

PALISADE 26: Resentment and Frustration Pt. 1

Transcriber: vesta (vforvesta)

Opening Narration	1
Introduction	2
[30:00]	20
[1:00:00]	41

Opening Narration

Austin: *PALISADE* is a show about empire, revolution, settler colonialism, politics, religion, war, and the many consequences thereof. For a full list of content warnings, please check the episode description.

[[“Nothing is Stationary”](#) by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

Austin (as Gur): I have heard those cursed words, and said them, too. Again, and again, appropriately, but to deleterious effect. Those three words which haunted me well before I was a phantasmal whisper in anyone’s ear. Those three words which served as inescapable burden, and catalyzing challenge, and easy alibi.

The wheel turns.

Their appeal is immediate and unsurprising. We live in a world of wheels, of circles, of cogs and cycles. Across countless worlds, seasons may differ— the long misty summers of Artemisios, the thrice-returning autumns of Tanden 12— yet each is a division in time, repeating so steadily that we shape ourselves to them. And even on those worlds without air, without differentiation, there is that old blessed thing: the orbit, and the rotation, and the sphere itself. And thus the day, and thus the routine; round like clock; complex yet simple, like *clockwork*. There we are, day by day, trapped under the axle.

And I do not deny the power of this centripetal force. How could I, a being alive and dead and alive again twice. The wheel *does* turn; the daylily shutters under frost, then breaches anew come spring; schools of resonant minnows entangle themselves on the spinning rhythms of the pulsar wave. But none of this is eternal. None of it is endless. If only it were, then we would not need to face the truth: that we turned wheel first.

We set the gears into the watchbody. We took the stars, irregular and boiling and jagged, and carved until they were round in our minds. We pressed the pencil to the page and summoned the circle.

And know this, Figure: one day we will draw a different shape. We must.

[music ends]

Introduction

Austin: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterisation, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker, and joining me today, Art Martinez-Tebbel.

Art: Hey, you can find me on Twitter [@atebbel](#), cohost [@AMTebbel](#), and Bluesky I think also [@AMTebbel](#). If you have to, I don't think Bluesky is gonna make it for me.

Austin: Also joining us, Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hi, you can find me on cohost [@jdq](#).

Austin: Today we are continuing—

Jack: Wait, sorry! You can buy any of the music [**Austin:** Yes.] featured on the show at [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](#), there was a pause there cause I was thinking about whether I wanted to say something rude about Bluesky? Instead I will let my silence speak volumes.

Austin: Hoo hoo hoo. Interesting.

Art: Wow.

Austin: Interesting. Today we are continuing our game—

Art: Do you not want to introduce yourself?

Austin: [reluctantly] I'm Austin Walker, you can find me on Twitter [@austin_walker](#)...

Art: Great! [chuckles]

Austin: And cohost [@austin](#). I'm on Bluesky @austinwalker, one word, I wanna say? Which is why it's not gonna work, they don't have underscores over there, or maybe I just didn't get it. Maybe I just got regular austinwalker— but if you search for austin_walker I think you'll find me— I don't like Bluesky. I'm trying, I'm trying. I don't like anything. It's all done, it's all over, it's all bad. I need a new paradigm.

Art: Yeah, really, if you wanna get in touch with me, find a way to get yourself on my TikTok algorithm.

Austin: I'm not there either, so, get on Art's, and say hey, I have a message for Austin.

Art: Tell Austin, yeah. If someone could do this, it would be incredible.

Jack: Yeah, travel to Prague and look for a man—

Art: And then, I don't want you to do it again.

Austin: [chuckles] Yes, and that's it, one time.

Art: Yeah, it's fun *one* time only [laughs].

Austin: Yes. It's our new podcast, "One Time Only", [**Jack** and **Art** chuckle] where we outline things that are fun to do just once.

Art: Once, yeah.

Austin: Just once.

Jack: Just once.

Austin: Today, we are continuing our game—

Jack: Yeah, ride Splash Mountain.

Austin: Ride— just once. Go on— I went to EPCOT recently, because over on the A More Civilized Age pod we did the Star Wars thing, the Halcyon Cruiser. [**Art:** Sure.] And I also took that opportunity to go on the EPCOT ride “We Grow This” or whatever it’s called. EPCOT “Growth Ride”? [**Jack** chuckles] “Living With The Land”.

Jack: And now you’re eight foot one!

Austin: Yeah, that’s right.

Art: Oh is that the— [singing] ♪ *living with the land we all love, living with the land*— ♪

Austin: They got rid of the song, Art.

Art: They got rid of—?!

Jack: What?

Art: Oh my go— oh my god! Oh ho ho ho!

Austin: So.

Jack: I don’t know this, I’m just mad that they got rid of the song. What did you hear instead?

Austin: It was originally called “Listen to the Land” and there was a song that Art was just singing.

Art: And I was doing a great job, everyone agrees.

Austin: You were. And in fact you were stumbling over some of the lyrics, I was like this doesn't sound right, ♪ *living with the land* ♪, it's cause it was called "Listen to the Land" as you did it [**Art:** Yeah.], it's no longer using the attraction, they renamed it "Living with the Land" and introduced some lines about how "listen man, we were just trying to make the most efficient use of land possible, [**Jack:** Oooh!]" and make the most food we could, and we were just trying to help people, but it turns out we maybe did some bad things here in industrial agriculture! But we're fixing it, we're better than ever over here, we're living *with* the land now. Anyway we got rid of that song, we replaced it with an opening scene of a storm rolling through the wilderness." They do still use the no-lyric, the instrumental version of that song in some other part of EPCOT, is my understanding. So you can go find it, Art.

Art: Okay.

Austin: It's heard at the land's exterior background music loop, as well as the music loop played inside the "Garden Grill", so if you get food at the Garden Grill, you would hear the instrumental.

Jack: Yeuck. Fun to do once.

Austin: You know, let me tell you something. You don't wanna— [mumbles] Hm. Hm, not quite. Anyway! We are continuing our game of *Armour Astir: Advent*. Our goals are to portray a world entrenched in conflict; to let the players make a difference— [amused] which I think they've done; to connect the magic and the mundane; and to play to find out what happens. How do we do this again? How do we play this game? Bad news for you folks, we gotta keep playing this game, by folks I mean Jack and Art.

Art: Yeah!

Austin: We're still in it!

Art: Here's the thing.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: I've been thinking about this a lot.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: There's not a ton of places to go from here, unless— I mean, here's some thoughts. One, we make a more threatening doomsday device.

Austin: Right, sure.

Art: We find someone who can invent the device that causes the heat death of the universe. [**Austin:** Mm.] Something that just draws all of the [**Austin:** Yeah yeah yeah yeah.] heat force from every atom.

Austin: Now, I am kind of on this in a way that you wouldn't believe. [**Art** chuckles] We don't have to get there right this second, but I will say that my "Harvest the Fundamental Nodes" alarm— or clock is going to finish today, we'll talk about that later. Other ideas.

Art: The other thing we can do is decide that we have to— that like, okay, we've done existential threat, now we need very personal threats.

Austin: Ahhh. Right.

Art: That we need to heighten in this different way.

Austin: Right, it's not Superman who's under threat, it's Clark Kent.

Art: Right.

Austin: It's Peter Parker's life. It's Aunt May and it's his friends and all that.

Art: Yeah, let's find Jimmy Olsen, Gwen Stacy, whoever, [**Austin:** Yeah.] and throw 'em off a bridge.

Austin: Uh huh. Should we have a high level—? Let's— go ahead, Jack.

Jack: Doesn't work, cause Spiderman can just get them. Off from the bridge.

Austin: No, now no this is the thing, is that it is in fact you know, Spiderman tries to get Gwen Stacy, it doesn't go good.

Jack: There are people for whom gravity remains true even in a world where Spiderman exists?

Austin: That is kind of quite literally—

Art: Yeah, Spiderman did not— I'm sorry to spoil this for you, [chuckles] but Spiderman did not save Gwen Stacy.

Austin: Yeah. The web made the connection, albeit too late. **[Jack: Oof.]** So, you know. Anyway.

Jack: Yeah let's do a high level picture.

Austin: I gotta do something right away, which is that I think,

Jack: Yeah, I'm really excited about this.

Austin: Everybody has to take a little Disfavor, and I think Kesh has to get more, like by a bunch, right?

Jack: Yes. But I do think everybody takes Disfavor because this is a Bilateral project. **[Austin: Right.]** This is, you know. I tell you who's got a shit ton of Disfavor, and it's Stargrave Ellia Elcessor.

Austin: One second, first and foremost, Stargrave Elcessor has fallen. I've put the X in.

Jack: Yep. [cross] Ooh, crossed it out!

Art: [cross] Oh, so that's what that does!

Austin: The line is automatically crossed out, Stability has dropped from nine to eight.

Jack: Oh, look at that! That's great.

Austin: Yeah. So that's number one. Number two, Disfavor. Now the way Disfavor's written about makes me feel like we've been skipping Disfavor thus far. Because it is really— you know, Disfavor is one out of nine, it is a nine point scale, and you're supposed to either get it or lose it depending on how you do as a thing, right?

Jack: Oh wait, we can lose it! That's nice.

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah, exactly, you can— so mechanically, because of what it says, “When a Division takes action that disappoints, dishonors, or disrespect their masters, increase the Division's Disfavor by one. Alternatively, when a Division does something that would make another look incompetent or disloyal, increase that Division's Disfavor by one. Similarly, when a Division takes action that impresses or elevates them in the eyes of their masters, reduce that Division's Disfavor by one. This should be something of note, more than just succeeding at a move, trust is easy to lose and hard to regain.” So like I would say that like, do you remember when we had like that regular soldier who faced down Rose River and like got the win somehow with ridiculous rolls?

Jack: Yeah, Occam—

Austin: Occam something? Occam—

Jack: Olio?

Austin: Occam Olio, that sounds right. That's— that to me would be like oh yeah, wow, that's cool, you maybe earned something back there. But we weren't tracking it, I'm fine with just handwaving it. But, I wouldn't mind being a little you know, loosey goosey with some big spends on Disfavor here because of what a big deal it was, you know? What do y'all think?

Jack: Yeah. I absolutely agree.

Art: Uh huh.

Austin: I think everybody gets one to start, which raises Nideo to two, Frontier Syndicate to one and Kesh to three. And then what? Cause this is big. It's bigger than Pal— it's the galaxy.

Jack: I would like to briefly suggest that maybe everybody gets more than one. **[Austin:** Mm-hm.] Every combustor has **[Austin:** Mm-hm! Yeah.] gone offline thanks to the events of Palisade. Now, and this isn't me equivcoating against Kesh getting a fucking shit ton of Disfavor, that's the next step. **[Austin:** Yeah yeah yeah yeah.] But imagine being in Kesh headquarters, **[Austin:** Yes.] and looking at Palisade and going, we had three central factions, including the *Divine Crusade*, on that planet, and every Stellar Combustor in the Divine Principality has gone offline. **[Austin:** Yeah.] I think it is worth more than one point of Disfavor for everybody.

Austin: I agree. Three?

Jack: ...Yeah, let's say three.

Austin: In the way that like— alright, we all take one, and then we all take one for not stopping the other one, and we all take one because of the scale of the whole thing.

Jack: Yes.

Art: Sure.

Austin: You know? So it's three— Frontier Syndicate up to three, Nideo up to four, Kesh up to six.

Art: And remind me what the hell this does?

Austin: If you get to ten,

Jack: Nine— no, ten. Yes, if you were to take, you would take the—

Austin: No, it's ten. Mechanically speaking— yeah. Mechanically speaking, any Division with ten or more Disfavor can be removed at the start of the Conflict Turn, if the other two Divisions desire it. No action roll is needed, but toss a coin. On a heads, the

Division is ousted and becomes a tapped Wayward Faction instead. A replacement Division of a different type moves in immediately. Ten Disfavor usually doesn't happen overnight after all, moves were already being made. On Tails, the target Division is dissolved and absorbed messily back into the Authority. A replacement Division of a different type moves in at the start of the next Conflict Turn, and until then, any Pillars the old one controlled are temporarily considered to have zero Grip, meaning they can be felled with a Faction outcome or a Sortie via Plan or Prepare. So either, you know, basically if one of these gets to ten, the other two can oust it. And at that point, if it's ousted, you flip a coin, and it either becomes a Wayward Faction, or it gets dissolved and brought back into the Bilats as like, no longer its own autonomous Division, you know?

Art: Okay so I think we have to start the conversation as, is Stel Kesh at eight?

Austin: I think we have to start the Conversation as, is Stel Kesh at ten? And we can walk it back from there, but we gotta start at that. It has to be on the table. They lost every Stellar Combustor? Imagine that—

Art: In a way— and in a way that really, I mean, and this is I think sort of like— this is I think a fault with the B-plot Move in Armour Astir?

Austin: Uh huh.

Art: But like, two knuckleheads came in and wrecked the whole thing, allegedly not even being the focus of the episode.

Austin: [chuckles] Okay, it was three knuckleheads, because there was an NPC with them. And two other knuckleheads [wheezing] showed up, it was five knuckleheads.

[Art: Sure.] And one of them's Branched, you know?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Which also I think is part of the overall terrible optics of this. [laughs] Millennium Break got to say they did it. Like it would be one thing if the Pact took credit for this, you're at war with the Pact. The Pact is still "us" fundamentally, you know what I mean?

There are you know, you're rivals in this, and they maybe do want to disentangle the nations, the Stels of the Divine Principality from one another and etc., but they ain't Millennium Break. Millennium Break and Branched Man decided to broadcast [Jack chuckles] that they did it. And so it's *such* a bloody nose, you know? It is, you know, what if we— what if America lost all of its nuclear weapons overnight? You know, I mean it doesn't exactly work the same— maybe all their nuclear submarines or something, you know? And then I don't— at this point in time, I don't even know who the Millennium Break you know equivalent is, but.

Art: And then North Korea Man went on TV and was like, I took all the nukes—

Austin: Right. Exactly! [laughs] Gotcha!

Art: I know that's— it's not a one-to-one [**Austin:** It's not.], don't @ me.

Austin: Listen, we're two episodes out from when Keith said Bin Laden— [laughing] compared Phrygian to Bin Laden, so I think that we're off to the races.

Art: That's the last episode. [**Austin:** Yeah.] The last episode isn't going to be an interlude episode, that's the previous episode here.

Austin: No, I wasn't sure if that was— yeah, who could say?

Art: Or if we're on a different episode because us fucking around before we started is 26.

Austin: Yeah, sorry we were just talking for twenty five minutes.

Jack: We were doing a quiz about Winnie the Pooh?

Austin: Yeah, friendsatthetable.cash if you want to hear us do a quiz about Winnie the Pooh.

Art: [chuckling] About Winnie the Pooh! We did pretty well, honestly.

Austin: We did great.

Jack: We did do pretty well.

Art: Yeah I guess, is this it for the Bilateral Intelligence Service?

Jack: Hmmm. Hmmm! This is a good question!

Austin: Or is it at ten? Is it at ten, cause this doesn't have to be it— I mean yeah, I guess that should also be on the table, it should all be on the table.

Art: Well no, if it's ten we have to flip, if it's nine, they can stay.

Austin: Riiight.

Jack: It's when it hits the ten.

Austin: I mean, we don't have to flip at ten, that's the thing. We can *choose* to flip it.

Jack: You also— you can choose, which is *fascinating*.

Austin: Yes, cause we could— Art, we could use this to put pressure on Kesh to do what we want.

Jack: Yeah! You absolutely could. Yes, you could. Yeah. I mean, hmm. So, the first thing I wrote down in my notes this morning was “maybe Kesh is done”. You know? [chuckles]

Austin: You know?

Jack: Not necessarily Stel Kesh generally,

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah, definitely not. Cause like, I really wanna emphasize this like, the war happens elsewhere. This is not the front for the war. The war is primarily being fought at the front with the Branched, and between the Pact and the Bilats. And this is a small corner of it where the Bilats are hoping that they can get a one-up on the Pact and turn the war in their favour, because they're losing it right now, by conquering the Twilight Mirage and excising power from it, right? Or finding ancient power here on Palisade of some sort, right? That is what the entire thing was here. So, Kesh writ large, I think takes a real big hit here, but we can't— Stel Kesh isn't dead from this, you know?

Art: No, Stel Kesh isn't dead, but all of these people [**Austin:** But these people.] might be. [**Jack:** Yes.] This might be like, we activated all of your remote controlled poison capsule teeth.

Austin: Done.

Jack: I mean there is another way of thinking about this, right? Which is that— okay. Crysanth and Connadine are very interesting characters where you have spies, where something that frustrates me in stories generally are when characters no-sell consequence. They go essentially “I am immune to propaganda. So you know, I wouldn't fall for that” or whatever. And I think as we demonstrated, both Crysanth and Connadine are people who exist within the society that they exist within, and are subject to the kinds of pressures and concerns. At the same time, they are spymasters trained to, you know, watch trends, and to make backup plans, and to prepare contingencies such that one would hope that in a crisis, a spymaster would be the kind of character who would go, shit, alright, okay, we need to figure this out. As such, I wonder if—and we can discuss this more in the episode—but I don't— oh, go ahead.

Austin: I would just like to put a point on that like, it's so easy to imagine someone from the now returned to be an intelligence agency Curtain sending Connadine a message that says like, oh, “was this On Cycle?” [**Jack:** Yup.] “Was this part of your grand orchestra?” you know? [**Jack:** Yep.] Because it obviously was not, right? “Was this one of your Guaranteed Events? Cause it doesn't seem like it.”

Jack: You see this happening? Yeah, exactly. And so I wonder if— again, we can talk this through over the course of the episode, but I wanna say it at the top so that we can, you know, keep it in mind. I wonder if Riah Connadine is starting to think “maybe this is it for Kesh”, you know? This doesn't preclude us taking action on this planet in service of our interests, but the way we do it might involve a stepping away from— essentially, we can't be out here like, oh, Stel Kesh is planning all this cool stuff. If we want to make— we've blown our cover as Kesh, essentially. You know, if we want to act and we still do, we need to think about a way to get some latitude from the Principality of Kesh as a state entity, and in doing so, enable us to move more easily and more freely.

Austin: Mmm. Mm-hm.

Art: Tell me what that is. Tell me what that does.

Austin: Well partly we won't know, because we have to flip the coin, right? There is— part of this that's not—

Art: Oh, this is a coin flip!

Austin: Well sorry, yeah. If we're talking about removing Kesh as a faction, we are giving away authority in a narrative sense to a coin. Because either the Bilateral Intelligence Service on Kesh under Connadine goes Wayward, or it's dissolved and reincorporated into the body of the Bilats.

Jack: Eaten up into the Bilats.

Austin: And still replaced, but has not gone rogue, right?

Jack: No.

Art: One of the— on tails, we're going to lose another Pillar?

Austin: Well, maybe.

Jack: Uhh, yes. And I would suggest not flipping the coin at this point? But.

Austin: Mm-hm? I mean I do have— I truly, yeah. I'm curious. We could raise it— again, it's fundamentally not up to Kesh. We could put— if we're gonna put you at ten, then the other two factions have to decide, the other two Divisions rather, have to decide, do we oust Kesh?

Art: Uh huh.

Austin: And then we'd flip the coin if we had said yes. But then we both have to say yes.

Art: Mm-hm.

Austin: Which is a big swing. It's a big swing.

Art: But I— it might be time— it might be time for a big swing. I say this knowing what it sounds like after what just happened in the show. I want everyone to know that I also know what the show is doing right now. [**Jack** chuckles] I think part of this is like, where are we going?

Austin: Yeah. Agreed.

Art: Because like,

Austin: What's the structure of the season— I mean this comes— this speaks a little bit to what Keith had voiced as like, strategic anxiety around the idea that like, oh my god we're twenty five episodes in and we haven't felled one Pillar, right?

Art: Sure.

Austin: And part of the way the book is written is like, well sometimes the dominos start to fall.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And also, to be clear, you don't lose a Pillar. The Pillars lose Grip, and so, you *could* start losing Pillars. You know, through moves, through whatever, through the Faction moves for instance. So it could happen, but it's not guaranteed, right?

Art: What are the—

Austin: Jade Kill could do it, you know? Or the—

Art: Yeah, that's just like, then just don't touch Jade Kill.

Austin: Well Jade Kill would decide to do the mission. The Cause decides who defends, remember?

Art: No, it's been a hundred years, Austin.

Austin: Okay well, the— Hexagon will decide who gets to defend any given thing, and they will use— if that happens, Jade Kill will try to fell a Pillar, absolutely. Like undeniably, right?

Art: Sure, but they need a Pillar with zero Grip which currently describes none Pillars.

Austin: Correct, but if you— this is what I'm saying is if we did flip, and you did get the dissolved option, then those Pillars would have zero Grip.

Jack: They both get zero Grip.

Austin: They both get zero Grip for this brief moment, correct. Which I think is interesting, but.

Art: Does this season end only when all of these Pillars have fallen?

Austin: That is how Armour Astir is written. [**Art:** Well, but Armour Astir isn't making a program.] That is how Armour Astir's Campaign is written, right? Those are the Campaign rules. I don't— you know, who could say? I do think that there is a degree to me where it's like, I'm excited by the idea of flipping the coin. And that to me is, I am a "chase excitement" GM, trust that we will find new ideas later, *and* I am excited by the idea both of Connadine falling into some other structural thing, you know, what's the world like where the Paint Shop remains... a Pillar, therefore Connadine's still in the season, but Stel Kesh gets replaced as one of these three Factions? Like who comes in instead?

Art: Well it could be a different part of Stel Kesh—

Austin: They could be a different part of Stel Kesh, yeah exactly, totally.

Art: Especially depending on which— head— whether it's heads or tails.

Austin: Right, right, right. I mean I had another big pitch, but I wanna— we'll get there eventually.

Art: Is that less— is that more— is that less exciting next time?

Austin: It's actually less safe next time, because I have a suspicion that I know what the party's going to do with their next mission. Well I guess I don't know, because we haven't recorded Downtime yet, but Brnine— [**Jack** chuckles] but Brnine and Routine are currently being held captive by Apostolos, by the Pact. And they gotta get them back. I don't think that's gonna happen during Downtime. So there's like a world where the party is caught up on some shit right now, you know?

Art: Well won't they just split into two parties again and do everything?

Austin: Maybe.

Art: I mean. I guess here's a question— I have a— what's the matter with my brain? A procedural question.

Austin: Sure.

Art: What's up with the Chimera's Lantern?

Austin: What do you want— what do you wanna know?

Art: Is it still— is it still Nideo's possession?

Austin: Nideo's still there, yeah, they didn't kick Consecration off. There's still bases all over that damn thing. And this is another way where there's a front, right? I think the thing that kind of, a C-plot let's say in that arc, is that Consecration is digging for the bodies of the dead Divines being protected by the Chimeric Cadent, right? And wants to effectively— what do you call when you dig up a corpse?

Jack: Exhume?

Austin: Exhume, yeah, the bodies of the Divines and kind of retranscript them into the Bilateral Intercession— into the Divine Principality, right? So that's still happening up there. I've not erased that in any way. Like they— the party didn't even really make a dent, you know what I mean? They like, they knocked out a few— they knocked out like

one of the embedded camps underground on the moon? But like the moon is covered with Nideo people, so. Yeah, still up there, Art.

Art: We would have to in this Downtime— and like basically open up a third front. We'd have to find a third thing—

Austin: Well I'm on it, buddy.

Art: For them to care about.

Austin: I got it, don't worry.

Art: Oh, great!

Austin: Do you want me to do my turn?

Jack: Oh wait—

Art: No, I wanna figure out if we're gonna destroy Stel Kesh— [laughing]

Austin: Okay.

Jack: What are the three things? The three things are the moon, the thing Austin is doing, what is the third?

Austin: Rescuing Brnine, presumably.

Art: Rescuing Brnine.

Jack: Oh getting Brnine, right right right.

Austin: Which theoretically, maybe Brnine sweet talks their way out of— it's not gonna happen. I promise. I know what's on that ship.

Art: I've seen Brnine try to sweet talk, and it's...

Austin: Yeah, Brnine and Routine are being held prisoner for the thing that they did, you know?

Art: Right. And I— my fronts are Brnine, the Pillars that could eventually be vulnerable in the event of a Tails in the Kesh flip...

Austin: Right, right. I think fundamentally my instinct now is we should not be afraid of flipping this coin, or swinging big in general. That we're at the part of the season where we should push momentum here, not hit the brakes and try to recenter, because there is so much still up in terms of Pillars.

Art: Can I roll a practice coin?

Austin: Well, it's not your coin to flip at all.

Art: I know, but can I flip a coin and see how I would feel about it if that were the real result?

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, do you have a coin? You're just gonna roll 1d2.

Art: I'm just gonna roll 1d2, heads is one.

Austin: Sure. You got a one.

Art: I mean that's the better result, but it doesn't feel great. Didn't feel great. [**Austin** and **Jack** chuckle]

Austin: Jack, how are you feeling about this?

Jack: [exhales] Okay. So, in *any* case, [**Austin:** Uh huh.] they are replaced with a new Authority Division, right?

Austin: Correct, yeah.

Jack: Okay. And I would be prepared to play a new Authority Division. I think it's worth saying that there is a— the Stargrave acted unilaterally in a way that— unilaterally even outside of— even within Kesh. I don't think that she has allies.

Austin: Yeah, sure.

Jack: I mean she—

Austin: She probably has some allies.

Jack: It's a big planet, right?

Austin: This is— yeah, uh huh.

Jack: She has allies. But, I don't think that there are other people who are like, "yeah! She's really—" you know. **[Austin: Right.]** People in major positions of power. And I think that Connadine and the Paint Shop are furious. Are abjectly, you know. Basically like watching someone not just score an own-goal by accident, but take the ball right up to the penalty spot, turn round and kick it as hard as you can.

Austin: Right, right. But who do you think— who do you think Cynosure puts this on? Because it isn't Elcessor.

Jack: No! Cynosure probably puts it— well so, there's something fascinating happening here, right? Which is, Connadine is also deeply frustrated with Cynosure's... This is, the stealing of the camera that sees everything, all over again. **[Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.]** This is the result of—

[30:00]

Austin: Can you remind people of what that is?

Jack: [chuckles] Okay. The camera that sees everything is the Divine Discernment..? Yes.

Austin: I think that's right, yeah.

Jack: Who in The Road to PALISADE— so it's a Divine that is a camera that sees the entire galaxy. Kind of creates a snapshot.

Austin: Yeah, once a year it can take a picture of everything.

Jack: It was stolen, outright, by a crew of Millennium Break scoundrels.

Austin: [chuckling] Yeah.

Jack: And in one of the openings, we hear Cynosure telephoning— or rather, we hear someone from the BIS telling this to Cynosure. And Cynosure not really buying at first that it was the result of like four people's work. [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] You know, Cynosure's like "oh, it was four battalions, right?". And the Lace is like, "no, it was four people". And I think that Connadine has been getting increasingly frustrated with the way that Kesh upper management has been underestimating the things that Millennium Break can do.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: We saw this a bit in the last few episodes where we heard from the Paint Shop this thing of like, "it is critically important that we keep painting them as destructive terrorists," but we need to understand, there is fancy footwork going on here. Like, these people are capable of very specific— I think Connadine feels hung out to dry on some level, of like you put me and my team in a place where two people— I'm mad at the Stargrave, you're mad at me, [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] I'm mad at an organization that doesn't buy that three people— five, four? Yeah, five. Routine, the two Pact people.

Austin: Right, the two Pact people, and then Phrygian and Brnine, yeah, mm-hm.

Jack: Brnine and Phrygian, can shut down every Stellar Combustor in the galaxy.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Connadine is very much of the opinion that we are dealing with a genuinely concerning revolutionary force, and he is not being taken seriously.

Austin: Right. Connadine, a historian— a folklorist, but, still. You know, understands—

Jack: Folklorist and a— yeah! Absolutely. And you know, this is also the path that Crysanth was on in a lot of ways, until she got undone by an individual, taking you

know— albeit an individual with the backing of a community and an ideology, you know, it wasn't just Valence being like, alright—!

Austin: Yeah but Crysanth got got on some bad luck shit, you know what I mean? Wrong place wrong time, too in the public, [**Jack:** Yup.] shouldn't have been outside.

Art: Ironically, too many failed rolls from the people trying—

Austin: Right, right! [**Jack** chuckles] That wasn't an assassination mission, that was you trying to do another thing, and it turned into a direct conflict in a way that was unexpected, and then Valence, like you said, Jack.

Art: It was real—

Austin: Driven by community and, etc., right? Ideology—

Jack: Shared ideology.

Austin: Right, right. Pulled out the doohickey, you know? And did the thing.

Jack: But still an individ— you know—

Art: Oops, pow surprise!

Austin: Exactly! [laughs] [**Jack** chuckles] Call an ambulance but not for me, like!

Art: Yeah!

Jack: Yeah yeah yeah!

Austin: We did need one for Valence, though. And that's very...

Jack: We did, unfortunately. But this is Connadine—

Art: Yeah. Call two ambulances, but not both for me.

Austin: Right. Go ahead.

Jack: But like, you know. This is kind of the weird inverse of Hadrian doesn't know he rolled a one? Connadine is beginning to realize that a tabletop RPG party is four people, you know? **[Austin:** Right, right.] And is going **[Art:** Ohhh!] **[Austin:** Mm-hm.], is going—and so there's a tension here, because this also is rooted in a weird piece of recent Kesh history, which is that the Peaceful Principle started to say, "look, all this *old* spycraft, we need to be open about this; we are going to—"

Austin: Modern. Modernization, professionalization, yeah.

Jack: "We're going to be modern. We're going to cull a lot— we're going to fire a lot of people who work for us—"

Austin: I'm sorry, you are all called the Curtain of Divinity?

Jack: The Curtain?

Austin: Absolutely not! No!

Jack: You know, you are going to be Commander so-and-so, you are going to be so-and-so whatever.

Austin: Yeah, none of this "Lace", "Satin" bullshit. Your name is Connadine, yeah.

Jack: We are just— and we need to work again— we are, it turns out, completely fucking unequipped to fight an organization like this! And so I think there is a real resentment that Connadine is feeling, [chuckling] of like clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right, you know? **[Austin:** Uh huh.] On one end I have the Stargrave who just acted unilaterally, and now her failures are going to be blamed on me. And on the other side, we have this like, New Labour, you know **[Austin:** Right, yep.], um, everybody out in the open, you know, we need to be nice and modern, you know, we're going to be MI5 or whatever, not the circus.

Austin: Yeah. Our new, more diverse Bilateral Intelligence Service.

Jack: Exactly! So when I talk about—

Art: I like someone coming out from like— coming to a meeting like, “did you know that we have names for all of the jobs you can have?”

Jack: There are ranks? [chuckling] Yeah.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah!

Art: [chuckling] Yeah! Do you know that we have like Private, Sergeant, Corporal, just like everyone else! [**Jack** chuckling]

Austin: We’ve been making this up!

Art: We’ve been wasting all this time!

Jack: We had them already! [**Austin:** Yeah.] And so when I say you know, Connadine is starting to think oh maybe Kesh is done, it is that atmosphere of resentment and frustration that I am talking about. And I think you know, might help inform us when we say something like, who does the Princept blame?

Austin: I put ten in on Disfavour, I think you made the case whether you wanted to or not. I think we gotta flip the coin. It’s not my decision to make, but I think we gotta flip the coin.

Art: You know what I wish we had access to in this situation?

Austin: No, what?

Jack: A large-scale glass prediction engine [chuckles].

Art: I wish we could like, go somewhere and watch someone flip a coin for us. Instead of like, rolling 1d2, I wish like, there was a guy in a room flipping a coin all the time,

Jack: [cross] Explain to me your feelings here.

Austin: [cross] We can find this.

Art: [cross] and we like join in and be like, next flip is us. What?

Jack: Why do you feel this way?

Art: I would like the drama of the coin flip in a way that—

Austin: We could do this. There has to be—

Art: Just like a guy flipping coins all the time? [laughs]

Austin: Cause we live in a world where you can bet on anything? There's a few ways to do this. One is Twitch coin flip stream, which I bet exists.

Art: God, can I do that? Can that be my job now?

Jack: I have a question.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: If we were to flip a coin, that would come as a result of the Frontier Syndicate and Stel Nideo [**Austin:** Yeah.] saying it is time to oust Kesh. Now—

Austin: It is time to oust Connadine. Or it's time to shift— let's read from the book. Let's make sure that we actually have this right. Mechanically speaking, any Division with ten or more Disfavour can be removed at the start of the Conflict Turn if the other two Divisions desire it. So yes. That is— it is the other Factions deciding, the other Divisions deciding, listen, you dropped the ball. [**Jack:** And in much the same—] And maybe that's— or maybe it's hey, someone has to take a fall, and it's not going to be us.

Jack: Right.

Art: Someone has to go down for this, this is putting up the thing like, Kesh would never do this thing. It was a rogue element.

Austin: Right. Which again we end up looking at like, well what happens based on the ousted versus dissolved outcome with the toin coss. The "*toin coss*".

Jack: The toin coss?

[Art chuckles]

Austin: The coin toss. [tired chuckling] The coin toss, yeah.

Jack: Yes. But I do think cause—

Austin: I think that's what it is, I think that that's an important thing to say, [Jack: Yes.] it might— because again, the Paint Shop would remain a Pillar, so Connadine wouldn't be removed from Palisade.

Jack: No. Similarly, if Art, you and I were going to oust Austin, we wouldn't be ousting the Frontier Syndicate, we'd be ousting the March Institute.

Austin: Right, and there would still be some other thing— though I think that actually, to be clear, there is nothing in Armour Astir that says that these factions have to be the three major— we have done the work of being like, there is a three-headed Bilateral Intercession. So for instance—

Jack: Trilateral.

Austin: Well, yeah, the Frontier Syndicate being like, no no no, it's fine, you don't have to call us— you don't have to rename the whole thing, we'll just be here, we're you know, a corporation under the Bilateral Intercession, don't worry about it. But, Jack, if you were like, I want to pick up and play a different part of Nideo, you could do that. Do you know what I mean?

Jack: Yes that's true.

Austin: So I don't wanna take that— you know, I don't want to say it has to be a Kesh thing. If you wanted to start playing Cynosure Whitestar-Kesh, if you said, if you said [laughs] "and the Princept is coming here to sort this all out".

Jack: Oh, god.

Austin: [chuckling] You can do that.

Jack: Oh my god— no, no! Because then just, then the planet catches fire or something, there is no way Cynosure “you can’t arrest me” Whitestar-Kesh arrives on Palisade and it goes well for Stel Kesh.

Austin: But that’s not what we’re thinking about. This is again, we have to think narratively and not strategically.

Jack: Yes. [chuckling]

Austin: Or certainly not both at once. [**Jack:** Yes, you are right.] Right? Not— we have to either— we have to be thinking— if we’re thinking strategically, we have to be head in the game on it, and in an in-character way, which is like, it’s easy to imagine Cynosure being like, “yes, I’ll go sort that all right out”, you know? Or even, in some ways, this might be the safest place for me to be, [**Jack:** Ha!] far from, you know, whatever else is going on in the fucking galaxy right now. If I have to be at one front, it’s not the one with the Branched, you know? But,

Jack: The planet of— *the planet* of Kesh.

Austin: Where— which is taken, currently, right? So yeah. Can’t go there! [**Jack:** Yeah.] So.

Jack: I don’t think it works— I don’t think it makes sense, but I’m saying it so that at least we can talk about it.

Austin: Mm-hm. And we wouldn’t need to answer that this episode. [**Jack:** We could—] If we flipped, we wouldn’t— the new faction would come next turn.

Art: Wait, is that true? If it’s a heads, isn’t it immediate?

Austin: If it’s a heads...

Jack: It is, it’s there, ready to go.

Austin: Oh it is. On heads it is, it is, it is. You’re right.

Art: Well we can just through the magic of recording, if you flip ahead, we can all just take half an hour and come back.

Austin: Or come back in a week and fill in what it is, etc., right?

Jack: Right. But is there a world in which we replace the Bilateral Intelligence Service with the old Curtain?

Austin: I don't think that exists in the way that we thought it did, right?

Jack: Broken up, gone.

Austin: Sorry, more importantly, no, because this is not about— I mean, the answer to that, Jack, is you're describing I think, a wayward faction.

Jack: Yes, you're right.

Austin: Not part of the Bilateral Intercession's work here on Palisade.

Jack: No. No, but that— yeah.

Austin: Unless, the thing that wildly would happen would be that Cynosure says yes, let's re— which doesn't seem like the thing that would happen here.

Jack: Yeah. It's tough that we can't know this— it's not tough, it's great— that we can't [Austin chuckles] know this before we flip the coin, because there is a way of this where Connadine, March, and Gentian get together, and Connadine says, look, let me take the fall.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: I'm going to go. This is— you know, we need to pick a person to go, and it's going to be me.

Austin: Right— well the Elcessor— okay, really quick. What happens to Elcessor?

Jack: This is a good fucking question!

Austin: Cause she's taking the fall to some degree no matter what. She's the Pillar who's fallen.

Jack: Yes. Do we kill her?

Austin: I don't know.

Art: Probably, right?

Jack: I— hm. We are getting so in the weeds and we should probably begin with a turn?

Austin: Well we can't, because it's the beginning of the turn and we have to decide if we're flipping the coin or not.

Jack: Oh. Okay, here's the thing.

Austin: I mean we could break that rule if we wanted to.

Jack: Yes, yes, you're right.

Austin: But it really changes a lot! Because it will change for instance, what faction is here. Or what Division is here. [**Jack** chuckles] And what ability we have access to, for instance.

Jack: What is Kesh's outward response to this? My thinking has been, something along the lines of— there are a few options, right? The first is immediate violent, punitive reprisal.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: You thought you could— you thought that you made ground. [**Austin:** Right.] Okay maybe you did, but we are not going to let you feel that way, you know?

Austin: Well this is— the thing that we had said during that last Conflict Turn was, yeah we have the Cause's membership, but we don't hit them hard. You know maybe we go a couple things here and there, but we're not— this is not the moment where we're

going to the mattresses, right? We are just gathering the intel on who the members of Hexagon are. And we could just do that here, now. Like okay nope, it's go time. You— by destroying the combustors, you've now forced our hand, we're happy to go bloody at this point. And maybe that happens all across the galaxy, you know?

Jack: We understand that you— we won't acknowledge it. We understand that you have chalked up a massive W, [**Austin:** Right.] and we are going to hit you as hard as possible, so that any time you remember the suns becoming safe, you remember those people you know getting killed in the streets.

Austin: Right. There are people that we let be— we knew that there were certain cells in certain worlds, in certain stations, that were you know, that existed and that we had under observation but had not closed yet, had not closed in on. We've now closed in on them. We've now— there are double agents that we had who are reporting on stuff, and we have extracted them and destroyed wherever they were. Fuck it.

Jack: And you sell this to military high command by saying, following the destruction of the combustors, we anticipate seeing an uptick in revolutionary activity. [**Austin:** [chuckles] Right.] And we need to prepare on it by acting as aggressively as possible in spaces where we see that— where we anticipate that violent uptick.

Austin: I have two other thoughts here. One is the thing that you're setting up which is like, the group that could come in here, the group that Kesh could want to put in is— it's military time, right? None of this— this comes back to what Art was saying too maybe earlier right, which is like, it is time to do a ground war, right? And so, this is— god what would, who was the character in *PARTIZAN* who was like the big hotshot?

Jack: Oh, he's like a—

Austin: Military person? I'm thinking of somebody else, I think I'm thinking of a— who was the rival, who was Clem's rival? Not Gucci, the other one. The other— the Icebreaker one.

Jack: Oh! [chuckles] Lucia. [**Austin:** Lucia!] Lucia Whitestar.

Austin: Lucia Whitestar! Right? Which is like, that's a Whitestar, as in the Whitestar-Kesh, was it a cousin or a niece or something?

Jack: Yes, niece of Cynosure I think.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Cause Clem is like, I think your niece is an idiot to Cynosure at some point.

Austin: [chuckling] Yes, exactly yes. Here it is. Here it is, Lucia Whitestar, Lady Whitestar is Clementine's peer, an emerging strategic genius, and 8th in the line to the throne of Princept, leading the operation to breach Fort Icebreaker.

Jack: She's Cynosure's daughter!

Austin: Very funny.

Jack: Okay so Lucia is one way to go.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: The other way to go— oh—

Austin: Sorry, the other big idea I thought in terms of just, how would Kesh respond? Is to go blow up twenty three star systems somewhere. And say, no they're not. They're not gone. We still have them.

[**Jack** laughs]

Art: Oh, just do it like conventionally.

Austin: Yup. Mm-hm. And deny it, right? But I think that that undercuts and undersells the ability for the truth to get out here, you know? And I don't want to undercut the victory that Millennium Break got here. [**Jack:** No.] But I do think that's a thing that gets brought up in a meeting—

Jack: It's extremely— something that listeners you know said a couple of times was, oh do you think that combustors have gone off before, and that's almost exactly the same as what I said to Austin when we were prepping the show [**Austin:** Yeah.]. And your answer immediately Austin, was yes of course.

Austin: Yes of course they have.

Jack: The Principality is massive.

Austin: Yes. And it's been five thousand years, you know?

Jack: They set these things off— it's not like they're going off every Tuesday, but.

Austin: No. Most people have— I don't think they've gone off in the lifetime of anyone alive except for Divines, right? And the Chimeric Cadent and etc. But like, if they go off once every millennium, that's still a wild almost of death.

Jack: They go off way more than once a millennium.

Austin: I think so. I think they probably go off once every millennium, but I don't know that it's once every century. It doesn't have to be, it's so big, do you know? [chuckles] Like. [**Jack:** Yes.] And again, the thing that I tried to emphasize with the outro was like, it's the threat, it's not the weapon. [**Jack:** Yep, yeah.] Killing people is easy.

Jack: Well this is why Kesh could just roll up and destroy twenty three systems.

Austin: Exactly, yes.

Jack: You know, they— this is not a problem for them.

Austin: Right. Especially if they could choose the systems and you know, it's—

Jack: Standard spread.

Austin: Right, exactly.

Art: Idea for a piece of counter propaganda. Did you hear that when they were turning off the Stellar Combustors, that Millennium Break killed Gur Sevraq? [**Austin** and **Jack** chuckle] But fake Gur Sevraq is probably more valuable still.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. Mm-hm. I think that that's the case.

Jack: The other way to do it, another way Kesh could respond is they castigate the Stargrave. They say, we— they kill her, publically, and say you know, essentially, we don't know what happened here. But, that— that is a massive display of weakness. [**Austin:** She betrayed us. She— yeah, yeah.] She betrayed us, you know. If you have a populace that is already raring to go, and they hear Kesh say you know, she betrayed us? The first thing they think is, what they think is either, no she didn't, you're lying. Or, how could you let that happen.

Austin: Right, right, which is why it falls on Connadine's head internally, right? Is the how could you let that happen. [**Jack:** Yeah, because that is actually what people are thinking.] An idea I just realized is, all across the galaxy, a bunch of Stargraves are out of a job [chuckling].

Jack: Oh my god, they are!

Austin: And there's still the local commander, but they lose, you know, I bet at least one other one hits the button that night.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Like, let me just try it.

Jack: Yeah, sort of a mutually assured destruction kind of—

Austin: Let me just try it. Let me just see if I really lost it. Let me arm it.

Art: All the Grand Moffs after the [**Austin:** Yeah, exactly.] Death Star blows up, like ohh...

Austin: Yes.

Art: I don't know, what other Grand—?

Austin: There's definitely other Moffs, I don't know— I guess I don't know if there are other Grand Moffs. There must have been.

Jack: Moff is a title?

Austin: It's a Star Wars title, yeah, Grand Moff Tarkin is who I—

Jack: I always thought Moff was his first name.

Austin: No, no. Uh uh, no.

Art: And his title is just Grand?

Jack: Yes! [chuckles with Austin]

Austin: Like well!

Jack: It's worked before, it's a mononym.

Austin: Yeah, it's a mononym. Grand, Moff Tarkin. Uh huh. One word.

Art: Grand...

Austin: Yes, there are— Wilhuff is his real first name, Jack.

Jack: Huh. Grand Moff Wilhuff—

Art: Cause they were definitely the Germans in the first one, and then they just sort of drop it.

Austin: Uh huh. Anyway.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I think we have to flip the coin or not flip the coin and make a decision, and then move on.

Jack: Yeah.

Art: I think people like when we take two hours to figure out if we're going to flip a coin [chuckles]

Austin: I think so too, but I think it's boat time.

Jack: Okay, before we do this, it sounds like you're not sure about this altogether, flipping the coin, Art. And I would love to talk through that feeling.

Art: I'm not altogether sure. I'm pretty sure.

Jack: Okay.

Art: But like, it provides a weakness that we might not— a potential weakness we might not want, and— strategically. And narratively, it might provide— it's forcing you to make a change that you might not want to make.

Austin: A thing that I really wanna try to get us off of is, I think this is like part of where we were going into this, is that we were playing as the Bilateral Intercession on this side of the game. Which is not what we're here to do. And I know that it's fun to do that. But we are here to play the Conflict Turn— you might recall that all the way at the beginning of the game, we even carved up the Cause, so that we would each have Factions in the Cause that we were in charge of. And that just didn't stay as exciting for us because of the way Armour Astir is built. But I really would love for us to think about this as a moment where we can re-evaluate how the Conflict Turn is set up in terms of where we are investing authorship. And it not being as simple as, an oppositional play with the Blue Channel, and instead being an authorial play as the Factions and Divisions being in conflict. Which is where— we can still think strategically, but we have to think strategically as you know, cards that we have— as players that we have on the table on both sides of the conflict. And I think we have to try to push towards getting excited when there is a cool thing happening, whether that's Occam Olio getting a huge dub over Rose River, or that is—

Art: I was not excited about that.

[**Jack** chuckles]

Austin: I was, it was my character, so.

Art: That's not what I wanted. I wanted— [**Austin:** You wanted—] my character—

Austin: You wanted Rose River to win that one, you did want Veronique and Fealty to win that one.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Okay, well then, good. That's good.

Art: I ride with Fealty.

Austin: I— we gotta print that bumper sticker. I think it's very weird in the real world to have an "I ride with Fealty" bumper sticker? I don't think it communicates what we maybe want with it? So maybe we don't— maybe we don't make that merch.

Art: Neither does the better like, wink wink jokey version of like, "I ride with Anchor"? That also like, people are going to see that and be like, wait, what?

Austin: What does that mean? Who's anchor?

Art: You're really bad at boating?

Jack: I ride with the Divine Fealty is also not good. [Austin laughs] Put it this way. I, hmm. I would be sad about this outcome if it got rid of— hm. Here's the place to start. I'd be delighted to play Lucia Whitestar. [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] I think that the Princept's daughter showing up to lead a ground offensive [**Austin:** Yeah.] is fascinating. And I have never played Lucia before? In fact Lucia has barely appeared on screen, in fact.

Austin: One scene maybe.

Jack: You know you suddenly realize— when you realize that the person you've only ever heard bad things about, is from your awful friend?

Austin: Uh huh.

[**Art** laughs]

Jack: We've only ever heard about Lucia from Clem.

Austin: She showed up once, she showed up in a briefing with Clem. Episode 16 of PARTIZAN, and 17. The BITTER AIR episodes, she's in. But that's it.

Jack: Yeah. We know very little about her. I would be delighted to play Lucia, and the idea of framing Kesh as a ground offensive is very exciting.

Austin: Right, switching this to like a military type of Division— I forget what that type is called, but like, yeah.

Jack: I would be sad if Connadine fell out of the story completely, because I think that there is a lot of interesting stuff going on there [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] in the tension of old and new Kesh spycraft [**Austin:** Right.], a character who is an academic-turned-spy-turned-academic, weird art spies, The Prisoner, all that stuff, I would be sad if that fell out of the story completely. [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] But I don't think it would? In part because I would do work and I know we would do work to ensure it didn't fall out of the story. [**Austin:** Right.] What would happen is that the focus would necessarily change. And I think it is silly to not— shut off all the Stellar Combustors and expect that nothing changes on the planet.

Austin: Yes, yeah. I also think that there is a narrative beat moment here where it would make sense for Kesh to go from major to minor, and have Crusade take the major, or have— you know what I mean? And—

Art: Can we do that?

Austin: Yeah, sure. Why not?

Art: Cause the rules say we can't?

Austin: It's not actually clear what the rules say about when one leaves, you know?

Art: Okay.

Austin: I don't think. I'm not a hundred— and we don't have to either, we can talk about that and decide about what we wanna do. But I don't think that it's— I don't think that we're locked in with Nideo and Frontier being minor indefinitely because so much of part of the idea of like piling Disfavour onto the other ones would be to try to take you know, leadership or whatever, you know? The undercutting of your internal rival to seize power, you know? [**Art:** Mmm.] Feels like a potential way this breaks. Like not in this particular circumstance, cause we haven't really played that, right? But, easy to imagine that in— you know, in the Star Wars version of this, Grand Moff Tarkin is one of these, Darth Vader is the other one, right? And those two are trying to Disfavour the other one until the other becomes the major, which is a fun B-plot in that first Star Wars movie. Anyway. Yeah, I think that that's a fair concern Jack, and I don't think— I mean, materially and mechanically, it would— it's possible the Paint Shop gets aced here? Depending on how these rolls go. It's more likely that they— that it and the Gravtrain— or it's equally likely that it and the Gravtrain become temporarily vulnerable, and then one of them gets hit, and I would imagine, given the narrative set-up that we have, that would be the Gravtrain and not the Paint Shop. It's hard for me to imagine the Paint Shop getting destroyed— *and* even if that's the case, it is within our power to say, and Connadine gets to continue to be a free agent, or an actor in an interesting way here, you know? There's nothing preventing us from, if that happens, Connadine becoming an interesting third— outside, Wayward Faction, you know?

Art: Well if we roll a heads— roll a heads, he necessarily becomes a Wayward Faction, right?

Austin: Right, correct. Yes, exactly.

Jack: Right, yeah. Or, you know, on a tails going the money's better—

Austin: Right, I'm signing up with the [**Jack:** With the Pact.], with the Pact, yeah, uh huh. Which is a *wild* thing to think about.

Jack: Yes [chuckles] Spying for the— just for the fun of it, doesn't really matter who I'm spying for. You know?

Austin: It's easy to imagine— it would be easy for him to imagine, looking at it all and going, you know, the— it is the weird hierarchy of the Bilateral Intercession that prevented me from running this the way I wanted to. And all of this old stuff is— I know the way the wind is blowing, and it's blowing towards the Pact of Free States. You know?

Jack: That's where it is. That's the thing that Connadine is thinking. It's not spying for the fun of it. [**Austin:** Yeah.] It is— the scary thing about Connadine is that he is a Principality man.

Austin: Right, right. And the Principality can look like a lot of things.

Jack: Yep.

Austin: But it has to stand in some form, right? And if this keeps happening, it will not stand, right? So. Should we get someone on the call?

Jack: Let's do it.

Art: Let's do it. [groans]

Austin: Hi, Keith.

Keith: Hi!

Austin: We need you for a thing— I think Art, you were the one who said you wanted to do it this way, right?

Art: Yeah, I wanna see it.

Keith: You wanna see it.

Austin: Keith, do you have a webcam?

Keith: I do have a webcam.

Austin: Can you point your webcam— can you— show us the webcam feed [Keith: Okay.] and then point it at a desk, or your hand— we need you to flip a coin.

Keith: Yeah. Let's see.

Austin: You can't know why. I will say it's fundamentally good, I think.

Art: I'm having a great time.

Austin: I know what you're thinking, have you gotten to any of your turns yet? No. The answer is no. Alright, I am looking—

Jack: We had to do a Winnie the Pooh quiz.

Austin: We did have to do the Winnie the Pooh quiz, friendsatthetable.cash for the Winnie the Pooh quiz. I have this over here, I am looking at it.

Keith: That was a great platform for a coin to flip on right?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: That was a great coin-flip platform right here, yeah.

Art: Nice wood grain.

Keith: Thank you.

Austin: Yeah, I have it, I'm capturing the video in case there was ever any doubt about this.

Art: Can we see the coin before it flips? [**Austin:** Yeah, can we—] Can we like, like an NFL coin toss, I can see there's a heads and a tails—

Austin: That's a heads— what year is this coin, Keith?

Keith: This is your classic 2016 American quarter.

Austin: Yep, mm-hm.

Keith: John Brown— featuring John Brown's fort— shoutout to John Brown.

Austin: Wow! They put John Brown's fort on the back?

Keith: I don't know what— yeah, it is that John Brown. Yeah, Harper's Ferry, it says right there, look at that.

Austin: Damn!

Keith: Yeah. They put John Brown on a quarter in 2016.

Art: The official quarter of Friends at the Table.

Austin: Yeah, I mean as far as American history figures go, you know?

Jack: I don't know who John Brown was.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: John Brown was an abolitionist, a militant abolitionist.

Jack: Oh my god, hell yeah.

Austin: Who led a slave rebellion at Harper's Ferry.

[1:00:00]

Keith: Yeah, John Brown is America's greatest terrorist.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah! This is the guy. This is the guy we need to— we're like Phrygian, who's Phrygian? [chuckling] Is Phrygian Osama bin Laden, [Keith laughs] or the leader of North Korea? It's— he's¹ John Brown.

¹ Phrygian's pronouns are they/them.

Keith: I did— I did like remember vaguely like three weeks after we recorded those episodes, that I literally compared Brnine to Osama bin Laden in those.

Austin: You did do that, yes.

Keith: Which is very funny.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Art: And then there is of course the song, that I believe they sang in the Civil War, the John Brown's body lies a moldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on.

Austin: Right, there we go. Also about Phrygian.

Keith: [cross] Yeah. There is— oh there is the tails by the way, I should get them both in the same shot.

Jack: [cross] Holy shit, they executed this man. I mean of course they did. Of course they did.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. Anyway, shout outs to the homie.

Keith: They gave him a big speech though, to defend himself, and then they— of course they hung him. Hung him, I think?

Jack: Hanged.

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Art: Hanged.

Keith: Hanged, right— sure, I was more questioning [**Austin** and **Jack** chuckle] the method of execution than the grammar, but yes. It is hanged, yeah.

Austin: Alright. So we've seen both sides?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I just wanted to confirm for Jack and Art, we are looking at the right— we are all on the same thing, we see what on heads and on tails look like?

Jack: Yep.

Austin: I'm gonna post these for us internally, and Keith once you leave, I will read out loud what they are, [**Keith:** Okay.] but you— don't worry about it so much.

Keith: Alright, I'm going— this might take a couple takes just because I don't have a lot of room to work with?

Austin: No. Uh huh. It has to be one take.

Keith: Okay, okay.

Austin: You just have to— Keith, [**Keith:** Yeah.] I'm looking at your hand. You just gotta do it. I believe in you. You don't have to catch it, you just have to flip it and it has to land on the camera— inside of the viewport.

[sound of a coin flipping and landing on a platform]

Austin: [cross] That's John Harper's— that's John Harper's fort. That's tails.

Art: [cross] That's tails, isn't it?

Keith: It's John Harper's— that's it.

Art: John Brown's— uh huh.

Austin: Interesting. Okay!

Art: Fascinating. Alright, thank you so much Keith.

Austin: Keith, this has been wonderful.

Art: I really needed this.

Austin: And this feels right.

Keith: Okay, good! [nervous chuckling] I hope it's the one that feels right, I should leave before I'm forced to ask more questions. Bye, thank you!

Jack: [cross] Thanks Keith! Bye.

Austin: [cross] Bye! Thank you.

Art: Unluckily for Keith, this will be like the first fifteen minutes of the actual episode—

Austin: [indignant] No it will not! What?

[**Jack** laughs]

Art: We're gonna keep all of this?

Austin: We're at hour twoooo! This is gonna be—

Art: I know! But most of this has been nothing!

Austin: On tails, the target Division is dissolved and absorbed messily back into the rest of the Authority. A replacement Division of a different type moves in at the start of the next Conflict Turn, and until then, any Pillars the old one controlled are temporarily considered to have zero Grip. Meaning they can be felled with a Faction outcome or with a Sortie via Plan and Prepare.

Art: Luckily that means one less turn this game, so this episode should be nice and short.

Austin: Yeah. That is true. But we should get a little colour here, cause Jack, are we gonna commit to this? Is it Lucia coming in?

Jack: Yeah, in the next turn.

Austin: In the next turn, yeah.

Jack: Yeah, this has got to be— and this is also— the other way this sits is the Pact is coming.

Austin: I mean, yes.

Jack: And why wouldn't you fortify you know?

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah.

Jack: Why wouldn't you send in— I think, as she's written about in the time in PARTIZAN, she is an emerging strategic genius and eighth in line to the throne of Princept. She has now solidified— she has been fighting the war elsewhere, [**Austin:** Right.] and she has solidified herself as The General.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: Like this is Kesh's military arm, tactically brilliant, and yes, she is being sent in, in part to mop up what has happened, and to execute these reprisals. But also, because the Pact is coming, [**Austin:** Right.] and we need, you know.

Austin: Do you think this will be the military type of Division? [**Jack** takes a deep breath] I'll post this in our internal chat, also.

Jack: Yeah, let me see.

Austin: You know what, I'll post the whole thing and that way we can look at them all.

Jack: Look at the options.

Austin: Yeah, look at the options here. Let me just drop that in. Military says, deploying for— Focus: deploying forces to attack or defend with violence. Every turn, hold three to spend during the next Sortie one-for-one to introduce a new threat or force someone to act in desperation.

Jack: Jesus.

Austin: And then when a military Division wins a Conflict scene, choose one. Either, a Faction with three Grip is seized, the Authority gains one Grip on a Faction or Pillar, or a

vulnerable or exposed asset or actor is fortified or hidden. It could be other ones here too. What are— Art, you have—

Art: And I do want to suggest that for this [**Austin:** Yeah.], for this turn at least, we should put Crusade into the driver's seat.

Austin: Into the major.

Art: Into the big chair.

Austin: Into the big chair.

Art: See how that feels.

Austin: Uh huh.

Art: Cause it's possible that it goes back to Kesh.

Austin: Now this is my question, does it get— does it get to happen? Do we get to immediately promote here, or does it have to happen in the re—

Art: I don't see why someone being gone would prevent— we should read the rules.

Austin: Well because you just didn't get the— yeah, my thinking here is, the strength reflects actual investment.

Art: But it says it's being absorbed. [**Austin:** Mmmm, mm-hm, mm-hm.] Like, couldn't they become a major faction by virtue of just having—

Austin: Having absorbed those forces.

Art: Okay, all this is mine now. [**Austin:** Right, right.] Yeah, like until someone says different, all of Kesh's assets are, [cross] belong to Nideo— Crusade, yeah.

Austin: [cross] To Crusade, yeah yeah. Gentian is calling the shots on those places.

Art: It could even be as simple as Gentian is who cleans house.

Austin: Right. Yeah I would love to know what this looks like.

Art: Well, I've been really holding back having Gentian do stuff on screen, so we really have to decide if this is the moment for that [chuckling].

Austin: Mm-hm. There's actually an answer for this in the book. If a Division is destroyed or dissolved, which is this, during the Conflict Turn, it is replaced at the end of the next one with the Division of a different type. We got that part. Until the new Division is created, any Pillars the old one controlled are temporarily considered to have zero Grip, got it, meaning they can be felled with a Faction outcome or a Sortie via Plan or Prepare— Plan and Prepare. The new Division inherits any Pillars the old one controlled if they are still standing. Additionally, if it was previously the major Division, it becomes a minor, and one of the others is promoted to major instead as the remaining groups within the Authority take or steal the lost Division's resources and favour. Once you've shifted the position, you should show a quick vignette of what this new Division's formation looks like.

Art: Okay, well then we should have— so it does look like one, this has to happen, two, it isn't temporary, it's permanent, so we should have a real discussion if it should be Crusade or March—

Austin: It should be Crusade. March is playing the hand— cards close to the chest. I don't think March— March is not going to be like, and now I am the Bilateral Intercession. That's a good way to put a target on your head.

Jack: March saw what happened to the—

Art: Sure, did you screengrab the— what the Grip was, so when we come— when the new [cross] thing comes we can put it back? It was zero and one, right? Or two and three?

Austin: [cross] Great question. It was— it was two— it was, right. The Diadem needs one.

Art: [cross] One, and there's none on the Paint Shop.

Austin: [cross] And there's none on the Paint Shop. Correct, correct.

Art: Right, just making sure so when we— if—

Jack: Beause Connadine kept his fucking nose clean [**Austin:** Uh huh.] until some lady goes and threatens to blow up the solar system!

Austin: Yes. I'm putting that paste there.

Art: I think Gentian— we should save Gentian for the player characters.

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: What's that mean? Say more.

Art: I think— I don't think that Gentian should personally do this.

Austin: Attend to this, right.

Art: Attend to this— or, the Divine should attend to it, Crusade would— the vignette should involve Crusade the robot doing it. But not—

Austin: I mean what is the "it" at this point? Because this is not a military action against Kesh or something, right? This is—

Art: No, I guess it isn't, so you couldn't do this with a Divine. You would have to do this with a person, or persons.

Austin: You could do it with a Divine, but it would be like the sort of, the way that like Grace was talked about in COUNTER/Weight right? With like this deep, emotional, personal you know sense of shame or something like that, but I don't know. And I would really love to leave it to y'all because this is, this is you, this is the two of you. Again, March quietly on a conference call, you know? Maybe watching this happen on a screen [**Jack** chuckles] but is not— you know, yeah. Other stuff going on right now in the March Institute.

Art: An ousting, and it's a— it's dissolving. What is happening to the people who were in charge of the Bilateral Intelligence Service?

Jack: [exhales] Um. They are— what's the— there's a specific language here. Absorbed messily back into the rest of the Authority.

Austin: Re-instituted. Re-assimilated. But they're not though right, because the Paint Shop still exists, and the Gravtrain still exists, as Pillars, and will come back under Kesh control.

Art: Right.

Jack: So does Connadine resign?

Austin: He doesn't have to.

Art: And are you using resign literally, or in quotes.

Jack: Uhhh, [Austin chuckles] I think I might be using it in quotes.

Austin: Oh, right. Because the Paint Shop stays around.

Jack: Because the Paint Shop stays around. [Austin: Right.] But it's— god, what if Connadine makes the argument, the Princept has lost faith in our project on this planet, but I understand its potential, still. I am handing you— hmm. We can't get anything done if he thinks he's talking to me. The difference is though that he would actually be talking to you. This is not a man behind the man behind the man behind the throne situation.

Austin: Oh so again— wait wait wait— before we get too deep into like how does the handover to Gentian work, the handover to Gentian is over on this turn. Whitestar is going to be the one who Connadine reports to in a week.

Art: Right, this is a stewardship more than a [Austin: Right. Like—]

Jack: Cynosure doesn't— Cynosure thinks— it's about— hmm.

Art: Think of it less about the material, and more about the people, cause the people are all being replaced. What happens to those people, do they become Crusade people? Do they you know, do they go somewhere else? Do they get slaughtered?

Austin: Do they reapply to— is it a thing where it's like everyone has been put on a sort of probationary unemployment until they can reapply to work under Lucia if— and see if they get their old jobs back. Otherwise, go work for Crusade, go do freelance work for the Frontier Syndicate, and the you know, Lock and Key, or whatever— not Lock and Key, Lock and Cross. Or—

Jack: No, they wouldn't let the spies do freelance work. That's way too dangerous at that point, right? [**Austin:** Mmm. Sure. Sure sure sure.] It's— god what if the Paint Shop shuts down?

Austin: What about the Diadem Gravtrain operators? Right, what about the rest of the people who are just making up the BIS across the planet who are going to fall in under Lucia?

Jack: It's— yes, it's the—

Austin: Or what about the people who worked for the Elcessor also, you know? The Elcessor's retinue and personal guard, her forces throughout Tintagel and all of that stuff.

Jack: A bunch— okay, let's do this in order. A bunch of the Elcessor's forces are imprisoned. Military, they're court martialed. They could have done something— I don't think that they could have done, they were being made to practice dying. [**Austin:** Right right right, yeah.] They could've done something and they didn't, and there are going to be punitive measures there. Diadem Gravtrain operators feel like— it feels like the changing of the guard. [**Austin:** Right.] They are told that new management is coming in, and that they need to reapply for different stations. They are also told to— those of them who have adjacency to Diadem military, are told to start fortifying central points. They are being told to essentially start making defensive or aggressive maneuvers in lieu of arriving. The Paint Shop is immediately put under guard with nobody allowed to

enter or leave. All internal spy communications are— take place on extremely limited, highly-monitored channels, because the thought of— the fear that any old loyal Curtain people might flee to say, the Pact, is very —

Austin: Right, or Millennium Break.

Jack: Or Millennium Break.

Austin: Or one of the other members of Hexagon— this is probably part of why the Grip is where it's at, right?

Jack: And this works in its favour as well because the Paint Shop is unbelievably secure at this point because the— the forces of the Authority are like, there is so much sort of potential energy in this place, [**Austin:** Right.] and we cannot let anybody move until we get the new measures in place [**Austin:** Right.] from Whitestar.

Austin: Do you think that the thinking is sort of like, we can make them just go back to being a really efficient intelligence service.

Jack: [cross] Yes, that is absolutely what it is.

Austin: [cross] Instead of being weird poets. Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Yep, yeah. We can take the artists out of the spycraft, you know? And, *and*, that's what got them— this is not the case— that's what got them into this mess in the first place! They were too busy fucking around with like weird art projects or whatever, when in fact it is the direct opposite, of woman with hand on bomb threatens to blow it up.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: But yes, it is a weakened— if anything, this pushes the sort of new reform factions of “get rid of the Curtain” into an even more active mode.

Austin: Right. And so then the final question ends up being, what happens— how does Connadine start the stewardship or initiate the stewardship with Crusade, Gentian, and

Nideo who become boosted up to major strength five. Is that a letter? Is that an in-person handover? Is that a—

Jack: It's in-person. **[Austin:** Yeah.] It's— but you don't— Gentian shouldn't be on screen, you're right, we should save that for the player.

Austin: I mean is it— Gentian's on screen but doesn't talk? Is it the shot from behind Gentian and Crusade, and it's just Connadine delivering a, you know.

Art: Is it like, you know, in that bitchin' song in the Lion King **[Jack laughs]**... the evil, the I'm evil song **[Jack:** Ohh!] in the Lion King?

Austin: How does that go?

Art: Um.

Jack: [singing] I'm so evil~ **[Art whistling]** I'm the Lion King.

Austin: Be Prepared.

Jack and Art: Yeah.

Art: At the end, there's just like a sequence of like, sort of crudely drawn I think, early digital animation hyenas just like walking by in formation **[Austin:** Mmm.] and like saluting Scar, and it's sort of just like, you know, a shot of a bunch of like ragtag Bilats of various divisions walking in being like, checked over, being issued new uniforms, and they're just marching by Gentian doing some sort of weird hyena salute— I might be making that part up.

Austin: No, you're not. You kind of are, but they are goose-stepping is the thing. And it's a little, it's a *little*— this whole middle section is a little much, I'm not listening, because I can't do that without ruining the screenshare.

Jack: [chuckling] Oh, the backup!

Austin: Right. But, yeah, the screenshare, the backup, correct. But, yeah does look like they are like, they're walking really high-legs, you know, in a way that's, that I could read as a sort of terrible fascist salute, I don't know.

Art: Yeah, and then like in the rest of the movie, there's still only the three hyenas, I don't know what happens to these like other fifty hyenas, they're not part of the story.

Austin: It's more than fifty. It's rows and rows of the— where'd they go? I guess the kingdom is big.

Art: Maybe they all die off-screen in the middle part.

Austin: In the interim, sure, yeah. They had some worries, they made some mistakes, yeah.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Sure, okay. Yes, I like that, and then I think it is you know, in a room, it's— Connadine writes a letter, you know, and it's an exceptionally pleasant, sincere letter recognizing the failures of people under his command, authorizing you know control— I think Connadine specifically asks for the Paint Shop to be shut— or cosigns like you know, the work that we do here is important enough that [**Austin:** Yeah.] and I understand that you're going to do this, of course I don't consider myself an exception to that, and then I think ends on this sort of note of like you know, I think he's saying the thing without saying the thing, right? Which is, this isn't my fault, and I think you know that. Of you know, we spent— I don't think he says it in as many words— but he's saying you know, we spent time together you know, you and March and me and our various staff you know, we are the kinds of people who have hung out together in the past, we think we understand the wavelength that we are on. You know, and I'm sorry that it had to go this way, and I look forward to being of service to you, you know, in the future as it goes. Just extremely sort of like generous but straightforward resignation letter. Signed with a seal, handed to the man outside his door.

Austin: Right. Has a drink or something. Listens to some music.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: God, what's—

Jack: Has some music on.

Art: The Lion King soundtrack mostly.

[**Jack** chuckles]

Austin: I mean is the Adagio— how does he feel about it in this moment? This dream, you know?

Jack: He, hmm. A plan on a scale like this, [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] it's not done, but it is forestalled. [**Austin:** Mmm.] And I think that he feels the mingled frustration of I— we really could have had something here. And, it would be foolish to think that a plan on this scale could be executed as quickly as this, or you know, would be— you know, we are dealing with hundreds of years, you know.

Austin: Right.

Jack: I think he's also just a— he is a planner. And I think you know, he goes, this is deeply frustrating. I need to— if I act now, I will act rashly, I need to take some time, I am unable to leave this building, you know. What will be will be, you've been in weirder scrapes, you have been trained for this.

Austin: Right. Right. Yeah. Love it, great. You know, sometimes you get your huge you know, free will-destroying plan temporarily postponed a little bit. You know, you close a manila envelope, you put it in your filing cabinet, you pull out a new one, you know? It doesn't go away, you can pick it back up later. Who could say?

Jack: Yeah. There are some people who say “the wheel turns”, and they think that what that means is that you know, you will magically end up on top or whatever.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Jack: Oh absolutely not. Consequences result from actions, you need to take time,
[**Austin:** Yeah.] those actions need to marinate. You need to shift your priorities at times.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: You know, there's plenty of time.

Austin: Yeah. Plenty.

[["Nothing is Stationary"](#) by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

[music ends]

[episode ends]