter the Mirage, but we can take them to the threshold, we can show them the better world.

Jack (as Véronique): Fealty, the risk of bringing people to the Mirage who don't — it's too precious to risk bringing a traitor into. You trust these people?

Art (as Fealty): If they take an oath, I can know... who is — who has ill intent.

Jack (as Véronique): Well, what do we tell them? We can't tell them that we're going to the Twilight Mirage.

Austin: Is that your suggestion for the obstacle?

Jack: Yeah.

Art: Yes. And I think this is true. I think Fealty can tell.

Jack: It's just Divine power, at that point.

Art: It's, yeah. You're in the sphere of influence.

Jack: Okay. Uh... Véronique is on team, thank them for what they said, but suggest that they try and enter Pact space.

Austin: Ta-ta, bye. Good luck with that, folks.

Art: [laughs] Thank you for your interest, have you thought about dying?

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: Uh... uh... I'm trying not to be too prescriptive about what comes next. Uh... these are both good, again. Thinking of a big swing, thinking of a big swing. Uh... the... this process gets

interrupted, and you don't get to do the full oath. Uh... but in the escape, they come with you. So we leave it hanging whether or not there could be a traitor in their midst, but you default to protecting these people, in order to avoid a Principality attack that'll kill them for sure, at this point. You might be able to get away, but they will not. And you've already traveled through a gate before you have the opportunity to, you know, deal with them, and at that point, if someone was going to be a traitor to you, it will have been too late. If someone wants to like, leave a tracker, or some — you know what I mean?

Jack: Yeah. So our three options are, make them swear a magically verifiable oath —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Leave them, or, we become interrupted midway through, and, in helping them escape, ensure their loyalty.

Austin: Ensure their loyalty, but, but not be certain that there isn't a traitor among them.

Jack: Right, yeah, in the way that we could with the magical, with the Divine.

Austin: Right right right, yeah.

Jack: Okay. Okay.

Austin: Mine is a 5 again, so a 3. That would be stressful, I imagine. Art?

Art: Mine is a 1.

Austin: A 1. An easy oath.

Art: And...

Austin: You've traded an easy oath.

Art: Jack has —

Jack: [laughing]

Art: Also rolled a 1.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: I think we should do mine.

Austin: Do your oath.

Art: Uh-huh.

Jack: I think we also should do your oath.

Austin: Let's do the oath.

Art: But, I'm worried it's going to fall.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Then, that's going to be really interesting.

Art: I would rather something predictable.

Austin: Ah...

Jack: If, if it falls and we abandon them, their ship just gets blown up by the Curtain or something. It's like, I think that this could go wrong with the oath, in a way more interesting way than —

Austin: Mm-hm. Than the other ones, yeah.

Art: Oh, I hate it, I don't have a good approach anymore.

Austin: It's not anymore. There's not a good approach — there's not really a — you have to just trust the jump-up.

Jack: That second jump —

Austin: Yeah. That was the easy part.

Art: I don't have a good — can I —

Austin: Oh, okay! Yeah.

Art: Why'd I do that?

Austin: Why'd you do any of that? You were up there, Art!

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: Art just brought the die back down, very rapidly, frankly. Ah, ooo. Oh my god, you're playing so fast and loose.

Jack: Why are you doing this?

Art: I'm, I'm — I, my camera's not right. I don't have the right camera.

Jack: Okay, put it down, put it down. Re, re, re—

Art: Absolute — no. How am I doing?

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: You're close — uh... more north.. Oh my god.

Art: Austin, I'm dead center on top. I have no —

Austin: You're — oh my god. You are not dead center on top.

Jack: No.

Art: No, my camera is dead center on top.

Austin: Is it? Because I would imagine you could line it up better right now, if that was the case. No offense.

Art: No, because a die is in the way.

Austin: Oh, right, sure, you might not be — you're like, zoomed in a lot, huh?

Art: Yeah, all I can see is my own thing.

Austin: I see.

Art: I can see your cursor. So if you want to tell me where you think I should go —

Austin: This way, this way, north.

Art: This way?

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I guess, again, you don't know North. Further this way. Okay, wait, let me —

Art: No, that can't be right.

Austin: Yeah, this way, 100 percent it's right. Towards me.

Jack: Oh... [laughing]

Austin: Reach out your hand to mine. Keep reaching.

Art: On my screen this is like not, I'm like half off the die.

Austin: Yeah, you are. You have to keep coming my direction, agreed.

Art: No, no, I like —

Austin: What? That's it, where you just had it a second ago was lined up for me.

Art: [incredulous] What?

Jack: [laughing]

Art: How can I take a screenshot?

Austin: That's 12... but you don't, don't do — oh my god, you're holding down your mouse, I don't know what's going to happen.

Art: I'm just going to take a picture with my phone.

Austin: Okay, great. Oh my god. As a reminder to people watching live, it seems like Art and my stack is not identical.

Art: So this is what you think is right?

Austin: No, further, further towards me. Further.

Art: Further?

Austin: Further. Further. There, there is right on my die, or on my screen. That's dead center.

Art: I'm going to send you on Discord this screenshot.

Austin: Okay, I'm going to see if I can bring it into the thing here, let's see. Uh... oh my god, that can't be right.

Jack: Oh, no.

Art: Someone get whoever made this program on the phone.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: And figure out how to reconcile this.

Austin: Let me see if I can drop that in here. Here we go. Let's see if I can line that up on the stream, sort of. Yeah, that looks bad on the — that looks...

Art: Yeah, if I drop it, if this is right and I drop it like this, it's just going to...

Austin: Yeah, what are you, what are you, what are you saying here? This isn't it. For sure.

Art: You're the host, so yours might be right.

Austin: This is a real situation we've found ourselves in.

Jack: I think it's fun.

Austin: You would. [chuckles] This is a question, okay. This is a question. There's a question here about like. About life, and about what Fealty would do.

Art: So when I'm over here, you're saying it's not right —

Austin: Oh my god. Art, go back to where you think it's lined up. You show me —

Art: This is dead center, this is shadow covering die.

Austin: All right, I'm going to take a couple screenshots for you, here, drop those in the chat. Not the chat, our chat. That's the side view. Here's the top view. [laughing]

Art: [laughing]

Austin: [cackling] So you see what I'm saying?

Art: Uh... what happens if I just miss?

Austin: What do you, what do you, what do you mean?

Art: What if I drop it and it doesn't touch the dice?

Austin: You have to, well, you still have to stack, you still have to pick it back up and stack. Missing is ideal compared to hitting, because you'd at least learn something. I think it has to be... if you want to go client-side, you want to come towards me a little bit more. At least to there. That, to me — that's still off in my mind, but that's perfect. On my screen, that is lined up.

Art: All right.

Austin: But it's going to fall, if it's wrong on your screen!

Art: Will it?

Austin: [bewildered] I don't know!

Art: Okay.

Austin: Do a countdown.

Art: No, I — go over to the other side of the table, and try to recreate this problem.

Austin: No, that's cheating. Absolutely not.

Jack: Oh, ho ho ho.

Austin: We don't have time for that. They're going to attack if we don't do something now.

Art: All right. I don't know what's right. Okay.

Austin: You've just got to go with your gut. Safe. On my screen, at least.

Art: What happened on my screen was, it was originally next to the die below it —

Austin: Oh my god. And then what?

Art: And like landed there, in a real, like, “well, I didn’t knock the tower over.”

Austin: Oh my god.

Art: And then the tower like, fixed itself to your perspective.

Austin: Weird. Okay, well, we learned something. Well —

Art: Sorry, podcast listeners, I know that wasn’t very exciting.

Austin: It’s fine. It’s fine. It’s fine. Everyone said, “Yo,” in the chat. We’re happy. Uh... Jesus. All right. That was your scene, but I kind of ran it, because I had an idea. What happens here, Art? And also you should probably get the next one, since I kind of — I mean, I’ll do the dice for the next one, but if you have an idea, I’d be happy to —

Art: Yeah, I’m not — you need to give me a scene off for some dice.

Austin: [laughing] That’s fair enough. So what’s this oath look like, that they take? God, is it basically — go ahead.

Art: I think we send Véronique to their ship, in, again, like full-on dress uniform and with like some sort of — how do you like, take a Divine with you?

Jack: Uh... I think that...

Austin: [chuckles]

Jack: I mean, the small Divines, the answer is, you just carry them.

Austin: The tiniest ones, yeah. Uh-huh.

Jack: The big Divines, and sometimes when — we can spoil the whole Divine series, right?

Austin: Yeah, we can do whatever we want. That’s wild, isn’t it?

Jack: Yeah, Liberty and Discovery just hangs out in offices and things, like, just walks around.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I wonder if, at this period, I have a symbol that I can carry, that is not networked and is not actually the Divine, but is, in terms of — I think a lot about the way that Parliament, in the UK, has very specific symbolic objects, like black rod, and the various scepters and maces and things.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Like an object that holds legal and political significance, such that, for example, if you wanted to send an Elect, but the Divine couldn't be there, for whatever reason, like that would ever happen — they could come with this symbol, and on the record, they would be traveling with the Divine.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And for Fealty, it's one of the javelins that Fealty —

Austin: Oh, sure.

Jack: Well, no Fealty's javelins are the size of a building.

Austin: Right.

Jack: It's a Véronique-sized javelin.

Austin: That's fun.

Jack: So I go over with that.

Art: But also, like, Fealty is in it.

Jack: Oh! I don't think so, but I think that they could be, if you wanted to.

Austin: [laughs]

Art: Well the, whatever magic oath sense, I think Fealty has to be present. It's not just anywhere anyone's making an oath, Fealty knows that's —

Jack: No. But I think that as close as this ship is to us, they might as well be onboard Fealty. I think like, I don't know, correct me if I'm wrong here, Art, but I feel like Fealty is so big that their sphere of influence would extend to a ship docked nearby.

Art: Sure, I mean, space is so big, what's nearby.

Austin: Space is big, what's nearby? Yeah.

Art: But yeah, sure, sure I accept that. And then —

Austin: I think that the oath — go ahead, you tell me what you think the oath is. Or what you were going to say, and I'll — I'll — shut up.

Art: Well, I think it's sort of, I think Véronique has a lot of, of, a lot of leeway here. That this is, in a very real sense, they're who the oath is to, in a sense.

Jack: Hm.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Art: Because that's the person in front of them.

Austin: What I was going to say is, I think the oath that they are like ready to give is just beat for beat, word for word the one Véronique did on the broadcast.

Jack: Oh, that's so grim.

Austin: That they've just studied it, do you know what I mean, as if it is — not a holy text, but like...

Art: This has become a cult so quickly.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: We're really speedrunning —

Austin: [chuckles]

Jack: Well, and they're also, like, they are civilians who are making an oath to a Divine, and they're making an oath to a Divine that they perceive to be all about oaths. So it's like, why not use the template that we just saw [unintelligible]

Art: I guess so, yeah, why would you, why would you mess it up?

Austin: Also, to be clear, they've been making oaths to fucking Divines their whole life. That's been all of their public schooling, all of the — everything that they, all of their religious lives have been, every, you know, every, whatever their celebratory period is, whenever they do that, whether if that's like a weekly Mass, or if that's a seasonal festival, some part of that has been about pledging loyalty to the Principality and its Divines, right?

Art: Hm.

Austin: This is Nideo space, like that's, that's the thing they do. 100 percent. So, uh...

Jack: But me and my Divine are the Queen of oaths, even among the oaths.

Austin: Exactly. Uh-huh. So, yeah. So, I think that this is, this is a, it's a thing that they take too quickly, even if it's — like, I do want to present this as being a little bit sad, because —

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Because they are fleeing a land of oaths, by way of an oath, without... without really — I mean, they're not wrong that it's bad in the world that they are fleeing. But I don't know that Véronique and Fealty — I don't know, we'll see, I guess. Also, the name of the ship — Jack, can I use a ship name?

Jack: Yeah, go ahead, just mark it off the list.

Austin: This is the Fox in the Snow.

Jack: Oh, hell yeah. That's extra great, because I think Véronique is a Belle and Sebastian character in a lot of ways.

Austin: 100 percent, yeah. [laughs] Véronique is also kind of a fox in the snow, right? Where do you go as you cycle round the town? You're going up, you're going down, you're going nowhere.

Jack: I like the fox in that song, though.

Austin: Me too.

Jack: And I don't know that I like Véronique — I feel for Véronique — we'll see. I'm on team Fealty. But unfortunately I'm playing Véronique.

Austin: But remember, Véronique and Fealty blend into one another over time.

Jack: Yes, they do.

Austin: So maybe they'll, maybe they'll go the right way there. [pause]

Jack (as Véronique): Thank you, your oath means a great deal to us. What did you say your name was? Cove?

Austin (as Pressure Cove): Cove, Captain Pressure Cove. Welcome aboard. Everyone here is so excited to see you. You don't understand what you've done for them. The possibilities that you've opened up in their minds.

Jack (as Véronique): We're going on a journey to a... [sighs] I wish I could tell you more about our destination, but I'm afraid that I cannot. I can tell you that if you fly with us, you will be under the auspices of my Divine, and myself. And we will do our best to protect you. I will warn you that our passage will not be easy. We have already been hunted by a Heresy Squad, two Hallows, and a second Divine. But, in each instance we've prevailed, and I hope we can do the same.

Austin: They smile. They have like, uh, uh, sort of a robotic beak, that I think kind of twists up its actuators at the edges to communicate joy. Uh... and say —

Austin (as Pressure Cove): Of course. We'll follow you, and if you need anything. Even if you just need a place to... rest, or, uh, a distraction, we have some musicians on board, and we have... uh... we know some good stories — food — whatever you need, that we can help with. Uh, but we do also, uh, if, on the way, we could stop. We don't — we had a doctor on board, but she got sick, and so there are some medical stuff that we could use some supplying on, and some advice from people. And then also, if we can get a message out to our loved ones to let them know that we're okay, at any point, that would be great.

Austin: And I think that there suddenly is this sort of like, oh, right, also there are people with us now, who have their own needs.

Jack: Like a very sort of like, tight smile, and like, "I'll see what I can do," and heads back to Fealty.

Austin: And I'm guessing, Fealty, no, no deceivers among them?

Art: Uh, no, I think this is a legit cult.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: [laughing] Congrats, everybody. Uh, Art, do you have thoughts on where we go from here? Since I hijacked your turn?

Art: Yeah, now I think I want a more militarized confrontation, now that we have our little —

Austin: Mm-hm. Now that you have stakes.

Art: Our little army, yeah. Because like, before it's like, a direct confrontation doesn't have the same stakes, because we know we're getting through.

Austin: Uh, I mean, as long as the dice go right, but yes, yes. I get that.

Art: Well, but even if the, even if the dice fall, we still escape.

Austin: You still get one more, yeah. Mm-hm. So what's the militarized response look like, or what is it? I think we're still a ways from Palisade, so I don't think this is like, the final barricade or something, you know?

Art: No, yeah. So, I think having it be a Pact —

Austin: Right.

Art: Thing is, because the last thing has to be a —

Austin: A Curtain thing, yeah.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And I have a pretty good idea of what it is. So is this like a Pact squad that's made it in deep, or a Pact Divine or a Pact — is it an offer? Is it a...

Art: Yeah, maybe it's just like, somebody who don't take this at face — takes it too much at face value, some group that's just like, “all right, you know, you've done your devastating betrayal of the Principality. Why not take it one step further? Why not just like, come with us?”

Austin: We know that — we just mentioned Gallica. We know that Present can teleport anywhere in the Principality at will. Uh... could easily show up and make that offer, right?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Not even, again, it's not even an offer, because you're right, it's just like, “all right, you've done the thing, we're here to pick you up,” effectively. “We're here to like, guide you back to our territory, since obviously that's what you're doing, right?”

Art: Right. It certainly looks like what we're doing.

Austin: Uh-huh. Uh... and I think maybe she is the one. One sec, I'm going to double-check Gallica's pronouns, I'm pretty sure they're she/her. Let me get it right. Yeah. I think she's like, “I have to say, I'm impressed. You've —” this message just comes in, before she even visually arrives, and then suddenly Present blinks into being in front of you. I believe Present is humanoid and can kind of switch between a kind of rounded humanoid shape, and then also an almost UFO style design. Let me see. Friends at the Table, this is from the wiki, the Partizan wiki, thank you, whoever added this. “Present is capable of transforming between multiple forms. In one form, it's a small, luxurious frigate, oval in shape, housing living quarters, a humble armory, enough cargo space to hold a single hollow, and even a fully-stocked bar. With a snap of its Elect's fingers, however, it transforms into a humanoid war machine that serves its Elect loyally, outclasses any single hollow or Hallow in operations. Capable of holding its own against many other Divines in combat.” I also think that she was able to like, freeze the ocean during the one scene, during the Kingdom game, which was fun. So yeah, I think she shows up, and is like —

Austin (as Gallica): I have to say, I am impressed.

Austin: I think this is in frigate mode, this is in like, luxury liner mode. Uh...

Austin (as Gallica): You publicly stepped away from the Curtain, and you captured one of the leaders of Millennium Break. I'll be honest, I've rarely seen someone so committed to the cause without even meeting us. So... if you need escort out, I can plot us a route and get you to Pact space quickly.

Jack (as Véronique): I don't give a shit about your cause, Pact. What makes you think that I would turn my head towards you?

Austin: Uh... I mean, and then — snap of the fingers, the frigate turns out to be an equally powerful Divine as the one you're piloting, right?

Jack: Yeah, I mean, I know who this is. But...

Austin (as Gallica): Oh, have I misunderstood?

Austin: She says.

Art (as Fealty): You have.

Jack (as Véronique): Yes.

Austin (as Gallica): Huh. So you didn't capture Gucci, it's a, it's a front? You're with them.

Art (as Fealty): We captured Gucci. We...

Art: I want a fancier word than released, but it's all I have.

Jack: Relinquished?

Art: Yeah.

Art (as Fealty): We relinquished custody of Gucci, a while back. Two jumps ago?

Austin (as Gallica): So you don't know what you're doing.

Art (as Fealty): You're wrong about that. We know exactly where — what we're doing.

Austin (as Gallica): You were going to to say, "where you're going." Where are you going?

Art (as Fealty): Out.

Austin (as Gallica): There is no "out" of this war.

Art (as Fealty): I didn't say out of the war.

Austin (as Gallica): [contemptuous] Out of the galaxy? Out of... The one place you won't be touched. [realization dawning] you know where it is. You know how to get in unbelievable.

Jack (as Véronique): Open fire, Anchor.

Austin: Okay, so your answer to this is, open fire.

Jack: Just, just nip this in the bud as fast as possible. If we can get Gallica thinking about how to dodge attacks from a Divine, we can stop her thinking, "wait a second, can I track forwards from where they're going to, to why they're in this region of space?"

Austin: Uh-huh. Mm-hm.

Art: My solution's to open fire even better.

Austin: [laughs]

Jack: [laughs] Okay. I mean, I could propose another solution.

Austin: What's your other solution?

Art: [laughing] No, no, I can, can —

Austin: You've got one, Art?

Art: Uh... no, I don't. If you have one, you should go.

Jack: We could give her false information, one way or another. Either lead her on a chase and —

Austin: Fuck, that was mine.

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: [laughs]

Jack: So now we have two.

Austin: No, but go ahead, keep talking, keep talking, keep talking. False information —

Jack: Okay, you know, we lie to her, we — I mean, we deploy hardpoints and then put them away again really quickly, and be like, “oh, no, actually, we will tell you where the Mirage is.” We lure her into a trap, we anticipate being followed, and get her into a trap that way. We... [tongue clicking while thinking] so, option one is kill her.

Austin: [chuckling] Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Jack: Or try to. Option two is, make her — give her the wrong information.

Austin: Uh-huh. Option three is to signal the nearest Curtain forces, so that they close in on Present.

Jack: [laughing] Just be like, “it's over here!”

Austin: Yeah, because you know that, here's my pitch for this one —

Jack: They have access to all our comms, still.

Austin: Well, that, and then two, or maybe you have access to theirs, or maybe you've set up your own at this point, to talk to, like, this other little ship, or whatever. But specifically, you know that like, “all right, and now I'm gone!” Is not necessarily going to work with the Divine that can teleport anywhere in the galaxy. And so, you need to at least stall, and like, make her — keep her busy for a second while you get some distance, you know?

Jack: Yes. She has to know where she's going, right?

Austin: Yeah, yes.

Jack: She can't just be like, “I want to go to...” because otherwise she'd just invade cities.

Austin: She'd teleport into solid matter and die.

Jack: No, I meant be able to be like, "I'm going to go straight to Palisade."

Austin: No, yeah, couldn't do that. Part of that's the reason that this is so appealing.

Jack: This is Nightcrawler rules.

Austin: Right, yes. You pass through a dimension of Hell on the way.

Jack: What?

Austin: Uh-uh, don't worry about it.

Jack: I've only ever seen the movies.

Austin: Mmm.

Art: Mmm, it doesn't come up in those.

Austin: It doesn't come up that Nightcrawler has to go through Hell every time! [laughing]

Jack: Hell where the devil is?

Austin: [laughing while speaking] Oh, do you mean Nightcrawler's father? [laughing]

Jack: [laughing]

Art: Yeah, mmm.

Austin: Comic books, yeah.

Jack: That's great. Uh-huh.

Art: Especially X-men comic books.

Austin: Because that's my — those are my pitches. What do we got? Let's do some, let's do some rolls. Let's do some rolls. My — which one am I claiming? I'm claiming —

Jack: I'm claiming kill her.

Austin: You're claiming kill her. Art?

Art: I'm claiming lie.

Austin: And I'm claiming call the Curtain. Hey, call the Curtain's a 6, so it's a 3.

Jack: Leading the army that hates you —

Art: Lie is a 1.

Austin: Uh-huh. Jack's —

Art: And destroy is a... 3.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: [singsong] Time to lie, to, a Divine.

Austin: Okay.

Art: You get to pick and you get to stack.

Austin: Me?

Art: Because I picked and stacked last time.

Austin: Oh, okay.

Jack: Also, before we do this whole charade this time around, can I quickly find a laptop charger? Because my laptop is about to die.

Austin: Yeah. This isn't a charade! This is a legitimate nightmare.

Jack: [laughing] Ugh. Okay. I'll be right back. I'll just be like two seconds.

Austin: I think I'm going to choose mine.

Art: You're going to do 3?

Austin: I think I can do three.

Art: Oh my god.

Austin: It's more fun — I, you know, I've got to play her real. I don't think that she's like, going to believe a lie..

Art: All right.

Austin: She'd be like, zip, zip, "I just checked, no, it isn't." And I don't know that a fight goes as well — I don't know, maybe I'm wrong.

Art: No, I guess I like this because it's a better fail than fight. We failed fight last time.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: Hello.

Art: Hi.

Austin: Hi. You might notice —

Art: Austin picked 3.

Austin: I picked three. I just don't think lying works. I think she'd just check instantly, and then come back and be like, "you lied to me." And fighting, well, I think that's a whole other thing. I don't think that's, I think that's not enough. But, calling in some nearby Curtain forces, now that — calling in the nearest Heresy squad and stalling until they get here — now, that's interesting to me.

Jack: When I sat down, I saw the chat was saying things like, "no," and, "Austin, no," and I didn't know why.

Austin: Well, now you do.

Jack: [laughing] but now I do.

Austin: All right, here we go. Here's number one. Line it up. Oh, I don't like it anymore. I made the wrong decision. I'm going to back up. I can't — how do I.

Art: [laughing] from my perspective, that's... maybe the best approach. Oh, maybe that's a good one.

Austin: You don't think it's this? I think it might be that.

Art: It's tricky because there's like a little overhang here.

Austin: There is, there is, there is. Fuck. Oh, I think it's here.

Art: I think it might be here.

Austin: No, it's not here, because of that. That's really bad, fuck. Uh... yeah, I think you're right. I think it's there. Assuming our things have linked up, you know?

Art: Yeah, I sure hope so. I think, I think when I dropped the last die, it did.

Austin: It did? Yeah. Okay. Here we go, number one. Simple, simple and easy. I hate how rotated this is. Please go up.

Art: Oh! Oh!

Jack: Woah.

Austin: Not that direction! It's not, it's not. For people listening, it just hit the dice like six times on the way up.

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: What I need is a stairway. What I need, is a stairway. Because otherwise it jumps up.

Art: And it'll hit the overhang.

Austin: Dude, this is —

Art: Maybe it's this.

Austin: One might just not — I might not be able to get one. Dude, it's not, because it's going to get under there, and then it's going to pop up, and hit the one right there, right?

Art: No, try to pop it before. So you're doing fine — oh, yeah, it's up! You're up!

Austin: [relieved] it's up, it's up, it's up.

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: Okay, here's number one, nice and easy, nice and easy. [dice clicking] There's one.

Jack: Oh, beautiful.

Art: There's one!

Jack: Hello, Curtain forces!

Austin: All right, now, this one is rotating differently, so that makes me feel like we might come in at a different place. Not this way, though. Actually, let's see. Because if it hops up early, then it's fine.

Art: Right, because you're already level with the one that seems to be the biggest problem.

Austin: But it needs to pop now.

Art: Oh, there it goes, there it goes.

Austin: [exhaling stressfully] Two. I think you're right about the five second rule here. I think that it just doesn't. It's not going to. Okay. I don't know, dude. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9? We're up to 9? And —

Art: Yeah, I believe that's correct.

Austin: This is the worst tower we've built, I would say, in terms of direction.

Art: Rude.

Austin: We've built them all together, so I'm being rude to us, collectively. Where do I come in? I think it's here.

Art: I think you might repeat over here again.

Austin: You think? Okay.

Art: Over on Queen's North.

Austin: Queen's North, great character name. Oh, boy. Okay. Now, this is the wrong angle.

Jack: You don't think it's where Art's cursor is?

Austin: Here? Yeah, maybe.

Art: Maybe.

Austin: Let's try it.

Art: Maybe with this orientation. Hop, hop, hop.

Austin: Please fucking hop.

Art: All right, you're up — [shouts] oh!! Why did you back off?

Austin: Because it was going to fall! It tilted, and tumbled, and regained itself. All right. You think it's going to do that again, and be safe this time?

Art: On my screen you were up.

Austin: I was up, but it was about to fall on my screen. There, we did. We did it. We got up, and now, just simple, let go. [dice dropping] That's safe. That was — okay, it fell —

Art: On my screen it fell.

Austin: It fell. It fell, but it's a 1, which means nothing happens. Right? Tyler's in the chat. All right, I have to check something out here. "If adding a new dice causes the tower to fall, the plan falls, you barely escape, the stress of the situation—"

Jack: Tyler says that's safe.

Austin: But what's safe mean? Does safe mean I now have to restack it? Or does it mean it's a fail, but no memory loss? I've already crossed off the one, so we're good. It's a fail, but no memory loss. I'll read from the book here. "If toppled dice only show values already crossed-off, you still fail in your attempt to overcome an obstacle, but you miraculously escape without damage. No memories are lost unless a new number is crossed off, and only one memory can be lost per scene." — so, this doesn't work.

Art: Do we have to start a new tower? Do we have to —

Austin: No, no.

Art: Keep this horrible thing?

Austin: No, no, the tower stays.

Art: Is that right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You don't create a new tower. You always keep —

Art: On my screen, the top die on the tower is like, off to the side.

Austin: Yeah, me too. But it's up there, now. Because it knocked that way, on my screen. You should look at the stream. "Once a full scene is complete, clear any toppled dice so that only the base of the tower and any stable blocks remain." These are stable blocks.

Art: Oh, it's worse on my screen.

Austin: Oh, I believe it. So, we narrate to the next obstacle, no memory loss. But it failed, which means we've not lost either of these units.

Jack: It does fail.

Austin: Oh, can I give a good one here?

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: The Curtain Heresy Squad shows up. They're actually loyal to the Pact. They have already been turned by Present, or by some other — they're like a deep cover Pact cell. Like, "yeah, we'll kill Divines, sure."

Jack: Oh my god. Yeah, yeah, fair enough. So the Heresy Squad arrives and just starts taking us apart again.

Austin: Well, and it's like, there's this moment of like, Present being like, or Gallica being like, "why are you here?" And then realizing what we've done. And then go, "oh, okay." And we just

jet. And now it's a rolling chase, through some part of space that looks sick. Through the rings of a nearby planet. And the Fox in the Snow is not built for this.

Jack: It's through the rings of a planet that are moving very, very rapidly, that are orbiting rapidly —

Austin: Ooo.

Jack: And bits of the rings are extremely dangerous to fly through at speed. Basically we're stuck in Super Hexagon, by Terry Cavanagh.

Austin: Yeah, love that.

Jack: Where it's like, we are trying to fly through rings that are rotating extremely quickly, and bits of them are very dangerous. And I think, as before, this is this weird, um, blurred piloting that we saw the Divine and the Elect do where they are sort of acting as one unit as they fly. Who is presenting...

Austin: So what is our —

Jack: I mean, is this fucking planet — an obstacle —

Austin: I think this is, this is an obstacle, this is an obstacle.

Jack: What's this planet called?

Austin: We all know already, don't we? It's... Graaaa [flailing to think of a name] Grave.

Art: Gragrau.

Austin: Gragrau. Gragrau Grave. The grave of the great Graugra.

Art: Mmm.

Jack: Yes, it's a, yes, because of the heart of the planet is a beast that died millennia ago, and the rings are not actually planetary rings, but they are the carrion birds and —

Austin: Love it, yeah —

Jack: Insects, feasting on the beast's corpse.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: They, they, they got very good at eating stone so they could chew down into the beast's heart, in the center of the planet, and if they're good at eating stone, they're good at eating metal. And if they're good at eating metal we need to be careful of them.

Austin: Uh-oh. We're running through them. We're flying through them. And obviously, the most ridiculous first solution I'll offer is, we've just got to go where it's the worst, we've just got to go to where it's the worst. There's only two of us, it's only us, and it's the Fox and the Snow. And we, we have to get through, but if we can take a couple of them down on the way through there, then that's a win for us.

Jack: This is Austin's Véronique strategy plan, to fly a civilian ship through a cloud of carrion insects.

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Art: I'm going to give the Star Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace solution.

Austin: Uh-huh?

Art: What if we fly through the planet core?

Austin: [laughing] Sure, of course.

Jack: What, where the beast's heart is?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Try and lose them in the innards, of the, in the innards of the planet, of the beast?

Austin: Yeah, Outer Worlds now, baby.

Jack: Outer Wilds.

Austin: Right, fuck. I messed that up, I'm the fucking Outer Wilds stan. God dammit.

Jack: Mine, so Austin's is —

Austin: More birds.

Jack: Destroy the Fox and the Snow.

Austin: No, it's not destroy the Fox and the Snow. It's only destroy the Fox and the Snow if we fail — oh, I see.

Jack: Oh, oh, sure. Uh... Art's is, go into the beast's heart and try and lose them there. Mine is... oh, let's just do it straightforward. Fly with intense focus and divine concentration and like, match speed with the rings, so that we can fly through the gaps, and hope that the Heresy units — well, they can't, they're not as good pilots as we are.

Austin: Sure. So you're not going to go to the most dangerous part before trying that. You're just going to do that in a regular part?

Jack: Well, my guess was that you were just going to fly through the clouds of insects. Oh, I see. Yeah, I need a different one, then.

Austin: Isn't that what you're doing? Yeah, isn't that the thing you just suggested?

Jack: Oh, we're using through here. Through has two meanings.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I thought you meant fly into the cloud of insects and like, try and take them out.

Austin: Oh yeah, what do you mean?

Jack: Dodge the clouds of insects.

Austin: Oh, I mean dodge — no, see, I mean like, get into the clouds, but don't get hit by the clouds. How big are the bugs in your mind? In my mind, they're like asteroid-sized.

Jack: Oh, shit, no. In my mind —

Austin: You said they were carrion. And like, if it's the heart of planetary beast, they're probably big too, right?

Jack: And there's trillions of them.

Austin: Okay, see —

Jack: In my mind they're small and horrid.

Austin: Oh, okay. Well if they're small and horrid then what do we have to fear?

Jack: Yeah, no, I think it's better, the idea of like, looking at a planet through a telescope and being like, "what beautiful rings it has." [laughing] You look closer, and —

Austin: Okay, then here. Then let me, let me change mine to be — we are a Divine. We are Fealty, we can shelter ourselves and the Fox and the Snow with our body, and we're just going to go right through them. And yeah, maybe — I bet Present won't do that for the Heresy Squad, and that'll kill the Heresy Squad, that's my pitch now.

Jack: Yeah, okay.

Austin: Where instead of, let you have dodging —

Jack: Yours is take the bugs, mine is dodge the bugs.

Austin: Right, yes.

Jack: Art's is, go into the heart of the dead planet.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, normal stuff. All right, rolling a die. Woah! I launched a die out here. All right, that was very weird. All right, rolling this one. Hey, it's a 5 again, it's a 3 for me.

Art: I got a two.

Austin: So it's a 1.

Art: And here's for Jack.

Austin: And Jack's a 4, so it's a 2.

Art: 4, it's a 2.

Jack: Fly — into — the heart!

Austin: So that's a one, right?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Art, do you want this, or should I take it?

Art: It's my turn.

Austin: I thought it was Jack's turn.

Art: But I've been placing for Jack.

Austin: But you've been playing Jack, yeah, uh-huh.

Art: I'm going to need your help, I'm going to need you —

Austin: Yeah, yeah, we'll collaborate again.

Art: I think the tower's desynced for me.

Austin: Oh, almost certainly. But you've just got to get it up there, somehow.

Art: Yeah, which I guess, if you're going to tell me where to drop, I can just focus on getting up.

Austin: Yeah. I think this is a pathway, maybe, but I don't know... it's scary. It's scary no matter how you slice it.

Art: I think, I think it's this, this path. Let me... I think it's right here.

Austin: Okay. All right. [sucking breath through teeth] Okay, you're almost there. Just one more little step, one more little step. Okay, okay. Okay.

Art: Okay. I'm very —

Austin: You're almost there. I think, come towards me just a little bit, up this way. Yeah, no, no, too much, too much, too much. Bring it back down. Then over a little, and then down one — nope, nope, this way, like a scooch. This way. And then over again this way, one more little scooch, one more little scooch this way. You're going away from me now, Art. One more. There you go. Right there. Right there? Jack? Confirm?

Jack: Yes. I mean, I don't feel good about it, but I think you're right.

Austin: [dice clicking] Unbelievable. How is it standing?

Art: [laughs]

Austin: Jack, what happens?

Jack: I mean, this is, we're just going in real Star Wars Episode One vibes here. This is like, this is the... what's it called in Star Wars? The something run, where he goes in the Death Star.

Austin: The Kessel Run. That's not the trench run.

Jack: No, no, the trench run. This is the trench run, except what if it was happening in the bloody remains of a planet beast, right?

Art: Uh-huh.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: We're not going to get specific, because it would be gross, but there's, you know, ventricles and things. And the ship's zooming around, and the bugs are trying to eat the thing, um, and there's like, you know, we pass over, like, some sort of a city that was on, that had been built on here and is now fallen to the bugs. We go through the city. It's extremely exciting. Behind us, the — oh, we do a quiet bit, right, where we, uh...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: We idle in a cave, and we can, because of the like, acoustic properties of the cave, the soundtrack drops out and all you can hear is the rumble of the Divine's engines echoing against the inside of this beast, um, and then, the Heresy Squads come buzzing about, pursued by more insects. Truly, we can leave this planet, or, Art, if you have really fun ideas for problems and obstacles inside a dead planet — it's up to you.

Art: Mmm.

Austin: I think that they have to be, they're like, "well, they're dead. They flew into the heart of that beast. We're not going in there."

Art: Yeah, that works for me. I really thought we'd have knocked over a tower by now.

Austin: Me too, at least one. We're too good at it, Art.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: I mean, technically, I knocked over a tower, it just only was a one-die tower, and it landed on the one that we didn't have to cross out, somehow, miraculously. [sighs] We get out, right?

Art: Yeah, we get out —

Austin: We get out, we sneak away, we have to respect that. And we continue on our journey. Uh... and I think, here's my pitch. We can kind of move really quick here. I think maybe, flying into the heart of a dead megabeast, space beast, a Stellaris super-creature, has maybe shaken the faith of some people, inside of the Fox in the Snow. And it's a really difficult situation, because like, you know, let's say there's 50 people aboard. If 15 are like, I don't want to do this anymore — they don't really have an option in the middle of this part of space. There's not like a subship they can get on to bounce. And so, I think the next obstacle really is just like, what do we do about these people who are not happy having gone through the guts of a big beast — or, the heart of a big beast? And, do you try to bring them back on — what do you do to their sudden doubt about this, this... uh... whole endeavor?

Art: I don't know, it's hard to imagine something that can be more affirming of the Divine providence of something than the success we just had. I think —

Austin: So that's your, your answer is, double down, make the pitch, how would we not be, how is this not — I mean, I think that's a different perspective than we've seen, necessarily, from Fealty. Because that's the perspective they've brought. They were saying, this seems to be a blessed endeavor. But for Fealty to say that, I think, is distinct.

Art: Yeah, I'm sticking with it.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: They shouldn't have made an oath if they weren't prepared to follow through.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: So yours is, guilt them with oath.

Jack: I mean, there's no guilting about it. We're going. We have the ships. They're on the ships.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Roll up!

Austin: My suggestion is, we get them to the next safe place, and they all leave. The endeavor is done, they, kind of broken-hearted by it, realize —

Jack: These fair-weather friends! You fly through one beast —

Austin: [laughing] One beast, one heart-beast. All right. Let's roll them, let's keep it moving. Hey, I rolled a 5 again. I think I've rolled 5, eight times in a row now.

Art: I rolled a 5.

Austin: Uh-oh. Jack?

Art: And Jack has rolled...

Austin: A 6.

Art: A 6.

Austin: Oh — ooo.

Art: Oh, it's going down for real.

Austin: Art, I think you're up.

Art: I think I am, too.

Jack: But whose plan is this, huh?

Austin: Do you want to take turns — yeah, which, who are you picking? Drop them off, inspire them, or, or... uh... really make it clear to them that they took an oath?

Art: I think it's drop them off.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: We're not running a labor camp here.

Austin: Yeah. All right.

Jack: I didn't say we're running a labor camp, I just think you, of all people, Fealty, should think that making an oath is very important.

Art: I do!

Austin: Do you want to do these, do you want to do, do you want to split these up, do you want to do them all yourself, Art?

Art: I got it.

Austin: Okay. I believe in you. What's three dice? On top of a 10-high tower [laughs] that's... kind of a remarkable construction of ingenuity.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Can you line it up so that we're with the tower of the church in the background?

Austin: Tower of the church in the background, what?

Jack: Isn't one of these buildings the church?

Art: That's an Austin question.

Austin: What? No.

Jack: Okay.

Austin: I don't think. Okay, wait, I'm missing the action here, Jack.

Art: I'm up.

Austin: You're up. I moved the screen by mistake, okay.

Art: That looks good to you? It looks good to me.

Austin: [sucking breath through teeth] A little bit more this way. Ooo, too much this way. Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, uh-huh, that's not so bad.

Austin: Where you just were.

Jack: Well, no, he moved it again.

Austin: Ooo, Yeah, yeah, yeah yeah, yeah. Ooo, perfect. [gasping anxiously] Ooo. All right, stable, 11. Our high —

Jack: Okay.

Art: [laughs]

Austin: We're now doing the impossible. They said it couldn't be done.

Art: I want to — I want to — we as a company should buy this software.

Austin: I don't know what that means.

Art: This should be Friends at the Table presents: Tabletop Playground, a dice-dropping game.

Austin: I don't think we have money like that. Ooo.

Art: Do you like a different approach?

Austin: No, no, no, no. You're good, you're good.

Jack: I don't know.

Art: That was jumpy, and I think I can —

Austin: I just hate the height.

Jack: [groans in anticipation]

Austin: This is as high as we've ever been.

Jack: Is this is our final dice, or —

Austin: No, we have two more. It's this one and one other one.

Jack: Okay. Yeah. Uh-huh. Thought so.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: I wish my mouse were more sensitive.

Austin: More sensitive? I guess that makes sense. All right, one more. All right, you're up. [sighs] For people who don't understand, there's like a very — I mean, you probably know by now. Very subtle, hard to control mouse movement thing here. I don't like the line-up on this. The thing I just realized is, those last three all happened to be the same direction. And this changes it up in a way.

Jack: Oh yeah, I see what you mean.

Austin: I think this way, like a step. Like a half-step. Like southwest. Yeah.

Art: You like it here?

Austin: I think. [dice clicking] [sucking breath through teeth] Oh!

Art: Nope. I knew as soon as I let it go.

Jack: Shit.

Austin: Oh, it doesn't work. Woah, okay. Let's add them up. 6, 6 —

Art: Two 5s, and two 4s.

Austin: And two 4s. So it's 6 that gets cut here. Oh, wait, wait wait wait. There's a third 4? No, that's two 4s.

Art: Wait, is that what happens in a tie?

Austin: On a tie, it goes to the highest, yeah.

Art: All right.

Austin: So what goes wrong, and then we need a memory.

Art: Could it just be as simple as like, by the time we get there, they've all talked themselves out of it?

Austin: They all talk themselves out of what?

Art: They've all talked themselves into leaving?.

Austin: No, that was — my pitch was they all leave. So that does it.

Art: Oh, it was all of them. I thought you meant the 15.

Austin: No, no, all of them leave. It was the whole process was broken, and everybody leaves. Because I wanted it to be a tough, a tough one.

Art: Mmm.

Austin: And yeah, as a note, we did leave on the worst of the top — this is not a great place to be. This top number is not — it's angled weird, I don't like it.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Do we get — does... all right, here are some pitches for what goes wrong. Pitch number one: they decide they don't want to leave. Or, no — it twists from, I want to leave, to this whole thing is, you manipulated us, you brought us onboard, you shouldn't have done this, and there's some sort of potshot on the way out that draws attention to you. Two: you go to a place you think is safe to leave them off, it is not safe.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, uh, three, they decide they don't want to go. They, in fact, want to get more involved, uh, part of what they realize is that they don't feel safe, and so they start to ask you for, they say, build us, build us hollows, because some of us want to protect ourselves. In a situation like that, we could have won that fight, if we had been able to fight. These are all suggestions for bad things.

Jack: I don't want to be like, "and here comes the pursuers again," at least in that way.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh...

Art: What if they decide that their real task is to go and just like, evangelize out —

Austin: Oh, that's fun.

Art: They become like this aggressive... they start going and having people swear oaths to them, and —

Austin: I like that.

Jack: What's the oath, the — an oath to an unallied Divine? Like this idea that there's this Divine out there that is free of the war, and is like —

Art: And all you need to do is say that you're loyal to them.

Austin: I think that you have to have a slightly higher stake here, which is that, like — you told these people that there was something out there, some good place to get to... uh... do they — I mean, they wouldn't — the Mirage exists in the world and in the sort of story that Nideo tells about the Principality. So it's not like it's something they've never heard of. Do they figure out that it's, at some point, does somebody, does Véronique let slip the word, the Mirage, and then they begin to go preach the good word of going to the Mirage, that you can leave this all behind by getting to the Mirage somehow?

Art: Mmm, that's sort of like more than I want to like, put on the season, but maybe not —

Jack: [cross] I think, I —

Austin: Jack, what were you —

Art: Sorry, Jack, yeah.

Austin: You just had a strong reaction.

Jack: I was going to say that there's something grim, if... it's not, you know, we keep saying that they know about the Mirage. What if they just work with that as the assumption. They don't hear it from anybody.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: They're just like, oh, oh, we're going to the Mirage. That's where we're going.

Austin: They just figure it out.

Jack: And there's Divines out there —

Austin: That it was foolish after —

Jack: I mean, like, we're describing it as them figuring it out, but they don't know whether they're right. They just believe they're right. They've just taken a punt. It just so happens that they're correct. They're like, "what could the good place be that this Divine thinks that they can bring us to? Or that we think this Divine says it's bringing us to? It's the Mirage. And, you can hitch your wagon up by being like, all you have to do is swear loyalty." It's concerning, I don't know.

Austin: The thing is, I don't, I don't take a lot — all you have to do is swear loyalty, is no stakes to me. That's not what real churches do. Real churches don't say, all you have to do is swear loyalty.

Art: No, I think it's like, you have to give up —

Austin: Right.

Art: You have to give up this place, you have to give up this war, you have to leave and —

Austin: I mean, like, and I mean this from both critical — from every perspective, faiths say, religions say, you have to do some community service, or they say you have to go on a pilgrimage, or they say you have to fight in a war, or they — there's some material component — or they say you have to tithe. Right? Or they say you have to adopt a daily meditation practice, and truly think on, or be mindful of, the, the place that you have in this world, right? There's a huge range of it, but it can't just be the oath — and maybe this is me in the game about oaths being like, "I don't give a fuck about an oath." But like, an oath ain't enough for this to be a negative outcome for me. So I think you're right, Art. There has to be some giving up of something.

Art: Well, and it could be like, it could be like sort of a perversion of the thing, right?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: That it's like, the first, the first branch, these people go off and they just ask for oaths. But like, the people they get to are like, "no, an oath's not enough. We need, we need you to give you us all your possessions, and get into our big Ark ship that's going to find the Mirage, and —"

Austin: Alton in the chat says, "all religions don't grow, though." It's true that all religions don't grow. It's also true that all religions that I know the names of have grown, even the ones that are not missionary or especially, uh, you know, uh, conversion-focused colonial projects. Over time, families grow, cultures grow. So I think, and more importantly, I guess, we're framing this as a negative, right? This was a negative outcome to a roll. I don't think the negative outcome to this roll is, then these people have developed a particularly healthy relationship with a new faith that doesn't have some knock-on effect in the rest of the show that we make, you know? Uh... but also, maybe, it's not negative in the fullest of the long run. Like, these people deciding, "the Principality is not for us," ain't that — is frankly still a positive in the grand scheme of things, right?

Jack: I'm not worried if this is actually negative enough. It's grim, but —

Art: I mean, what if, what if the thing is just worse? We can just, what if we just keep dialing up the knob that says religious fanaticism, until...

Austin: But we're — yeah. The thing is that like, that would have come from nowhere. These people seem —

Jack: Yeah, this is what I'm saying. They need to get there. Yeah, again. I said this earlier, but like, this really is, you fly through the heart of one planet, and then they go, we're going to start a universe-spanning cult as a result? I don't think. Uh...

Art: What if they take the javelin with them?

Jack: Ah. Now — what if they take — what if they leave — what if we don't go as far as the cult and everything yet? What if they just leave with the javelin? What if, you know, this is Austin talking about the, what if there's some sort of a potshot, right?

Austin: What is the consequence here? Mm-hm.

Jack: And it's, what if you have a bunch of people who had a brief dalliance with a Divine who claimed that it could take them to a good place —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And they leave with a symbol that legally represents — legally — we're in a war, you know —

Austin: It doesn't, though, because you're already, you're a heretic. It doesn't represent anything anymore.

Jack: It represents this Divine.

Art: Of course it does.

Austin: I mean, it represents something to other people, but it doesn't represent legally anything. Legally it's nothing.

Jack: No. It —

Art: But socially it's —

Austin: Right, but that's not what Jack said.

Jack: I think that's — I meant legally in its original — yeah, this is an object with a great deal of power. That power used to be demarcated through laws and stuff, right? But now it's —

Austin: What's the thing that they do with it that's a failure, for you? Because to me, it sounds like we're going to get back to —

Jack: Uh...

Austin: Why would they do such a bad thing after just kind of being decent people? Like are we, are we, the next time that we see — I've already forgotten — Pressure Cove, I don't think Pressure Cove is going to be like, “and now I am the one who is chosen by Fealty, and I have the javelin to prove it.”

Art: No, but like, someone could just take it from Pressure. Pressure doesn't have any juice, you know?

Austin: But then what do they do with it? Because then that should be the thing that happens here. Or we should get that, we should signal that.

Jack: Take it back to the, take it back and claim they've killed us? Uh... that's not —

Austin: Because this thing has to then also, as Tyler says in the chat, it should cost a memory. So like, this is... whatever we see here needs to echo.

Art: I mean, the, the memory can be associated with the symbol of the javelin. The memory part isn't challenging. The consequence part is challenging.

Austin: It makes me wish we had done the thing with you being a little bit in the javelin, because then I think it's a material thing that has —

Art: Austin, we can go back and —

Jack: We can change that, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: The fact that Fealty wasn't there materiously [sic], [laughs], materially. Materiously.

Austin: Or previously.

Jack: Didn't have like a direct infact [sic] [laughs again] —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Oh my god, impact — on the scene. We can go back and change that.

Austin: And then they have a piece of this Divine.

Jack: But then how do they do that? How do you steal a...

Austin: Does Fealty let it happen?

Art: To honor the commitment that they've made.

Austin: You honor the commitment, yeah.

Art: And maybe we just reframe them leaving a little bit, right?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: They're not, they're not giving, they're not like disillusioned and leaving, they're leaving to like, do this somewhere else.

Jack: Oh, shit. If they have a bit of Fealty, that bit of Fealty knows about the Twilight Mirage, right?

Art: That's really hard to say. Does every bit of Fealty know everything that Fealty knows?

Austin: Right, right, right. Are you atomic in that way? Yeah.

Jack: This is a Curiosity Divine-type... uh... it's tough, right? Because I feel like we're stuck, and I also don't feel quite satisfied with —

Austin: I like the leaving with a bit of Fealty more. That, to me, feels like — one, it echoes the memory loss thing. And then, two, it feels real, to me, as a loss.

Jack: It, it, it's an object that has stakes.

Austin: Because remember, them leaving was the plan, that we didn't get. So it has to be, do you know what I mean? Our plan was to let them leave. So it has to be something that is... costly, yeah. So I like that, but I'm still open for other, much wider ideas. You know, like, we've danced around a lot of, “ooo, could it be, could they leave in a bad way?” But like, there's other options that have nothing to do with them being, like — they don't get to leave at all, because bad thing happens, or something else, you know?

Art: Instead of leaving, there's twice as many of them.

Austin: Right, right, exactly. We get through, and we get to the next port, and there's three other ships waiting for us, to join up, right?

Art: That's not bad.

Jack: Let's make it more than three, let's make it like, ten.

Austin: Right.

Jack: Let's make it like a flotilla.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Like a... a real, like, I didn't think this area of space was this populated, and Pressure's — Pressure Cove —

Austin: Pressure Cove, yeah.

Jack: Pressure's Cove is from the NEH. Uh...

Art: And they all demand to be sworn-in, and that's the stress that causes the memory loss.

Austin: That's the stress, yeah. And it actually re-convinces the 15 who wanted to leave, who suddenly have this special relationship, right where like, "oh, we were one of the first 50, and we went through the hard time together, and I'm inspired by how many other people have been inspired, and I feel bad —" like, you get messages from those 15 saying, "we're sorry we ever doubted. We see your vision."

Jack: We don't know where we're going, but we're happy to be going — we don't know, but we're along.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: Yeah, okay. Yeah, let's do that.

Austin: We're going to wherever Fealty, you know, yeah, we're going to wherever Fealty, whatever — they probably have come up with a name for whatever this is. They don't know that it's the Mirage, right? But they probably colloquially talk about something.

Art: Yeah, the Place over the Horizon.

Austin: Right, exactly. Yeah. All of our fucking — all of my quick jump words are just so terribly Christian that I just don't want to use them, you know what I mean?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: But, but — or are just pulled from other real earthly faiths and I have no fucking right using, so...

Jack: I mean, maybe it's just something like the Edge, the End, or the — they think that — this whole place is just war, so anywhere we're going has got to be outside of it.

Austin: I mean, Outside is actually — we're going Outside, that is the words they heard Fealty use on broadcast, right?

Jack: Yep.

Art: Mm-hm.

Austin: We're going Outside. Yeah.

Jack: Oh, dear. But as we've learned from our dear friends Arrell and Alyosha —

Austin: We can't spoil those seasons.

Jack: No, no, just mentioning two names. People who have feelings about inside and outside.

Austin: Insides and outsides, yeah.

Jack: Uh... yeah, I like this a lot, okay. You want to cook up a memory to lose, Art?

Art: Yeah, but now it can't be the javelin memory I was thinking about. Uh...

Jack: I mean, why not? It can be a memory about the javelin. Although, yeah, no, you're right, the memory should be linked.

Art: Uh, what if we go to, I mean, we've talked, we've danced around it a lot in this tower. What if we go back to, to the oath that Véronique took at the beginning?

Austin: Mmm, sure.

Jack: Yeah, absolutely. Is it me and —

Art: Do you want to go like, right to that? Do you want to do like a scene right before it?

Austin: Ooo, I love right before it. The sort of private conversation before the public ceremony. Because we have a pretty good idea of what the public ceremony might look like, right?

Jack: God, I just love this idea of the Divine crouched in the playing field of a school. Because it's shown up for the ceremony as well, right? Or they've shown up for the ceremony?

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Once the Queen's sister opened a science building at our school, and she flew in on a helicopter. Uh... and when she flew away, it looked like the helicopter was going to hit a tree, and the entire school went, "wait!"

Austin: Jack, this is a Belle and Sebastian song narration. "Once, the Queen's sister came to our school to—" what did you say she was doing?

Jack: [laughing] she was opening a new science building.

Austin: "To open a new science building, and... " yeah.

Art: That's what the Queen's sister does?

Jack: Yeah, Princess Margaret. Is she the Queen's sister? I think, I think she is. I don't know, but she came, and — she was fine, because the helicopter pilot knew what she was doing. But a bunch of 11-year-olds were briefly excited about seeing a helicopter with the Queen's sister inside hit a tree.

Art: That feels like such a mundane — I don't know that if the school closest to me opened a science building, that anyone would come, let alone —

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: We're a smaller country, I suppose.

Art: Let alone someone in line to be President or whatever, I don't know.

Austin: In line, oh, no.

Jack: Yeah, where is this? Is this us just talking together before the ceremony?

Art: Yeah, I think, yeah, I think it is. It's sort of like, if you think it's at the school, maybe it's just the two of us on the field, and no one's been like, let in yet, or there's like the people setting up, but no one like —

Jack: Like, thousands of chairs. In the school hall.

Art: Yeah, lots of chairs. You can sort of like hear the dull clatter of all the people waiting.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: But here, it's, it's — quieter.

Art (as Fealty): You're going to do great.

Jack (as Véronique): Thank you. I'm nervous. Are you nervous?

Art (as Fealty): No.

Jack (as Véronique): It's just a lot of responsibility. My parents are out there.

Art (as Fealty): Did you get to talk to them this morning?

Jack (as Véronique): Mm-hm. I had breakfast with them. It was tough, because there was the honor guard, and... the press was waiting outside, but — yeah, we got, we got to talk.

Art (as Fealty): It'll never be that easy again.

Jack (as Véronique): It didn't feel very easy this morning. We didn't know what to say.

Art (as Fealty): It'll be an incident next time.

Jack (as Véronique): What will?

Art (as Fealty): Your arrival. You'll come to this planet, and everyone will wonder why.

Jack (as Véronique): Oh, I think — I mean, I can come on my own, I suppose. We can, we can travel separately, can't we?

Art: [chuckles]

Art (as Fealty): We can... but we won't.

Jack (as Véronique): You sound very confident. Am I not allowed to just take a little trip somewhere?

Art (as Fealty): You're allowed to, but you won't. They never do.

Jack (as Véronique): How do you know what I'll do?

Art (as Fealty): It's very busy work that you're signing up for. You'll love it, though. It's the ride of a lifetime. Only a handful of people on dozens of worlds are going to experience what you experience.

Jack (as Véronique): What are we going to spend most of our time doing?

Art (as Fealty): We protect dignitaries... we fight in wars. Skirmishes, really. To unleash a Divine on a battlefield is a major move. You'll go to middle schools and open their science buildings.

Jack: [chuckles quietly]

Art (as Fealty): You'll meet a thousand people every day.

Jack: Like outside, one of the attendees is waving a clipboard, and they've started letting people in, and they're all filing in, and some of them as they sit down are like, looking over their shoulder at the big, silhouetted shape of Fealty on the school field.

Art (as Fealty): Look at those faces. Look at how they look at us. You're going to do great. We're going to have a wonderful time. [pause]

Jack: Perfect. The flotilla hanging in space, on the other side of —

Austin: Uh-huh. Mm-hm. We're going to have a wonderful time. So —

Art: Oh, this is so hard.

Austin: Yeah. I think what we should do is, we should say, we each go around one more time. And, that six turns is, you make it. Or you don't, because, if you don't, you don't.

Art: Wait, if we each go around two more times.

Austin: I said one? I meant two.

Art: Yeah, and then you said six.

Austin: Six is right. Six turns, but we go around twice.

Jack: Six of us, Austin, Austin, Art, Art, and two Jacks, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, and two Jacks. Jack Jack. That's the name of the baby, isn't it? In Incredibles?

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah. I only have half of his name, but I'm twice as good as him.

Austin: That's right. And don't let anyone ever tell you otherwise.

Art: I don't think the birth certificate probably says "Jack Jack."

Jack: Think that baby's called Jack?

Austin: They just decided to call that baby Jack Jack?

Art: Yeah, I think it's like a nickname.

Austin: Unlike as if it was on the birth certificate, where that would have not been their choice, presumably.

Jack: You are going to call this baby —

Austin: Yeah, the doctor looked at the Incredibles and said, "now, listen, you're going to call this baby Jack Jack."

Jack: [laughing] But they lost that memory because the tower fell down, four years into their marriage, and —

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh, uh-huh. God.

Jack: That libertarian baby. Okay, yeah, I agree.

Austin: Mm-hm. [laughing] I don't think the baby is libertarian. I guess I haven't seen the sequel, so...

Art: Yeah, the baby talks a lot of politics in the sequel.

Austin: All right, I have a full name for the baby.

Art: Well, in the sequel, the baby is sort of like a Warner Brothers cartoon antagonist.

Austin: Oh, sure, sure, sure. All right. In Incredibles Zero, the comic, the baby's full name is used, and it's, "John-Jack." It's John, hyphen, Jack.

Art: [laughing] What are they, the fucking Kennedy's?

Austin: [continually laughing] Yeah.

Jack: This, as someone called Jack, this is the funniest possible solution, because, especially older people in Britain, would regularly ask me if my name was short for John.

Austin: Right, right, right.

Jack: And so, I think that calling this baby, his real name is John-Jack, is very funny.

Austin: Uh... I am going to become a new type of guy. The type of guy I'm going to be is, I'm only referring to this baby as John-Jack from now on.

Art: You're going to have to come up with a lot of ways to get this baby into your conversations — [laughing]

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: We're going to go to that Disneyland ride with Austin, and he's going to be unhappy to be at Disneyland all day, until he gets on the ride. Then your face is going to light up, Austin.

Austin: Oh, John-Jack is here!

Jack (as Austin): John-Jack, did you see him?

Austin: Did you see John-Jack! [coming out of the bit] Oh... what happens next, with the flotilla?

Jack: Oh, dear god, whose turn is it?

Austin: Who knows. Does anybody know? Art stacked lasts, and I think Art was stacking for —

Art: I just stacked twice, though, right?

Austin: Yeah, so that means it's me.

Art: So it's you.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh...

Art: This is the second — we're really becoming a Pixar-adjacent show, though, you know? Between that Tweet, and the John-Jack conversation.

Austin: Oh my god, yeah. Uh-huh. Jesus Christ. Lots to say, won't say any of it. Uh... the, the — there's a period of this journey that goes surprisingly well.

Jack: Oh, good.

Austin: Like, the adding — the addition of all these other ships means that we start to get a sort of — the social, the space is socially bigger, and becomes increasingly sustainable. One of the ships that joins us — what was the number you said?

Jack: Ten, but then I said a flotilla —

Austin: I heard ten — you said ten. A flotilla, yeah.

Jack: So we could make it, I want it to be an unwieldy number.

Austin: And, uh, maybe it keeps happening, smaller ships join us, bigger ships join us. You get, uh, you get the ship that's an agriculture vessel, like just a garden vessel, right? And it's just making, it's just growing food. You get the ship that has a really great doctor on it. You get the ship that does have some hollows, right? You get a mercenary company that signs up, and is like, "yeah, we believe in the cause." You know? "We want to go Outside," they say. "We've done a lot of fighting. We've fought for every side in this war. We just want to go Outside." And it's like this for, I don't know, three weeks. And, you're getting pretty close again. And I think a communication comes through, just to you, like, as if it cuts through whatever other, I don't know if you've been denying communications, like, what have you been doing to not just get pummeled by communications from people this whole time? I mean, I guess mostly, the way communication works from zone to zone, from sector to sector, is that the gate has to be open. Because you certainly don't have the Strand network up inside of your... inside of the Divine.

Jack: In the Divine, no.

Austin: Maybe someone in the ships does, though. And maybe it's through that, that a message comes in. Uh... and the message comes in from a pilot you know. This is... that's the wrong document, here it is. This is Amaryllis. And Amaryllis is the elect of the Divine Conviction. You've fought shoulder to shoulder with Amaryllis. They are as noble and honorable a person as you could imagine. Um, you went through training together, that you were — they, they followed you, they, uh, they were, like a few weeks after are your big ceremony, they had their ceremony. They're like, 5'7", 5'8", tan skin, kind of dyed red hair. Uh... I think this is a text message, not a visual message. But it comes in to you. It says, basically it says, "pass this to Véronique, if you get this, please pass this to Véronique." And it says, "I don't know what to do. I think I know where you're going. I just want to talk." [pause] And it has a location. And the location is, it's, it's a choice. You have to go there, but, it's on the way, you know. It's like one of those things where it's like, do you, do you go — we're going to have to get off at this exit or the next exit to take a rest break or whatever. But you have to decide which one —

Jack: In space.

Austin: In space. Uh-huh, which rest stop do you want? Or, like, you know, we, we have to pass through one of these three towns, it's one of the towns, effectively.

Jack: God damn.

Austin: Ashlin G in the chat says, "who knew the Road to PALISADE would be so literal?"

Jack: [laughs]

Jack (as Véronique): Oh god, Anchor what do you make of this?

Art: Give me the pronouns on the pilot again?

Austin: They/them on the pilot, she/her on the Divine. The Divine, again, is Conviction.

Art: Conviction, yeah.

Austin: Conviction is a Kesh, uh, Divine, it has the kind of big, bulky golden armor. Looks, like, looks like a knight, but with, uh, kind of equine features. Not a centaur, but like, it has hooves,

right? Or maybe it has like a centaur mode it can go into on the ground. But in space, it's just a, a person. It's a humanoid knight figure.

Jack: Kind of a dragon slayer Ornstein vibes.

Austin: It's in that vibe, yeah. I mean, I straight up think that if you just search for golden knight mech, you would get something similar to what I'm imagining. I guess some of these are towards it, a little bit. A big, Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. There's a, there seems to be a character from Knight's and Magic called Gordoleo who has these like —

Jack: [laughs]

Austin: Really big knee armor plates. I don't know shit about Knight's and Magic, it might suck, so apologies if so. But I do think, instead of having a big sword like this one does, it has like a really big, or she has a really big lance that she tends to use, that emits a sort of, you know, it's like a pneumatic lance, it has like, that style of like... it releases steam when it's resting, because if it's just been expended — that style of thing. And she is, she is as big as you are, Fealty. She's like a large, maybe not as big. She's like, in your size range, in — in Armour Astir terms, the same tier as you.

Art (as Fealty): You trust them, don't you, Anchor?

Jack (as Véronique): Yes, I do. They graduated...

Jack: Graduated. They, what did we call it? Did we have a name for it? What happens?

Austin: Well, no, we don't have many — we have not had many Elects as main characters until now, you know?

Jack: I think they would probably say something like, when they were sworn-in, some sort of very like. You know. Anyway.

Jack (as Véronique): They came just after me. They're good people. I like Amaryllis.

Art (as Fealty): Maybe we should go.

Jack (as Véronique): This is scary. I don't know Conviction very well. We could talk to them together. You could talk to Conviction, and I could talk to Amaryllis.

Art (as Fealty): Sure.

Jack (as Véronique): I'd find that a comfort.

Austin: My solution — so, wait, one of those solutions was, let's go have a talk.

Jack: My solution is, we go, and we split up —

Austin: Right, mm-hm.

Jack: The Elects talk to the Elects, and the Divines talk to the Divines. Véronique said that it would provide her a real comfort if she knew that her Divine was talking to their Divine.

Austin: Right. My suggestion is, avoid them. That's my solution. It's just, nope, pretend you didn't even get the message. Leave them on read. Art?

Art: Uh... my suggestion is... to come with the whole flotilla.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: Ho-ho, oh. What — how is that good?

Art: Roll up with our full cult. Because, it's showing that we have followers.

Jack: But if this is a trap the, um, the Curtain will just wipe out the flotilla.

Art: But if it's a trap, we have some more firepower.

Austin: And maybe, maybe Confidence and Amarilla will —

Jack: Conviction.

Austin: I said Confidence — yeah, sorry, uh, Conviction. I named the thing — Conviction and Amarilla [sic] will be moved by the amount of people you have, or understand what it is you're doing, or be frightened in a positive way. Religious fear.

Jack: I like to be frightened in a positive way.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: That's why I watch horror.

Austin: Yeah. All right. Let's roll some dice. I was team... fucking avoid them. And I've rolled a 5 *again!* That's a 3.

Art: That was for my idea —

Austin: Yeah, that's a one for your big fleet. And then Jack? Rolls a 4, so a 2.

Art: 2.

Austin: Hey. This is a spread, this is a 1-2-3. Jack, it's your turn, I think? I think we're saying it's your turn?

Art: We started this as your turn, because I had stacked twice in a row.

Austin: Me? But I just, did I not — oh, did I not just stack? I didn't, you're right, this is my turn, fuck. Uh.. I like bringing the flotilla. I think it's a fun visual, especially in my mind, because in my mind, Conviction is literally seated on like a big asteroid or something, using it as like —

Jack: Just being like... like —

Austin: It's like a — go ahead.

Jack: She's just like, "oh, I'm going to talk to Fealty and to Véronique," and then like 30 ships fly in.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: With the Divine.

Austin: Yeah. I really imagine it like, the shot that's in, like, an anime OP, like the opening of Escaflowne or something, and it's just like a big — also this, she definitely has a cape, the Divine. Conviction wears a cape, for sure. Uh, uh, and I think maybe... you know, I feel like, I feel like, Amarilla does not, they are not as, they don't have the conviction needed to wear a cape. Um, uh, very scary thing to do. But I think that they're just seated there, and then, yeah, I guess, we'll see if y'all come through. This should be easy, this should be easy. This is the angle, right?

Art: Yeah, it should be nothing.

Austin: I don't like this angle, hold up.

Art: I mean, maybe just a little bit over this way?

Austin: Over this way. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. One second, I don't like how my hand is. I have to shake my hand. Okay. Phew.

Art: That's how I knocked it over, it was a hand tremor as I was pulling —

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh, that's a lot of what I've done. There we go. Nice and easy. And I'm going to try to... get us a little bit more stable here. Oh... [laughing]

Art: It feels pretty stable...

Jack: Isn't that beautiful.

Art: Oh my goodness.

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: This is a nightmare tower. All right. [sighs] Thomas Whitney says, "it was really funny, that last game they were worried they wouldn't have enough game left for a whole session." The thing we did offscreen was, talk about how we could have a full game, still. Off-mic we were like, "well, it's not just going to be jump to Orion space and that's the end of it. We've got to come up with something better than that, that has enough legs." So we did.

Art: Also, we then had an 11, or... 12, tower?

Austin: Yes, we had the highest tower we've had yet. Only by one, but still.

Jack: Beautiful.

Austin: So yeah, I think you show up, and, uh, Conviction and Amarilla are surprised by the incredible flotilla you've built. Fealty's flotilla. The flotilla of Fealty. A little more imperious. Which, maybe that's bad, I don't know — eh, Fealty. Uh, and this isn't a trap. There isn't — this is an otherwise empty sector. I think there are people in the fleet are at first scared, there's lots of chatter on the comms. But when the two of you tell them to be calm and that there's nothing to be afraid of, there truly seems not to be, at least not yet. Uh, and, this seems to be a genuine meeting. Uh, do you welcome Amarilla onboard? Where does the meeting happen?

Jack: I think I would welcome Amarilla — is it Amarilla, or Amaryllis?

Austin: Amaryllis, Amaryllis. Whatever I said the first time.

Jack: I think I welcome them onboard. Because, like, there's a real cordiality here. We've only ever seen Véronique talking to a Divine, or talking to people she feels like she's sort of constitutionally above.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And this is a Divine pilot from her own army. Who, they are very close in age, um, they've seen similar things. I think it's absolutely like, "Amaryllis, come onboard the ship, it's good to see you."

Austin: They reach out to shake your hand as they come onboard. And it's... they have cold hands. Just a sensation worth saying out loud. Not because it's a secret. They have cold hands.

Jack: This isn't you showing the barrel of a gun.

Austin: No.

Jack: This is just someone who has cold hands.

Austin: No. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And they come onboard, and they — are there other people onboard? Are they... where is this? Is this onboard Fealty?

Jack: Fealty.

Austin: Okay. No other people onboard. I will say that they say —

Austin (as Amaryllis): I am surprised not to see... Garantine. I thought you would keep her close.

Jack (as Véronique): Oh, ha... we relinquished her, we — where do you think we're going, Amaryllis?

Austin (as Amaryllis): I don't want to say it.

Jack (as Véronique): It's okay, you can say it here.

Austin (as Amaryllis): [haltingly and rapturously] To — to the Mirage...

Jack (as Véronique): [lowered voice] Do you think it would be a good idea to bring Gucci Garantine to the gates of the Twilight Mirage?

Austin: They like, blush at their own, like, foolishness, to ever —

Austin (as Amaryllis): Of course not. What are you... what made you do this?

Jack (as Véronique): When Fealty and I — It feels so weird talking about it to, talking about it to like, a person. Fealty and I don't talk about it a lot, because, you know how it is. Uh, but when we first figured it out, we tried to put it to the back of our minds, straight away. We tried not — and in fact — it's so good to see you, I — that's how we got caught, first of all. Is, we thought about it, and then Fealty thought about it, and then they knew. And so, for a long time, we didn't think about it at all. But straight away, as soon as I had the thought, and then I had to push it away, I knew that there would be people who wouldn't feel that way, who'd cling onto it, as hard as they could, and bring... bring the might of the war to a place where it shouldn't be. You ever think that you don't want something — or you don't know whether you want it or not, and you toss a coin, and then when the coin's in the air, you suddenly realize you have a preference about which side it comes down on? That's what it was like, realizing that we knew where this planet was. I — I don't even want to tell you its name. I can't go that far.

Austin (as Amaryllis): I've never felt like that.

Austin: Fealty, I think that the Divine Conviction says to you —

Austin (as Conviction): This is a bad idea.

Art (as Fealty): It's not for me to say. Or you, either.

Austin (as Conviction): I understand your oath. I've made my own. But these people don't have our perspective. They don't make oaths like us.

Art (as Fealty): What do you think is going to happen?

Austin (as Conviction): You cannot see it? You will bring them there, and... it will open old wounds. It will introduce new ideas. What was once a locked door will be pushed open, from one side or another.

Art (as Fealty): The door can close behind me.

Austin (as Conviction): The door closed once before because we lived in different times. And because someone was there to hold it shut.

Art (as Fealty): I can hold it shut.

Austin (as Conviction): You are one Divine.

Art (as Fealty): You know that not all the new Divines deserve the name.

Austin: [laughing under his breath]

Jack: Oh god.

Austin (as Conviction): Your perspective is getting the better of you again. There are things more deadly now, things built to kill us. You will give them an excuse.

Art (as Fealty): I have to do this, and I can deal with the consequences.

Austin (as Conviction): You have no doubt?

Art (as Fealty): No.

Austin: Is that true?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Is there no doubt in Fealty?

Art: No. I mean, the, the memory loss thing isn't great, but that's probably unrelated.

Austin: Okay. Do you think that they could — they have the same thing you have, except it's not about truth, it's about doubt.

Art: I don't think Fealty has any doubt.

Austin: Do you think that the thing about the memory loss has... surfaced?

Art: Yes, but I don't think it's doubt, it's just —

Austin: It's not doubt, yeah.

Art: It's just, weird things happen, an unrelated weird thing is happening.

Austin: It is, yeah. They move their lance from one, from like the one underarm grip, to being like, up on the other shoulder, and they kind of cross their body with it.

Austin (as Conviction): Do you believe that those with you bear your conviction? Do you believe that your Elect will not buckle?

Art (as Fealty): I do believe in them.

Austin (as Conviction): They will send us after you.

Art (as Fealty): You don't have to come. Maybe we should look out for each other.

Austin (as Conviction): End me here... where there will be as little loss as there can be. I adopted the Principality because, in my perspective, it was... the most stable form. It was... it was the shape we kept returning to anyway. And I will defend that with my life. Here, only one of us will die.

Art (as Fealty): So, defend it.

Austin (as Conviction): You ask me to take up my weapon, then?

Art (as Fealty): I'm not harming the Principality.

Austin (as Conviction): You will harm more than the Principality if you go forward with this.

Austin: Inside —

Austin (as Amaryllis): I don't know how you can do it.

Jack (as Véronique): Do what?

Austin (as Amaryllis): Leave it all behind? Did none of it mean... I mean — the two of you, you're Fealty.

Jack (as Véronique): Oh, ugh. Really, Amaryllis?

Austin (as Amaryllis): Really. I don't mean to guilt you. I, I truly mean it. I do not understand. You didn't see... you didn't — I expected — here is what I expected. I expected I would meet you, and you would tell me some great misdeed, or some betrayal at the highest level, your proximity to the Princept, I thought perhaps you'd overheard or seen something. Worse, I thought maybe, oh, the Break had gotten to her. But it's neither. You saw a thing and projected an outcome, imagined a terrible end.

Jack (as Véronique): We were cast out of the Principality, Amaryllis, because we were, we were fighting, because all we knew how to do was fight, and bicker, and we've been doing that ever since.

Jack: I know — I, Jack, know that's not the exact reason we were cast out of the Principality, but Véronique thinks — there was a war, and they were cast out.

Austin: Yeah.

Austin (as Amaryllis): If you come back with us now, with whatever information you have, if it's so important, this route in... you will be welcomed back. You are too important to be dismissed.

Jack (as Véronique): It's too important to tell you about.

Austin (as Amaryllis): Then don't tell me.

Jack (as Véronique): [exasperated] I mean you, in the... I mean —

Austin (as Amaryllis): You see me as them.

Jack (as Véronique): Of course I do, Amaryllis.

Austin (as Amaryllis): They wouldn't have called you here in peace. I'm me.

Jack (as Véronique): And we spent a long time wondering whether or not this was going to be a trap.

Austin (as Amaryllis): And it wasn't.

Jack (as Véronique): You know what they're talking about, right? They say that we should fight now if we're going to fight at all.

Austin: They nod.

Jack (as Véronique): But you haven't drawn your weapon yet.

Austin (as Amaryllis): And I won't. Unless...

Austin: And a little nod, as if to indicate that you know exactly what it's like when a Divine, you know, puts a hand on your shoulder, and makes a case.

Jack (as Véronique): Fealty?

Art (as Fealty): Yes, Anchor?

Jack (as Véronique): What are we doing here?

Art (as Fealty): Saying our good-byes.

Jack (as Véronique): If you bring what you know back to our leaders, to your leaders... they are going to come to the gate of the Mirage with an army. And when you stand at the head of that army, I want you to remember the choice that we offered you today.

Austin: I think that they narrow their eyes at you, and say —

Austin (as Amaryllis): What choice?

Jack (as Véronique): Come with us.

[pause]

Austin: I feel like this is, is this an obstacle? Because it doesn't have to be, right?

Art: No, but it's an easy situation to get three outcomes —

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, outcomes on. Yeah. So, option one is, yeah, sure. Join the flotilla.

Art: Now we have two Divines.

Austin: Now we have two Divines, yes.

Jack: With all the consequences that comes with Conviction having to make a... I mean, it's a double, it's a real double-edged sword, from Conviction's perspective.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Because it's like, on the one hand, if they want to continue to move as part of the Curtain in our flotilla, they also have to, like, A, hide that from Fealty —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And if they want to come legitimately, they have to reckon with their sort of ideological raison d'être in the same way that I did.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And this is Conviction.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: Yep.

Jack: It's a double-edged sword for us, because, like Art says, we have a second Divine, but also, it might be a second Divine that is, you know.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: But there's also Amaryllis.

Austin: Yeah. GD in the chat says, is this an obstacle from Conviction's POV? Which is very funny. It sort of is, right? I do think you can underscore the like, this is making the, making the offer and meaning it, is, is the way in which Véronique and Fealty can, can, that we can frame it in that way.

Jack: It's like extending the hand in this one moment, right?

Austin: In this one moment, yeah. Uh, what's the second option?

Art: We destroy Conviction.

Austin: We destroy Conviction, yeah.

Jack: Yeah, fight. And option three is, we leave them to go back to the... Kesh headquarters, and be like, "I've got a weird story for you."

Austin: Yeah. Let's roll some dice?

Jack: Okay, option one —

Austin: What is what? What is option one?

Jack: Extend a hand, and have them take it.

Austin: Extend the hand. Boom, that's a 4, so it's 2.

Jack: 2.

Art: All right, option two? Fight. [dice rolling] 3.

Austin: 5, so it's a 3. And option 3, leave them be. Ugh.

Art: 3.

Austin: All right.

Jack: Art — none of this is pleasant, is it?

Austin: Jack, I think it's your turn to make a choice? [pause]

Jack: I think it's, I think it's let's them return. I think it's let them return. I think it's the scariest option. Option A, I can't in good conscience take, because I don't trust Conviction, as far as I can throw them, and as such, I don't trust Amaryllis. Uh, I don't want to kill them here and now, because I think bad things happen when Divines fight, and we have a flotilla.

Austin: Uh-huh. Which is, in some ways, Conviction's argument.

Jack: Yep. Also, I think that the idea of this message, in its — I mean, by now, the Curtain probably has a rough idea of what is going on. They just can't act on it very clearly.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: But I love that the clearest version of this message coming back to Curtain headquarters comes in the form of this like, contemporary of Véronique, who, for whatever reason — well, I think because she's the Divine Conviction, is holding onto it, onto her allegiances, more strongly than Véronique was, and is just like, "well, I'm going to go home and tell them."

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Also, am I remembering right, Amaryllis didn't seem convinced that they were going to bring an army to the Mirage?

Austin: Uh, Amaryllis didn't — no, Amaryllis was like, "what offer?" Uh, I think Amaryllis was more, was waiting for you to make the offer. I think Amaryllis is completely convinced that, of what, of what Conviction was saying.

Jack: What knowing about the Mirage will do.

Austin: This is like, we're on the way to war at this point, completely convinced by that. And that, and that's, in a sense, inevitable, but only draws closer the closer you bring people to it. That, every step you take in that direction, is an increased chance that this goes bad. From one side or the other, right? Part of what Conviction's argument was, was that, like, if you go there, you risk opening the door from the other side, at a certain point. And once that's done, who knows what the Principality does in response? All right. So that's one of these 3s, huh, Jack? Art, are you ready? I guess it's the, send them back was — it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter which actual die it was.

Art: Right. Uh... [sucks breath through teeth] hold on, I need to zoom in. Too far out.

Austin: Oh yeah. This is a three one, I don't like it.

Jack: Wait, wait, wait, wait wait wait wait wait.

Art: [laughs]

Jack: Or do we just fight them?

Austin: It's the same number, Jack.

Art: Yeah, you can, you can change your mind as long as I'm stacking dice.

Jack: Okay, but I would want to talk that through.

Austin: Uh-huh —

Jack: While Art stacks dice.

Austin: Okay, that seems safe. Talk to me about it, Jack, say more. Oh my god, it shook so much.

Jack: Do we just — no, we can't do it, we can't kill a Divine. That would be so hard to do, even for another Divine, to be like — we're not going to let this get out of the system, this is already too much of a risk.

Austin: It's doable, if the dice stack up. It's just, there probably would be losses, realistically. Uh, but maybe it goes really well, and —

Jack: I mean, there's a chance where like, god, if we do well, her getting back with the information is also compromised.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I was assuming we'd fail, but Art is a golden god, so we'll be fine.

Austin: [sucks breath through teeth] That's two!

Art: Do you have anything else to say?

Jack: I, I think you'll do great. We're going to have a wonderful time.

Art: Jump up, jump up.

Austin: Jump up, good jump up, good jump up. Yeah, I think you got this. I think you got this perfect. Stable. That's 8. We're up to 8.

Art: Oh my god, it's so bad. Look at that one in the middle.

Austin: It's a, it's a nightmare, just, yeah.

Jack: [laughing] it looks like it's going to fall down at any moment, and just those top four dice are going to drop onto the bottom three.

Austin: That four is, the fourth one in, rather, the fourth one up, is just brutal. All right. Art, it's back to you. I guess — and the narration here is that they leave, right?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, Amaryllis gets back inside of Conviction. Conviction bows her head to you, Fealty, for a moment, out of respect. And, you know, moves towards the, blasts off moving towards the nearest portcullis.

Art: Is this our last one, is this our last turn?

Austin: No, we had said, we said two go-arounds, but maybe it's our last turn. It's almost 11, right? It's 10:30?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: So I could, I could do with this being our last one.

Art: Uh...

Austin: And in a way that's like — what we've gotten to at this point is — I guess let's wait to do a wrap-up until we get there. So you tell me, Art, what is our last thing?

Art: Uh... well, if this is our last turn, we should get to the threshold —

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, 100 percent.

Art: You saw, you saw, right?

Austin: What did you see?

Art: I dropped something.

Austin: I didn't see, I'll check. Gotcha.

Art: Uh... where are we at?

Austin: 8.

Art: It's 8, and it's a hard 8.

Austin: It's a hard 8.

Art: To borrow a term from craps.

Austin: This is what it's from, actually.

Art: There's no good approach anymore, is the real — I guess sort of right here —

Austin: Wait, is that true?

Art: I guess sort of right here is the good approach.

Austin: Someone says, "two turns, but that was the first of them." Was that, is that — did we do three just there?

Art: That was —

Jack: I think we did, yeah.

Art: That was two.

Jack: Oh.

Art: Because I think we each stacked one since the fall.

Austin: I thought so too, I thought so too.

Art: It was a four tower and we put in one and then three.

Austin: And then three, Yeah, yeah, yeah. So yeah, okay, we're right.

Art: Okay.

Austin: People keep saying in the chat that we should have re-racked, and I keep looking in the rules for where it says that's allowed, that we can restack, but I don't see it. It's obviously too late now.

Art: And I don't know that you can really do it here.

Austin: You could, but it would be cheat — it would, it would — I wouldn't want to. I feel like it's too late. If I had seen it in the rules immediately.

Art: This the approach, this is the...

Austin: Oh, right, you still have to — no, we're at a new scene, we're at a new scene. Right, right, right. We're not on approaches.

Art: Yeah, I'm just...

Jack: [laughing]

Art: But maybe it's not, because if it jumps here...

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: And then jumps again, you might hit on the way up, you know?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: But if this is the last scene, we should be on the threshold.

Austin: Yeah, and I think like — the emotional conversation to a former confidant and ally is, is, the pre—

Art: Is a good —

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So now we're at —

Art: We get to the, however long it takes, days, weeks — we get to the threshold of the Mirage, and it's just a massive Principality army, right?

Austin: Yeah, 100 percent, right?

Art: Uh-huh. With probably at least Fortitude? Fortitude's —

Austin: Definitely, right?

Jack: Beat us there?

Austin: Already — right. Well, like, because you had to go this roundabout way, carefully from place to place, and taking care of all these people.

Art: And stop to, to get new... robots.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Oh god. Can we... yes. What does it look like to approach the threshold of the Twilight Mirage?

Austin: Well, like, and part of it is, part of it that's funny is like, it's not about the threshold to the Mirage, because they don't know where that is. If they knew where Palisade was, they would be at Palisade. But it's, it —

Jack: Oh, this awful blockade of —

Austin: Yeah, just this amazing blockade. It's incredible what they've done, right? Like, space, space is big, we've talked about this. Uh... and maybe, I mean, there's a way to compartmentalize this, which is like, they know the general, they know where they were when you saw whatever you saw, right? And so it's like, well, every gate between here — every gate that gets even close to here is blockaded. But there's also the version of this that is like, Legend of the Galactic Heroes, huge, huge fleet that just goes on forever. I mean, those fleets are smaller than even what I'm talking about. But like, some sort of system that is just, for light-years across. But it would have been very quick to get something like that in place, I imagine. I know they have Divines, but... [pause]

Art: And it probably starts with a conversation, right?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: They probably offer us one more chance?

Austin: Yeah.

Art: To turn around? And I'm not even sure it's worth going over. We've had this conversation now five or six times, right? We're going through.

Jack: Oh, god...

Austin: But I still think that they, they raise it, right? And, and — what do they — yeah, I don't think, do you think they can even make an offer that's interesting? Okay —

Art: I think it's one of those, like, I think it's even like worse than that, right? The like, the real thing they're offering is the... they're offering to let the rest of them go.

Austin: Oops, I pinged. Did you know I could ping? I can ping.

Art: Yeah, that's what that sound is.

Austin: That's what that sound is. They're offering to let them — mmm.

Art: They're like, they're willing to let the flotilla go —

Jack: In exchange for the location of Palisade?

Art: No. They're willing to let them go, and we can just die.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Why — why would they want to kill us if we have the information they need?

Austin: That's a good point. Oh, they can just take it from you.

Art: I think they think they can just harvest it from the —

Jack: Oh, just pull it out of the body of the Divine.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Okay, yeah, cool.

Austin: I mean, maybe they make this offer, which is like, “tell us where it is, and we'll let you all go to it. And no one has to die.”

Jack: Oh my god.

Austin: But you know you can't protect this flotilla, they say, effectively, right?

Jack: No. And also this is just, this is the whole reason we ran, right? Is seeing this army... asking us where Palisade is, and saying — if you tell us, we'll just let you go there.

Austin: Yeah. Uh...

Jack: Uh...

Austin: Really quick, I want to clarify a thing. Ashlin in the chat says, "I'm still not fully clear on how Fealty found Palisade and no one else did, if the Principality knows where the Mirage is, to be honest." The Mirage is huge, and it hides itself, right? Again, if you think about the Mirage as a think that is not stable, but is like huge, gaseous ocean, semi-gaseous, fake gaseous, ocean, that is constantly ebbing and flowing, it, one, it seems like it can cover up planets all at once so you can't see where they are. Two, it's really dangerous to fly near it. Uh, to get in there is to suddenly lose track of time and space. Uh, and so, to get really close to it is to do that. Now, I suspect one reason that Fealty found it, is because Fealty's been to Palisade, and recognized something. In my mind, the purple that you see is not simply the, the Mirage in the distance. It's the flash of the Mirage's light off of the surface of Palisade, which, I'm not sure what color Palisade is yet, but I think it's kind of a miserable color, right? I think it's like the moon or something, in terms of the color that it is from space. But it reflects —

Jack: It is not the Mirage.

Austin: It is not the Mirage. But, and it's not Partizan either, it's not the miracle planet, right? Uh... it is, it is a place that was turned into an industrial staging ground, over and over again. Uh... whatever its history was, you know, before that. And, is reflecting the beauty. Uh... and I don't know if it's something in Fealty that recognized it. If you happen to be in the right place at the right time, where such a beam of light would catch you, and would catch something deep inside of you, you have this oath, and you are Fealty, right? So I think it ties to that in a real way. Uh, but it's like, it's one of those things where like, yeah, you could just send ships to try to, like, ride along the coast of the Mirage. I hope you don't need to see them for 100 years. Because it'll just swallow them whole if you don't have a way in. Uh...

Jack: Véronique also believes — go on.

Austin: I was just going to say, briefly, to be clear, getting to Palisade is not — and that's the game, they've done it. Because the games will take place on Palisade. But from Palisade, can they find a way in more easily? I mean, we had ways in and out as of the end of Twilight Mirage. Uh, so there are some, there is some way there, and we know that Palisade is where the Principality, the Divine Fleet, and the then-forming Principality came after leaving the Mirage. And so, maybe there's information there about how to get in and out. Maybe there's, you know,

who knows what's there? I have some ideas, but... anyway, hope that that helped. Jack, go ahead.

Jack: I was going to say, we know that Véronique believes, whether the Principality generals know this is true or not, Véronique believes that there are also weapons hidden inside the Mirage that are, that are deadly.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Uh, and I feel like as part of the cultural myth-making around the Twilight Mirage, definitely civilians and maybe even some young Divine pilots are like, “oh, it's not only dangerous to fly there because of the Mirage itself, there might be something bad in there that will push back.”

Austin: We know, we know, that —

Jack: We know.

Austin: Part of the end of Twilight Mirage is that Advent kept trying to get it, and they lost, every time. They — once they had that brief moment of control, and once that ended, they never came close again. Because the Mirage is the Mirage, and it is — we can talk about it in terms of technologies, but we can also just talk about it in terms of the cohesive unit that got built by the end of that season, that was sturdy in that way, and that did have a, an interest in protecting the people there that was genuine, and was something they showed that they could back up, right? But, it's been 5,000 years, so —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: We'll see. Advent is not the Principality, you know? Or I guess the other way around. Principality is not simply the Advent group.

Jack: 5,000 years of the biggest empire in the galaxy.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Who sharpened its teeth on itself for 5,000 years.

Austin: Right, right. Like the Sith.

Jack: Is that what they — oh yeah, I suppose it is, yeah.

Austin: That's what they do, yeah.

Jack: That's why you can't beat them, and they've tried across 9 movies and they've never once succeeded.

Austin: [laughs] [pause] The Empire Strikes... again! Not back. They just keep striking. What are we doing? We're here at the final one.

Jack: I don't think I can do this. I don't think that Véronique, Véronique does not want to go to the Mirage. Véronique wants to stop these people from getting to the Mirage.

Austin: Oh... right. So, is your solution here... throw yourself and Fealty into certain death, but in the process, such destructive death that they lose whatever it is Fealty has?

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: Or is it just flee? Again, and go elsewhere?

Jack: We'd just be running forever, a Divine that knows where Palisade is. I mean, that's kind of sick. Uh...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It's so sad. Because Excerpts can presumably live, if they don't get killed, for a very long time time.

Austin: Excerpts can. Elects, we don't know.

Jack: Oh yeah, sorry, I got that wrong again, yeah.

Austin: It's fine.

Jack: I mean, also, Véronique is young. We could just run forever.

Austin: Véronique is young.. Véronique could live a full life.

Jack: Until we get blown up.

Austin: I bet you could get a new pilot from this group of people — this flotilla — this cult you formed. But it's probably really demoralizing to get to the gate of Outside and not go through it, right?

Jack: But I cannot, I cannot go through it. This has never been about — this would be a completely different thing, if the core thing for Véronique was, "I'm curious about the Twilight Mirage."

Austin: It's not, yeah.

Jack: For Véronique, it's always been — she doesn't — I've specifically tried not to say it like this, because I don't think it's quite, that she quite thinks of it in that way, but it's a holy place. The Mirage is the holy place that we should not be allowed to go. Uh... the only reason we were going there. Well, the only reason I believed from Fealty that we were going there is because it was a place where we could find solace from the people chasing us, and we could, we could get lost in there.

Austin: Mm-hm. So your suggestion here is, Véronique says no.

Jack: Oh...

Austin: Go ahead, what were you going to say?

Jack: Shit. I have another suggestion, actually.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Punch through the fleet and take our chances with the Mirage.

Austin: Just get lost in there.

Jack: I mean, Fealty seems to suggest that, that they've sworn an oath. Who knows whether it would —

Austin: And they'll be welcome.

Jack: Who knows whether it would —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And if — they can choose to follow us, they'll get shredded by the Mirage. What are the odds that we come straight through on to Palisade and lead them all there? Extremely small. Yeah. My suggestion is, go through.

Austin: That's fun. And I'll take your first suggestion, which is —

Jack: Fight and die.

Austin: Fight and die, blow up in such a spectacular manner that no one gets the information. And as part of that I would say, allowing your people to get to the Mirage. Because if they can just — this is the thing. If they can get to the Mirage, the weird time dilation, it doesn't matter for them if it takes 1,000 years to get into the Mirage. I mean, again, their experience will into the have been 1,000 years. Or I guess maybe it has been, I can't quite remember how the time dilation stuff works. They would have — they might need to quickly learn how the NEH did sleep detachments. So maybe it would matter.

Jack: It's only important for the Principality because the Mirage for them is strategically important, and —

Austin: That's the thing. They want what's in there now, so they can win this war against first the Pact and then the Branched and Millennium Break can get swept up in the fucking mix.

Jack: They have a plan for that bizarre style of ultimately flawed warfare that the NEH worked with in the first place, right? Where the NEH was, in theory, planning wars thousands of years in the future?

Austin: Right, exactly.

Jack: But, as we found out, that is not a good way to fight wars.

Austin: Yeah. Well, I don't know, how many Divines were left by the beginning of Twilight Mirage?

Jack: Mmm. Mmm. Can we talk about the colors really quick, as we frame this?

Austin: Please, please. Also, we still need a third action. We need an Art action —

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: But go ahead and name colors.

Art: Yeah, I've got one, don't worry.

Jack: Is it just the black of space, and then behind the Principality fleet, or the Pact fleet, you can just see the beginning, the faintest inklings of color. Because there's the temptation, right, to stage this and have them be silhouetted against the full majesty of the Mirage —

Austin: But they're not there yet, yeah.

Jack: No. And I like the idea of the color of the Mirage being so impossibly intense for, you know, lightyears upon lightyears, but we're just far from it. You can just see these wisps of purple and orange and gray. Very, very faint. Behind the fleet.

Austin: And I think a thing that's worth underscoring about this all, which is like, a little bit of a hit against them, as fucked up as Principality is — they're fucking scared of it, right?

Jack: Uh-huh.

Austin: Like, they don't want to get close to it.

Jack: Which is an advantage that Véronique and Fealty... we're not scared of it.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah.

Jack: I'm a bit. I think Fealty probably isn't. I don't know. What's your pitch, Art?

Art: We lay waste to the army of the Principality. Yeah.

Austin: You win. You fight it, and win.

Art: We win. We show them what an old Divine is.

Austin: Yeah. And we, we float through the wreckage victorious —

Austin: Ooo...

Art: To a hero's welcome in the Mirage.

Austin: Time to roll some dice, everybody.

Jack: Oh, shit. We just go to war as a full Principality army against the Pact.

Austin: Against the Curtain.

Jack: Except it's us and — oh, the Curtain, yeah.

Austin: All right, I'm rolling for... what was your first, it was — you blow up spectacularly, hiding information. Hey, that's a 5, so it's a 3. Art?

Jack: Punch through into the Mirage.

Austin: [dice rolling] Hey, only a 2, that's a 1. It's easy.

Jack: Destroy the Curtain army, on the edge of the Mirage.

Austin: That's a 2.

Art: 2. Who's — this is my pick?

Austin: I don't fucking know. I think it's a collective pick. Because this is the end of the story.

Art: Mm-hm.

Austin: This is your pick. It is whoever's pick its turn it is, and I like any of these, as an attempt. I like mine, because it's 3 dice. But I don't like it —

Art: Yeah, I like that, too. Because here's the thing, if I can speak frankly —

Austin: Yeah, Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: I... want... to... get the — I want to get the scene of losing the memory of the origin of the Anchor nickname.

Austin: Right. Why don't we just say it's three dice? I almost pitched this before we started rolling dice, and then thought it was too mean and people would be mad at me.

Art: Just say whatever it is, it's three dice?

Austin: Three dice.

Art: Three dice is to blow up.

Austin: Three dice is to blow up, uh-huh.

Art: So, what is it to fail to blow up?

Austin: Oh, getting captured, they get the information. They find out where Palisade is.

Art: Oh, I don't want to do that, no, that's, that's —

Austin: Well that's going to be — Art, that's going to be if we fail any of these.

Art: It doesn't have to be.

Jack: Yes, but it would be more impressive if we try and fight the army.

Austin: It is. If we fail here, that's the game. I guess if we fail here and don't get 3, 4, 5. They get what they want, on the loss.

Art: Is that what it says? I'm consulting the rule book.

Austin: I guess I'll read it here. Let's see: the scene always ends with your Hound destroying itself to enable your pilot's escape, and its flashback will always be a memory where your Hound promised to protect them. It doesn't say that, but the stakes of this are, they get the thing. Because that's what they're trying to get, right?

Art: Well, not if it's destroying itself — if Fealty destroys itself to... doesn't that protect the memory?

Austin: Yeah, maybe.

Jack: So if we stack three dice and we succeed, we blow ourselves up so spectacularly that they don't know where we are.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: If we stack three dice and fail, we get destroyed and they extract the information.

Austin: I think you have to have that as the fail — yeah, for that one, at least.

Art: But I think it's, for power through, which was 2? Or win is 2.

Austin: Yeah. Win is 2, power through is 1.

Art: To fail to power through, I think you could destroy the memory...

Jack: Yeah, except the stake there is that we're losing our lives, right?

Austin: Here's what I don't like about that. Is, yeah, but like, what I don't like about that is, right now, the hardest thing to do, mechanically, is to die and destroy the information. If that's the outcome you want, the best thing you can do is to take the medium difficulty one, and throw it. You know what I mean? The easier difficulty's negative outcome should be worse, than the harder difficulty — video games have programmed me to say —

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: To say the hard mode has the true ending, where the Master Chief blinks for a second or whatever at the end. He doesn't blink, you can't see his eyes. But you know what I'm saying, right?

Jack: He like gives a fist-bump to Commander Gregs or something.

Austin: If we go for an easier one, than certainly, the negative outcome should not be better than the victory of the hardest one.

Art: But it's only hardest because of random chance.

Jack: I kind of see your point.

Austin: Right, but we are in control of the game we're playing. In the same way that what we could do is say, this could be a sad ending or a happy ending, we just make that decision, as the book says. When the timer turn reaches zero, clear it from the table and decide as a group whether you'd like to destroy it, and have a happy ending or a sad ending. If sad, roleplay a final collapse and scene following the guides above. If happy, roleplay a scene where the pair escapes for good before collaboratively narrating a flash-forward to a moment years in the future, where your hound and pilot are living free of scrutiny. That is actually what we've hit, if we've decided we've hit our final turn. But —

Art: You're saying, if I win, if I stack these two dice, then I can — then we can still narrate a sad ending.

Austin: Oh, if you wanted to. We can narrate a sad ending whenever you want, Art? As long as we three all agree upon it, and you know I'm down.

Art: Well, I want to narrate a sad ending. I don't want them to get the information.

Austin: Right.

Art: I want the, the...

Austin: Then that, to me, feels like we've hit what the heart of the most interesting thing to you as a player is, is —

Art: But I still want to stack more dice.

Austin: I know, I get that. That's what I'm saying is, then it sounds like what the stakes of that stack should be, if you stack them good, you narrate a sad ending on your terms. If you stack them bad, you narrate a sad ending on their terms. Maybe it's 2, maybe we just do 2. 2 feels like the happy medium. We meet halfway, you do two —

Jack: The thought of laying waste to a Curtain army is the most visually appealing. I think it's exciting to see this old Divine be like, “you have brought an army to my door —”

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: “And I'm on the outside of the door with you.”

Austin: Mm-hm. I know what my, I know what I want as the outcome. Actually, I don't know. Mm-hm. I don't know what I want at this point.

Art: What was 1? 1 was barrel through?

Austin: 1 was just, drive that the Mirage as fast as possible.

Jack: Lose them in the Mirage.

Art: Maybe that's... good. This is such a tenuous tower. How could you ever stack 2 on this?

Austin: I think you can get 4 on this.

Art: [disbelief] 4?!?

Austin: I think you can get 4 on this.

Art: You're — I'll do one, and then you —

Austin: It's only at, what, 1, 2, 3, 4...

Art: I'll do 1, and then you do 3 more.

Austin: 3 more? We should just alternate.

Jack: Why are we stacking 4?

Art: Well you said 4.

Austin: I was just saying I could, hypothetically.

Jack: How many of those dice in that pool do you think you could stack, Austin?

Austin: On a fresh stack? I had control over?

Jack: No, now.

Austin: I don't know.

Jack: 4.

Austin: 3. But then Art would get 1, and then that would be 4. We shouldn't stack 4. 4 is not an option. This game isn't built for 4.

Art: I like, I like just barreling through. Because it has like the desperation, and it has a lot of ambiguity, but —

Austin: Yeah, me too, I like the ambiguity of it a lot.

Art: But I still, I still want to narrate the Anchor memory.

Austin: Yeah. We can still just —

Jack: We can still get it, it can just be a memory we have, and — Oh, I have a suggestion

Austin: And it's not lost. Yeah.

Art: That's not what the game's about. The game's not about flashbacks you don't lose.

Austin: I know it's not, I know that it's not, yeah, I agree with you.

Jack: I, yeah... I — let's stack them and see how it goes. I have a thought here, for how we could lose it in a good way, in a melancholy way.

Austin: What are we stacking, what are we stacking? 1, 2, or 3?

Jack: I think Art's stacking 1 to punch through, right?

Austin: Stacking one to punch through.

Art: Yeah, 1 to punch through?

Austin: I think we got this, I think this is doable, I think this is nothing.

Art: Someone in the chat pitched, "just stack dice until it falls, and pick an ending based on how many dice it is."

Austin: I... don't hate that. I was about to pitch the same thing separately, which is, what if we stack until we don't stack anymore, and that determines how good the ending gets to be?

Art: I don't know that I can stack one. Look at this tower.

Austin: You got one easy. Come on.

Jack: Art might be seeing a different tower.

Austin: That's fair. It's a bad tower, but I think we've done a good job of fixing the center of balance.

Art: Let me, hold on, I'm gonna check this, I'm gonna check.

Austin: That fourth die is terrible, but I think we've got it.

Art: Yeah. I just don't know, am I just doing straight up, or am I still trying to correct for the fourth one?

Austin: I think now you're straight up. I think the fourth one is corrected, as corrected as it's going to be. I think you've just got to go. I think we've just got to put it straight up, and we'll see.

Art: I'm so of two minds about this. I'm like, I want this to be what we do for every game forever, this is the only conflict resolution I ever want to do again.

Austin: Forever, yeah. Yeah.

Art: And also, I'm dying.

Austin: Right. Let's stack 1, and see how that goes. Wait wait wait, wait.

Art: You don't think this is the right approach?

Austin: Yeah, I think that that's — yeah. Oh... you know, I thought we could do like 8 before, but now I'm down to maybe around... 2. The jump-up's going to be rough, be real careful on the jump-up, you've got to be real careful. I don't know that... that's not it, that's not it, that's not it. That's not it.

Art: I need to, I need... my hands are...

Austin: That's not it, that's not the approach.

Art: That's not the approach? What is the approach?

Austin: I think the approach is here, is southwest. Because I think, if you come in at it from just pure south, you'll get into this mid — the zone where 4 is, you might end up under 6, do you see what I'm saying? You might end up where the 5 faces on my screen. I have no idea what your faces are. But the southern —

Art: I see that, yeah.

Austin: You see the 5, you see what I'm saying? I'm afraid you're going to pop up there, like an uppercut.

Art: So you think it's here?

Austin: Yeah, I do.

Art: Don't you think that has a lot of the same risk?

Austin: Yeah, but when I look at it in profile... less. Just here — I don't know.

Art: My hands are sweating, I hate this. I need like, chalk. Ugh. It's like, hold on, I'm going to go buy a new mouse.

Jack: [laughs]

Art: I'll be back in 40 minutes.

Austin: Okay, yeah. That's fine.

Art: So this is, you think, the good approach?

Austin: Ugh...I do, but I don't like it. I hadn't considered over here, no, that's not it. It's definitely not... uh... go with your gut. Go with god. Go with your gut.

Art: No, no, no. What's happening. Am I not on?

Austin: I don't know! No, you're on! I see you moving. Do you want to go back to your side, and see, if you jump a little earlier on your side?

Art: It's just, it's not going up.

Austin: Oh my god, you're so — there it goes, there it goes, there [huge gasp] I can hear it hitting. All right, you're up, you're up, you're up. You're perfect. Oh, that was it, you had it perfect for a second there. That, to me, looks like a sure thing.

Jack: Yeah, that looks good.

Austin: It's solid.

Jack: Oh, ho ho ho ho.

Austin: Told you, you got it. I think you could keep doing it. Push your luck.

Art: Okay. Let's hold this... uh... let's hold this win.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: And let's just keep stacking.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: You want to go, or you want me to go.

Austin: I'll go.

Art: But if we get 3 more —

Austin: 3 more.

Art: We can just have a full-on happy ending.

Austin: Yeah. No losses, yeah.

Art: No losses.

Austin: Because what you've just ensured is we get, we get —

Art: We succeeded is, we barreled through, we get into the Mirage.

Austin: Right.

Art: 3 more, and I'm willing to just do, happy ending, everyone —

Austin: No lost memories —

Art: No lost memories.

Austin: It's this way. Oh, boy. It's just so tall. [pause] The jump-up is rough. The lack of a jump-up is rough.

Art: Jump-up on this approach is very hard.

Austin: It was almost up, wasn't it.

Art: Yeah, you're, you're — on my screen, you're midway. Oh, you're up, on my screen you're up.

Austin: Okay. Lining it up... oh, I hate this.

Art: Oh.

Austin: All the stress has come in. All right, here it goes. [dice dropping] Solid. Boom.

Art: Okay. Great.

Jack: Okay, now what have we got? We've got —

Austin: Now we've got, what have we got?

Jack: Is this an, an, an ancient Divine fucking laying waste to a —

Austin: No, 3 is an ancient — I guess that was, it was 2?

Art: That was the Divine laying waste. I wasn't saying we could get other outcomes, I was saying —

Austin: Right, right, right, you were saying each one progresses us through an outcome.

Art: Right, yeah.

Austin: People are going to say this is the good outcome, the one that we're at now. But I guess that's part of the push your luck thing. We have to get through, you blow up.

Art: No, I wasn't even saying, I'm not saying that like, we do the one that we get to. I'm saying like, we've done push-through, that's what we're going to do.

Austin: Okay, gotcha.

Art: If we can get two more dice, we'll just like, the more dice we get now, the happier the ending is.

Jack: Oh, the better it works, yes, I see.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I gotcha. Yes.

Jack: We've assured a measure of success, and it's going to get better from here.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Hopefully.

Austin: Hopefully. At least for you two, right? Because the rest of it is, who the fuck knows. Like, I don't know that, like, "oh, and we let the Mirage know that trouble is coming," is a good thing.

Jack: Yeah, uh-huh. I know that there are, there are almost certainly hawks inside the Mirage being like, oh...

Austin: Yes, yes. 100 percent.

Art: What about this angle?

Austin: That's an interesting angle. Yeah. I don't like that we're changing up our strategy this deep into the play, but let's, let's do it.

Art: Well, it's not like... we don't like the jump-up.

Austin: We don't like to jump-up. [dice clicking] well —

Jack: Oh!

Art: [sharp laugh] Ha-ha!

Austin: Well! There it goes.

Art: It got me on the jump-up.

Austin: It got you right on that jump-up, huh? Uh... well, tell me what happens, Art. [chuckling]

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: Jay Ford says, "I jumped." Ah...

Art: It, it's — it barrels through, as this, like, tiny little war breaks out, and I think that you see, like, the more military inclined people in the flotilla sort of like, fight back. And you see a fair amount of the less, the less martial types scatter.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: But, like, but scatter in all directions. Scatter towards the Mirage, scatter away from the Mirage. I want to leave that as a real dangling, those groups of people as a real dangling —

Austin: Yeah.

Art: And I don't think everyone who stays, gets killed by any means.

Austin: No, no. Some get captured, which might be worse. Some get away.

Art: Yeah, get captured... some, like, win their little skirmish, and, you know, take that as it is.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Uh... but Fealty doesn't fight.

Austin: At all. Does Fealty keep their statuary on? Or do they release it as part of the fight, and travel without it again?

Art: I think I release a few of them. I think most of them come through.

Austin: Okay. Mmm.

Art: Because I'm interested if that visual.

Austin: Yeah, same.

Art: Uh... and they get to the edge of the Mirage, and you see them sort of like, like, slow up, like a, like a horse that gets a little startled. And then they just... they disappear into the Mirage.

Austin: Swallowed by it. Well — we don't know.

Jack: And this is the intense color of —

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: It's just like a wall of... like, uh... like, when we were making Twilight Mirage, I feel like we were sharing those great videos of like colored dust in water all the time. And Fealty just disappears into the, into the Mirage in that way.

Austin: And we don't know, where they go. We don't know. Is it... do they wind up on Palisade? Do they make it into the Mirage proper? Are they lost in this space or a thousand years? This in-between?

Jack: I think that when the cockpit enters the Mirage —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: In a way that is not — that is unusual, based on how we have understood — well, no, one thing we know about the Mirage itself is that it operates in ways that —

Austin: Fuck. That was me. Sorry. Art and I are playing with dice. We're children. Uh... continue, I'm sorry, continue. One thing we know about the Mirage, you were saying.

Jack: It operates in completely counterintuitive ways. It was quite hard to make rules about —

Austin: Right.

Jack: This is how the Mirage works, one way or another. Uh, and I think as Véronique's enters the Mirage, we see the Mirage just fill the cockpit.

Austin: Ooo.

Jack: Completely, not in like a —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It's, not in like it's seeping in like gas. You know. When you see Mirage pilots flying ships, they can fly fine, you know.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: The air is clear. But this is like, literally like, uh, like a particle volume in a game or something has been dragged through her cockpit.

Austin: Yeah, mm-hm.

Jack: Suddenly, you know, she can't see her hands in front of her face. She knows her body's there, because she can feel it. She can feel the chair under her. She can sense that Fealty is near. But both Fealty and Véronique are completely swallowed into the Mirage.

Austin: Do we get that memory, or do we let it hang?

Art: Oh yeah, of course. And, and... is it a lost memory, or is it a kept memory?

Austin: I think we leave it open.

Art: Okay.

Austin: Tower fell, but you did get through.

Art: Tower fell.

Austin: Well that's —

Art: Is this earlier, or is this slightly after the last one?

Austin: It would be earlier, right? Because you were using Anchor in the last one.

Art: I didn't use Anchor in the last one.

Austin: Oh, you didn't use it. You're right.

Jack: I don't think I did.

Austin: Art just corrected a very funny tilt to our tower. I don't think you did, either. I don't think Anchor came up last time.

Art: Yeah. So we can go, we can go either direction. [pause] I guess it doesn't super matter.

Jack: Where is this, is this, is this... hm.

Art: This could be as simple as like, as they're leaving the planet that the ceremony was on.

Austin: Yeah. I like that, because we already have that ceremony. I like seeing before and after the ceremony, with the only actual ceremony we see being the private ceremony, and then the duplicated —

Jack: Yeah, the kind of fake one.

Austin: The fake ones, yeah.

Jack: Yeah, I think in the cockpit, seeing the, seeing the planet, the home planet, sort of receding into a, into like a marble. And Véronique goes:

Jack (as Véronique): Here we go!

Art (as Fealty): The beginning of a beautiful adventure.

Jack (as Véronique): Ugh... I mean, we've got a lot of meetings first.

Art (as Fealty): It's all the adventure.

Jack (as Véronique): The meetings?

Art (as Fealty): Yeah.

Jack (as Véronique): I mean... do you have to attend the meetings, too?

Art (as Fealty): I'll always be where you are. That's how it works, now.

Jack (as Véronique): When did that happen?

Art (as Fealty): When did what happen?

Jack (as Véronique): You said, that's how it works now.

Austin: [chuckling]

Art (as Fealty): From now on. We're a team now.

Jack (as Véronique): Yeah, but when did we, when did the team start? Was it when I said the oath?

Art (as Fealty): In a way, before that, but, but yeah, when you said the oath.

Jack (as Véronique): They talk a lot about the connections that Divines have with their Elects. Maybe it works differently for other people, but I sort of thought that when I said the words... it would be like magic, and I'd be able to see into your head or something. I don't know if you have a head.

Art (as Fealty): You don't want to see my thoughts. It's too much.

Jack (as Véronique): Right, this is what I'm, this is what I'm saying. I don't know, it just, it felt like, it felt like we were, we kept doing the thing that we've been doing, for all the training and everything. And I don't think that was a bad thing, I just, you know. We're Fealty. I sort of thought I'd say the oath, and, and... it would be really special.

Art (as Fealty): And then? It didn't feel special?

Jack (as Véronique): Oh, it felt special, it was very special. But it was like — we know, we know what it's like to be Fealty. I feel like we've known for a while now. Fealty?

Art (as Fealty): You'll always... you'll always expect there to be these moments of revelation, these big steps of progress. And instead, you'll find that you've been making the progress the whole way. It's not stairs, it's a ramp. Look behind you, see how much higher you are.

Art: This is a great thing to say when you're leaving a planet's orbit. Really works.

Austin: [chuckles]

Art: Nailing this one.

Jack: Does Fealty, does Fealty make the joke? Or is that just you, Art?

Art: That's me, Art. But I think Fealty does, like — turn.

Jack: To underscore it with the visual.

Art: Fealty does like readjust so that the —yeah, so the visual does underscore the...

Jack (as Véronique): How long do you think we're going to be together?

Art (as Fealty): A very long time. An incredible career.

Jack (as Véronique): Yeah, that's what I think.

Art (as Fealty): [laughs gently]

Jack: Do you think that it's Fealty, or do you think it's Véronique, or Erritt, that coins the anchor call sign?

Art: I think it has to be you, because of the track and field connection. Fealty does not run track.

Jack: It can go both ways, right? But, no, I mean, [laughing] Fealty does not run track. I —

Austin: [laughing]

Art: It could go both —

Jack: Our brains, as the Divine and the Elect, are already so working in the same space that I could see Fealty being like, this is it. But I could just as easily do it.

Austin: It could also be that Fealty uses it in the other way, and Véronique is like, ah.

Art: Mmm. That's good. The like —

Art (as Fealty): We have a long time together, it's such an important relationship we have. I can show you... all of these fantastic things, and you can anchor me back to the world of people.

Jack (as Véronique): Is that an important bit?

Art (as Fealty): That's the whole point. A solitary Divine will lose their perspective. Become... untethered.

Jack (as Véronique): I, I — I guess I haven't talked to you much about track and field.

Jack: Which is very funny, because Véronique talks constantly to Fealty about track and field.

Art (as Fealty): No, I guess you haven't.

Jack (as Véronique): [pause] It's okay. We've got plenty of time.

[["Permanent Peace"](#) by Jack de Quidt plays]