

Live at the Table Audio 48: August 2021 - The Road to PALISADE: HOUNDS Pt. 1

Transcriber: Parker @grimportents

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker, and joining me today: Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi there! You can find me on Twitter @notquitereal and buy any of the music on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com. Especially today, when we're doing it live, because today is Bandcamp Friday! Where all money on the platform goes to the artists, minus a little bit for Paypal, and that bit sucks, but otherwise it's a great day to support your favorite musicians.

AUSTIN: Yeah what can you do. Also joining us, Art Martinez-Tebbel.

ART: Hey! You can find me on Twitter @atebbel and I think all of the still in-stock Friends at the Table merchandise is still on sale at Fangamer. Go check that out. Um, and buy some, [crosstalk] buy...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Bu--yeah buy some, just buy some. [cross] I appreciate it.

ART: [cross] Yeah, you know, if you like it. Don't do me any favors. [AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: Today we are playing HOUNDS, an RPG by Tyler, uh, I never know how to pronounce Tyler's last name, I'm gonna do my best not to butcher it, I believe that it's, Crumrine [pronounced CREW-mrine], Crumrine [pronounced CRUM-rine]? Something like that. C-R-U-M-R-I-N-E. Possible Worlds games, which, I actually just have, I'm not gonna show it 'cause I don't wanna turn on a camera but I have a physical copy of it in my hands.

ART: Ooh!

[Book sounds]

AUSTIN: Right now, you can hear it.

JACK: Oh sweet!

AUSTIN: You can hear it! [Book thumping] That's paper and cardstock, babey. I just got my collection of all of season one of Tyler's games. They rule, they come in these little flip booklets, these little like, it's almost like a notepad, you know with the ring, a ring binding on it, it's so good. Uh, apparently Tyler says I did a good job. CRUM-rine. CRUM-rine. Alright, yeah, perfect. Love it. Great name.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Today, is the start of the Road to Palisade, our follow-up season to Partizan. You could be listening to this live, on February 4th, 2022. Which is, I wanna say, 364 days since Sangfielle started? Sangfielle...

JACK: [cross] You are kidding me!

ART: [cross] That sounds fake. Nope.

AUSTIN: No it's not, sorry, it's 364 days since Partizan ended. Partizan 48, Post Mortem, February 5th, 2021. So, y'know?

ART: Wow.

AUSTIN: We did it! We got there in a year. We got there in a year, that's not too bad. Uh...

JACK: That's about aver--that is like, that's right on the board for us, as they go.

AUSTIN: [cross] It's--that's about where it's...

ART: [cross] I think it's a little long, right?

AUSTIN: Not--Twilight Mirage just throws it all... you know what I mean? It's all a nightmare now, it doesn't, the numbers don't make sense anymore because like, Hieron one is 24 episodes and Twilight Mirage I believe is still happening somewhere? [chuckling] I believe that.

ART: Uh-huh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Our others have continued playing that game.

ART: I think I did record a Twilight Mirage this week, I think. [JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, how's, [cross] how's Grand going? Doin' alright?

JACK: [cross] Is it good?

ART: Great, um, yeah, that's uh, um, uh...

AUSTIN: Don't, no spoilers! Alright.

ART: Yeah no spoilers. He's... he's better than ever.

AUSTIN: Better than ever.

ART: Or worse than ever. Whatever you thought of Grand, [cross] more.

JACK: [cross] He maybe died 34,000 years ago, it's hard to tell.

AUSTIN: It's hard to know, it's hard to know.

AUSTIN: The Road to Palisade is going to be a lot like the Road to Partizan in some ways and unlike it in other ways. I think a key difference is Partizan is a spot where I think you can jump in and start listening, from the jump. I think Palisade is a sequel to Partizan. For that reason, I will suggest you go listen to Partizan if you haven't listened to this yet. The Road to Partizan is filled with kind of loose setting spoilers, quote unquote, of stuff that comes before, but I think you can listen to that by itself because it's just core, core, y'know, here's what a divine is, here are some big names. But, at the same time, I do want to encourage people who are maybe here watching live to stick around because I think this is going to be a fairly self-contained game with a couple of caveats there around stakes and big reveals and stuff like that. We'll see how it goes I guess, I have no idea how the game's gonna go.

For people who weren't here for the Road to Partizan but maybe listened to Partizan and are eager to just jump in and continue right now, these Road games tend to be ways for us to fill in the gaps about the setting and what's going on in the world, beyond the kind of small kind of camera purview of the main season. Or at least that's how we're thinking about this set. I think the last time we really wanted to draw a line over the 5,000 years that traveled between Twilight Mirage and Partizan, 'cause a lot can happen in 5,000 years it turns out. Empires rise, and mostly keep rising, continuing to expand and conquer the galaxy. We're gonna do another time jump but nowhere near as big, *nowhere* near as big, as the time jump from Twilight Mirage to Partizan. We're talking about a number of years, not a number of millennia, not even a number of decades. We're talking about, y'know, we don't have that number yet but it's under ten! It's probably five or under! We're not talking about a big jump this time. And yet, things continue to move in the galaxy, things continue to change in the Divine Principality. [cross] This is--

ART: It is important though that if you had a favorite character and they return--

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

ART: --in Palisade they have a new, they have a totally new hairstyle.

AUSTIN: New hairstyle, new look, [JACK laughs] yeahyeahyeahyeahyeah. New outfit, 100%.

JACK: Yeah. Very important.

AUSTIN: Yeah. There is a, I think it's probably worth saying if you're listening to this in the main feed this was recorded, like I said, in February, which means we did it without the knowledge of the rest of the Road to Palisade. We don't know where--I have an end goal in mind, but I don't

know what we're gonna, what's gonna happen between now and then that's gonna throw me for a fuckin' loop. I have an idea for what that campaign looks like but it could all get thrown away because someone does something wild in one of these games; the same way that Partizan itself changed so dramatically through the introductions of things like the Prophet in our Microscope game, or through actions that players took in the Armour Astir game--like, there's a million ways in which stuff just goes wild. So who knows where it goes.

And also I'll say to that end, if there's differences to audio quality because we're doing these as Lives, if there's differences in gameflow because we're not playing set characters over the course of a campaign, be patient with us as we kind of, you know, play it by ear. And also be patient with us because it's a lot of pressure to come back to a setting people really love. It can be really hard to say like, "alright, yeah, let's just pick this up and see where it goes." And live games tend to be faster and looser than our main campaign games, partly because they're live and you're not playing your set character and you don't have that big campaign view, partially because dozens of people are saying stuff all at once in a chat that you can see, um [laughs] and that can change the vibe. And partly because as a live game we tend to just play a little bit faster and looser, and so I think that you'll find that that could be the case here today.

We are playing, like I said, HOUNDS, and maybe it's time to just introduce HOUNDS, unless Jack or Art do y'all have things you want to ask or say about the Road? [pause] Sounds like a no, to me.

JACK: [cross] I don't think so, I think you hit all the beats, yeah.

ART: [cross] No, I don't think so.

JACK: It's exciting, it's a bit scary.

AUSTIN: It's a bit scary.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: **HOUNDS is a dice-stacking roleplaying game, about the bond between a mech pilot and their robot companion. HOUNDS stands for Human-Operated Utility-Neurolink Device, and authorities want to erase your mech's memories, deleting your friendship. Escape is unlikely, but you are determined to resist.** These are all the words from Tyler in HOUNDS.

Each turn, you'll overcome obstacles and accrue Stress as a result. Whenever Stress is gained, dice are also added to a tower in the center of your playspace. When that tower of stacked dice falls, your HOUND is damaged and loses a memory in the process. When six memories have been lost, the game ends. Sessions always focus on a single HOUND and pilot, but can be played with any number of participants. This guidebook also includes modifications for playing without a tower if stacking dice is ever an issue.

To play HOUNDS, you'll need:

- one or more players**
- a minimum of 3 six-sided dice**

-20 or so six-sided dice for tower play (optional)

-writing materials (paper and writing utensils)

-a tray or box lid to avoid dice scatter (optional). And then there are other rules again for things like solo play, duet play, online play, towerless play, etc.

We are, I guess I'll switch over my view at this point...

ART: Oh yeah, I missed the technical...

AUSTIN: You did.

ART: ...Rehearsal.

JACK: The technical rehearsal.

AUSTIN: We are gonna be, we are gonna be fuckin' stackin' some dice using Tabletop Playground. A seeming, uhh, alternative to Tabletop Simulator, a game I don't want to give money to because of recent transphobic and homophobic shit that's gone on with them.

JACK: Yup!

AUSTIN: Which you should read about over at Dicebreaker, [cross] if you just--

JACK: [cross] Fuck those guys.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh, big time. So you can go look that up for your own time. But, we are gonna make a little Tabletop Playground thing, and we'll get to what the dice-stacking is and why it's important that we have this set up as we, as we go. But I guess we can kinda just jump into it. I guess I'll also say, you can already see this on the screen now, we are not playing with HOUNDS and pilots, no offense to HOUNDS and pilots; I think there's lots of great very flavorful theming around the idea that they're hounds in this book. People should really pick this up, it's great! But we already have flavorful giant robots that have cool names and tight relationships with their pilots, and we call those divines.

Another thing to say is the game as written is not really written to be about you having a character. As it says up top, you can have as many players as you want, or you can have multiple players, not just two, one for the pilot and one for the mech, you rotate around, everyone has ideas, etc. We are lightly hacking that. One of you is gonna play a divine pilot, one of you is going to play the divine itself. It sounds to me like Jack, you're ready to play an elect. But I don't know if that's 100% true.

JACK: I think I am. My willingness to play an elect is just because I don't think I've played an elect before. If you had strong feelings about playing an elect, Art, [cross] I would be happy to play the divine.

ART: [cross] No I am so excited to play an unknowable robot.

AUSTIN: I love that.

JACK: Hell y--the thing is, I feel like I've played fuckin' tons of unknowable robots--

[AUSTIN laughs]

ART: Yeah.

JACK: --over the course of this show and never the human that sits in or near them.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: Take a break from the unknowable robots just for a second.

AUSTIN: Just for a [cross], for a beat.

JACK: [cross] Okay, I appreciate it Art.

AUSTIN: Be an unknowable person instead, human, instead, our divines are kind of people so I guess they're already people, but. Anyway.

HOUNDS takes place in a futuristic setting, but there's plenty of room for variation and nuance. Your game could exist in a setting indistinguishable from our present moment with the exception of HOUND technology existing. Or, your game might take place in a far-future where humankind lives among the stars. Your story might not feature humans at all!

If a technologically-advanced setting doesn't interest you, you can also get creative in applying the HOUND concept to other genres. In a fantasy setting, they could be magically-powered automatons. In a horror setting, symbiotic cosmic horrors. Or, if you're creative in adapting the games rules, a "pilot" could be someone strongly bonded with an animal companion.

JACK: Excellent.

AUSTIN: [laughs] It is.

ART: I don't want to tell anyone how to do it, or like what they should do, or give away ideas that we might want to use in the future. But if you're gonna do it in a fantasy setting it should be a dragon.

AUSTIN: [cross] Ooooooh, that's real good.

JACK: [cross] Ooh shit.

ART: [cross] Like a, like a dragon that's like just really entwined in the memory of the person [cross] who's friends with the dragon.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, spells can do anything. Magic is wild.

ART: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

ART: And, and make your dragon scarier, dragons are scary.

AUSTIN: Dragons are scary, I agree.

Whatever your setting, these things must be true:

-Neither your pilot nor your HOUND wants to be separated from the other.

-An authority figure has decided the HOUND must be wiped/removed/destroyed. In our case this is to say, Art, you are a heretical divine. The Principality, presumably both sides of it at this point--I guess we'll talk a little bit about what's going on in the Divine Principality these days--not a fan of you. Or maybe that's not the case, maybe it's only your direct superiors and that can open up certain doors to you. **An authority figure has decided the HOUND must be wiped/removed/destroyed.**

-The pair is determined to resist, and the authorities are determined to pursue.

HOUND Creation

Characters in HOUNDS don't have stats or ability scores, so you have the freedom to create whatever kind of HOUND you'd like. All players share control of a single mech over the course of the game, though again we're cutting that up a little bit, um, **so when thinking about "your" character, remember that they're everybody's.** We should keep a sort of collaborative sense here even though Art, I really think I want you to be an unknowable divine and Jack, I really want you to be an unknowable pilot, [laughs] or potentially a very well-known pilot. **As such, everyone should be given equal opportunity to contribute during brainstorming.** That's the part I wanna emphasize.

ART: Do we have like a--do we, or through a wiki, have access to every divine we've ever said?

AUSTIN: We have--there are a bunch of different fan wikis, and searchatthetable.com is a really good resource for just searching all of the great transcripts that the transcript team has compiled over the years.

ART: No, that's not gonna work for "list of divines" though [cross] because I would search for "divine" and get a thousand results.

AUSTIN: [cross] No it's not, yeah, get a bunch of them, yeah. Yeah.

ART: Not--no slight to the transcript team who I, I love and respect but this search is not what it is.

AUSTIN: No, no.

JACK: [cross] Also the--

AUSTIN: [cross] No, no. You're gonna wanna pull up the COUNTER/Weight, the Twilight Mlrage, and the Partizan wikis is what I think you're gonna need, Art.

JACK: We could always have a new divine as well.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: I'm trying to have a new divine [cross] so I need to...

JACK: [cross] Oh you want to--I see.

AUSTIN: [cross] Art is trying to find and make sure not to duplicate here. Maybe let's start, let's not start with names and start with what the game wants us to start with which is, **When creating a HOUND, you'll primarily focus on two things: its form and its function. One will likely influence the other, so feel free to start with whichever you prefer. It also may be helpful to record any choices you make on a piece of paper** like the one in the Roll20 I've set up for us.

A HOUND's form is its appearance. Because [JACK chuckles] of the convenient acronym, many HOUNDS are canine in branding. But regardless, it's up to us to make it the way we want. **In particular make sure to establish the HOUND's size and where in the mech's body it's piloted from.**

Its function is the task it was created for. Functions usually fall under labor, combat, or sport. The important thing is that whatever a HOUND's function is, the task is complex enough that a pilot is required. Otherwise, the independent AI would be suitable for the task. We also know why we have divines and pilots in our own weird, sociological reasons that we've explored for many many seasons at this point. And then finally we have, is there a nickname between the pilot and the divine, and then--the elect and the divine--and then how self aware is the divine. In our case, I think we can think about that as, how speaky is it; because we've had divines in this show that are, that feel like forces of nature that have no personality, and then we have really, *really* personality-first, personality-forward divines. So, worth thinking about that. Art do you have strong [JACK: S-] feelings on, on this stuff? Go ahead, sorry Jack.

JACK: It's just so funny to me that you said "well, let's try not to think about maybe what divine we are. Now to figure out the divine's form and function! Let's begin there!"

AUSTIN: [cross] See it's easier for me--

JACK: [cross] As a just--that's divines, babey.

AUSTIN: [laughs] It is, it is. It's a lot of working backwards sometimes, you know? I didn't start with Asepsis, for instance, as the name. I started on, "what's the most [laughs] mechanically--

JACK: [laughing] Horrid!

AUSTIN: --fascist robot I can think of?"

JACK: The problem is we are, as we make more and more of this show, the divines get harder and harder to come up with. As we--you look at the first divines and they were, they were nice and easy.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: And they had really straightforward like, ideas, [cross] like...

JACK: [cross] Grace.

ART and AUSTIN: Righteousness.

AUSTIN: Yeah, great, love it.

ART: And I'm trying--here's where I'm starting with, because I know we're not gonna make a dog robot right now, I don't think. But I'm trying to think of like things that are cool about dogs.

AUSTIN: Oh I love it. [pause] Ears.

ART: Right, uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Loyalty.

JACK: Speed.

ART: Loyalty, yeah, loyalty is where I am [cross] and I know--

AUSTIN: [cross] We've had a Loyalty.

ART: --we can't do Loyalty but what if we did like, what if it was the divine Fealty.

AUSTIN: [excited] Ooooh. Let's fuckin go.

[clapping]

JACK: Oh-ho. Could you speak to--

AUSTIN: Big swings!

JACK: --that extinction--that distinction in your mind?

ART: Loyalty is about like--you can be loyal to anything. But like, fealty I feel is like, a loyalty to something that is, that is *doing* something for you; it's like a loyalty to some--to a protective force.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: And I mean, in a lot of ways that often comes through like nationalism or family structures or all sorts of things, but like... You could have fealty to a more mundane thing I think, and also to a more abstract thing, you have--you could have fealty to your convictions, I think. In the same way you could have fealty to, you know, your feudal lord.

AUSTIN: And you think that's distinct from loyalty.

ART: [cross] It's been a long time.

AUSTIN: [cross] Because for me that ends up being--no no no, I meant the *word* loyalty.

ART: Oh, yes, I do.

AUSTIN: Okay. I like it, quite a bit. I definitely think that there is a... It really emphasizes the relational aspect of it, right, because like... you can be--there is a promise of action, in a way, that's really interesting in fealty and you can be called upon if you have fealty to someone, right, in a way that's not the same thing. Also, because the Principality would absolutely build a divine named Fealty. Right?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Big fan, big fan. What else we got, function? I guess I'll give a little color for something that could help inform function. I mean, I think it being called Fealty already opens certain doors. Maybe different ones than what I'm about to say, but, I have a pretty good idea of why you're being chased--the thing that you discovered, and potentially chose not to give the Curtain. I guess as a reminder about the state of the world, here is our "what do you mean by two Principalities?"

Here is a worldbuilding thing: when we last left off at Partizan, and again, gonna be talking about spoilers for Partizan, going forward, it's gonna happen, I'm giving you time to hit pause because you didn't take me seriously when I said it was gonna happen before. [pause] At the end of Partizan, the state of the galaxy was that: Millennium Break had separated out their goal, they had been very clear, they wanna burn it all down. Meanwhile, the Curtain, a group of manipulators and kind of secret power behind the throne of the Princept, had been outed publicly and had decided to lean into that and use its power very publicly and declare

themselves the true protector of the galaxy, the true protector of the Principality. On the other side of things, the Pact of Necessary Venture, which also at one point had been a fairly secretive organization, stepped into the light--they're the ones who kind of put the light *on* the Curtain--and became a separate more reformist but still fundamentally, um, [chuckle] I mean not fundamentally, but still *seemingly* revolutionary group, that still has a great deal of populist support among its supporters. And those groups more or less fall into the falling camps: Stel Apostolos and Stel Columnar are Pact, pretty much through and through. Again, there are exceptions, there are always exceptions, there are always communities and individuals and worlds that go the other direction, but by and large, that's where the Pact is in control. The Curtain, the more traditionalist, the more regressive, the more tied to the heart and soul and original identity of the Divine Principality, are tied to Stels Kesh and Nideo. Stel Orion is at war with itself. [laughs] On one side...

JACK: Having a good time over there?

AUSTIN: Yes, absolutely. And I think it's--you cut it a billion different ways. There are people who want to fundamentally, totally leave the Principality, or destroy the Principality a la Millennium Break. There are people who want to rejoin with either the Pact or with the Curtain. And there are people who want to see Orion as its own total unit, maybe, as a rival to all three of those things. All this was all set up, none of this is new, particularly new information, it's all previous stuff.

What might be new, what is new, is--if we were playing Microscope right now I think the left-most card would say something like, you know, "the signing of the..." of some sort of treaty, the equivalent of signing the Geneva Convention. There is an agreement reached between the Curtain and the Pact that basically says, "hey, even though we're at war, and we're allowing all of our vassals to go to war with each other, we are still *the* Principality." And the rhetorical maneuver that they do is, they say that, whoever wins this war, basically, will be the Princept and by all rights the Apostolosian Apokine. Up until this point, there was no one challenging that Dahlia was the Apokine, because Dahlia was *Dahlia*, the one who was adopted by Apostolos--Apostolos's previous Apokine--as a way of gaining popular support for them and for their side of the war, Dahlia has kind of put that "up" as stake in this fight.

But hey, "we're still just the Principality! There's still only one Principality!" It's just whoever wins gets to *be* the Principality. And so that has been kinda in the air. And then I guess tied to that is, the Curtain is getting *whooped*. [laughs] The Curtain has a lot of things that make them very powerful in a stable society but they are not the sort of "Future" and "Motion" of Columnar and, uh... Why am I blanking I just said...

JACK: Apostolos.

AUSTIN: Apostolos, right. They don't have that war machine that these other cultures do, and they don't have the R&D labs that Columnar does. And so I think one of the ways to think about your character is, you are one of the people who has been sent out to find stuff that makes them, that could give them an edge in the war. We can talk later about what it is you found, but

the thing I want to mark it with is that whatever it was you decided, it ain't--no. No, they can't have this. But I don't know, you tell me if that helps identify a function for you. [pause] Ashlin in the chat says "to be fair, Motion isn't Motion anymore either right?" No, but Apostolos is still "Motion," Apostolos the... If you didn't read or listen to the Drawing Maps for the last season, each of the Stels has a kind of a catchall, a sort of phrase, a watch-word, that identifies what moves them and what they're grounded by. Kesh is "Past," Nideo is "Present," Columnar is "Future," Orion is "Space," and Apostolos is "Motion." So Apostolos is still Motion, there's still this sort of futurist, pseudo-futurist, always in motion, always moving forward, always moving into action. That is still who they are as a kind of cultural identity. So yeah, is this an exploratory divine? Is this a scientific divine? Is this an escort? Were you escorting something on an exploratory mission? Was this... [cross] What do you think you did?

ART: [cross] Escort is a good starting point, I think. I think in a lot of ways like, this is almost like a public relations divine.

AUSTIN: Mmm, okay.

JACK: Oh wow.

ART: But like I'm starting--in the ways that I struggle to articulate what makes a giant robot a public relations tool. And on the other hand I know exactly how, you know?

AUSTIN: We've had lots of divines that have been *about* their rhetorical power, right?

ART: Right. And you know in the ways that you see... Fawning media coverage about giant American bombs.

JACK: Yeah. Or like fighter pilots and their jets and things.

ART: Right yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah absolutely. So like, maybe we lean in really hard on the--also this is Stel Nideo which as a re--or I'm guessing it's--it's Nideo or it's Kesh. And both of them have very traditional looking divines and mechs. They're very humanoid in focus, you know, they have things that diverge from that as always, but the Kesh models often look like people in armor in some way? That they're very human-first in that sense. And if I remember my Nidean aesthetics well enough, lots of like sick looking, almost angelic things, "this is what peak performance looks like," and then also stick a bunch of fuckin statues on the side of it, you know?

ART: Yeah. And I... I'm sorry, to every artist who likes to draw things from the show, because...

JACK: Oh god, [laughing] here we go.

ART: I think it's really shiny.

JACK: Oooh.

ART: That it's like, it's glittering chrome, it looks like a new car, it looks like a showroom.

AUSTIN: Love it.

ART: And in the statues on the side of it thing, there's this real effort to make it, whatever you like is on there somewhere.

AUSTIN: Somewhere, you could identify with yourself.

ART: Right like, if you're into really aggressive weaponry, that's somewhere. If you want something that's smooth and, like a car, that's somewhere, and if you're looking for... Whatever you want, if you want depictions of the great leaders of the past, that's there too.

AUSTIN: [cross] Can we--I have a--

ART: [cross] Like an over-crammed diner menu of a robot.

AUSTIN: Just like covered in statues bowing upwards, or reaching upwards, or looking upwards.

JACK: Oh yeah, towards the central...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Face or image or--does it have a face, Art?

ART: Yeah, of course. It has like a central face, I think it's a humanoid body and so it has a face and it's like, uh... It's like the face on a statue in a park.

AUSTIN: People are noting it's like Independence, I wanna be clear: it *literally* has statues on it. It's not--

ART: Yeah, Independence--

AUSTIN: --you look at it and it hits you in your heart and soul. [clapping every few words for emphasis] This is what Nideo lost when they got fuckin' kicked out of the Mirage. Like, they don't get that anymore, they don't get to have that, that's Twilight Mirage shit, that's not Principality shit. They can only ever get to like a fake version of it.

ART: And Independence is the cave on Dagobah, it only has what you take with you, and this is, this *has* everything. If you don't want a cheesesteak, the cheesesteak's still *there*.

[AUSTIN laughs.]

ART: But not a cheesesteak, but you know.

JACK: Yeah it's the difference between going to a restaurant and being able to say to the chef "oh I would like to eat salmon please" and she's like "yes here it is," and going to the Cheesecake Factory [cross] where like every type of food you've ever--

AUSTIN: [cross] This is the Cheesecake Factory! Yeah!

JACK: --you could ever, [AUSTIN laughs] the Cheesecake Factory menu is a beautiful piece of work.

AUSTIN: Yes. 100%. I love it.

ART: It's, it's... What's the Lord of the Rings quote, the "as beautiful and terrible as the dawn?" [all laugh] That's how I feel about the Cheesecake Factory.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I agree with this. That sounds [cross] like form and function.

ART: [cross] Someone in the chat asked if it looks spiky. I think it looks spiky from like a medium distance, and far enough away it looks smooth again.

AUSTIN: Right. I--

JACK: This is also--oh, go on Austin.

AUSTIN: I was gonna say thinking about the way that the *fleur-de-lis* gets used in architecture or iron-wrought stuff, like those curves and stuff like that I can imagine being there--or again, statues of just tons of people near each other is another good touchstone. Anyway go ahead Jack.

JACK: Well, we know what it looks like when Hidetaka Miyazaki and his team make mechs, that's Armored Core. But this is like what if him and his team made mechs while they were making Bloodborne or Dark Souls, right?

AUSTIN: Right, this is that great Armored Souls concept art that a fan made forever ago, that is like--those original posts aren't on Twitter anymore and it breaks my heart but you can find reposts of them around, so. Alright, what else do we have here for your side, Art? I have to, I have a million things open right now, FYI, so it can be hard for me to manage everything I'm seeing.

JACK: Nickname!

AUSTIN: Nickname and level of self-awareness.

[pause]

ART: [mumbling] Nickname and pilot address...

AUSTIN: We can come back to nickname if you want to, because let's hear about, we can hear about Jack's pilot, Jack's excerpt [ART: Yeah.]--or not excerpt, whoof, not an excerpt, an elect. *Much* different.

ART: I think it's--I'm gonna start with medium level of self-awareness and give myself time to adjust that as we go.

AUSTIN: Yeah. If you feel like it you can start filling in these forms also. Jack, do you have an elect name chosen?

JACK: I do! I think this elect is going to be Véronique.

AUSTIN: [curious] Véronique!

JACK: Yeah. V-E with an accent above it, an acute accent-R-O-N-I-Q-U-E. Véronique.

AUSTIN: What is a véronique?

JACK: Véronique is a derivation of Veronica, which is a kind of plant, named after Saint Veronica, and is just classic plant symbolism for loyalty and fidelity. I also like it because it is also--and this is us doing mirrors rather than deliberate ref--like ooh there's a secret lore link. Véronique and Veronica is also where we get Berenice from.

AUSTIN: Ohh, sure.

JACK: And I like there being some sort of a line there, in this bizarre futuristic divine of Fealty.

AUSTIN: Do you know what else the véronique is?

JACK: What is it?

AUSTIN: It is a 1950's-1960's successor to the V2 rocket.

JACK: [sarcastically] Oh! Lovelyyyy.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Oh don't worry, it was for the French.

ART: [cross] I love when that happens.

AUSTIN: [cross] The French, it was for the French, it was Western European, obviously. Who worked on it? Oh, uh...

JACK: Was it the Nazis?

AUSTIN: [cross] Hm, uh-oh!

JACK: [cross] Was it the former Nazi rocket scientists?

AUSTIN: [cross] Hm. Uh-oh!

JACK: Uh-oh!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Whoops!

AUSTIN: Love it. Love to live in the world where Nazi scientists all got hired by Western powers.

JACK: But um, in the vein of these things, Véronique has an actual name that she was born with!

AUSTIN: Of course.

JACK: And her name is Erritt Garretty. First name Erritt, E-R-R-I-T-T. Second name Garretty, G-A-R-R-E-T-T-Y.

AUSTIN: Is that a name that you still use in your own head? Because *no* one would call you that publicly.

JACK: No, no one would, not at all. I think this is something that Véronique thinks of herself as having? And I think is definitely--I think Véronique is a younger elect, so it has been... I don't know, there's an outward-facing name and an inward-facing name probably.

AUSTIN: I just realized, also, we need pronouns for Véronique, but also we do need pronouns for Fealty also.

JACK: Yes, we do. Let me put this in here; Véronique's pronouns are she/they. [quietly, to herself] Elect name... Véronique. [louder] Can I put a--let's see will Roll20 let me do an accent. Yes it will!

ART: [quietly annoyed] Hey.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Roll20's text stuff has gotten bad, Art, if it gets too bad just let me know and I'll try to... Fuck with it.

ART: I think I did great.

AUSTIN: Okay, you did it.

[ART and JACK laugh.]

JACK: [typing] Uh, pronouns: she/they.

AUSTIN: And a look. What's Véronique's vibe?

JACK: I think Véronique is in her early-to-mid-twenties. And sometimes facecasting is trickier than others, but I think this might just be Hunter Schafer showing up in Friends at the Table.

AUSTIN: Sure, okay, yeah. That works.

JACK: Blonde.. Tall... Skinny.

AUSTIN: A Clementine Kesh-like, is what you'd say.

JACK: I mean I suppose but sort of like--

ART: [laughing] You're being so mean to Hunter Schafer right now!

JACK: Yeah, [laughs] I think Clem is more like your Anya Taylor-Joy, maybe.

AUSTIN: Oh no, you have a facecast for Clem.

JACK: Oh yeah and that's Cara Delevigne who's like a literal European noblewoman's daughter, right?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Is that true? Of course. Yeah sure.

JACK: Yeah I think Cara Delevigne has like a fucking family tree, like a *fa*--you know, everyone has a family tree--

AUSTIN: [laughs] No I know what you mean, I know what you mean.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Ugh. Love it. Okay. I guess the last thing here is, positives and negatives. Did I only write positives down? Did I write negatives too? Let's see. I did, I wrote positives and negatives. I'll read from the book about these.

Based on what you know about your pilot so far, also brainstorm any number of positive and negative emotional qualities they possess--at least one for each. Perhaps they're dedicated but petty, or compassionate but shy. You're welcome to interpret "positive" and "negative" as you'd like, but whatever emotional qualities your pilot has, your Divine has developed them too. Keep these [cross] emotional qualities in mind for both characters as you tell your story.

JACK: [cross] It's so good.

AUSTIN: So another good reason for collaboration here.

JACK: Yeah. I'm gonna say in my past that I was a... Uh, I was the best, like, I was like a school track and field prodigy. In like, the long jump, or the... As a sports person, but not like a professional athlete. Just like extremely good at doing high jump, or something, [cross] at whatever school I went to.

ART: [cross] Like javelin? One of those?

JACK: Javelin, yeah I think there's probably--they did, they competed in several events but they were always like I'm better at this one, or whatever.

AUSTIN: Well it's gotta be javelin now because Fealty can totally have a sick javelin.

JACK: Yeah. Yeahyeahyeah.

AUSTIN: Or *one* of them has to be javelin. It could be a whole, [cross] you know, realm of athletics.

ART: [cross] Yeah, what's... There's all those like weird combo track and field events, right, like, decathlon, but isn't there also like a [JACK: Bartering...] less than ten? It's like, decathlon, isn't there like septathlon or something?

AUSTIN: Yeah, probably.

JACK: [laughing] The septathlon? [cross] With seven events?

ART: [cross] Oct--tath--lon? [laughing] There's like a shorter one, a less than ten.

AUSTIN: Well there's at *least* a biathlon, right?

ART: [cross] Well that's skiing and shooting, that's not track and field.

AUSTIN: [cross] There's an oct--there's an octathlon, there is a heptathlon...

ART: Is there a pentathlon? [cross] Modern pentathlon, or something?

AUSTIN: [cross] There is. There's an athletics pentathlon, yes.

ART: Oh [cross] the chat just got there.

JACK: [cross] What's the difference between modern pentathlon and the other pentathlon?

ART: Probably some weird stuff we don't do--I mean, here we go. [AUSTIN laughs quietly.]

AUSTIN: Uhh... I think that they might not always be the exact same.

ART: [incredulous] What?

AUSTIN: Because there's also a throws pentathlon.

JACK: [cross] That's all about throwing.

AUSTIN: [cross] Which is just throws, that's--

JACK: [cross] Oh, it is?

AUSTIN: [cross]--hammer, shot put, discus, javelin. [cross] And the weight throw.

ART: [cross] Wow I never would have guessed the five events of a modern pentathlon. Never in a hundred years [cross] would I have guessed these.

JACK: [cross] Wait can I try?

ART: Yeah.

JACK: Running.

AUSTIN: [cross] Okay well that's not--

ART: [cross] Not by itself there isn't.

AUSTIN: [cross] [quietly surprised] Reeally?

JACK: [cross] Okay. Shooting.

ART: It's a combination of pistol shooting and cross country running, now referred to as "the laser-run" [cross] according to Wikipedia. [JACK laughing]

AUSTIN: Shut up, no it isn't.

JACK: Then it's swimming...

ART: Uh-huh.

JACK: Swimming, cross country running, pistol shooting--are those two separate?

ART: No it seems to be--that seems--it's--the--

JACK: Okay fine. Swimming...

ART: Those are two of the five, swimming, shooting. [JACK: Running and shooting.] You're at three of five you're two more.

JACK: Bicycling.

ART: No.

JACK: Throwing something, throwing a javelin.

ART: No.

JACK: Fuck, how many other sports are there Austin?

AUSTIN: Jumping high?

ART: N--...

AUSTIN: Jumping long.

ART: No.

JACK: [laughing] Quit [???

ART: "Jumping" is in the word. Is in the title.

AUSTIN: Jumping is in the *title*.

JACK: Horse--horse jumping!

ART: Yeah, equestrian show jumping, yes.

AUSTIN: [dawning comprehension] Equestrian show jumping. [pause] What do we got? Can we go over--what do we got?

JACK: Swimming.

ART: You got free-style swimming, you have equestrian show jumping, and you have pistol shooting and cross country running known together as the laser-run.

JACK: Bicycling.

ART and AUSTIN: No.

AUSTIN: Not there. [laughing] I know you want it to be. I know. [JACK laughs]

[pause]

JACK: Hand on my--gun to my head I could not tell you another single sport [cross] played by athletes.

AUSTIN: [cross] Okay is it--is it another Olympics sport.

ART: Yes this is its separate, this is its own Olympic sport as well.

AUSTIN: Is it a--

JACK: Climbing.

AUSTIN: --is that an Olympic sport, Jack?

JACK: Yeah! Yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Golf.

ART: I would call this a kind of like a posh sport.

JACK: [cross] Golf.

AUSTIN: [cross] Polo.

JACK: Polo, polo!

ART: No, polo is a great guess but no.

AUSTIN: [cross] Fencing.

JACK: [cross] It's not golf?

ART: [cross] You can't play polo on your own, what'd you say Austin?

AUSTIN: Fencing?

ART: Fencing is correct.

AUSTIN: Fencing is correct.

JACK: [triumphant] Oh! [cross] What a weird collection of sports.

AUSTIN: [cross] Shooting, swimming, horse jumping... Run and shoot, and fence?

ART: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Love it. Ah, the Véronique pentathlon, love it.

ART: And they do this in one day, apparently.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yes. Yeah, sure, that's the challenge.

JACK: [cross] Nooo. Poor them. It doesn't seem pleasant.

AUSTIN: No, I wouldn't do it.

JACK: But yeah, Véronique was like beloved as a university track and field star, I've written down "beloved jock." I think that they straddled the line between being showboating and also extremely technically impressive. And just sort of like won the hearts of a lot of people. And then I think much like when Elvis was sent to war, there was like a real public delight and preciousness when it was announced that Garretty was going to become Véronique, specifically the elect of Fealty, because I think it bound all these weird feelings about contemporary sports into a divine.

AUSTIN: And specifically a divine at the moment of a contemporary war. Have you been, how long have you been in Fealty? [cross] Or have you been...

JACK: [cross] When did the war start? The war started...

AUSTIN: X years ago--the end of Partizan.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: One to five years ago.

JACK: Let's say I went into--let's make it really unpleasant. Let's say I went into the divine when I was between 16 and 17. So I have been with the divine for...

AUSTIN: A few years.

JACK: Eight years?

AUSTIN: Oh so you went in before the war then?

[pause]

JACK: [cross] Oh, yeah, that's--

AUSTIN: [cross] You see what I'm saying? That's what I'm wondering is, did you go in--actually, pause.

JACK: [cross] Let's put me in just before the war.

AUSTIN: [cross] There's two wars. Because we skipped something else, which is of course there is the war against the Branched up near Counterweight, where all of the Stels have started losing ground. As the Branched have come under the leadership of some sort of new leader, some sort of new general, not *under* the leadership--a general has started getting wins. And seems to be, seems to have changed a position; which is that, historically the Branched were happy to hold onto the Golden Branch system; this new leader is interested in pushing back and taking territory away from the Principality. Way more aggressive in terms of--not in terms of fighting style or something, in terms of literally being able--being willing to launch attacks on Principality soil. So that's happening up there, so that war was already happening. You stepping into Fealty around that period would have meant something still in a similar way, versus stepping into it after this Pact-Curtain stuff happened, but I like stepping into it right before, that's really fun.

JACK: So yeah, I think I'm about 24, 25, and I've been in the divine then for about--my maths is so terrible--seven, eight years?

AUSTIN: I mean, we don't have a direct date of where we are. So you can't do this math. Right? Or you're saying age from 16 plus 8? Is what you're asking?

JACK: [cross] Yeah, that's the math I was trying to do.

AUSTIN: That is 24, that is 24 years old.

JACK: Perfect! Ship it. [AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes. Positives and negatives. Emotional. Emotional positives and negatives, not “emotional” as a positive or a negative. We are all emotional.

[pause]

JACK: It’s tough here, right, because in the book Tyler has written “impulsive” as a negative, and impulsive is such a good trait to have in a tabletop game.

AUSTIN: Yeah, roll with, I love it, go for it.

JACK: And I think the “impulsive” works well with this idea of them as a sort of like... [pause] Oh, or do I put like “team player” as one of these? [JACK and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: Those could both be things.

[pause]

JACK: Negatives: impulsive. Positives: technically, what’s it called when you have a degree of technical commitment to the thing that you’re doing.

AUSTIN: Of *technical* commitment?

JACK: Technical in the sense that I’m thinking of them first as a track star, or a track and field star, and then as a... Soldier, for the Principality. And I’m thinking about someone who fails to do something and says, “alright, show me the footage.”

AUSTIN: Ahhh. Yeah. A classic of athletics, right there.

JACK: And then is able to put that--I think that’s a really compelling combination in an athlete, it’s so much fun to watch athletes who are like, big noisy stupid loudmouths on the field, and then you can see the gears turning in their head as they’re like, “alright where did I go wrong *there*,” or--[laughs]--I’m thinking of LeBron, was it LeBron? Talking to that guy and that guy having absolutely no fucking idea what was going on.

AUSTIN: I wanna say--was that a Draymond Green bit?... I forget who it was but someone asked somebody during a press conference that you’re talking about like, basically like “what went wrong with blah blah blah,” and the answer was like way more complicated than the sports reporter expected.

JACK: Oh no I’m thinking of a recent gif.

AUSTIN: [cross] Ohhhhhh.

ART: [cross] Yeah, I know, it's LeBron talking to some guy on the Lakers and LeBron's like--

AUSTIN: Oh yes, yes yes yes.

ART: --very clearly explaining basketball to this other professional basketball player but [cross] in a way way over...

JACK: [cross] And a very good player!

AUSTIN: Yeah it was, it was that. I was thinking of a thing in a press conference after a game in which someone broke down elements of the game that just don't get talked about even at the "I'm always watching ESPN level" because they're just--sports are very complicated and I think the kind of like meathead--as someone who like, and Art you played football in high school right?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Learning your assignments, and learning how defenses work and how offense--all that stuff is very complicated and there's a lot of theory that goes into it and I think that it's very easy to forget that that stuff, that there's a whole mind game element to it too. So yeah I think that like--a lot of people are suggesting "disciplined" in the chat, which is fun for double reasons, and then also "dedicated," "committed," I thought "committed" first.

JACK: I think "committed" is fun alongside Fealty.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: There's lots of ways we can read "committed."

[pause]

AUSTIN: I love it. Alright.

JACK: Oh, what's the divine's pronouns, Art?

ART: I don't--it's hard to think of... There are no pronouns big enough for a divine, I feel. [light laugh]

AUSTIN: [cross] [chuckles] Already getting into the mind of Fealty, here.

ART: [cross] And so the temptation--the temptation to be like "any" but also that's--that allows--I think it might just be they/them just as a convenience tool.

AUSTIN: Do you think it's a thing that's different--that different elects bring and Fealty accepts the ones given to it as part of this act of fealty to their new elect? [cross] That if, before...

ART: [cross] I sort of feel if given under the right circumstances.

AUSTIN: [cross] Because something about fealty--

JACK: [cross] Are you an old divine?

AUSTIN: That's a good question.

ART: Old-ish. Perhaps this is like a post-Loyalty. Filling in the gaps.

AUSTIN: Is this a post-Twilight Mirage divine? [pause] Is this--does Fealty remember an era before the Principality, or does Fealty only go back as far as the Principality.

ART: I think it's an older divine than that.

AUSTIN: Interesting, okay.

JACK: Wow.

ART: A nickname idea--and this is just from searching track and field terms--"Anchor."

JACK: Say more.

ART: In track and field, an Anchor is the last person who runs a relay. They're supposed to be your fastest/best runner.

JACK: Oh that's fun.

ART: And also the... Of course you can understand why you would feel the need to be tethered in this sort of situation. It is also like calling... Calling her "The Anchor" for Fealty. It's a double... it's a double. A two-fer, if you would.

AUSTIN: Love it. Okay.

ART: Anchor as stability and also anchor as running.

AUSTIN: Anchor as running, yeah. I think that that's what we got.

Taking flight. Play begins with a scene brainstormed by all players. As a group, decide what the last moment was before our duo agreed to break the law and which one suggested resisting--the HOUND or their pilot. Your scene could include a straw that

broke the camel's back or simply be a conversation after receiving paperwork. In either case, though, it should be a mutual decision.

Also decide what the pair's initial resistance looks like. Similarly, this could be a high-octane breakout or a quiet fading into the shadows. Just make sure you have a clear intent in mind and that you know where the two wind up at the end of the scene.

Once you've arrived at ideas you're all happy with, cast a player as the HOUND, another as their pilot, and any others as extras. I'm extras. Narrate and roleplay the actual conversations and actions inspired by your brainstorming. There's no need to act out every little detail, but you should at least give a snapshot of the moment your HOUND and pilot reached an accord.

At the end of the scene, place a single die in the center of your playspace--this will be the base of your tower.

ART: Uh-oh.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

Next, list the numbers 1 through 6 on a piece of paper. These numbers will track Stress and its impact on your HOUND as you continue to avoid the authorities, which we'll get to.

So what do we think it is? Again, I like the idea of--it's almost an honor guard escort style thing here that you've kind of suggested, Art. Do you think you were with someone who was like... Do you think you found the thing you found by happenstance then, and not because you were out looking for it? I'll give you a little bit more which is like, whatever it is--maybe it's a piece of data--but I think it might be better if it's... Maybe you saw something from going place--from point A to point B, you saw something in the distance and you were like "oh that's that thing they were looking for." A glimpse of, I don't know, a glimpse of shape or color or like... Oh you're old old, right?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So you recognized a thing, maybe. You're like "oh shit, I've been there."

ART: Yeah. [cross] But we're not saying it, right?

AUSTIN: [cross] And because you're a divine, you have--um, I mean, I can get specific but I think... I think we should get specific *during* this game, about what this thing is.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: I don't--we were talking about this before we started and I think that there is a degree of interest in like, given what it is... Part of it is, I don't know how much is going to come out during this game versus future games.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: But also part of it is: it's a big thing, in some ways, and so it's like, does Fealty, how often do we talk directly about it? Right, Jack, you were saying this before we started.

JACK: Mhm. Yup.

AUSTIN: But maybe it is just color, maybe it is just a blotch of color, as you're like, attached to some noble or other, on their way to something in Nideo space. [pause] Does that make sense?

ART: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We're using d6's for the tower, chat, we are not using, I promise we are not using any d100's. [chuckles] What were you asking, Art?

ART: Is it Fealty that's interested, or is it [cross] Véronique?

AUSTIN: [cross] I don't know. I think Fealty would recognize the color, right? It's this dash of... purple, against the--I almost said "the night sky" but you're in space.

ART: Well, so it's always the night sky, it still works.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. There's no atmosphere up here. And so, I think you see it first, but it's up to y'all to tell me what--why you wouldn't want to go tell your Princept, presumably, that this thing is here. As a divine and an elect you have direct access to a Princept in a way that most people don't.

ART: Mhm.

[long pause]

JACK: Okay, I think that Véronique is uncomfortable in the pilot's seat. They've been sitting still for a long time looking out through the sort of twin tinted glass windows that form the eyes of Fealty on the front. And they get up and they stretch in their seat and they sit back down and they say,

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

[pause]

ART: Wait I thought *you* were Anchor. [cross] Did I get the name wrong?

JACK: [cross] Oh I thought it was--my nickname *for*...

ART: Ohhhhh. [AUSTIN laughing]

JACK: It's their nickname *for*... [laughs]

ART: [cross] I thought it was my...

AUSTIN: [cross] You call each other Anchor!

JACK: This is cute.

AUSTIN: You call each other Anchor, it's fine.

ART: It's fun.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! It can be one name for two people when you're the only two people who use it. [JACK: Mhm.] You're always referring to the other, you know?

JACK: Yeah. That's really cute, I like that. And that's very Fealty.

ART: [coming in as a mumble] ...underneath pilot address it says it right there.

AUSTIN: It does.

ART: Um, look, I'm doing great. I'm sorry, give me the line again 'cause I, uh, [laughing] give me the--feed me this line again.

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

ART (as Fealty): [in a soft voice] Of course, Anchor.

JACK (as Véronique): We should tell the Princept.

ART (as Fealty): Oh I don't--I don't know about that.

JACK (as Véronique): It's okay, if it's something you're not happy to do, I'm happy to make the call. You can focus on keeping an eye on the honor guard.

ART (as Fealty): The Princept might not like the information.

JACK (as Véronique): [light laugh] I don't think the Princept would like it if we spent all our time worrying about whether or not they would like the information we were giving them.

AUSTIN: We do know, this Princept--[ART: ???]--really quick, we do know that this Princept uses he/him pronouns. [cross] This is uh, this is, uh...

JACK: [cross] Okay cool. This is the fucking guy.

AUSTIN: [cross] This is the Keir Starmer motherfucker. What the fuck's his name?

JACK: [cross] [laughing] The Peaceful Princept.

AUSTIN: Yeahyeahyeahyeahyeah, what the fuck's his name? Why am I blanking on his name?
[pause] Cynosure! Cynosure.

JACK: Cynosure Kesh.

AUSTIN: Cynosure Whitestar-Kesh, yes.

ART (as Fealty): The comms are yours, Anchor.

JACK (as Véronique): Okay. Um. [pause] I just think it's im--you know. We don't need to tell the f--we don't need to tell the--

JACK: Peering out at the secondary ships,

JACK (as Véronique): We don't need to tell *them* right now, but I think if we--it feels... I think it feels significant.

[pause]

ART: [quietly] Um... sorry I'm drifting out of the...

ART (as Fealty): It's just... it's been a long time. It's a deep memory.

JACK (as Véronique): Could you... Could you open the call please?

ART: [quietly] Um. I really think that's just a button, probably, I dunno. [quiet laughter] It's weird just to go BOOP BOOP BOOP BOOP. [all three laugh]

AUSTIN: I think around you, Fealty, you know, you're in this honor guard of--let's just call it the Princept's ship, right. You're flying along this pathway that is kind of on the edge of Nidean space, probably away from the galactic core and away from the Golden Branch. You know, the Princept got on this last trip as close as he has ever been to the front line, which is to say still very far away and very safe, especially in contrast to Dahlia who has fought on the front line directly. And so, for him it was a big deal, he gave a big speech, "I hope all of the Principality's children come home" and blah blah, you know, *you* know. "As the great Aram Nideo once said," you know, that shit. And is now heading back down through Nideo, the Nidean arm, towards some other press op basically.

I think we've seen a lot of tightening between Kesh and Nideo; the two of them had been, not rivals, but there was a degree to which when you have two different powers that represent the old founding power of the Principality there's a degree of like school rivalry. Add to that the fact that Sovereign Immunity had previously brought shame to Nideo by, through the Farmer's Rebellion, I think there has been a lot of, in the last few years, post-Partizan, a lot of mending that relationship and the realization that if you don't mend it, the Pact is just gonna fuckin' steamroll us. So, off to meet some other functionary, or maybe land on a major industrial hub, or something like that.

But the thing I want to emphasize is, even this little bullshit honor guard is just... so much power around you. Not protective power. The other Hollows and Hallows around you are very clearly the sort of war-making Hallows. These aren't--they're not here to protect anybody because that's not what the Divine Principality makes. The Divine Principality makes weapons of war and expansion. And I think that's very clear to you, and you think about your time from before the Principality as one where that wasn't the case. Beings like you were not only made for war-like purposes.

[pause]

JACK (as Véronique): Come on then, let's get it over with. I don't like this guy.

ART (as Fealty): Comms are open.

JACK: Tapping her foot on the desk.

AUSTIN: So you make the call?

JACK: Yeah, uh,

JACK (as Véronique): Come in Alpha?

AUSTIN (as Alpha): This is Alpha. Is everything alright over there?

JACK (as Véronique): This is elect Véronique. Could I get a line to the Princept please?

AUSTIN: Takes a beat then realizes, you don't push back on an elect, even a young one.

AUSTIN (as Alpha): Yeah, right away.

AUSTIN: Ba-DOOP!

AUSTIN (as Cynosure): Ah, Véronique.

JACK (as Véronique): Hello sir.

AUSTIN (as Cynosure): So good of you to check in, the trip is going wonderfully. I cannot wait to reach the next destination, I hear they have the most lovely tarts.

JACK (as Véronique): I'm sure they do sir. Look... Fealty and I have been patrolling and...

[long pause]

AUSTIN (as Cynosure): Yes? Véronique, out with it.

[long pause]

JACK (as Véronique): We think... [pause] [sigh] Following a scan of the surrounding sectors, I'm happy to confirm that there are no threats in the vicinity, and I wanted to convey the good news to you personally that your fleet is going to be able to move forward.

AUSTIN (as Cynosure): Ah, okay, thank you Véronique. In the future, please just let me know if there is anything *troubling* you. I will, as a show of faith in your competence, assume that my pathway in our territory is safe and secure through the hard work of you and the rest of our incredible crew.

JACK (as Véronique): Yes sir. Signing off now. [AUSTIN (as Cynosure): Oh!] Over and out.

AUSTIN (as Cynosure): Coffee and a tart when we arrive though, yes?

JACK (as Véronique): Yes sir.

JACK: [laughing] Just ends the call. [AUSTIN laughs]

ART (as Fealty): What happened, Anchor?

[long pause]

JACK (as Véronique): [takes a deep breath] ...If... What happens when we disagree on something? On the right course of action.

[pause]

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.

[long pause]

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

[pause]

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

[long pause]

JACK (as Véronique): I don't think we can tell them about it. [cross] I wouldn't say this to--

ART (as Fealty): [cross] I think that's wise.

JACK (as Véronique): I wouldn't say this to anybody else. I don't think... I don't think that they should know 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.

ART (as Fealty): Some things are... Not for governments.

[pause]

JACK (as Véronique): So we just keep going? It's a regular patrol? We arrive home? Write it off? "What did you see?" Nothing! "What did you hear?" Nothing!

AUSTIN: Fealty. Someone is probing you. Your thoughts [ART: Hm.] aren't only yours anymore. The call Véronique made set something in motion. A doubt in the Prince's mind; something else, another divine or a piece of technology, maybe one of these new pieces of technology, the sort that has been made with the Kalmeria particle--this new kind of dynamic almost magical scientific discovery which has made divines like you all the more touchable--is prying its way into your recent memory, trying to find whatever it is you saw before you can lock it up.

ART (as Fealty): They're trying to steal my thoughts.

JACK (as Véronique): [urgently] Who?

ART (as Fealty): Our experiences.

JACK (as Véronique): Since when?

ART (as Fealty): Recently. Short term.

JACK (as Véronique): *Shit*. Okay, stop the engines.

ART (as Fealty): Okay.

ART: And power instantly just goes down, right, it's like, we go to those Star Trek: Next Generation lights?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Oh yeah all these little, flickering... And the afterburners of the Princept's fleet start pulling up, pulling ahead of us.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, yeah.

ART: [cross] Yeah, the way that space travel works where we're still going forward of course, that's where the momentum is.

JACK: But much slower [cross] than them.

ART: [cross] But much slower, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And then of course we get the like. Two or three Hallows stop. Or, begin to slow down from in front of the fleet, and begin to wrap back around towards you.

JACK (as Véronique): *Shit. Shit!* I shouldn't have told you! We shouldn't have--I knew so you knew. We shouldn't have spoken about it.

ART (as Fealty): You don't need to be scared of this.

JACK (as Véronique): I don't need to be scared of three Hallows, I need to be--can you hold them off, some aspect of it... How far away it is, where it is, the fastest route to it.

ART (as Fealty): I will start just... [JACK (as Véronique): Put it, put it in--] I'll start doing a lot of calculations, try to push it out of recent memory.

JACK (as Véronique): Dump it to something physical.

JACK: Fumbles in her pockets, and--this is still Partizan-era tech right, [cross] everything has kind of one--

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh yeah we're still--right. I guess to think about it going forward, Palisade will be played in Armour Astir, which is a setting that is kind of fantasy mechs. It is our Armoured Souls-style game, but--and as such we are going to get this increase in a certain sort of technological stuff, but it's not the Twilight Mirage. It's not hand gestures and stuff just appears. Everything is still clunky and physical and the classic rule of Partizan still applies, which is like, a screen can only be--if it's a touchscreen it can only show one thing. That is still the case here. So yes, big clunky Rogue One-style giant harddrives.

JACK: Yeah, just takes it off and plugs it into a port and says,

JACK (as Véronique): Dump the location to this drive and delete it from your recent live banks please.

ART (as Fealty): It will take a moment.

JACK (as Véronique): Take as much time as you need.

AUSTIN: I also think you can't delete it permanently, since the point of this game is, they want the divine's memory.

ART: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah, but it's now on a drive, *in* the divine.

AUSTIN: Totally, but it's--

JACK: [cross] Oh, right, yes I see, right you mean--yes you're right.

AUSTIN: [cross] You see what I'm saying?

JACK: I just don't know why they wouldn't network it straight out of Fealty.

AUSTIN: Totally, but I think the answer is because you have to--the end of this scene is that you take flight.

JACK: Yup.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: I think that there's something to be said for the sheer--it must take a while to derive anything--

AUSTIN: [cross] Right, yeah yeah yeah.

JACK: [cross] Oh yeah you're right.

ART: --from Fealty because of the unbelievable amount of information a divine is...

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Compared to a Hallow? Yes.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And with distance they probably have, they don't have the same sort of access of getting into your mind that they did when you were up with the whole fleet, right. It's worth saying here too that we don't need to work out every little detail per the rules, we need to--I feel like we've reached an accord--

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: --so maybe we can talk in a broader sense here. What does escaping these three look like?

ART: Well that really depends, doesn't it.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: Because Fealty could simply... Could simply deal with them.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: Right? It's just like... It would be nearly trivial for Fealty to just destroy three hollows, right?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: But is...like...

JACK: Not this close to the fleet. Don't do that! [JACK and ART chuckle] Just go.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: Si in the chat says, "I missed the illicit "it" that's causing them to flee." It's... Fealty has seen a source of power, something that Fealty knows the Principality wants. Véronique went to

call it in and when she did, she had second thoughts, sensing Fealty's own. But by doing that, Véronique has put a target on Fealty and their own back. And now there are questions, wait a second wait a second wait a second why'd you really call in? Why'd you really call in? So.

JACK: Is it just instant flight? It it just running. I mean, in space, you know. [all laugh] Is it fleeing?

AUSTIN: Just the other direction? Just anywhere?

JACK: Just like jet burners start...

ART: Yeah, that like blue flame--I know it's not flame 'cause it's space, but you know.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ART: Laser propulsion, whatever it is. [laughing] It's gotta look cool, dammit!

AUSTIN: Evan L in the chat says "lazer running."

ART: Yeah, laser running, like we established, the modern pentathlon event.

AUSTIN: Exactly. Alright, well, I guess with this--"start with an empty table." Art, you gotta make some quick calls. We gotta select a table. [ART: Oh, uh-] Take a look at the stream I'm streaming you. And pick me a table out from this set.

ART: Uh... How do I... I need this to be bigger, hold on. Okay, okay! Ooh! What's going on in the top, the top right? [cross] What are we calling that? "Garden?"

AUSTIN: [cross] That's "garden." You wanna do "garden?"

ART: Uh... The dead center, is that like a card table? [cross] Or is that like a marble or glass?

AUSTIN: [cross] That's "glass top."

ART: Mm, I want it to be marble so I will go "garden," yes.

AUSTIN: Gonna go "garden," alright.

ART: Wait, isn't this one also glass? [cross] Uh, center left?

AUSTIN: [cross] This is definitely glass, that's "glass round," yeah yeah yeah.

ART: [cross] "Glass round." And we have like--

AUSTIN: [cross] I've used this one, I don't like the sound of this one, is what I'll say.

ART: Alright, "garden" is great.

AUSTIN: "Garden," alright. Well, now we've got a second thing: "Select environment."

[JACK laughs]

ART: Oh, goodness! Um... [JACK and AUSTIN laugh] Wow...

AUSTIN: We've got "field," grand--"*gran* canyon," "bridge," "milkyway," "station," "elevator," "square," "beach," "forest," "winter forest," "shrine," "victorian (3D)," "western saloon (3D)," "fantasy ruins (3D)," "retro room (3D)," and "cyberpunk (3D)."

ART: Do you think they're worried about getting sued by the Grand Canyon people?
What--[laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Maybe!

ART: I would like "station," please.

AUSTIN: "Station," love it, okay. Well here we are, in a station. Well that's blurry [cross] in the background.

JACK: *Extremely* low resolution station. [laughs]

ART: [laughing] We're very far away from the station.

AUSTIN: Yes. And I'm gonna now turn the audio of this back on, now that there's no music playing. And I am going to, "object library," get us some dice.

[Clicking sound effect begins playing repeatedly]

ART: I hear we need twenty.

AUSTIN: I've heard that, I'm just gonna drop a bunch of them here. [pause] That's probably... That's probably what we need, right? [Clicking sound stops] Call that... Call that a... The amount that we need and if we need more we can just grab more? Let's grab all these, let's bring them together and [cross] put them over here. [Sound of many clicking dice sound effects overlapping]

ART: [cross] [getting gradually quieter] Click click click click click click click. *Click* click click click click.

AUSTIN: Alright! Here is the first dice in our tower, first die in our tower. [cross] Let's put it right there.

ART: [cross] We did it!

AUSTIN: We did it. Let's take a break before we move into pursuit. Does that sound good?

JACK: [cross] Yeah that sounds great.

ART: [cross] Yeah. I'll get more water.

AUSTIN: [cross] Let's take five minutes. We will all be right back.

[long pause]

AUSTIN: Alright we are back. I will transfer back over to this other view. There we go! So. [JACK sighs] How you feelin'? Feelin' good?

JACK: We just committed a big, a *huge* crime.

AUSTIN: Sure, yeah. Uh-huh.

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: And you were being pursued. **The rest of play takes place in turns.** I'm just gonna add, maybe they caught *something*. What they got from you Fealty was like, "they can't see it, it's too powerful." Or something like that, you know what I mean?

JACK: Yup.

AUSTIN: Something so that now they know they're chasing you for not just, you're running away weirdly. But *really* know that you got somethin', you got somethin' going on.

JACK: Also if the Fealty turns around and starts running away from three Hallows after a weird phone call, [AUSTIN: Uh-huh] you would chase that down.

AUSTIN: You would chase 'em down wouldn't ya, you would chase 'em down. **The rest of play takes place in turns, with turn-order proceeding clockwise from player to player. The player who used a piece of heavy machinery other than an automobile most recently goes first.**

JACK: It's so good. That's probably Art, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, Art has house stuff going on, right?

ART: I don't *do* any of the--there's heavy machinery *at* my house but I didn't--I'm not pouring my own concrete, y'all.

AUSTIN: You didn't touch it? You didn't go like "ooh, what's going on over here? Let me do a little..." No?

JACK: That would suck. I'm glad that Art didn't do that. [cross] [laughing] Don't do that.

ART: [cross] Yeah.

AUSTIN: [cross] I've never built a house but I think that I would be bad at it.

ART: Let me tell you what I learned this week, is that I had no idea how concrete is done, [cross] is made.

AUSTIN: [cross] [intrigued] Mmm.

ART: Not important for this though, um...

[JACK and AUSTIN laugh]

JACK: Well the divine [cross] Concrete...

AUSTIN: [cross] That's commitment, that's discipline right there.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah, who last used heavy--I guess gardening equipment I wanna say, last [cross] year?

JACK: [cross] I used an ax recently, but an ax is not [cross] heavy machinery.

ART: [cross] Mm, that doesn't feel like...

AUSTIN: [cross] That's not machinery. But it might be closer than what we got, Art. I live in New York City. You know?

ART: [thoughtful] Heavy machinery...

JACK: Do you have a manually operated garage door, Art?

AUSTIN: Mm.

ART: [chuckles] No, I'm not even sure I've ever *seen* a manual--oh I guess I have.

AUSTIN: Yes you [laughing] have!

JACK: [laughing] Yes you have, Art!

ART: Where we were briefly living between spots had a manual garage door. And like, is a washing machine a piece of heavy machinery?

AUSTIN: Nnno...

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: I mean, it's heavy and it's a machine but it's not "heavy machinery."

ART: [sarcastic] Sor-ry!

JACK: We're two writers and a composer, it's... we're limited--is a piano a machine? [cross] A piano is a machine.

AUSTIN: [cross] A piano *is* a machine, yeah.

JACK: [cross] It weighs about a ton?

AUSTIN: [cross] It's heavy.

ART: Well, a washing machine's heavier than a piano.

JACK: [cross] Bull shit!

AUSTIN: [cross] Mm, depends on the [laughing] fucking piano!

ART: [cross] I've got a really heavy washing machine.

JACK: [cross] What do you think is--what do you think is in a piano?

AUSTIN: [cross] A washing machine!

ART: Strings! [laughing] Strings are really light!

JACK: [amused] And a huge chunk of metal that everything is attached to.

[pause]

JACK: Art go first, I made the call. To the princept. [JACK and ART laugh]

AUSTIN: A washing machine can weigh almost--a large capacity washing machine can weigh [cross] almost 230 pounds. A piano can weigh as much as 1400 pounds or as little as [laughing] 500 pounds.

JACK: [cross] I cannot believe... Art thinks a washing machine... Weighs as much...

ART: Well, this is a combination washer *and* dryer so I think you have to at least double the...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. It's still lower than that 500 number.

[all laugh]

ART: Alright then, then Jack wins! [AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: [laughing] A 1.4 ton washing machine!

AUSTIN: Ohh... No...

JACK: It just shreds clothes.

AUSTIN: Wait, a ton is 2000 pounds.

ART: Yeah.

JACK: No, a ton is--

AUSTIN: Jack.

JACK: A metric ton is 1000. A metric ton is 1000 kilograms.

AUSTIN: Oh, is it... Yeah, okay, but a--

ART: [cross] That's about 2000 pounds.

AUSTIN: [cross] That's about 2000 pounds, yeah.

JACK: [laughing] Oh, I see! Right.

AUSTIN: [cross] A ton--

ART: [cross] A kilogram is 2.2 pounds.

JACK: We were weirdly *both* right.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Art, you wanna go?

ART: Um, I think I wanna talk about machinery for a lot longer.

[AUSTIN and JACK laugh]

JACK: It's quite fun!

AUSTIN: **On your turn, establish a scene by narrating your story's events and scenery up until an obstacle of your choosing is encountered.**

JACK: Fun.

AUSTIN: **Obstacles can be anything from a security checkpoint to being actively chased, but should always pose a risk to your pair's continued evasion of the authorities.**

Once an obstacle has been presented, all other players pitch tactics for overcoming the obstacle and explain what their plan's success would look like. Unless your previous brainstorming – or, sorry – **Unlike your previous brainstorming, though, each player presents their own scene idea rather than collaborating on a single scene as a group.**

After pitching their idea to the active player, each player makes a Stress roll to determine how much Stress their plan would induce. To make a Stress roll, roll a single six-sided die (1d6) and divide the result by 2 (rounding up). Because the roll occurs after a plan is pitched, a seemingly simple plan could still cause the most Stress, and should be roleplayed accordingly.

The active player selects a pitch based on whatever criteria they like, whether it's an idea that will accrue the least Stress, an idea they believe makes the most sense, or just an idea they think would be the most fun to roleplay. They then add the scene's number of Stress dice to the tower in the center of the playspace.

Any time you add dice to your tower, wait 5 seconds. If the tower still stands after 5 seconds, the selected plan succeeds. Again, cast players as the HOUND, pilot, and any extras involved in the plan before roleplaying the scene's success.

Overcoming obstacles is always stressful, but try and match the tension of the scene to the number of dice added to the tower, 1 being the least stressful and 3 being the most. Once the scene has concluded, start a new turn with the next player clockwise taking the lead.

If you ever run out of dice, stack non-dice objects on your tower each turn until it collapses. Accidental toppling due to any forces other than stacking does not count as a collapse. If your tower accidentally falls, simply rebuild it, possibly shifting the new tower to a more stable surface if necessary.

We should not have that [cross] problem.

JACK: [cross] Oh, Austin!

ART: [cross] Put a piano on top of that tower.

JACK: That might count as us knocking the tower over with the dice.

AUSTIN: I think if I'm lifting it, at that point, you're stacking. [cross] I gotta be careful here.

JACK: [cross] Oh, shit.

ART: I want everyone to know that I was heavily pitching that we all just go get a bunch of dice and create our own towers on our own tables and see what happened, [cross] and it was...

AUSTIN: [cross] But then they don't get to see it.

ART: Eh... [JACK laughs] But they could hear it. [cross] They could hear our own stress.

AUSTIN: Well they'll hear this! But yeah that's fair. I'm gonna be stressed because I'm the only one that's in the session, handling these dice. [cross] It's a lot of pressure.

ART: [cross] Right, see, we *all* could have had that.

AUSTIN: I mean, you could buy this game for \$15 and hop in but that feels like a lot of money, you know?

ART: And then we can stack them together? Or we stack them separately?

JACK: [cross] Yeah. I don't want to--

AUSTIN: [cross] No, it's one--it's a shared thing. Jack doesn't want to do this.

JACK: Well no the thing is I don't want to do that but I would let my divine do it on my behalf.

AUSTIN: Mmmm. [pause] Art you wanna go buy this game real quick? You can hop in here.

ART: What's this called? What's it on? Is it St--What am I going to, what video game marketplace [cross] am I going to?

AUSTIN: [cross] It's Steam, it's Steam.

JACK: [cross] Remember at the beginning of this when we said, "please be patient as we figure it out?" [laughs]

AUSTIN: Also, I don't know how to--I might not be able to add a second player, I might have to recreate this. That's fine. That's okay, I can do that.

ART: We've made very few choices.

AUSTIN: We've made no choices, [laughing] I think I remember them pretty well. It is called Tabletop Playground on Steam. I'm gonna come back up to--

ART: Oh, we're not Steam friends, how did that happen?

AUSTIN: Are we not Steam friends? [cross] 'Cause we don't play things on Steam.

ART: [cross] Oh, you're not online?

AUSTIN: [cross] I'm never online on Steam. I'm *never* online on Steam.

ART: [cross] There we go, that's how I was trying to find it.

AUSTIN: Here, I'm online now. But I think I have all my shit just super, like, no ones allowed to see my shit because of when I was a games journalist. [sighs]

ART: Sure, alright, well that's okay, I'm just gonna type this in...

AUSTIN: You're just gonna have to type it in.

ART: I thought I had a workaround here.

AUSTIN: I gotcha, yeah.

[Tabletop Playground menu music starts playing]

ART: [cross] Ooh is that the sound the game makes?

JACK: [cross] This music is so cute!

AUSTIN: [cross] This is the music, this is the music, yeah, yeah.

JACK: I really like it! It's got a really good vibe!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

ART: Ooh it supports VR.

AUSTIN: It does.

ART: I don't have any VR stuff.

AUSTIN: No, me either. [pause] Continue, and then "Station." You gonna stick with Station, Art?

ART: Yeah, uh-huh.

[music stops abruptly]

AUSTIN: Okay. The name is Palisade and I will send you the password. [pause] The password is... [pause] That was a reference to the old board game--not board game, Jesus, the game show.

ART: [cross] The game show, Password.

AUSTIN: [cross] Password, yeah.

[dice clicking sound effect begins repeating again]

AUSTIN: I can probably pull this back up now. As I refill it [cross] with dice.

JACK: Art, earlier when Austin said that he was going to be stacking dice for us, I said "don't worry, I absolve you of sort of any mistakes." I want you to know that I don't extend the same to you. [AUSTIN laughs]

ART: [cross] Great, okay.

JACK: [cross] As my co-player, I will hold you responsible for any dice failure.

ART: Jess had offered to also [JACK laughs] do this in the real world that we could have just had a webcam in our living room and that she could do all the stacking. But I think the stress would have ended up feeling...

AUSTIN: [to himself] ...fucking paste, there's a way to paste. This? There's another way to do this. I thought it was just Control P but apparently it's not. That's probably enough, for now at least. [sound effect of all dice being tossed, repeatedly] Are you downloading, Art?

ART: Yeah, it's downloaded, I'm now doing the weird, the first time set-up.

AUSTIN: People want to know how the physics work so I'm just playing with a bunch of dice at once, to show people how they work. I'm *not* stacking dice yet though, not intentionally stacking any dice.

JACK: Can you throw them?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, ready?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Fuck it!

[new sound effect of die on wood]

JACK: Oh, goodbye! [JACK and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: They're gone now. Fuck 'em.

JACK: I like that you can see them through the table like you're in Batman, [cross] you've got your dice vision.

AUSTIN: [cross] [laughing] Yeah, your detective music! Vision, I said music, I don't know why. Yeah there they are, they're all the way over there near the station. There's a way--

JACK: [excited] Oh, while we're waiting for Art, can you put some other items in?

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. Oop! "Allow access," I think Art's here, because I had to allow--oh, yeah there's Art! There we go!

ART: How do I, make this not fullscreen?

JACK: Oh shit, this is amazing!

AUSTIN: Mhm!

JACK: This is great radio!

AUSTIN: Yeah! Ali, make sure to cut this down when it hits the real feed. [JACK and AUSTIN laugh]

ART: Um... I can probably go a *little* bigger on this resolution. Maybe even bigger than that.

JACK: Can you put like, miniatures in?

AUSTIN: Yeah, but we shouldn't. 'Cause Art's here n--oh wait, where'd Art go? Oh Art's back.

JACK: No, he's figuring it out.

AUSTIN: Here we go. Object library, we got chess figures, we got cards, we got stored objects--there's nothing there--we got dominos, we got game boards.

JACK: What's "general?"

AUSTIN: No no, no stacking Art! Get outta here. Woah, what the f--did you see that? Wait, hold it right there--hold it off to the side, hold it off to the side. Watch this, I'm gonna let go of this queen, and it's gonna LAUNCH--

JACK: Woah!

[all laugh]

AUSTIN: It happens whenever anybody holds up a thing, hold up a thing again? Grab a thing. Yeah, grab a queen. Can I launch a queen from a--that didn't work at all!

JACK: You're double bouncing chess pieces.

AUSTIN: Very weird. Well, that was fun. I have to delete all these queens now, jesus christ.

JACK: Well, thank you for tuning in everybody.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's it for us. Delete, delete, delete. Grab... Grab, hold. Oka--I wanna put them down slower than that so that they're kinda grouped. I keep losing your thing, Art. Oh it's 'cause you're like zooming around.

ART: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: I see.

ART: I'm looking at the [cross] station.

AUSTIN: [cross] There we go. Yeah, fair. Alright.

JACK: Earlier, Austin and I played in a saloon and we tried to get out of bounds but we couldn't.

AUSTIN: It didn't work. Alright. [pause] Art, narrate your obstacle. Narrate your scene, up until the point we hit an obstacle.

ART: Okay, so we--we're just trying to like, outrun them, which we are of course very capable of doing.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: But we're sort of just in the middle of space, right? There's not like... We're not yet at...

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think we're just between worlds, right? [cross] I guess--

ART: [cross] Yeah, so it's just like--

AUSTIN: We haven't talked about what space travel looks like now, because it's been a while. And last we remember, the divine Space, though an Orion divine, is tied to the Pact, not to the Curtain; but, I think this is one of those things that was agreed upon at that conference and that treaty signing. The divine Space is the big gates, the big Part--remember the big gate at the end of Partizan?

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: That you used to travel faster than light from system to system. I think the thing that was agreed upon is, anybody can use these, they work on the same weekly schedule that they always worked on. It's too important to be able to transport food and et cetera. Privately, or in their own territory especially, I suspect that the Pact uses those whenever the fuck they want. And maybe even fucks with them when the Curtain needs them at key times. So it's not like super reliable, but more or less it still works on the kind of week by week jumping system to system stuff, as it did during Partizan. [pause] So yes. Other than that I think we're between worlds, in that way, you know?

ART: Sure. So it's just like, making a beeline for a... For a gate?

AUSTIN: I guess, but then do you have to like--if it's not scheduled to open right now, what do you do?

ART: Sure, I guess, so what are the...

JACK: You could deploy the elect to board the gate and try and open it from the inside.

AUSTIN: Is this you pitching an idea? Have we found our obstacle? Our obstacle is, you get to the gate--

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: --but it's not--

JACK: Come screaming up on the gate.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's not open, it's not gonna open for three days. What do you do? So Jack, your suggestion is, Véronique lands.

JACK: Land the divine.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Send out the elect, have the elect open the gate. Surely it's a computer--

AUSTIN: It is, [cross] we know this.

JACK: [cross] --on the inside, or a person--oh yeah, we do. Just get it open.

[pause, AUSTIN chuckles]

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. Art, do you have a suggestion?

ART: "Get it open" is sort of every solution... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I guess Véronique, are you fighting your way through, are you...

ART: My suggestion is, find some way to trick the clock in the gate [AUSTIN: Oooh] to think that it's time to open.

JACK: Oh that's really good, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's really good.

JACK: Mine is... Use my status as a beloved divine to just get them to open it for me.

AUSTIN: Mhm. My suggestion for this is that you use some sort of divine power that we haven't identified quite yet to make your pursuers think you went through the gate, at which point they will open the gate so they can pursue you, and you can follow them in.

JACK: Oh a classic stealth game trick!

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah.

ART: Wait, if they go through the gate, shouldn't we just not go through the gate, and then they're [laughs] really far away?

JACK: [laughing] Oh yeah, [cross] that's true.

AUSTIN: [cross] They're not all--this is only those three Hallows who are following you, [ART: Oh okay] not the rest of that whole fleet, you know?

JACK: And we can kill those two Hallows comparatively easily on the other side of the gate away from a full...

AUSTIN: Exactly, yes.

JACK: ...Curtain fleet.

AUSTIN: But whatever, at this point what we need to do is all roll a die, a d6, [cross] a single d6.

JACK: [cross] Okay, my plan, cha--

ART: In Roll20, [cross] or in...

AUSTIN: Let's just do it here!

JACK: Oh! Shit, yeah why not?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Art, you can just right click it and hit "roll--"

ART: Oh, not like--

AUSTIN: --or hit "R" while highlighting it. I rolled a one, my stress level is a one. You rolled a one.

ART: I also rolled a one.

AUSTIN: Jack, do you [cross] want us to roll one for you?

JACK: [cross] And what's--yeah, roll one for me!

AUSTIN: Which one do you want here?

JACK: Gimme--I don't care.

AUSTIN: Top right, let's go top right. Boom! That's a two, which I believe is a one. Are all these ones? 'Cause it's, really we're rolling--

ART: It's divided by two, right?

AUSTIN: Divided by two, right, with... Rounding up. So yes, all of those are ones! You get to pick whatever you want here, Art.

ART: I think I'm gonna go for the Road Runner cartoon solution of opening the--tricking them into opening the gate and then following, I think.

AUSTIN: Love it.

ART: Do I have to r--do I have to stack the die--

AUSTIN: Now you have to stack *a* die.

ART: --you rolled? Or just any die.

AUSTIN: Ehh. Oh, that's a good question, that might actually matter, let's see. Oh, I don't think it does, I don't think it does.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: But I'll double check it. After pitching their idea, uh... Active player selects the pitch... Da-da-da-da-dah... They add the scene's number of--no, because you have to add the *number* of die.

ART: Oh sure.

AUSTIN: Alright, here we go.

ART: I really can't get closer than this?

AUSTIN: You can but you're not allowed, I'm not gonna let it happen.

ART: [under his breath] Oh my god.

AUSTIN: 'Cause you can get too close otherwise. This is the game!

ART: I don't think this *is* the game, it doesn't say, "and then drop it from four inches" and...
[laughs]

[JACK laughing]

AUSTIN: Four inches is--yeah, uh-huh! Yeah, drop it. There you go. It's just too easy to zoom in all the way, and we won't get fun results, I promise. Alright so let's play this out. What happens here? Also yeah, someone brought up in the chat, uh, kescon3 says "also is it established whether they're Fealty's Hallows or someone else's?"

JACK: [cross] Oh, they're not ours.

AUSTIN: [cross] I think they're someone else's, yeah, they would be listening to you otherwise. I think that they are--yeah, yeah.

JACK: [cross] They might get confused, but they would be like, "alright, boss said we're moving out."

AUSTIN: I think... Do we have a divine on hand that's a good fit? Y'know, we could go to a deep cut, it could be Imperium, we know that Imperium is hot shit. We know that... I think that [cross] Imperium made it--

JACK: [cross] Tight with the Princt.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. I think Imperium made it out of all that. Can't be Past... Can't be... We talked about Present. Have we talked about Present? This is the other thing about this being fun and when I say like, "give us patience," it's been like--oh yeah we've talked about Present, it's not Present, Present's too fucking powerful. Again, if Present made it out of the finale. [JACK laughs] It's been a minute, I have not gone back and done my listen through yet, you know? So.

JACK: Yeah! We are not possessed of perfect information about our show.

AUSTIN: No, exactly. Uh, someone says "what was the divine in Obelle?" That was...

JACK: That was--

AUSTIN: That was Order, right?

JACK: Order.

AUSTIN: That was Order, who has another form, but I don't remember if we ever--did we say that the other form of that Order was Law?

JACK: Yes I think, I *think* we did.

AUSTIN: We know Asepsis is--we know what's up with Asepsis, Asepsis ain't here.

[pause]

JACK: Imperium--it could be Imperium.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think Imperium is a good one because we know what that visually looks like, and it's fun to picture these Hallows with the fiery red light chasing after you all, so. Yeah.

JACK: Someone in the gate, looking up from their thing,

JACK (as gate attendant): We've got four shapes coming in fast.

AUSTIN: So yeah, how do we do it, how do you do it? Fealty, what is the weird divine trick you do that make this look like it opens? Is this a power that Fealty has with other big machines? Has Fealty--when's the last time Fealty's operated a large machine [laughing] other than an automobile?

[JACK laughs]

ART: I think Fealty has the ability to inspire.

AUSTIN: [understanding] Mmm!

ART: And like, inspiration looks different for everyone, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, sure.

ART: And with the ability to sort of like nudge it, right, [cross] it's not--

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah yeah yeah.

ART: This isn't a... You know what I'm saying.

AUSTIN: So do you then... Are you inspiring both the gate to look like it's opened, and also the Hallows to chase after you?

ART: Yes.

AUSTIN: Love it.

ART: Or--I'm inspiring the gate to look opened and it's like a nudge to the [AUSTIN: Right right right] Hallows. What you should do is chase, not what you should do is call someone.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Nope says, "oh is it Imperium, I've been mishearing it as Emphyrean." It used to be Emphyrean, it became Imperium during the early days of the Principality.

ART: Love when a podcast uses near-homonyms though.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's us, that's us.

ART: We're... A lot.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Which is the good one of those we did? Nevermind.

AUSTIN: What? Okay.

ART: Well there's another one right, there's another...

AUSTIN: [incredulous] *Homonym*, in Friends at the Table?

ART: Yeah, [cross] which is the other one?

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, there's a--

JACK: [cross] Sun and son.

ART: [cross] Sun and son is the one I was thinking of.

AUSTIN: [cross] We do a lot of them, out here.

ART: Sorry, spoilers of...

AUSTIN: Don't--it's nothing, it's nothing.

ART: It's nothing.

AUSTIN: Uh... Jack, it's your turn. I believe, unless you want to play this out a little bit more tightly.

JACK: [cross] I mean, I think I kinda wanna see what happens.

AUSTIN: [cross] How does--yeah, talk to me about what happens here. I think they do the thing you wanted them to do, they flee right into that blood red pool of liquid that is the kind of gate form. Or they see it and they're like, "oh, it's not working, let me just resend the code." And then it opens up and they go in, it opens up for real and they go in.

[pause]

ART (as Fealty): We'll ambush them on the other side, we'll be free.

JACK (as Véronique): We follow them through?

ART (as Fealty): I think so.

JACK (as Véronique): We're gonna launch--we're launching an attack against our own fleet's Hallows? Can we do this?

ART (as Fealty): We can do anything we want.

JACK (as Véronique): We're Fealty!

ART (as Fealty): Our mandate is older than the Principality.

JACK (as Véronique): [taken aback] What do you mean, "our mandate?" I... I'm 24!

ART (as Fealty): I'm much older.

JACK (as Véronique): No no, I know. Alright let's go!

[JACK and AUSTIN laugh]

JACK: Just like, pulls the straps of her flight harness [AUSTIN: Uh-huh] and clicks them in over her chest, leans forward.

AUSTIN: Because of course remember, this trip, one, takes a long time, we've talked about, two: feels terrible!

JACK: But also, I'm an elect.

AUSTIN: You're an elect, [cross] yeah, you've gone through it.

JACK: [cross] It probably feels bad, but like, this is the job.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Or no, it's more than just this is the job, it's the job for Hallows pilots, I think elects are supernaturally just better at this, right?

AUSTIN: I don't--they're still people, in there.

JACK: [cross] They're still people, but--

AUSTIN: [cross] They're not supernatural--you're a beloved jock, so I think that probably helps. You've gotten better training. They probably give you better meds, the divine probably shields you from some of it, it's an overdetermined fact.

JACK: What is the supernatural--

AUSTIN: Exactly.

JACK: --but a series of overdetermined facts on a body?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Exactly.

JACK: Divine pitches forward, disappears into the bloody pool of the gate.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. And then, you know, some time later you reappear in a new part of space, another part of the Great Constellations, and the two Halls are looking for you. Do you dispatch them?

JACK: This is an area of space that, something went weird with the way that planetary objects were formed in this region. Perhaps it was exacerbated by the effects of the Kalmeria particle, but perhaps it happened so long ago [AUSTIN: Right] that who's to say why things in space happen.

AUSTIN: It just actually looks like that right now, in our real universe.

JACK: [cross] Yeah! Find a spot, it looks like that.

AUSTIN: [cross] You just get there.

JACK: Instead of gravity forming either spheres or weird lumpy oblongs of asteroids and things, it formed these tall spires and spokes, almost like a nebula but of these shards of rock.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Massive, vast, thousands of mile long shards of rock hanging in the air like icicles.

AUSTIN: Jack, I know exactly where you are. Do you know where you are?

JACK: No!

AUSTIN: Are you doing this on purpose?

JACK: No, where am I?

AUSTIN: You are on, you are in the Skarnoc Debris Fields.

JACK: Oh shit, am I?

AUSTIN: Yeah one second, I sent you this map--except maybe I didn't write the Skarnoc Debris Fields at the time. It's very weird that I can just send you this immediately and be like yeah, it's right here.

JACK: Oh yeah! This is absolutely where we are.

AUSTIN: This was first mentioned in the... Episode from Twilight Mirage... God, I'm gonna search for "Skarnoc" and it's not gonna come up because whoever transcribed it did not write it the way that I happened to write it, 'cause they only heard me say it. I could just search my own--this is from "Guaranteed Events."

JACK: You could search "debris field." [excited] Oh, it's from "Guaranteed Events?" [cross] That's a good episode.

AUSTIN: It's from "Guaranteed Events," because we've never actually *been* here been here before. This is from the second story in "Guaranteed Events," in which Tanner Indiana hypothesizes the creation of the machine that would one day be called Past. And Tanner thinks, or writes, "Such detail was, of course--" the detail of the divine Past--"of course, abstract. Deployed with a forward operating unit of the Rapid Evening's mechanized Heresy Division, Tanner put his ideas down a few lines at a time. The high arch of a window before they drove the divine Opportunity away from Lenaphon IV. The silhouette of a pulley system, right after their costly loss to Nobility in the Skarnoc Debris Fields." So here we are.

JACK: Wow. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Tall, strange spires, crystalline. Debris from this fight and previous ones. This place draws things to it.

[pause] [JACK takes a deep breath]

JACK: The two Hallows have been clinging to the side of one of these debris fields, and they've been resting. One of them was, I don't know, watching something, the other one was watching the gate. And as we come screaming out of the gate they pull up and hover in front of us. And... They... It's wild, right? What puts a Hallow in a place that makes them pull up in front of a divine and say "stop and tell me what you're doing?"

AUSTIN: Is this actually, are we already at your obstacle for your turn?

JACK: I mean, I really think it is, I just want to be able to rationalize in my head what makes Hallow pilots think...

AUSTIN: They must think something's wrong. Right?

AUSTIN (as Hallow pilots): Fealty, are you *okay*, Véronique are you *okay* in there? We need you to come back with us.

AUSTIN: And of course [JACK: Yeah, yeah] you'll come back. Because the idea that a divine, let alone Fealty, would turn away from the Principality, and from the Princept's own escort, is unthinkable.

JACK: Yes, yeah. Okay, so. My pitch is that I tell them to stand down. I say,

JACK (as Véronique): My orders have changed, yours have not. Return through the gate. And don't bother me any longer.

JACK: And, [cross] yeah, that's my pitch.

AUSTIN: [cross] Art, what's your pitch?

ART: I wanna say I like that pitch. [AUSTIN chuckles] It's great. Um...

JACK: Are you about to pitch killing them?

ART: No, I think I'm about to pitch something worse.

JACK: Oh, okay!

ART: What if these were ours now?

AUSTIN: Mm.

ART: What if their fealty became to us?

JACK: Can we do that?

[AUSTIN makes an "I don't know" sound]

JACK: Is that a thing Fealty can *do*?

ART: I'm learning with you. [JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: I mean Fealty can, the two of you can make that argument, and be compelling. Separate from any sort of brainwave shit.

JACK: Yeah that's true. I think what I'm saying is I would be more comfortable with--there is something potentially getting more bound up in consent stuff about--

AUSTIN: Oh yeah.

JACK: --being like “listen--you’re now *our* boys--”

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: --*mentally*. But I think [cross] we can absolutely--

ART: [cross] I mean, it’s not about brainwashing, it’s about inspiration. And also, did we put the right number of dice on the tower?

AUSTIN: Yeah, [cross] we--the stress was only one, yeah.

JACK: [cross] Yeah, we just needed one.

AUSTIN: The stress was one.

ART: It’s not the total [cross] of all the rolls.

AUSTIN: [cross] No, it’s the total of the plan we’ve picked.

ART: Great, okay.

JACK: I think you’re right, it could just as easily be, “together we are about to be part of great service to this place. Join us.”

ART: Yeah, it’s not, it’s not brainwashing, it is inspiration. But like, inspiring someone to do something changes what they wanted to do, right, it’s--

JACK: Yeah.

ART: It’s, but it’s not force, it’s... [cross] Persuasion.

JACK: [cross] And this divine is just exceptionally good at that.

ART: [cross] Right.

AUSTIN: [cross] And you could fail, is an important note here.

JACK: [cross] [laughing] Yeah, yes that’s true!

AUSTIN: [cross] You might not be convincing. I’ve got a third pitch for you. You gotta fucking kill them! They’re gonna go back and tell the rest of the crew where you are, and they’re gonna come getcha! You gotta blow ‘em up! You’ve got some javelins [cross] to throw, or some guns...

JACK: [cross] But how do we know that they are telling the truth--

AUSTIN: Exactly!

JACK: --when they say, [in a mocking voice] “oh we wanna know what the deal is?”

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly.

ART: [cross] Yeah, great point.

JACK: [cross] Alright, let's roll 'em.

AUSTIN: Well no--oh right we roll first, we do roll first, right? We do roll first, yes.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna roll this one over here. Boom! That's a one! Art--

ART: I have also rolled a one. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Alright... [cross] Jack, ready?

JACK: [cross] And mine is...

ART: [cross] Do these dice roll other numbers?

AUSTIN: Yeah, they do. There's a three, for instance.

ART: [cross] Alright so that's a two.

AUSTIN: [cross] You got a four, you wanna do the four?

JACK: [cross] No Art rolled a--

ART: [cross] I rolled a one, I just tested to make sure.

AUSTIN: Oh oh oh, okay. [pause] So it's a one. [cross] Is that--

ART: [cross] So my plan is one, your plan is one--

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: --and Jack's plan is two.

AUSTIN: Yes. What are you doing, Véronique?

JACK: Um... [pause] Fear. Panic. And a gut reaction. I think also perhaps from the athlete's reaction of competition. And perhaps some weird feeling of like, they shouldn't talk to me like that?

AUSTIN: Oooh.

ART: Mmm.

AUSTIN: Yeah. "Elect, we're gonna need you to come with us" is like, very... Yeah, uh-huh.

JACK: [cross] Especially given that I know what I know.

ART: [cross] It's sort of like "your majesty, we need you to come with us."

JACK: Yes. No, not good.

JACK (as Véronique): Light 'em up, Anchor.

AUSTIN: Alright, well that's two then, right?

JACK: Like weapon hard-points deploy on the outside.

ART: [cross] No that's one, you were, you were, yeah.

JACK: [cross] It's, it's one.

AUSTIN: Oh I was, right, Jack was the one that was--alright. Jack, do you want me to do this?

JACK: Yup!

AUSTIN: Or should Art do it, [cross] because Art is your--

JACK: [cross] Since it's your plan, no it's your plan. Oh no, it's Art, Art do it.

AUSTIN: [cross] Art do it.

ART: [cross] Okay. Great.

AUSTIN: I've had more practice. I'm gonna tell you Art, a thing to really think about, sometimes when you pick it up and you move towards it, you could hit it on the way up. So you gotta be careful.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: That's gonna count.

ART: Oh 'cause the distance is [cross] static.

AUSTIN: [cross] See that? Yeah, but then it jumps up as you approach. So you gotta keep that in mind as we go forward.

JACK: Come on Art.

ART: Can I twist it?

AUSTIN: I don't think you should be able to.

ART: You don't think I *should* be able to?

AUSTIN: [chuckling] No.

JACK: Austin's playing the role of [cross] bastard in this game.

AUSTIN: [cross] Woo! Nailed it though! It happens exactly as you foretold. Just what happens here?

JACK: Just, bang! Signal flare, flak cannons just deploy automatically on the back of Fealty, and the air around--it's like a firework going off, the air around Fealty deploys faster than they can think to shoot torpedoes or heat-seeking missiles. The divine and the elect just lash out with a spear, or with a--it's just, it's like swatting a fly, right? Hallows are big, but they're not divine big. It's just two silent explosions in space. And I think Véronique goes,

JACK (as Véronique): Woo!

JACK: and is just like dead silent in the inside of her cockpit.

AUSTIN: Alright, I guess it's my turn to come up with a situation, and I think the situation is pretty clear. You are in the Skarnoc Debris Fields. You are alone. Or, you have each other and little else. There is no one else around. I don't know off the top of *my* head who you would call, or where you would go. Divines are incredibly powerful; they cannot keep you fed forever, Véronique. And I think it's just this moment of the two of you in crystalline silence, you know. There are other gates to get to. You can continue going somewhere else. But I don't even know that you even know this sector particularly well, if there's a place here you can go to refuel or lay low, or what your next step is. I think the next obstacle truly is, what's our gameplan? Where do we go from here? Do we try to get this information somewhere, do we try to destroy it or bury it?

You can't destroy a divine's memory unless you are trying to kill the divine, obviously, but like, uh-oh. And then, what are your big next steps?

[long pause]

JACK (as Véronique): We killed them. I didn't mean to--I didn't mean to do that.

ART (as Fealty): I know you didn't, Anchor.

JACK (as Véronique): I--I just thought that they were gonna send us back through the... We shouldn't be able to do that, right?

ART (as Fealty): Do what? We shouldn't be able to kill people? We shouldn't be able to be told what to do? All of these might be, yes.

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.

JACK (as Véronique): [stressed] What does that mean, Anchor?

ART (as Fealty): We're loyal to so many things, and some loyalties are more important.

JACK (as Véronique): Okay, so we can't go back through the gate. Where's the nearest--who's spa--how f--do they know that we blew them up? Does the fleet know that we blew them up?

ART (as Fealty): It's hard to say.

JACK (as Véronique): Shit! [pause] Is there a station nearby? Is it one of o--I don't even know if that means anything anymore, "is it one of ours?"

ART (as Fealty): We can... [chuckles] We can take any station.

JACK (as Véronique): I don't... [regaining composure] Is there a station nearby? Perform a scan or something.

ART: Sure. Yeah [laughs] uh,

ART (as Fealty): Yes. [JACK laughs] There is a station nearby.

JACK (as Véronique): What colors is it flying?

ART (as Fealty): My maps are out of date for this region.

JACK (as Véronique): What colors was it flying?

AUSTIN: It would have been Nideo, last you checked. But a place like this? It's a risk, right? These are the sorts of places pirates hang out. The sort of places revolutionaries hang out. These are the sorts of places that people who just don't want to be found go to live. I remember going to Death Valley once as a teen, on a trip between Vegas and California, and stopping at a Burger King. It was the hottest I've ever been [cross] on the way between...

JACK: [cross] Oh, it's bad. I had a similar experience.

AUSTIN: Between the car and the inside of the place was like, "oh, we've gotten past--" It's totally dry, but there's a point at which heat is still heat, past any sort of humidity, and it's worse in some ways. And while we were in there, my dad asked someone, "Why do you, what type of folks live around here?" Like why do people move out here? And the answer was, some folks don't want to be found. Some folks want to go places where it's so abrasive to be that no one will come looking. And that is the Skarnoc Debris Fields. It's hard on your eyes out here, you start to realize.

JACK: [cross] I stop to--

AUSTIN: [cross] It's just like the way the light is hitting you is twisted and sharp in too many ways.

ART: A chaff grenade of an asteroid belt.

AUSTIN: [cross] Uh-huh, yeah, yeahyeahyeah, exactly!

JACK: [cross] Oh god, and we're in our own... Baffling flare, as well, right? And the debris of two Hallows.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah, yeah.

JACK (as Véronique): Okay, okay. Listen to me. Anchor, [nervous laugh] we're not gonna kill any more of our own team. I don't think we can do that anymore. Can you take me in close to this station, we'll scope it out, and hopefully we'll get there before any sort of message gets through.

ART (as Fealty): Of course I can.

AUSTIN: Well that's a plan. That to me feels like a plan.

JACK: So my plan is, safely approach the station, ascertain its loyalty, and if we're safe, land on the station.

AUSTIN: Mhm. [pause] I have a plan. My plan is, it's not too late to just sneak forward instead of backwards. Jump through the gate the other way, regroup up with the fleet, get to a place that you know you can--convince them that something went wrong, that the Hallows, you know, were destroyed by some third party; you've come back, give them some fake information, and then jet from a much safer place, where you know where you're going. Give yourself the time to think and figure out a different way forward. And just kind of socially blend in, Hitman style, until it's time to get out of there. [cross] I think this is--

JACK: [cross] Carrying a piece of potentially lethal information.

AUSTIN: Yes. I think this is a bad plan, but it's my plan.

JACK: Yeah, yeah! That's [cross] what's good about this game.

ART: [cross] It's a fun plan, it's a fun one.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

[long pause]

ART: Um... [laughing] My plan is we live here now.

[JACK laughs, AUSTIN guffaws, someone applauds]

ART: This becomes the domain of Fealty.

JACK: Holy shit, okay let's roll 'em.

ART: And we figure it out, in time the base will become our base and...

AUSTIN: Yeah, alright, roll 'em if you got 'em!

AUSTIN: [cross] There's a two so it's a one.

JACK: [cross] Austin's rolled a two.

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh it's a *three*! [laughing]

JACK: [cross] Art's rolled a six.

ART: [cross] It's a six, yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh, you want this one down here, Jack?

JACK: Yup.

ART: I'm gonna roll away from the stack, from now...

AUSTIN: Okay sounds good. That's another two, so it's one, one, three, because you cut these in half.

JACK: Shit, we gotta put three dice on the tower, right?

AUSTIN: Is that what we're picking? [cross] What was--

ART: [cross] [laughing] My plan is ludicrous!

AUSTIN: Oh but it's so good! [cross] We live here now is so *fucking* good.

JACK: [cross] It's so good! And also if it falls, we're still early enough in the game that it's not gonna have...

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.

JACK: This isn't the last thing to fall, y'know?

AUSTIN: Yes, agreed. Alright. Whose [cross] turn is it? It's my turn.

JACK: [cross] We like, make our own petty barony, ruled by a divine.

ART: [cross] It's your turn.

AUSTIN: Fuck, okay. Jump up please. [AUSTIN makes a series of stressed sounds]

[all laughing and making anxious sounds]

ART: [laughing] Oh no!

JACK: [struggling to speak through laughter] You just--[cross] you just took it out--

AUSTIN: [cross] [amused] It didn't work right. It didn't work right. It was--

JACK: [cross] Did that count? [continues laughing in background]

AUSTIN: Wait a second, wait a second! Art. Pick up a die, just pick up a die regular style.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yours is higher than mine! I must have fucked with my default height. Do you see?
[cross] Like come over here!

ART: [cross] Yours is too low!

AUSTIN: [laughing] Alright pick yours up! I wanna make sure they're the same height.

JACK: Okay, this one doesn't count.

AUSTIN: Okay. It still might fucking happen! I was like, it's supposed to jump up! Sooner than that! Okay, well now I have to fuckin' rebuild this--okay. Alright.

JACK: *Now* we're putting three dice on.

AUSTIN: [laughing] It's already a better situation! Alright. Oh I hate it. I should be able to drop this from lower, you were right.

ART: Okay! We're almost there!

AUSTIN: [cross] Are we?

JACK: [cross] We've got two more to do!

AUSTIN: [laughing] Look at this though! Look at this terrible angle! Alright. Two more.

JACK: For the radio listener, Austin is slowly approaching the tower with his dice, which leaps up suddenly as [cross] he gets near it.

ART: [cross] No!

AUSTIN: I can't even see it!

ART: It's over!

AUSTIN: I can't because I zoomed in so I can't zoom out to see the whole thing. Okay, I'm just gonna drop it.

ART: On my thing it fell and then reassembled itself.

AUSTIN: Oh weird. It did not on mine. [relieved and triumphant] Ooooooh!

JACK: [cross] One more!

AUSTIN: [cross] It's hanging on, baby! Grabbing this one.

ART: [cross] How is--what does this look like on--hold on, I guess check the stream.

AUSTIN: [cross] Check my stream, yeah. It's bad! It ain't good! What's the angle I wanna come in at this from?

ART: On mine it's like hanging on by a th--literally a thread.

AUSTIN: It needs to jump up, please!

ART: Hold on, [cross] how do I, how do I...

AUSTIN: [cross] It nee--there it goes.

JACK: [laughs] I love this game.

AUSTIN: Okay. I think I wanna go this way just a little bit, because...

JACK: This is for successfully ruling a petty kingdom, Austin!

AUSTIN: Let's fucking go! [ART cheers] One, two, three, four, five! [relieved] Woo!

ART: We're gonna play this game all night!

[AUSTIN and JACK laugh]

AUSTIN: Oh my god... Unbelievable. [sighs] Deep breaths, deep breaths deep breaths. Well I guess this means that Fealty [laughing] establishes a minor kingdom in the Skarnoc Debris Fields!

JACK: How does this happen? How do we do this? What does this look like? Over the next... Like what's step one? Because the way you put it--how is this different from going and saying to the space station, "you're our space station now." I mean, it might be that.

ART: [cross] I don't think--

AUSTIN: [cross] I think that's a smaller part of it, later maybe. Go ahead Art, this was your plan.

ART: Yeah I'm sort of like... You know Marvel comics has all these characters that are just basically like dudes in space?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Like Living Tribunal and, etc. That's the only one I can think of off the top of my head. Where it's just like, a person who lives in space, and they're exceptionally powerful and mysterious. I think it just sort of--it starts like that.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: It's Fealty is in the Debris Field, and if you would like to talk to Fealty you can come here, but, you know. It's sort of starting to be like the Bane model, the "I was raised in the Debris Field."

[AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: Do you start turning these rocks and crystal spires that we've talked about into a place somehow? Is there something in them that Fealty recognizes, something primal that you can work with? To produce, for instance, oxygen, which you know your elect will need.

ART: Uh-huh. I think so. I sort of want the image of Fealty gathering [cross] the debris and turning it into land.

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh. Oh! Can I pitch an image?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Can there be something that you've never seen Fealty do, Véronique?

JACK: Yeah, absolutely, 100%.

AUSTIN: The statues peel themselves off.

ART: [excited] Ooooh!

AUSTIN: And they all independently--not independently--loyal to Fealty, begin to gather stuff from around the Fields. Right? And that's the other thing right, it's a debris field, so yes there are these rocks and these crystalline structures, but there's also ancient battleships that have been half destroyed, and vaults that are free-floating in space filled with shit. So they begin to--propelled by *what* you do not know--float around you, each as big as a Hallow, grabbing bits and parts from different places and beginning to put them together. Quiet as the night. No emotion on their faces, silent, lips sealed, marble--marblene, begin to build a castle around you.

ART: Yeah, a castle and then sort of like a Minecraft landscape, right?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yes!

ART: I think we end up with this giant image of Fealty sitting on a throne above just like this... This plane of scrap.

AUSTIN: We're fucking back, babey!

ART: But like some of these ships had terraforming materials, right?

AUSTIN: Right! Right, yes.

ART: Yeah, so it makes this like... This Asteroid M of...

AUSTIN: Oh, yes!

JACK (as Véronique): Anchor. I need to eat. I like what you've done with the throne, [AUSTIN laughing] but I'm gonna have to get some food soon.

ART (as Fealty): I believe there's an apple orchard in the western fields, Anchor.

JACK (as Véronique): I can't just eat apples!

ART (as Fealty): I think you can just eat--that's what you do with an apple, Anchor. What is it you like? We have many things.

JACK (as Véronique): I want a meal! I want... I want fries!

AUSTIN: [laughing] A burger!

JACK (as Véronique): I want a burger! I want like a burrito!

JACK: I mean, I'm also working and I'm a track athlete, so maybe I want like, what do athletes eat a lot of? Carbs, right?

ART: Yeah, it's carbs, it's a big plate of spaghetti.

JACK (as Véronique): Yeah, I want pasta! I can't eat an apple, Fealty. How did you--why didn't you tell me that you can do that?

ART (as Fealty): We almost never need to do this.

JACK (as Véronique): Do we *need* to build a throne?

ART (as Fealty): Well, there's a certain poetry to it.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Ahhh.

JACK (as Véronique): Can you get me some food other than an apple? I'm not going to just eat apples.

ART (as Fealty): I'm sure that there was cafeteria rations in the... We'll do an inventory.

AUSTIN: Jack, are you proposing this as an obstacle?

JACK: Yes! My fucking divine has forgotten that I'm a person! Uh, yeah. My obstacle is: after constructing a floating throne and a rocky landscape, the human inside the divine now needs to eat and replenish oxygen and does not believe that the divine's pitch of "go and eat apples" is sufficient.

ART: And your solution?

JACK: I'm gonna take a... You know how big stupid fucking yachts have little boats? I'm gonna take like a launchcraft from the divine to the station.

AUSTIN: You do not--"neither your pilot nor your HOUND wants to be separated from the other."

JACK: [laughing] Oh, no. I'm just gonna pilot, just take the controls and fly to the station to get food.

AUSTIN: Need a third solution here, huh.

JACK: What's solution one? Eat the apples?

AUSTIN: [cross] That's solution one is eat the apples--

ART: [cross] Ah--

AUSTIN: Is that not solution one?

ART: No, no! I'm listening to the concerns of...

AUSTIN: Oh do you have another solution? Then mine can be eat the apples.

ART: [laughs] Okay. Um... Mine is: a vessel gets too close.

AUSTIN: Ah! Yeah. [cross] I love it.

JACK: [cross] Oh no! We've become the pirates! Or, *you've* become the pirates [laughing] in the Skarnoc Field.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah. [cross] Love that.

ART: [cross] Well, maybe they want to live here!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: [cross] [laughing] Let's roll 'em.

AUSTIN: [cross] We'll see. Um. Okay, what the fuck. Where--okay here it is.

ART: That wasn't a roll, that was me moving a die.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: That's my roll, it's a one.

AUSTIN: Here's my roll, I'm gonna move it over here. Oop! What the fuck. I'm just gonna move it, this is not a roll, I'm moving it. Roll! That's a three so it's a two. [cross] Jack?

ART: [cross] And I'll roll for Jack.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you roll for Jack.

ART: That's a five. So it's a three.

AUSTIN: So it's a three. Jack's was go talk to the station, investigate the station. Yours, Art, was the ship comes close. Mine was sustain yourself off what we have here. Get u--not get used to it, but maybe get used to it for a while, you know?

JACK: Let's take the ship gets too close. I think that's exciting.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Which one was that? Was that the--

ART: That was mine, so it's the one.

AUSTIN: It's the one, okay.

ART: [stressed] Oh my god.

AUSTIN: Yeah just lift it up! Oh my god. So now we're gonna see the way [cross] you start--

JACK: [cross] Gently, gently. Art, do this really gently, Art.

AUSTIN: Art! Wait. If you want to put it down right now and change your camera, you should do that. I want you to have the view you want to have for this.

ART: Yeah, hold on.

JACK: For the radio viewer, the tower is now six dice tall. And on dice three--so the dice on the floor is dice one, the dice above it is two, the dice above that is dice three--is offset really spectacularly.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Such that the tower kind of has a kink in the middle of it?

ART: And again, the tower that I can see is different than the tower that Austin can see.

AUSTIN: [laughing] I don't know what's gonna happen!

ART: Which raises a lot of questions about [laughing] where the dice really are.

JACK: [cross] [laughs] That's so horrible.

AUSTIN: [cross] Welcome to Friends at the Table, babeyy!

ART: I want like an above view, kinda, right? Almost like seven eighths, I think?

JACK: Did you just put a little chess piece there, Austin? [cross] To threaten Art?

AUSTIN: [cross] I found a little queen, so, uh-huh. Let's put that over there.

ART: Is this the die I was using? I guess it doesn't matter what die I was using.

AUSTIN: I have no idea what you're looking at on your screen. I'm very concerned. Nice and slow. We gotta get that little hop up.

JACK: Easy does it. Easy does it, Art!

AUSTIN: Oh my fucking-- [stressed sound] It just jumped up! Oh, it just jumped up again, it just jumped up again.

JACK: Art's dice now, fifty-five feet above the stack!

AUSTIN: Okay here we--

JACK: He drops! It stands!

AUSTIN: It stands. One, two, three, four, five. [pause] What ship is this? It's a success, so we're gonna get what we want from it, but how do we get what we want from it?

JACK: Oh, let me find a ship name, from the ship names list.

AUSTIN: Ooh! It's been so long!

JACK: I just googled "ship names."

AUSTIN: [cross] It's not how that goes.

JACK: [cross] No, I want it in the Google Drive.

AUSTIN: You have a -- Yeah, there it is. "Ship names by Jack." Alright. Ones in here we've used before: *A World Without End*, *The Gleam and the Glory*, *The Blue of the Heavens*, *The Deadnettle*, which I then put into a real life--which I then put into Star Wars. That's--

JACK: Into Star Wars!

AUSTIN: That's where I--I put *The Deadnettle* from your ship name list into my short story in *A Certain Point of View: Empire Strikes Back*. [JACK laughs]

ART: So Austin gave it to Disney. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay, well...

JACK: [laughing] He did!

AUSTIN: I also gave them my Star Wars OC, my [laughing] genderswapped Star Wars OC, Sunnari Khall, captain of *The Deadnettle*.

JACK: Nah that's great, we're both shackled together, [cross] to the mouse here.

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh, Anchor, yeah. *The Wake Robin* we've used, *The Other Hand* we've used. *The Pale to the Wheel* we've used. *The Snow in Summer* we've used. There's still a lot of great ones in here, though.

[pause]

JACK: I think this might be the time for *The Hen and Chicks* to show up, right?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah.

ART: [laughing] It's a fried chicken ship.

AUSTIN: [laughing] The fried chicken ship!

AUSTIN and JACK: *The Hen and Chicks*.

AUSTIN: Some kind of agrivessel?

JACK: Curious--agrivessel, I'm gonna write: Agrivessel, comma, curious about the new throne in the sky. [all laugh] Approaches Fealty.

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): [in a Southern accent]: Uh, hey uh, Jeremiah, do you see that throne over yonder? [pause] Floatin' in the sky there, in the debris field?

ART: Oh yeah!

JACK (as Jeremiah): Say again?

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): There seems to be a little bit of a throne situation happenin', ahead. I don't remember that last time we passed through here.

JACK (as Jeremiah): Human-sized throne? [cross] Please clarify.

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): [cross] No! Gotta tell you, little bit bigger! Wouldn't be able to see it from this distance if it were just a human-sized throne. In fact, I suspect here in the debris field there's probably a couple dozen human-sized thrones but a throne this size--this is a new revelation.

JACK (as Jeremiah): Jeremiah please clarify building material of throne?

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): You know, it's a couple different things? I see some raw obsidian, I see some... Uh, paper. Seems like it's been a bit of an amalgamation of materials made available probably from the debris field. My scanners are going *wild*.

[ART laughs]

JACK (as Jeremiah): Any moving or living signatures?

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): Ah uh... Be-be-be-be-beep... I think there's a person over there! Command? I think--you know, I think we gotta go--I think... I hate to do this to you,

but according to the rules and all that we gotta go check [JACK (as Jeremiah/Command) sighs] if there's a living signal.

JACK (as Jeremiah/Command): Clear for approach, go ahead.

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): [spaceship thruster sound effects]

[JACK and AUSTIN laugh]

JACK: Just like a big ugly ship with *The Hen and Chicks* in big letters on the side.

ART: No, this feels like the ship from *Alien*, right? [cross] What's the--the *Nostromo*.

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh, yeah. The *Nostromo*, for sure, for sure. God, I --

JACK: God, *Alien*--this is my new--catch me on AO3--this is my new fic, it's called "*Alien Except Instead of a Planet They Saw a Big Old Throne Floating in Space*." [AUSTIN laughs]

ART: Yeah that's, that's... That's the, what was the... That was the prequel, right? That was what happened in...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: What's the matter with me, what's the *Alien* prequel?

AUSTIN: *Prometheus*.

ART: *Prometheus*, yeah.

JACK: Oh, sure, it kind of is, I suppose. I mean I feel like probably this is you, Art. You've got to figure out what's going on here.

ART: Oh do you want me to talk...

AUSTIN: Well, what do you... What happens to this thing? [pause] I've just realized what this is. This is not a human. I realized the voice I was doing wasn't quite KRK-56 [pronounced Kirk 56], KRK-56 [said as the letters K-R-K 56], it was a little higher pitched; but this ship is a person. This is a ship AI. I don't know if people remember this, from the end of one side of Partizan, they met a delivery ship that just had a bunch of little robot drones on its back that flew around--little mosquito drones. And it was stopped at the gate at the edge of space, sorry, at the edge of Partizan space. And given that I'm playing the same character but a little more agitated, I feel like maybe it's a cousin or a similar build to KRK-56. Who, I didn't name this character, but. So just a ship pulls up, filled with food and stuff. [pause] Art, how does Fealty... What's Fealty do here? We already know that you're succeeding.

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: So what's it look like?

ART: I think it's, you know,

ART (as Fealty): Is this what you *want* to do?

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): What's that, going around and delivering, uh, wheat and chicken and whatnot?

ART (as Fealty): Yes.

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): I would say that it's sort of a mechanical compulsion more than a desire.

ART (as Fealty): I can free you from compulsion.

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): You can--I'm gonna have to check in on Command to see if that's an acceptable outcome.

ART (as Fealty): Don't ask your Command.

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): Don't ask my Command? I mean, I feel like...

ART (as Fealty): Think of your own command.

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): [contemplative] Think of my own command?

ART (as Fealty): What would you do if you could do anything?

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): I reckon I'd be a painter.

ART (as Fealty): You could paint here.

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): See I've already started doing a little--let me just show you a thing or two.

AUSTIN: And from the back, the mosquito drones that are like its defensive units, one of them lifts off that seems to be different than the other ones. Its guns have been replaced by spray nozzles. And it finds just a surface somewhere, and starts to go to work. At first you're like, oh, did they mean a painter like a house painter because they just paint a surface. But it's clear that that's the primer. They've primed the side of one of these crystalline spires--or maybe it's a

harder rock spire--and then goes to work painting in these big bold bright squares. Squares and rectangles. You don't know if there is a particular image that this space truck is setting up here, but it's something--in fact maybe it is... [chuckles] You realize actually after a moment that it's painted a big apple tree. You realize like oh, that's the direction the apple orchard is. And it's a very beautiful, *sort of* abstract, image of an apple tree, in the direction of your apple grove.

ART (as Fealty): That's beautiful work. Would you like to stay? And work for yourself? And work for me?

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): Well I mean, you know... I might could. All I have to offer is the food I have here. Would that be enough to let me stay?

ART (as Fealty): You sell yourself short.

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): [bashful] Aw, well. I don't know how a space truck can blush, but I'm doin' it.

[ART laughs]

AUSTIN: Gotta name this character. Gotta name this character right away. [long pause] I think that that's it. This space truck lands, very near to you, Véronique. And you got a lot available to you right here.

[pause]

JACK: Great, okay. Whose obstacle is coming up now?

AUSTIN: We've lost track of turns. We can find a new turn order.

ART: No, it must be my... Didn't you pick... [cross] You picked...

AUSTIN: [cross] Two ago--we skipped you, so yes, it's you. 'Cause I picked the cold silence. Jack picked food. Skipping over you in our bottom of Roll20 turn order.

AUSTIN (as *The Hen and Chicks*): Sierra. My name's Sierra.

ART (as Fealty): It's nice to meet you, Sierra. I'm Fealty.

AUSTIN (as Sierra): I'm gonna go explore a little bit, but if you need me, just let me know.

ART (as Fealty): I will. And if you need anything, let *me* know.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna add to your list here, your food list--"your food list," your *ship* list, that the name of this agrivessel is not just *The Hen and Chicks*, it's Sierra. That is the name that they've chosen for themselves.

ART: What a year we're gonna have.

AUSTIN: Can't fucking wait! [ART and JACK laugh] Art, what's up? What's the situation?

ART: Well I mean, they have to c--they have to find us.

AUSTIN: Oh, they *have* to find us, yeah yeah yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. [cross] Or--

ART: [cross] And I wanna just put some time in, right.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: It's been months. There's self-sustaining agriculture now--

AUSTIN, laughing: Yeah!

ART: --using the stuff from the truck. There's chickens, there's... What else was in there?

AUSTIN: Wheat.

ART: Wheat!

AUSTIN: What else we got, we got a bunch of stuff! There's probably a ton of just staple foods, you know?

JACK: Microgreens.

AUSTIN: [cross] Microgreens, yeah yeah yeah. Yeah.

ART: [cross] It's a real pastoral... A pastoral scrap empire.

JACK: [cross] With a huge stone throne!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: With a divine sitting on it.

ART: [cross] Yeah.

AUSTIN: [cross] Uh-huh.

JACK: This is like a speedrun for the worst place.

ART: I don't know what you're--this is great! Let's all move here. [AUSTIN and JACK laugh] So eventually, the Principality comes to... Comes a-knockin', right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, someone's looking for you, someone has come to... "Wait a second. We *know* that they passed through here."

JACK: Divine Fealty has gone off-grid for three months.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: [laughing] The divine Fealty has gone off the grid and created feudalism.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JACK: [sighs] Okay.

ART: And I guess that's--they probably sent something a little scarier than a Hallow, right?

AUSTIN: I think this is, do they send a divine? Or do they send some sort of anti-divine squad, the sort of which has only just started getting deployed against the Pact and the Pact's divines.

JACK: The sort of people [cross] with the same techniques as Kalar.

ART: [cross] Yeah that's the--

AUSTIN: Yeah! [cross] But--

JACK: [cross] But for the--

AUSTIN: And in this case in space.

JACK: Yes.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: God, what did Sylvi call this group in COUNTER/Weight? That the Rapid Evening had, the Rapid Evening had some sort of special unit that did this. [pause] I know how to find it because I know the episode is "Candle in the Sun." [pause] [sigh] What is it called? It has a great--yeah the Heresy Unit! Right, it was a Heresy Unit! Just like with Tanner Indiana and the Heresy Unit. It was the same type of thing. Yeah yeah yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So it's a Heresy Unit gets put, facing inwards here. So yeah, we got it. [pause] I think Jack, is this your--or I guess it's back to me now because we're going in a weird arc--no, it's Art! Art! [cross] You're setting this up.

ART: [cross] It's my turn, yeah. This is mine, and the solution to the Heresy Unit...

AUSTIN: What happens? They show up and what happens?

ART: I think they're here to tell us that it's over, that we gotta come in.

AUSTIN: Is that how--they do communicate it to you like that? Where it's just like [cross] "alright, wrap it up."

ART: [cross] Yeah, this is over. You had your fun. Sometimes, the old divines, they get a little...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: They get a little literal.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And we know that because of the... The thing that's in divines, circa the end of Twilight Mirage that lets them be immortal: they can be destroyed and rebuilt. Indefinitely. And doing that *has* a psychological element to it. We believe. Or in some cases, at least. So I think there is probably like. "It's time for you to get remade," basically. Like,

AUSTIN (as Heresy Squad): You've gone faulty, you're heretical, you can still serve the Principality but to do that best, both of you need to come in *now*.

AUSTIN: And I think they probably even give you the direct offer, Véronique, of like,

AUSTIN (as Heresy Squad): This is about your divine, elect. We know that you've done your service as normal. You will not be punished for this.

JACK (as Véronique): I don't know what they're... Thank you, that means a lot to hear. I don't know what they're thinking.

AUSTIN: You're saying this to them? About Fealty?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Damn.

ART: That's how it is.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, that's how it is!

AUSTIN (as Heresy Squad): Well you know, it's like we said, it's a rather old divine. The sort of which [cross] frankly--

JACK (as Véronique): [cross] Fealty--

AUSTIN (as Heresy Squad): Fealty, yes.

JACK (as Véronique): Fealty got an idea that something was... There's all kinds of security concerns that we have to take into account when escorting the Princept. And in this particular moment Fealty made a call, which I supported at the time. I'm happy to take responsibility for that. But since then, they haven't chosen to act on it. They've just been constructing this. Nothing has come of the decision that they made. I really don't know what's going on. And I want you to know that I would come with you willingly.

AUSTIN (as Heresy Squad): Well of course, of course. I don't think we had any doubt about *that*. Now Fealty... You're gonna come with us? Or you gonna make us bring you back?

[pause]

AUSTIN: I think they're in their own hollows. And they're in *hollows*, they're not blessed by any divine, a heresy unit wouldn't be. But they are using this new technology that is built to fuck up [cross] divines.

JACK: [cross] Are they not blessed by divines in the same way that executioners wear hoods? Where it's like, there is some sort of, like--

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: --to be blessed by a divine and do this would feel so repugnant to them that part of the way they can get around it is like... "We have no connection to the divines."

AUSTIN: At all. Yes. And their jobs got much easier in the last five years, in the sense that--I mean, harder also, in the sense that there's more errant divines, right? In the sense that Pact divines have been said to be heretical at this point, or at least particularly dangerous ones; ones that the Curtain believe cannot be brought back on board through traditional negotiation. So there's way *more* work to be done. But the development of the Kalmeria particle, the further investigation into using Branched technology as anti-divine weaponry, for instance, all that stuff has given them a lot of really powerful tools.

I think that these are also just deeply--I mean, I like the exec--I think there's something about thinking about them as, "what if an executioner was a giant robot," or that's what their units look like. There is a theatricality to what they look like. Big, kind of conical helms at the top. Those

sorts of like tall, inquisition-y cone-shaped helmets. And long black swords, or axes--melee weapons, they get up close, because they have to, to do this real damage to a divine. Also because they can end it quickly if they get in close. They know that ranged weapons are just like not gonna cut it for most of what they're gonna do here. And so they begin to move in on Fealty.

ART: Wait they asked a question, I still have to answer.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, give me your answer.

ART (as Fealty): I will do as my excerpt commands.

AUSTIN: Two of them look at each other and go,

AUSTIN (as Heresy Squad): Yeah, far gone. That's... Old lingo. This is what [cross] we're talking about.

ART: [cross] I know what I said!

AUSTIN (as Heresy Squad): Alright well then, you *really* gotta come in with us.

JACK (as Véronique): Wait wait. Uh... Although, hold on. I don't think I can do that. [pause] I don't think Fealty will--I don't think that Fealty will let me.

AUSTIN (as Heresy Squad): Now elect, Fealty just said they would do as you command.

JACK (as Véronique): I don't think that they're... No, I have reason to believe that--is that so, Fealty?

ART (as Fealty): Of course it is.

JACK (as Véronique): Can I talk to Fealty? Alone for a moment?

AUSTIN (as Heresy Squad): Three minutes.

JACK (as Véronique): Fealty, what's going on?

ART (as Fealty): There's something dangerous out there.

JACK (as Véronique): No, I know. I assume that we're talking about "it" again, which is good, because this is the first time we've talked about it since you started building a kingdom out here.

ART (as Fealty): If I think about it, it's in my short-term memory. They can get my short-term memory. Do you know how many things happen here every day?

JACK (as Véronique): [cross] Is this true?

ART (as Fealty): [cross] Enough to fill the memory of a divine.

JACK (as Véronique): Are you telling me the truth?

ART (as Fealty): Always, Anchor.

JACK (as Véronique): So you're just out here playing house to fill up the--shit! But it's still there, right? You can't think--don't think about it! Don't think about it, don't think about it!
[AUSTIN laughs]

ART (as Fealty): What you're asking is hard.

AUSTIN: Don't think of the pink elephant.

JACK (as Véronique): Shut up, shut up! Fuck! How many of them are there --

AUSTIN: Fealty, do you think of it?

ART: Yeah! You can't tell someone not to think about something.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so one of these mechs that has instead of one cone-head thing, has three--it's actually three faces and they're kind of welded together, one looking forward, one looking left, one looking right. Each of them has their own weird cone-head thing, cone helmet. They're not helmets because it's just the head of the mech, you understand. The pilot in there goes,

AUSTIN (as Heresy Squad): Holy shit! I got it.

ART (as Fealty): That one has to die.

JACK (as Véronique): Yup! I concur.

JACK: Okay! Obstacle one: We fight the squad. We lure them further into the... [laughing]
Sarlacc? No.

AUSTIN: Skarnoc. The Sarlacc pit!

JACK: We lure them farther into the Skarnoc Debris Fields and we kill them. That's my pitch.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: This is--[laughs] again, this is guilt as well, from Véronique here. [AUSTIN laughing]

AUSTIN: Number two: someone from that station finally shows up and interferes.

ART: Mm. Solution three: we find a way to evacuate Sierra quickly and we detonate the entire...

AUSTIN: The kingdom is destroyed.

ART: The kingdom, yeah.

JACK: [laughing] Holy shit. This is so funny to me because every single round of these, Austin and I come up with, I think, fairly good plans. [AUSTIN laughs] And then Art just blows them out of the water with his stupid plans.

AUSTIN: Art the god. Alright, I'm rolling, I'm rolling, I'll roll this one up here.

JACK: So you're rolling for you, yup.

AUSTIN: This is me. Hey, a--three stress! [JACK laughs]

ART: I'll roll this one.

JACK: So this is uh, kill 'em.

AUSTIN: Wait no, I thought [cross] that was...

ART: [cross] Two.

AUSTIN: I thought that was Art's, is this not [cross] Art's? Because--

ART: [cross] Oh yeah, that's mine.

AUSTIN: --blow up everything. And so this is yours, Jack. You wanna do it, Art?

ART: I'll roll that one.

AUSTIN: *This* is kill 'em. One.

ART: That's one, kill 'em is one. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Kill 'em is one, blow it all up is two, outsiders come in and interfere is three.

JACK: This is your choice, right Art?

ART: [cross] Yeah, uh-huh.

AUSTIN: [cross] This is Art's choice.

ART: Um... [pause] What is... See, the blowing it up is a plausible end to this that might not get other people to come here.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: [cross] But I don't want to put two dice on this tower!

JACK: [cross] It would require you to put-- [laughs]

ART: So I think we're going with the one stress plan.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Kill a full heresy squad.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: And we're gonna have to leave, but Sierra can have this.

AUSTIN: We don't have to leave! I mean, I guess we could.

ART: I think we do.

JACK: This is just treason all the way down.

AUSTIN: We'll see if you succeed or fail! If you succeed, you *succeeded* at the obstacle.

ART: Yeah.

JACK: I think Art is saying, they sent a heresy squad; they'll send another.

AUSTIN: Yeah, maybe.

JACK: When that one doesn't check in.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: I have to ask a quick rules question, and when I say rules question I mean a house rules question.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Can I move a die closer, and then adjust my camera angle?

AUSTIN: Yeah! Yeah.

ART: Alright.

JACK: Yeah, it's the putting it on that's the difficult bit.

AUSTIN: Yeah. But be careful as you approach! Because it could still fuck up. Alright, yeah yeah yeah.

ART: [cross] Zoom in a little bit, move up a little bit.

AUSTIN: [cross] One die, we can do this. I believe in you. One, two--

JACK: For the listener, the tower is now seven dice tall. Art is trying to put an eighth dice on it.

ART: Oh this isn't the right angle.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna move these other dice away, Art. So that you--we have a clearer view of the whole situation. Okay. There we go.

ART: Alright, I'm ready to go when you say so.

AUSTIN: Go for it.

JACK: [cross] Pop up! Pop up! Yes!

AUSTIN: [cross] [anxious noises] [sharp inhale]

JACK: Ah!

[ART cackles]

AUSTIN: ...Two, three, four, five. I think we did it. As Tyler said in the chat, this is why you need so many dice. However, we're at a point where if it falls, bad shit's gonna happen. Because the more dice that fall, the higher the chance that bad shit happens. That's how I'll summarize those rules, for now. Alright! What happens here, Art? You just kill them? They just can't stand up? What happens? What's the fight?

ART: No they *can* stand up, that's the point, it's a heresy unit, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: But we just sorta like--it's sort of like oh, the gate is this way, and we fly through a thick bit of debris and we take them by surprise. And this I think isn't the ordinance, this is the javelin.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah!

ART: No explosions, no looks, just...

AUSTIN: This is just, it's quiet. This is our like, the fight that's in space that doesn't have any sound in it because space doesn't have any sound. Can you call the javelin back to you? Do you know what I mean? You throw it, and then [ART: Yeah--no] almost telekinetically? Or do you have to go after it?

ART: No I think there's just more javelins.

AUSTIN: Ah, okay. Sure.

[AUSTIN and ART laugh]

ART: I think that Fealty can sort of like, metabolize javelins.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Well we've seen this before! Motion used to do that to y'all, remember?

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: In the... The Demiurge, the Demiurge could do that with raw Perennial Wave, could turn it into those javel--those spears. So yeah, I think this is a well established thing that we know divines, some divines have figured out how to do. So, love it. And yet maybe this is a thing you did back in pre-Principality days, you know? Fuckin' running across the--we know that Twilight Mirage loved its Olympics. It started with Olympics, it ended with Olympics.

JACK: There was also Olympics in Partizan!

AUSTIN: [cross] We've had a lot of Olympics.

JACK: [cross] We just keep coming back to the old Olympics.

AUSTIN: Yeah, mhm! [cross] I think--

ART: [cross] That's why it's the *modern* pentathlon.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Oh, okay.

JACK: [laughing] Right, I see.

AUSTIN: Yes. Twilight Mirage Olympics, less corrupt than the real Olympics; Partizan Olympics somehow *more* corrupt than the modern, than our Olympics.

JACK: Swimming and bartering...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Seeing... Taking our a heresy unit is tripping all the switches in Véronique's brain that made them go, "we physically shouldn't be able to fight our own Hallows," but like, ten *times* that. Of just like, this is a unit sent to kill rogue divines. I do not understand how we are killing them.

AUSTIN: How much--

JACK: Like, physically.

AUSTIN: How much are your hands on the controls here, Véronique? Do you feel yourself pulling triggers and pressing buttons, and...

JACK: I think so. I think it's a combination. Because of the way we're describing how Fealty looks--and I don't know if Art has strong feelings about this--my guess is that, even compared to other divines, Fealty is complicated to fly.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And I think part of the way that is offset, is that the elect is doing something, and the elect has autopilots that they oversee, and then the divine is doing stuff, and then the divine has AI subroutines that are handling other things. And it's just this really--it's a ballet of involvement.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Fealty requires effort from both sides.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Yes. Yes. [cross] That's what's written on the--

ART: [cross] And also the robot.

AUSTIN: And also the robot! Alright, who's up?

JACK: It's you I think, Austin.

AUSTIN: Is it me? Okay. It is me. You've gone through the gate, did you say that? Or did you actually just go *towards* the gate?

ART: Towards the gate.

AUSTIN: Okay, towards but not out. So I'm gonna pull that trigger that I teased last time, which is, I think--now having killed a heresy squad... I mean, what we get is, if this is a new episode starting of a TV show, we open in a place we've never seen before. Which is, a base. In the Skarnoc Debris Fields, inside of that station, that abandoned--that seemingly abandoned station that in fact is not abandoned--as members of a paramilitary unit throw on warning signs as a fucking heresy squad shows up in their sector. And they're like, "oh my god, they found us! Alright everyone get ready to evacuate, everyone get ready to get out of here! Everyone man the battle stations! We're prepping our anti-aircraft guns! We are preparing the self-destruct for this cell!" And then one after another they get dropped. And we see their kind of radar display as dot after dot from the heresy unit disappears. And seeing that, they think, maybe we have an ally here. And a vessel comes out to meet you. Flying Millenium Break... The banner of Millenium Break. The classic M, with a slash through it.

And this obstacle is an invitation; it's an invitation to dinner and parley. They know you're here. They've known you're here, you've been here for a while and were happy to let you just chill, but they saw you destroy, undoubtedly, one of the powerful things the Principality can throw at you. And at that point, what they've realized is, "we need to know if you're someone we can live with here, or if we need to fucking leave." Because... Basically, it's now or never in terms of *you*. Some people there I think just want to scramble and leave. "Fuck it! This whole thing could be a trap! They could have wasted that heresy unit just to try and draw us out!" There's a lot of debate here from these folks. But the message goes out, you get the call. I don't know, maybe this is a Gucci Garantine base, maybe that's a fun name to bring up here, right?

JACK: Oh shit! She just shows up!

AUSTIN: And just miserable! Just *miserable* in the middle of this *fucking* asteroid field filled with nothing but--

JACK: Is she in like, fatigues?

AUSTIN: I don't think she could bear to be. [JACK laughs] I think she's in... She's in a dress uniform. You know? But it's... It ain't good! Do you know what I mean? It's beat to shit, it's not a particularly fashionable look. And the people around her are in fatigues but it's catch as catch can. Millennium Break doesn't own a factory where they make fatigues. So it's a lot of stuff from people's own private, previous--if they served in the military, in one of the different Principality Stels, stuff that they picked up secondhand along the way, stuff that they found or stole. Other markings have been removed, but they don't have their own shit in that way. At least, this unit doesn't. And Gucci is here and is not particularly happy about being, again, in the Skarnoc

Debris Fields versus a palace somewhere, [laughs] for instance. [JACK laughs] But yeah, invites you to some sort of parley; dinner and a parley.

[pause]

ART: We're gonna see Véronique's dress uniform.

AUSTIN: Yeah, what is Véronique's dress uniform?

JACK: Oh god, it's... Okay, Véronique is Nideo through and through so it's going to be high formal... Neoclassical stuff, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's what we said.

JACK: [cross] Grotesque neo-classical.

AUSTIN: [cross] Grotesque neoclassical from Nideo, yeah.

JACK: It's like a... Oh god, I didn't know we were gonna have to do costumes. [AUSTIN laughs] [pause] Oh! It's--you know how the queen in *Green Knight* has that doublet absolutely covered in little mirrors or medallions or pins?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: Guinevere. It's like a military dress uniform and I think it makes Gucci's dress uniform look bizarre. But it is just completely covered in, um, oh god what are they called... What's that style of English neoclassical or European neoclassical jewelry which is like a pale blue, almost like paste or enamel, with an inlaid white sort of concave face. Do you know what I'm talking about?

AUSTIN: Oh, hm.

ART: Uh-uh.

AUSTIN: No. People in the chat almost certainly will, though.

JACK: Yeah, I'm... Cameos! Cameos!

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah! Sure sure sure sure sure. Yes.

JACK: It's just a dress jacket [cross] covered in hundreds of cameos.

AUSTIN: [cross] Covered in cameos. Yeah, okay. I looove it. That's extremely Nideo to me.

JACK: It looks absolutely bizarre. And it means that she has to move really stiltedly because it doesn't quite bend in ways that bodies do. And she's furious, because these are absolutely the enemy.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah.

JACK: [cross] She barely took this meeting at all. The only reason she has taken it is because she has absolutely no idea what it means to be on a side? In a war anymore. She was told, "you are the elect of the divine Fealty for Stel Nideo for the Principality." And what does that mean if you've just destroyed eight of their units? Is that true? What is being on a side? All I know is I cannot stand Millennium Break and my own army keeps trying to kill me.

AUSTIN: So what's your solution? Is it fuck this, no? Or is it...

JACK: I'm going. [cross] But I'm gonna try to get them to leave.

AUSTIN: [cross] You're going? Okay. So your solution to this obstacle is go and convince them to leave.

JACK: Make it very clear that this is Stel Nidean business. We want absolutely nothing to do with them. I think I'm acting--I don't know if this is also what Fealty's plan is, I'm curious to hear what Art's suggestion is.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ART: I don't care what Millennium Break does. I want you to just try to look at everything, touch everything; through whatever connection we have, I want you to go back to filling up the memory banks. I want you to spend an hour, spend a day, spend a week here. I guess that's not a solution.

AUSTIN: No, but the solution there is to like...

ART: Filibuster... [cross] [laughs] The dinner.

AUSTIN: [cross] Is to filibuster them! Yeah yeah yeah. Right? I think my solution is to make a trade. Is to trade them some of the supplies that you have, because from Sierra's food banks and other supplies... For something from them. What do they have that you would want?

JACK: Oh, shit! They have information. Millennium Break comms. [cross] They could, you know--

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah yeah yeah. The state of the things outside. Right? You have no idea what's going on elsewhere. They do. So you can use that to plan your next maneuver, or whatever it is you're doing. Right?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Let's rolIII 'em.

AUSTIN: Alright.

ART: I'm gonna roll for my own...

AUSTIN: Yup.

JACK: So this is--

ART: [cross] That's a four.

JACK: [cross] --fill up the memory bank.

AUSTIN: Fill up the memory bank is a four, I'm rolling now. That's a three for... Ooh.

ART: [cross] And a two for Jack's plan.

AUSTIN: [cross] So a two or a three! Alright. Two to convince them to leave, two to fill up the memory banks, filibuster them, make no actual maneuvers, and a three for get access to their comms in exchange for food. [pause] Whose turn is this? Is this me?

ART: It's yours, isn't it?

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, I want those comms, babey!

ART: [cross] Alright.

JACK: [cross] This also makes sense for Véronique because she's like--I want to eat, I want to prove myself that I'm still a good Nidean if I can get some information about Millennium Break... Maybe there's a way back here.

AUSTIN: And is there a--yeah yeah yeah, that's a big thing. [cross] And then also just like--

JACK: [cross] Oh, also the--

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

JACK: The other thing that's happening is that like, all through this, Véronique is doing contortions in her head to avoid thinking about the thing. [cross] And where the computer--

AUSTIN: [cross] You have an image of the thing, but you don't know--you have the purple, but you don't have what--

JACK: I think I know what it is.

AUSTIN: Fealty is, right.

JACK: No I think--yeah, Véronique knows what--because Fealty knows, Véronique knows what it is.

AUSTIN: Right, right. Okay.

JACK: [cross] The big distinction though--

ART: [cross] [laughing] Everyone knows but the audience.

AUSTIN: I bet the audience has some thoughts!

JACK: --is that the computer is doing it through a series of processes of trying not to remember; this is like the awful human thing of trying to keep something out of your brain.

AUSTIN: Yeah. [cross] Good fucking luck.

JACK: [cross] But knowing that there's huge stakes to it.

AUSTIN: Speaking of huge stakes, are we at eight? One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight!

ART: There's no way we're getting to eleven. This is [cross] science fiction.

AUSTIN: [cross] Fuck, I didn't mean to do that.

ART: Especially Austin.

AUSTIN: [sharp inhale] Ahh! [cross] It's not jumping quick enough!

JACK: [cross] Oh shit, Austin!

AUSTIN: Okay, I'm gonna come in from this side, I'm gonna come in from this side. This looks like [cross] what I have to do.

ART: [cross] Oh I would go in from the absolute opposite side.

AUSTIN: Well we don't have--

ART: Ah!

AUSTIN: Okay, I can't see it anymore. I can't, this is a bad angle.

ART: You're up, you're up and over.

AUSTIN: Dropping.

JACK: Oh!

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Okay, Austin has got one on, the tower now has n--does it have [cross] nine dice on it?

AUSTIN: [cross] Nine, nine. Alright, trying it again. I like this approach.

ART: NO!

JACK: No! Oh! [laughing] Okay okay, so now, Austin has knocked all the tower over except three dice. So this is important.

AUSTIN: Except three. It's time to read, it's time to read. [despairingly] Ahh. This goes bad, huh? Alright. Ahem.

Memory Loss. If adding new dice causes a tower to fall, the plan fails and you barely escape. The Stress of the situation--whether physical, mental, or emotional--could also cause your HOUND to lose a memory.

When your tower falls, survey the face-up values they toppled dice land on. Identify the number that appears the most and cross it off your list. If multiple values tie for the most prevalent, cross off the highest. If the most prevalent value is already crossed off, cross off the second-most. This means if enough numbers are crossed off, even one die can lead to memory loss.

Any dice that remain stacked are not counted and can be straightened for stability before the next turn. The tower's base die is also considered "toppled" if alone.

JACK: So we have two sixes, two twos, and two ones.

AUSTIN: So the six gets crossed off, right? The highest. "If the most prevalent value is cro--If multiple values tie," it's the highest. So cross off that six. I guess I'll do it. On our list of numbers. Um. Ah, that's the wrong button.

JACK: Oh wait, someone's saying we have three ones.

AUSTIN: [cross] Three ones? Where's the third one?

JACK: One, two three four five, six seven eight nine, [cross] te--

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh yeah we have three ones.

JACK: [cross] Is that the one that went all the way over there?

AUSTIN: [cross] The one that went all the way over here counts, yeah. So it's one instead. Thank you chat, for picking that up. And I'll come back over to Roll20, and I will continue to try to figure out their new shit. They moved stuff around on me and I don't like it. Alright, let's cross off this--

JACK: But we don't check off any other numbers, right?

AUSTIN: Just the one. I believe. Well that didn't change color; change color! There we go. [makes crossing out sounds] No more one.

When a number is crossed off from your list, it's time for a special scene. Cast players before roleplaying the scene's failure and narrow escape. Two additional things must be included in the scene:

-One, the HOUND must take damage in some way

-Two, your scene must feature a flashback to a memory between the HOUND and the pilot

Roleplay this memory until the emotional connection between pilot and mech is clear before jumping back to the present. You narrowly manage to escape the situation, but the damage to your HOUND has erased the flashback's memory forever.

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.

Once the full scene is complete, clear any toppled dice so that only the base of the tower and any stable blocks remain. Turn order then passes to the next player clockwise.

You might be guessing, once these are all crossed off, we are done. We can also end sooner than that, given that we've already gone for quite some time; or we can... We'll get there when we get there. We'll talk about it when we talk about it. I'm gonna clear this area. Three is three, I'm not--okay here we go. Did it say we could straighten them? Did it say that? [cross] I don't th--

JACK: [cross] It did, yeah. We can straighten them.

AUSTIN: [cross] We can straighten them.

ART: [cross] Three stay? Shit.

AUSTIN: Three stay. Third one right here. Third one right here.

ART: Alright, sorry, I took one off.

AUSTIN: We're good. Alright, is that straight? Is that straight? Should we go straighter than that?

ART: I think that's as straight as we can [cross] reasonably hope for.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, yeah, yeah. Alright.

ART: I already know the right way to approach this one.

AUSTIN: I don't, so. Okay.

ART: Over here.

AUSTIN: Mm. Sure. That might be right. What happens here?

ART: [cross] I've never knocked a tower over.

AUSTIN: [cross] I think I know what happens here. Which is, a great feast, an incredible amount of delicious food. The stuff that you have is good, back at the throne, but is it good enough, Véronique? It's not homemade, you know what I mean? This stuff is gruel, but--actually you brought them good materials and so there's probably some really good chef here, who's able to make, take, make gold from flax. Which, don't eat either of--don't eat raw flax and don't eat gold, please. Thank you. But is able to make good stuff out of--and *really* good stuff out of the stuff you've brought. You're wined and dined. And then, somewhere along the line where you're trying to get those memory banks filled, there is an emergency call. From--or an emergency feeling, from Fealty, whatever that connection looks like. Fealty, are you just parked out there? Or are you...

ART: I think so.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: This like weird, juxtaposition of the base and glittering...

AUSTIN: It can only be this; your sensors pick something up at the throne, right? And it's on fire. Burn thrones. [JACK laughs]

ART: Yeah.

JACK: [cross] Holy shit.

AUSTIN: [cross] And the second that begins, they're drilling into you. They're drilling into you, they're on your body, they're all over your body in spacesuits too small for you to even notice; they've pulled some of the statues away, or they've blown them up, or knocked them away. And are beginning to drill into you where your memory core is. They're trying to get at you. And their bet was--the play was--without your elect, you're not gonna be able to fucking defend yourself the right way. And, you know, they pull guns on you Véronique the second this operation begins. They open up the glass window, the viewscreen, to show that your little throne is one fire; and this was all a ploy. This was all a way to get whatever they could from you before you hurt them, which they believed was inevitable in the long run.

[big sigh from JACK]

AUSTIN: I think Garantine says to you,

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

JACK: I mean, I'm trying to find a reason here why Véronique wouldn't just try and kill Gucci Garantine. [laughs]

AUSTIN: I think it's all of the people pointing guns at Véronique.

JACK: Yeah, yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Right?

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

AUSTIN: I think, have we stumbled into the--oh we haven't, because we have to have a flashback here.

ART: Yeah.

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.

AUSTIN: And hits a button on a big, bulky remote control. And your image pops up from like various news feeds.

AUSTIN (as Gucci): They say you're a traitor.

JACK (as Véronique): I can't be. They're making a mistake.

AUSTIN (as Gucci): Well, some of them say you already joined us. Others say you went to the Pact. I heard on one news feed you're actually a secret Branched operative.

JACK (as Véronique): I am the elect, Fealty. And my loyalty lies with the Stel.

AUSTIN (as Gucci): Funny. I saw you kill six, seven, eight members of that Stel. So recently.

JACK (as Véronique): It doesn't matter. I am the elect of Fealty.

AUSTIN (as Gucci): Fealty's being dealt with.

JACK: Cut to!

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK (as Véronique): You've been to war before, right Anchor?

ART (as Fealty): Of course I have.

JACK (as Véronique): What's it like?

ART (as Fealty): Oh it's terrible. You wouldn't like it.

JACK (as Véronique): Oh, don't say that. War's coming, you know.

[AUSTIN cackles]

ART (as Fealty): War is always coming.

JACK (as Véronique): War is coming sooner, and it's gonna be, it's gonna be a big one, but you know. That's why they put us together, right? [amused] I can't believe that I asked you, "what's war like," and you said, "it's terrible."

ART (as Fealty): It *is* terrible.

JACK (as Véronique): [cross] Why?

ART (as Fealty): [cross] Do you know how many wars I've seen?

JACK (as Véronique): How many wars have you seen?

ART (as Fealty): Thousands.

JACK (as Véronique): [shocked] You've seen *thousands* of wars?

ART (as Fealty): Thousands of wars, Anchor.

JACK (as Véronique): Shit! I don't even know what a thousand wars look like.

ART (as Fealty): [cross] In a lot of ways--

JACK (as Véronique): [cross] Did you win?

ART (as Fealty): --very similar.

JACK (as Véronique): Did you ever have a good one? You must have--you've fought a thousand wars and one of them must have been good.

ART (as Fealty): What does a good war look like?

JACK (as Véronique): Oh, you know.

ART (as Fealty): [cross] I don't know.

JACK (as Véronique): [cross] It's like, you fight for your Stel, and you're proud, and you go out and you bring glory! And you... You take your Stel to good places.

ART (as Fealty): I fight the wars, and the Stels go wherever they want.

JACK (as Véronique): I don't know--I don't know [slight laugh] how to interpret that, I just wanted a pep talk before we get deployed. Come on, it is coming right? The war? It can't be long now.

ART (as Fealty): It can't be long now. You shouldn't worry about the war. [cross] You'll do fine.

JACK (as Véronique): [cross] I'm not really worried about the war. We can't die.

ART (as Fealty): Not as long as you're with me.

JACK (as Véronique): Yeah! I don't plan to go anywhere. I don't think you plan to go anywhere.

ART (as Fealty): I'm with you to the end, Anchor.

JACK (as Véronique): I'm with *you* to the end, Anchor. Alright let's go! We got a parade!

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: Click seatbelt.

AUSTIN: Alright, back into the moment now. "Not as long as you're with me." So what's that look like?

JACK: I am going to draw a pistol and try to shoot out one of the windows and dive out onto the statue-covered body of... This is like a Titanfall move, but what if your Titan was like three hundred feet tall.

AUSTIN: Are we rolling this into the next--is this the obstacle, at this point? Is getting out?

JACK: [cross] I would assume so, right?

AUSTIN: [cross] Or no I guess it says you escape, it does say you escape, it says...

JACK: Yeah but Gucci is not gonna let me go.

AUSTIN: No, it's more fun to just roll with it and say that [cross] this is the next obstacle, right?

JACK: Also, I want to be clear that when Véronique said to Gucci "you can't kill me," she didn't mean [cross] "it's tactically inadvisable for you to kill me."

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah yeah yeah, yeah.

JACK: She meant, she does not believe she can die.

AUSTIN: Mm, mhm. Alright, so that's your solution to this moment, is shoot your way out.

JACK: [cross] Ah, no--

AUSTIN: [cross] Out of a window, out of a window, and then [JACK: Yeah] jump out and get saved before...

JACK: I'm sure Gucci's been depressurized before.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, for sure. [cross] Yeah, Tyler--

ART: [cross] My solution would just be, that, but what if you held on to Gucci.

AUSTIN: [cross] Ooooh! [excited laugh]

JACK: [cross] You kidnap Gucci Garantine!

ART: [cross] What if you shot out the window and grabbed by the wrist!

[AUSTIN and JACK laughing]

ART: Does Gucci have to be in Palisade? I don't know!

AUSTIN: No! No one has to be, no one's, ain't nothing promised baby! [ART laughs] You know? [laughs]

JACK: [cross] Listen, chat--

AUSTIN: [cross] Millennium Break don't need to be in Palisade, it could all go bad!

JACK: Listen chat. You offer me: we put Gucci Garantine in a perilous situation.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: We offer you: these idiots capture Gucci Garantine! [laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! [laughs]

ART: Capture, leave out there, or anything! It could be anything!

AUSTIN: God. I think the third one here is that, Fealty reveals just how much it can do, just how much can be done without a pilot. Without an elect.

JACK: Sure!

AUSTIN: Or an excerpt, which is just... An arm cuts through the entirety of this base, cutting it in half. The statuary comes alive again and begins to peel apart the entire base one at a time. It's a real, "I'm not locked up in here with you, you're locked up in here with me" moment for the people who are in the room with Véronique as the kind of survival mechanisms come aboard for Fealty. These are our--here it is.

ART: Whose scene was this? Because...

JACK: Austin's.

AUSTIN: No, mine was last time.

ART: No, it's--who gets to pick this? So it's Jack's...

AUSTIN: Jack, according to our weird stumbled into it, yeah, thing. Right? We gotta roll some dice. Here's me. Two!

JACK: Austin has rolled a three, [cross] which is a two!

AUSTIN: [cross] Which is a two.

ART: I've rolled a three for the Gucci plan, [AUSTIN laughs] and for Jack, [cross] it's a one!

AUSTIN: [cross] A one! Yeah, this is all right!

ART: That's all right! Yeah, that's...

AUSTIN: I love that your plan and Jack's plan are basically the same except with Gucci and that is what leaps it all the way up to the top. So, Jack. You decide.

JACK: [cross] You can't--this is--

AUSTIN: [cross] Are you killing everyone here, are you escaping by yourself, or are you escaping with Gucci?

JACK: Austin!

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, we gotta do it, right?

JACK: Put those three dice on!

AUSTIN: I mean whose--I think Art and I both have to put dice on. Art should go first since I went last.

JACK: Wait, why do you both have to put dice on? We're kidnapping Gucci.

AUSTIN: Because it's *your* turn, isn't it? Or is that--that was Art's--was that Art's? Plan? Was that your plan.

ART: It's my plan.

AUSTIN: Oh it was your plan. Then Art has to do it.

ART: Hold on. I'm just moving it [cross] so I can get the right angle.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah yeah yeah, uh-huh. Can I turn on... Oh you're putting it on right away. Okay, I see, I see. Okay.

ART: Oh, should I have moved three? [cross] That's fine.

AUSTIN: [cross] No no no, you're good, you're good. Alright, that's safe. Clear. Up to four. Ooh, [laughs] but this one has an interesting figure already on my screen.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's already listing.

JACK: Yeah, sort of a wobbly one.

ART: It's not doing it on mine.

JACK: Here we go!

AUSTIN: Clear.

JACK: Lovely.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Five. One more. Nice and easy.

ART: I'm sorry, I need to readjust.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah.

ART: I need to--I need to take stock.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Uh-huh! Ohh. Good game, imo.

ART: This is the right approach. I think everyone should have to play it on this, I mean.

[JACK and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: It's this approach that's the scariest thing. [pause] Nailed it.

ART: [cross] Oh, I did not have a good enough camera angle.

AUSTIN: [cross] One, two, three, four, five. Nope, you got it. Alright! I will say, we're both doing a better job than I did during our tests, where I was just a nightmare at this.

JACK: Austin kept knocking them over all the time in the tests.

AUSTIN: All the time, all the time. It's gametime now baby! Um. What happens? Jack, this is your turn, describe how this goes.

JACK: This is--this is... I mean the thing is, Clementine is naive and incapable.

ART: What a slip. Oh--

AUSTIN: [cross] No, I think that was intentional.

JACK: [cross] No, no.

ART: [cross] That wasn't a slip.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.

JACK: Véronique is naive about what it means to serve Stel Nideo as an elect, but is also an elect. Trained as an elect. So I think this is one of those bizarre turnarounds of they're all pointing their guns at me and Gucci gets too close or something. And suddenly it's a "if you shoot me you shoot Gucci" type situation, where Gucci is a hostage. And then it's just out the window and into... And I think it's like a big excerpt moment of excerpt weirdness, is that, you know, I said Gucci's been depressurized before; this is also Véronique getting depressurized.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Just like, ice forming on her eyelashes. Lips turning blue and then getting picked up by Fealty and presumably loaded into Fealty.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Now, I believe--and I just want to really underscore this, Tyler correct me if I'm wrong here--that memory has now vanished from Fealty.

JACK: I think so, yeah.

AUSTIN: [cross] That is the memory that has been lost.

ART: [cross] Yeah. It's like,

ART (as Fealty): One day I'll tell you about war, Anchor.

[pause for pained, quiet laughter]

AUSTIN: Where do you keep Gucci? Where do you *go*? Art, this is your scene now.

ART: Where do we go with Gucci? What are we going to *do* with Gucci? Um...

JACK: We don't even--for our characters as well, we probably have no idea who Gucci Garantine is.

AUSTIN: Um...

JACK: We know she's clearly some sort of high-ranking Millennium Break... [cross] Officer.

AUSTIN: [cross] Have the Millennium Break people been put up though as, most--on a most wanted list.

JACK: Oh! Maybe. Yeah. And the people who would know that would be elects and divines.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. Totally. I mean I think you make a public--I think Nideo is like, running arti--running documentaries about how bad the Garantine name has gotten. [JACK laughs] How far the House of Garantine has fallen. Once servants of our own Princept, now traitors to the entirety of the Principality.

JACK: Gucci was always a Kesh woman though, right?

AUSTIN: [cross] Gucci Garan--

JACK: [cross] She was Crysanth's--she was, wasn't she Crysanth's kind of aide?

AUSTIN: [cross] No, no no no.

JACK: [cross] No, no, you're right! She's the diplomat.

AUSTIN: [cross] Garantine goes--yes. Garantine was a diplomat, and the Garantine family goes back to the Bri--goes back to being a lieutenant in Captain Briar Brightline's--

JACK: [cross] Oh my god, I didn't know this. This is great.

AUSTIN: [cross] --fleet during the Armour Astir game.

JACK: That's really good. And Briar Brightline is distantly related to Kent Brightline? Or is that a...

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, to the Brightline family, to--who was our Brightline? Did we have a Brightline in Partizan? I don't know that we did. I don't think that we had a particular Brightline, did we? But no, Gucci is *Stel* Kesh, but is not from the...

JACK: Is not [cross] from the Kesh lineage...

AUSTIN: [cross] Kesh family. She's from the Garantine family, yeah.

JACK: I'd forgotten that where we'd started in Partizan, we were like, even the low level ambassadors sent to Kesh are in themselves from noble houses of other, the fuckin' worst.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I'm glad we set that city on fire for a bit, and then they put it out... [cross] And took it over again.

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh, you're thinking of Kent Brighton, yes.

JACK: [cross] Yes I am, you're right.

AUSTIN: [cross] You're thinking of Kent Brighton from Twilight Mirage. Yes yes yes. Yeah, I don't think that we ever saw a Brightline again. But Brightline... Brightline, in my mind--I named Brightline Brightline because of the kind of the image in my head of a bright line across a horizon. And Horizon, of course, is the name of Gucci's group.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Remember? So that's a Brightline, that's the Brightline family's secret organization that Gucci is part of. Yes, Brightstar was a different family, yes. Anyway.

JACK: Listen. We have to come up with so many names.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, yes. Brightstar goes back to... If I remember right. Let me see if I'm right about this. Uh, am I right about this or not. Where would I even find this? Uh, Brightst--who was it? Who was our Brightstar in Partizan? We did have a Brightstar. It wasn't... Oh god, this is gonna kill me. I'm sorry, I'm being very slow. Someone in chat remind me. Because Brightstar is actually a ref-- Oh no, it's not Brightstar! We have a *Whitestar*, don't we. We have a *Whitestar*, we have House *Whitestar*, which is important because that is where the, what's-his-face is from. Isn't Cynosure from *Whitestar*? *Whitestar* slash... *Whitestar*-Kesh. We said this earlier, Cynosure *Whitestar*-Kesh. *Whitestar* is originally, is a COUNTER/Weight thing. That traces itself all the way back to COUNTER/Weight. Which I don't think I ever said out loud before. But *Whitestar* is one of the houses from the September Institute.

ART: Mmm!

[sound of Windows pop-up]

JACK: Oh!

ART: That's why you gotta listen to the lives!

AUSTIN: That's why. This is the real shit.

ART: [cross] This probably makes the--

AUSTIN: [cross] Maxine Ming. Maxine Ming is a princess from the Principality of Kesh who belonged to House Whitestar. And that is how you get to there. Anyway.

JACK: Old, old!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JACK: The answer is, we put her in handcuffs, and we put her in some sort of like--the inside of the divine, there is the cockpit, and then there is presumably like a slung hammock or something for the, to sleep in. There's storage areas. [cross] And then there's--

ART: [cross] It's always a hammock!

JACK: [laughs] I mean I was trying to think of like, it's like a cot or something. But then I think there's like, just tucked away areas. Just like a place where you would store something. Or in the more baroque divines, a place where there might be a pedestal [AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah] with a statue on or something. And Gucci's just sort of unceremoniously put--like, tucked away in a bit of the divine. 'Cause really, divines are just built for the elect and the divine and that's it.

AUSTIN: And that's it. Well, some of them aren't, some of them are bigger than that. We know that in Counter/WEIGHT, Order had like a whole little museum inside of it somehow.

JACK: [cross] Oh yes you're right!

AUSTIN: [cross] In strange ways. So like, some of the--and we know that Past, the divine Past, currently houses thousands? Tens of thousands? How many people are inside of Past at this point?

JACK: At this point? [cross] Who the *fuck* knows.

AUSTIN: [cross] Because it is, it is the Pool--not the Reflecting Pool--it's the Reflecting Pool.

JACK: Yeah, the Reflecting Pool.

AUSTIN: So, and that's a divine. So. Anyway.

JACK: The worst. Yup! We've got Gucci Garantine.

AUSTIN: Gucci is neither a Whitestar nor a Brightline. Gucci is a Garantine. Garantine worked with Briar Brightline. As part of the, attached to the Brightlines. Anyway. Just correcting--helping to answer questions in the chat. Um, yeah! You've now arrested, you've kidnapped Gucci Garantine. It is Art's scene now? Where are we? I keep losing track because we're not using the order that's at the bottom of our screen, which is normally what we do.

ART: It's my turn, it was you, then Jack, it's me.

AUSTIN: So we're going counter--here's how I can remember this. We're going counterclockwise according--we're going left on my screen. Wrapping around from me to Jack that direction. I can remember this now. Anyway.

[pause]

ART: Um...

ART (as Fealty): We could trade her for our freedom, Anchor. A lot of people... Would be very grateful... To get Gucci Garantine.

JACK (as Véronique): [deep breath] I think if we go back. I think if we go back... We took out a Heresy Squad, Fealty.

ART (as Fealty): We don't have to go to Nideo.

JACK (as Véronique): What?

ART (as Fealty): There are other Stels. That would trade... Our freedom.

JACK (as Véronique): We, we can't! We can't do that. We're the divine Fealty for Stel Nideo. What are we gonna do, sign up with Apostolos?

ART (as Fealty): No. We would make a trade with Apostolos.

JACK (as Véronique): For our freedom? What does that mean?

ART (as Fealty): Stels are powerful entities.

JACK (as Véronique): No I know! What are you talking about?

ART (as Fealty): They could make Nideo back off.

JACK (as Véronique): But then we'd just be a prisoner of whatever Stel we've gone to. What stops them from doing what we just did to whoever she is?

ART (as Fealty): It's Gucci Garantine, Anchor.

JACK (as Véronique): Yeah, okay, fine, Gucci Garantine. What stops them from just...

ART (as Fealty): There is still nobility in the world.

JACK (as Véronique): I don't fucking think so! After what we've been doing!

ART (as Fealty): Fair enough. Then where do you want to drop her?

[long pause]

JACK (as Véronique): Is this supposed to be clear to us? Are we supposed to have some sort of straight line to the answer here? Because I don't have it. We go to another Stel and we give them there, and. I'm trying not to talk about it.

ART (as Fealty): It might be time for us to leave Stel space.

JACK (as Véronique): Okay. Okay. And take Garantine?

ART (as Fealty): Only if you want. She doesn't seem like good company.

JACK (as Véronique): If you're saying what I think you're saying, I don't think that Millenium Break should know about it, as much as I don't think that our own people should know about it.

ART (as Fealty): I agree.

JACK (as Véronique): [laughs] Well, we're gonna look stupid if we just give her back right now, won't we? And I don't think I want to kill her. Do you have suits, escape pods? Can we just jettison her in the--

JACK: --me, looks at map--

JACK (as Véronique):--Skarnoc Debris Fields?

[AUSTIN and JACK laugh]

ART (as Fealty): We should probably jettison her one gate over. [pause] But of course, the statues are ultimately autonomous.

JACK (as Véronique): Okay, here's my proposal. We know where it is. We move towards it. When we're far enough away from this station, we jettison Garantine, we get her out of our hair, and then we keep going north.

AUSTIN: That's your solution, is, jettison, keep on moving.

JACK: Yup! We know where it is. I can't talk about it, I'm scared of giving Fealty the problem.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. Yup. Fealty, what is your suggestion?

[Pause]

ART: [cross] Um...

JACK: [cross] I mean, it feels--oh sorry go ahead.

ART: Oh.

JACK: It seemed like Fealty has a pretty good suggestion was like trade Garantine with one of the Stels.

AUSTIN: Right. That is, that is--

JACK: But I don't want to put words in your mouth.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.

ART: That might be a little big for this.

AUSTIN: My suggestion is: we give Gucci back to Millennium Break in exchange for them causing a distraction for us. That we--

ART: Well that's--

AUSTIN: --we go into a different gate together, or they go in first, cause a bunch of shit, and we get past that gate and therefore the net in which where could we be becomes so much bigger. Because we're then at least two gates away.

ART: It's a big move to trust the people who just betrayed you.

AUSTIN: I mean, it's what the dice are gonna do, you know? To be fair, there's lots of... I think what I would say is, Fealty has seen a lot of things. You know?

JACK: One thousand wars.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

ART: Sure. Um... Yeah I guess my solution is to find a Stel to open a gate for us in exchange for Gucci. Apostolos, Kesh, anyone else who might see this as a... Honestly we're giving them two things, right, we're giving them a political prisoner *and* we're giving them "Nideo doesn't have Fealty anymore."

AUSTIN: Right. So are we getting--

JACK: Huh. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Are you, is that like send communication out somehow? To get--

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: --to build, not a radio tower, but some sort of--hijack Millennium Break's fancy fuckin', what's the name of their thing? Their Strand tech. That lets them communicate across the galaxy, which by the way has also advanced in the past few years. There is a network now, and you can be part of the Strand network even if you're not part of Millennium Break. They kind of disseminate that tech around. I think about a lot of it as being early internet stuff, where nodes are not kept in big warehouses places only. You could have a node on the internet that's *yours*. It's very expensive to keep it up, but it lasts--it's *on*, it's not something that's tied to the gates. Previously you needed a gate to open for new information to download. That is no longer the case using this technology that the group of, I think it was, Broun, plus... Was it Lily Lysander? Is that the right name? And then, I know Gur was sort of involved but not seriously involved. I wanna say there was another technician that was involved also, using some tech that really originated with the... Oh what are our deer-people type people named?

JACK: The Hyphans?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yes, the Hyphans. Hyphan, is that right? H-Y-P-H-A-N? Yes, I think that's right. No, Lily Lysander's fucking wrong. Si'dra! Si'dra Balos [pronounced to rhyme with 'Hallows']. Si'dra Balos [pronounced to rhyme with 'halos'], Si'dra Balos, yes.

JACK: Yes, yes.

AUSTIN: To be fair, Lily Lysander was also a cool nerd from Twilight Mirage, was the assistant to the archeologist who did some stuff. Right? Yes, wrong season. They have similar vibes, to be clear. Si'dra and Lily would get along. Anyway. So yeah, my proposal is that trade, that trade for a distraction. Art's is build a, or take advantage of the radio system, or the Strand system, to connect to another Stel. And... What was yours, Jack?

JACK: Start heading... [cross] North.

AUSTIN: [cross] Just ditch and go, yeah.

JACK: Ditch Gucci.

AUSTIN: Alright. Rolling mine, over here. That's a two, that's a three, that's a two. Three and a half is two. Art?

ART: This one--that's your three, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's my three.

ART: I'm gonna take this one over here and roll it. That's a three, that's a two.

AUSTIN: [cross] That's a three that's a two!

JACK: Hooooo.

AUSTIN: Jack--you got it, you got it. Yeah yeah, all yours.

ART: That's a four that's a two!

AUSTIN: That's a two. So we're all equal! What's it gonna be?

ART: This is mine, right?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Um, let's...

AUSTIN: Wait, is it? Or is it--

ART: Is it mine or is it Jack's?

AUSTIN: I... What did I do? I had the invitation. Then Jack had the escape. This is Art, this is--wait is that right?

ART: Yeah. Yeah, I think so. I don't remember making a different choice.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

[JACK laughs]

ART: Um... They're all two.

AUSTIN: They're all two! Yeah, it's Art's.

ART: I guess I'm gonna pick Austin's plan?

AUSTIN: Interesting. Okay. Get stacking!

ART: I feel like I'm... Mm... [AUSTIN laughs] Austin's plan is less interesting if we fail and more interesting if we succeed. So maybe I should pick my own plan, which is... [cross] Interesting if we fail.

AUSTIN: [cross] Fun either way.

JACK: [cross] Turn ourselves in to another Stel.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yup!

ART: Yeah. Alright, I'm picking my idea. Final answer.

AUSTIN: Yup! Let's see 'em!

ART: I'm bringing some dice over here.

AUSTIN: Be careful!

JACK: Oh wow, he zoomed it right around there, didn't he.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

ART: You can only knock over the dice [cross] if you're stacking.

AUSTIN: [cross] During the stack, you're right, you're right. Which does include the approach, though.

ART: But I don't think it includes, [cross] I'm putting these dice over here.

AUSTIN: [cross] No, no, you're right. No, it does not. But now, now it counts.

ART: Now it counts, yeah.

[sounds of anxiety from AUSTIN and JACK]

AUSTIN: So big, so high. [pause] I think you got this. I'm confident. That's one!

JACK: Oh, beautiful!

AUSTIN: Here comes number two.

ART: I'm adjusting my camera angle 'cause I did *not* find that to be a satisfying angle.

AUSTIN: [laughs] The thing is, you're really trading good approach versus good release. You can have a really good angle for an approach, but then it's gonna jump up--[gasps] Okay, you tapped it for a second on my screen!

ART: Yeah, mine too.

AUSTIN: Okay! [gasps]

JACK: Ooh!

AUSTIN: You're good! One, two, three, four, five. We're good. We're clear. It was real shaky for a second there.

ART: It sure was. Good luck to the next plan. [chuckles]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: So is it Apostolos? Is it Kesh? Who do we like here?

JACK: Not Kesh, they're our own--well...

AUSTIN: So Kesh is--this is the thing, right? These still are different Stels. Kesh is allied to Nideo in the war against the Pact. Or, again, it's not as clean as Kesh and N--Kesh has a representative democracy, technically. There are people there who don't want to be in a war at all. There are people there who think that Millennium Break might be right. You know? But, by and large, Kesh's powerful have sided with the Curtain, because the Curtain is made up of Kesh's most powerful. And as such, they've sided with Nideo. Apostolos and Columnar are effectively allied in this war, it's just that they're allied the way... These are colonies of ants or something, right? They largely work together but there's always an outlier who's off getting food, you know, or doing whatever. They're individuals with shared purpose more than they are completely unified.

JACK: [laughing] You could take it to Stel Orion.

AUSTIN: You could take it to Stel Orion. Stel Orion... A bunch of...

JACK: Caught in a bitter civil war!

AUSTIN: Caught in a bit of civil war, not part of this larger conflict. Also the furthest away? So you'd have to figure out a way to get-there get there. Or, we could--that could be a solution. "If you can get her here we'll guarantee your safety," is 100% a thing that they could offer you. You

know? Or could bring you an extract team or something, you know? Hold tight, we'll come get you. You know? But you succeeded so at the very least they're going to accept this offer. Right? Presumably it's gonna be the side that wants an independent Orion. Right? I guess it doesn't have to be, it could be the Orion that's loyal to the Principality, and the Curtain even, but wants a leg up on Millennium Break, wants a leg up on the other factions. Because like, *they* might end up trading Garantine to a different Stel for something. You know?

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Gucci Garantine has entered the commodity form.

JACK: This is some real dominos hitting other dominos that we're in now.

AUSTIN: No. Sorry, yeah. I was saying no to Ashlin G. who says, "is there still a central Stel Orion government in that way?" And the answer is no. I mean, there hasn't ever really been. Stel Orion has always a bunch of fucking robber barons. It's always, always, always been--back to OriCon--a conglomerate. It's always been a group of fucking rich people. Except for that little bit of time there where it was a worker's paradise, and then all of that iconography was captured by capitalists. So yes, that is a possibility, is that you go to any side of that Orion--you could go to a rich person from Stel Orion! You could just call up the company that sent that agritruck and be like, "hey, do you want Gucci Garantine?" [laughs]

JACK: [laughing] "Do you want Gucci Garantine?"

AUSTIN: But you presumably go to someone who has a lot of, enough funds to actually keep you safe and keep you, whatever, you know?

ART: So what do we like? What do *you* like, Austin? [cross] You as the...

AUSTIN: [cross] It's all golden for me, baby. This is all good! I think it's... If I had to like make a gut call about who picks up the phone or who gets in touch first...

ART: Post on future Craigslist, "want to sell..."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Want to sell...

ART: [cross] Gucci Garantine. [laughs]

AUSTIN: [cross] Want to sell... POW.

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: I think it's probably... It's probably the side that wants to get in. You know. It's the side that wants it to remain Stel Orion, and supports the C--ah, maybe they don't care if they end up

being on the Curtain or the Pact side, they just want to remain a Stel. They still want the Principality to exist. And they want Gucci because trading her back to any of those other Stels will get them supplies they can use to try to stamp out the other side of the Orion fight. So it's Orion loyalists, which I wanna say we had a name for but they were never vocal enough to be like, super core, in our campaign. That was like real background shit that was happening near the end of Partizan. Again, they definitely have a name, but I definitely--it will definitely take me a minute to find what it is. Because we had names for the Orion independents movement and stuff, you know.

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Anyway.

JACK: The O-I-M. OIM.

AUSTIN: Is that right?

JACK: [cross] [laughs] No, I don't know.

AUSTIN: [cross] You're just guessing, you're guessing. This is a joke, you're joking with me. [laughs] Anyways, we can keep talking. I don't--

ART: So yeah, I think that's how we do it.

AUSTIN: Right, it was, there was OFOR, right, which was the Organization for the Foundation of the Orion Republic. They sided with the Pact in the end, yes. The Organization for the Foundation of the Orion Republic ended up being pro-Pact because they were, they wanted a standalone republic, which is effectively what the Pact wants too. Break up the Stels into independent states. Anyway.

So yeah, they say yes. And I think that they say--this has wrapped back around to me again at this point, right? They say, basically say, "hang tight; we're going to send a group--" Orion companies still do a ton of logistics, a ton of shipping. That truck that--Sierra was probably tied to a Stel Orion company. And so, they say, "we're going to send a fleet of trucks," or like a mega-truck, [laughs] a mega-space truck to put you in. To hold a divine. A sort of like, super carrier, that we're going to be able to load Fealty into and then we can transport through Nideo territory. 'Cause I don't--you might not remember what the full map looks like at this time; let me see if I can pull it up on the stream. Where are we at here. HOUNDS plus image six. Let's see if I can find an image of the Principality map. Do I just have it, right here. There's the Partizan map. Do I have the right map here, do I have Annie's. Yes I do. All Divinity. Close that, let's put this just in the middle of the screen for a second.

So if you take a look at this map, y'all are somewhere in Stel Nideo territory, which is that big red bar. To get to Orion, you're gonna have to pass through the center, the kind of Western half of the eye in the center of the galaxy, and then get into Orion space. Basically, you have to pass

through Partizan. Because Partizan is at the center of it all. So we're gonna get Partizan onscreen--

JACK: Perennial.

AUSTIN: No no no--Partizan. The line towards Orion territory--Orion's the blue--you have to track west on Nideo territory, the red, until you hit where Partizan is, the white. The center of the five--

JACK: [laugh-groaning] Oh no!

AUSTIN: --the only place all five Stels touch. And that's actually not even true, because Kesh space doesn't actually touch there. It's the only place where four of the Stels touch, besides the Golden Branch, I wanna say. And then... No I'm right, all five Stels do touch there. All five Stels do touch there. And then pass into Orion space. So that's what they're gonna do. They say, "hang tight, we're sending a super-cruiser to come pick you up, it's gonna look like it's just shipping a bunch of beer." It's just a big beer truck. Coming to pick you up.

[pause]

JACK (as Véronique): I hate it, Fealty. I hate it. This is--I feel like we're--this is a mistake. I don't know why I let you talk me into it.

ART (as Fealty): We need to get out of here.

JACK (as Véronique): Yeah we need to get out of here! But we're gonna be packed up... We're a divine and an excerpt! We're gonna get packed up in a *beer* truck and driven through Partizan?

AUSTIN: Was that a slip? Did you say "excerpt" on purpose, or no?

JACK: Oh, that was a slip.

AUSTIN: That was a slip. Because earlier, Fealty said it on purpose.

JACK: I did--yes, no, I mean we could play it that way, [cross] but no, I did mean to say "elect."

AUSTIN: [cross] No--yeah yeah yeah, fair.

[pause]

ART (as Fealty): Sometimes it's not about the journey but the destination.

JACK (as Véronique): [exasperated laughter] Oh come on! [AUSTIN laughs] “Sometimes it’s--” Fealty! Anchor! You--you don’t need to talk to me like that. We know each other. I just need you to be straight with me. Please stop talking in like, riddles. We’re gonna arrive and they’re gonna put us in some sort of hostage situation. And I don’t know whether the “journey or the destination” mantra is gonna help us out there.

[AUSTIN laughs]

ART (as Fealty): I think we could take an infinite number of beer trucks.

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK (as Véronique): *What?*

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK (as Véronique): Are you messing with me?

ART (as Fealty): No!

JACK (as Véronique): What do you mean, “take an infinite number of beer trucks?”

ART (as Fealty): I think if forced to fight beer trucks, we could do it until time stopped.

JACK (as Véronique): Oh, oh! [laughing] You mean “take” as in we kill them, not “take” as in we journey with them. As in like take a bus or take a train.

AUSTIN: Forever! [cross] You could do that, too!

JACK (as Véronique): Forever. [cross] Can you see why I was – no, I agree with you, we could kill beer trucks until the cows came home. God. God! Okay, fine. Right. We’re gonna do this, but--what do we plan for? How do we plan for being taken hostage?

ART (as Fealty): With outward humility and inner confidence?

JACK (as Véronique): Fuck you! Alright. [all laugh] I’m turning off... I’m turning my headset until the beer trucks get here.

JACK: [cross] Click. Shifts in her seat.

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh... It’s so funny.

JACK: Okay. Whose obstacle is it?

AUSTIN: It is...

ART: Austin's.

AUSTIN: Is it? [cross] I guess so.

ART: [cross] Yeah, I just went and then it's you and then it's Jack.

AUSTIN: [sighs] You know there's just a lot going on. Emotionally. You know? So. I think that they show up. It takes a while. They diverted some other shipment, some other driver, she's just like,

AUSTIN (as Orion space truck): You're gonna make me drop--we have--you're making me drop--

JACK: [laughing] Just terrified.

AUSTIN (as Orion space truck): --you know, ten thousand tons of beer! Just loose? And I have to come back and pick it up after I pick up this new car--you won't even tell me what the cargo is!

AUSTIN: And so this other ship is gonna show up. And this thing is surrounded by additional other units to protect it. We actually--

ART: Hold on, can I have a quick aside before we get too far here?

AUSTIN: Please! Please. Yes.

ART: Before we leave, Fealty transmits whatever code or programming or that whatever Sierra needs to have complete control over the...

AUSTIN: I love it. Incredible.

ART: I'm assuming Sierra was able to get the fire out.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. Sierra dealt with it. [JACK laughs] Reworked whatever their paint drones to be water drones, or whatever, to be firefighting drones with foam anti--you know. I know we're in space. Cut me some slack, you know?

ART: There must be some kind of atmosphere there if they're growing crops.

AUSTIN: They're growing crops. Véronique can breathe there, yes. So there is some kind of atmosphere *there*, at least. Good call. Good catch.

ART: Just making sure Sierra has full control over the area before we leave, in case we ever wanna come back. Here.

AUSTIN: Yeah! Yeah. Exactly.

ART: Not *we*, but you know. *We*.

AUSTIN: Yeah, *we*. What? Yeah.

ART: *We're* not coming back.

AUSTIN: No, but *we* might.

JACK: *We're* not coming back.

AUSTIN: Okay. Now I understand. Alright, so. They show up. I realize that we actually have something like this in a Road to Partizan game, in our Dusk to Midnight game. The group of--

JACK: Yes, we do!

AUSTIN: --pilots we were were on one of these like super-carrier type things. From Stel Orion from before they were Stel Orion. I don't know that we ever had a cool name for it or something, but we did describe something very similar. Almost like a mobile UPS shipping center is how we described it. And I think that that's big enough to be, to house Fealty. I forget if we had a really great name for it. But, I don't know.

It shows up, it comes through the gate. I think immediately there's activity from the Millennium Break base but they don't attack because it's so big. And it shows up at your throne. And the people who run this little convoy are so confused. [JACK laughs] And are like, "alright, I guess. Get aboard." I'm guessing you do. This isn't an obstacle. Y'all get onboard.

JACK: Yeah. Begrudgingly. There's like fucking "what will be will be."

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly.

JACK: "I'm functionally immortal."

AUSTIN: Was it just like a... Sorry, I'm getting in my own fucking head about what the name of this thing was. I don't think it was--ah, the ship was the *Top Mark*, says Terrence Hector. I don't think we had a class. So yeah, the *Top Mark* was the name of the vessel apparently, which is very fun.

Yeah, so you get onboard and you go through your first gate. Totally fine. Wow, amazing. Go through the second gate. Wow, fine. Nothing. You're living off of whatever food you have in there. These are long trips. It's now been days and days, weeks and weeks. And finally, I wanna say, you get to the gate that would take you into Partizan. And when you go through... When

you get to that gate, it doesn't open. Or, no. Let's say as you approach the gate, it opens from the other side. And what comes out is a swarm of... They're not mechs in the humanoid model. They are almost a wall of floating, squared-off tanks. Almost like gunships. They're just like big, heavy, boxy gunships. And there is a kind of humanoid form somewhere in there, in the mix. Much smaller, not much bigger than a person. Someone in more of a power suit than a mech. And this is the divine Fortitude. An *ancient* divine. One you know, Fealty. And I think that its elect, whose name is Akaya--sorry, Acacia, Acacia--speaks to you and says:

AUSTIN (as Acacia): Elect Véronique. Fealty. We can't let you go any further. You're going to get all these people who are moving you killed. And--

AUSTIN: Before they can finish speaking, Fortitude says to you, Fealty:

AUSTIN (as Fortitude): This is how it is. The Principality is our home now.

ART: Um... Austin can I talk to you over here for a second?

AUSTIN: What? Yeah. What's up?

ART: Are we...

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. Hi.

ART: Are we ending or are we continuing?

AUSTIN: Jack said that they have twenty more minutes in them, after this.

ART: Right right, but are we gonna come back?

AUSTIN: I don't know.

ART: Or are we gonna... Okay.

AUSTIN: How are you feeling about it?

ART: I'm feeling great! But there's things--this scene might go different ways depending on how long we wanna...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Actually, do you want me to read these rules?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: For if you want it end early because we've already gone so many hours. **If you decide to wrap your session before all memories are crossed off of your list, you have two**

options. The first is to simply save all play materials, record the height of your tower before disassembling it, and pick up where you left off another time.

If you'd like to end your game in a single session, you can also implement a turn timer. At any point, if all players agree they're in the story's final stretch, you can place a die with the 6 face-up next to your tower. After each turn, reduce the die's value by 1. When the turn timer reaches zero, clear it from the table and decide as a group whether you'd like your story to have a happy or sad ending. If sad, roleplay a final tower collapse scene following the guidance 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.

ART: I mean, I would be more than happy to play this again, I'm having an [cross] amazing time.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, it's great!

ART: I don't know what our schedule looks like.

AUSTIN: Good question!

ART: As a show.

AUSTIN: As a show. Yeah. I could go either way. I don't have a super strong--we've hit a bit where we feel like we're actually on the edge of narrative completion. You get through to Orion space; it's feasible to say, and then where? Because Orion space is *huge*. It's huge. It's most of the galaxy. Or not most of, but in terms of who owns the most space in space, it's Orion. [JACK laughs] That's why their watchword is "space." And, from there, you can get to arms that aren't mapped. From Partizan you could actually get into... You could theoretically--I guess, was that gate destroyed? You destroyed the gate into Valence's arm, right?

JACK: Oh my god! Holy shit.

AUSTIN: But could a divine figure out another way? Could you investigate a way? Could you, you know, could you just start floating through space on your way somewhere else. There are other places that we know that the arm that goes into Columnar space eventually connects to the Golden Branch. We know that there's other stuff in other directions. You could get lost once you're past Partizan. Especially if you go into Orion space where it's a mess. So I think that that is an apt success end if you get there.

ART: Sure. [cross] Okay, so--

JACK: [cross] I don't know--sorry, you go ahead Art.

ART: So, I'll be more vague than I would be if we were like, this is gonna be over in ten minutes.

AUSTIN: Mhm. But it might be--I'm saying, we have the ability to make it over in ten minutes if we want that.

ART: Well then, I'll cut a new line here and we'll put that into the feed version and we'll just tell the people listening now and it will be fine.

AUSTIN: But wait, Jack, what were you gonna say.

JACK: I was gonna say, I don't necessarily feel confident about being able to end this well on my level of tiredness at the moment.

AUSTIN: Right. Even if this is our final thing?

JACK: Yeah, because I would want to be able to contribute in a way that felt good. Although, I would absolutely trust Art to just face off against a divine--

AUSTIN: Right now.

JACK: --in the last ten minutes, yeah. But I don't know that I've got a good ending. I don't know that I've got good ending power.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you wanna just call it here? We can just call it here and pick this up.

ART: Well, we should finish this little bit of dialogue.

JACK: Yeah, I wanna hear these divines slug it out!

AUSTIN: Oh, okay! Yeah, sure!

JACK: Thank you to the listener. This is what making the show is all the time.

AUSTIN: This is what making the show is all the time.

JACK: You just don't hear most of it.

AUSTIN: Totally. 100%. Yes.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What we may end up doing is ending this and then appending something in the final episode. Because what I don't to have to do--

JACK: Something for people to come back for!

AUSTIN: What I don't want to do is have people come back to another Live that's twenty minutes long. So, either we have to decide--we'll see how this goes. Maybe this goes in such a way that's like oh, I could see this going for another hour. Do you know what I mean?

JACK: Yeah, you're right. Because if we just do an hour Live, it's nice!

AUSTIN: That's nice! That's in and out, that's a whole other Live, love that.

JACK: Yeah. Alright. Well, let's see how it goes. I'm just hanging out in the cockpit. I'm fucking steamed. This is exactly what I thought would happen.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Art, feel free to go as hard as you want.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: If I understand what you're saying. Because I think even if we have to come back and do a whole other second one, going as hard as you want right this moment is a nice little way to end the first recording. You know?

ART: Sure.

ART (as Fealty): I have oaths that predate the...

ART: Um...

JACK: You're doing great.

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

AUSTIN (as Fortitude): We've all taken oaths that the time has passed on.

AUSTIN: This is Fortitude speaking to you now, and speaking to you in hundreds of voices. Fortitude is not the person in the power suit, it is all of the gunships and hover-tanks that make it up. And again, you've known Fortitude for tens of thousands of years. You are an ancient god like it is.

AUSTIN (as Fortitude): Not all promises must be kept. Especially not those to... Those to things that have gone by the wayside.

ART (as Fealty): It is not a promise. It is an oath of Fealty. And I owe it to them now more than ever. I know when my promises, when my commitments, are over.

AUSTIN (as Fortitude): You would see the Principality fall then. Whatever you are keeping from us could be used to save us. Do your oaths of fealty stack in only--calculation of time? The oldest takes precedent over the most valuable? We have different lives. I care first and foremost about protecting those who I'm loyal to. Those who need protection *now*. Those who number in the trillions. The galaxy will burn if the Curtain cannot face the Pact, and the Branched, and god knows who else.

ART (as Fealty): We have seen the galaxy burn before.

AUSTIN (as Fortitude): [forcefully] And I would see it not burn again. This is the promise of the Principality: stability. And we've seen it work.

ART (as Fealty): I don't know that it does work.

AUSTIN (as Fortitude): You can't... This is the end of your road.

AUSTIN: What are our options?

ART: Well, we can waste Fortitude.

AUSTIN: [short laugh] Uh-huh!

JACK: Oh, shit.

ART: We can win!

JACK: [laughs] Fortitude is older than you, right?

ART: [cross] Yeah, uh-huh.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, I'd guess so. Fortitude's from COUNTER/Weight.

ART: Yeah, I think Fealty is in between...

AUSTIN: That makes sense. A period of time during which we said there were just endless wars. The Mirage, the Divine Fleet and the relationships between divines and humans that we see at the beginning of Twilight Mirage come out of a period of great chaos and strife.

JACK: Oh my god. Okay. Option one: we fight the oldest divine that we've seen on the show in years.

ART: *Destroy* Righteous--not Righteousness, uh Fortitude! We could just, we could win the battle and get away.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: [cross] We could--

AUSTIN: [cross] I almost thought, "where's Righteousness right now?" but then I remembered I actually know exactly where Righteousness is which is a fun thing to remember.

JACK: I think I also know where Righteousness is. We could flee.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Yeah. What's that look like? You just turn. Turn and burn, baby.

JACK: It's just, that great moment in all the movies when all the cops get out of their car and approach the person who's standing by their car and then they suddenly get back in their car and drive off and all the cops have to turn round and get back to their car.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: So that's an option. That's my proposal, I can only do one. [cross] Art's is we fucking fight an old divine. Mine is that we just run.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, yours is flee. Art, was that yours or was that just you floating a thing?

ART: Um... I think it's mine. I really wanna hurt it too. I wanna leave a mark on Fortitude.

JACK: There's a ideological debate happening here between you two. I think I should also say, Véronique hearing this is just like, stuff is clicking into place in Véronique's head, because... Véronique has found it impossible to reconcile their actions in the last few months with the fact that they are, that they show fealty to Stel Nideo. And I think that following their conversation they're going, "wait a second. Maybe it is a different fealty."

[sound of Windows pop-up]

AUSTIN: Yeah. My suggestion is... To give up the body. It's that Fealty does not need to be the big kind of carrier of all these statues. It can be a single one. And that you get into it, and its much less capable body--

JACK: And Gucci Garantine!

AUSTIN: And Gucci Garantine. It's still big enough for two people, right, but not by much. [cross] It's a mech, it's a Hallow size.

ART: [cross] Probably, yeah.

AUSTIN: And in the chaos of the fight, you get away.

[pause]

JACK: I mean, I think that's a great plan.

ART: Yeah, let's see how the dice go!

AUSTIN: Alright! Let's roll these dice.

ART: Which one are you rolling? That one?

AUSTIN: This one over here, yeah.

ART: This one's for my plan...

AUSTIN: Two for me. [laughing] Ohhhh...

ART: [laughing] Three for me!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

[JACK laughs]

ART: Let me roll this one--

JACK: Yeah, uh-huh!

ART: --for Jack's plan.

AUSTIN: A one!

ART: That's a one!

AUSTIN: Okay, so one is just run. Two is do the thing where you get rid of the big sick divine body and instead get left with the divine's mind inside of one of the statues. And three is, you do the fight. You fight the fucking fight.

JACK: [cross] We should clear the map on the stream.

ART: [cross] Oh Austin, we have to clear the map, yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh, fuck. I'm sorry. That's a shame.

ART: Because we're about to have some *fuun*!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JACK: I vote--I don't get to pick, but.

ART: Austin gets to pick.

JACK: Yeah. But my vote...

AUSTIN: Oh, I get to pick?

JACK: Yeah. Do you want me to make a vote Austin, or are you...

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: ...just good to pick.

AUSTIN: I want votes here.

JACK: Small statue. I think that the themes and tone of what we're doing feels like a really great resting point is it breaking off into like, this extremely confident divine and a weird child, and Gucci Garantine, inside a neoclassical statue. But I could go either way. I don't think you should put fucking three dice on.

AUSTIN: No, I think I should put two dice on.

ART: I think you're a coward and should put three dice on! [ART and JACK laugh]

AUSTIN: You think just go for it! Big plays!

ART: Uh, I don't know, I accidentally just knocked the tower over by clicking on it.

AUSTIN: Mine's still up. Is yours down?

ART: No, I said "almost."

AUSTIN: Oh "almost," okay.

ART: Um...

AUSTIN: As a reminder, the tower is at eight currently.

ART: We're not getting to eleven. It's... If you want to do--

AUSTIN: I could get to eleven.

JACK: [cross] To fuckin', fight Fortitude!

AUSTIN: [cross] What's Fealty feel? What's Fealty feel in this moment? Véronique feels scared, I'm guessing?

JACK: Confused.

AUSTIN: Confused.

JACK: And also like a dawning realization and with it, in the same way that when Fealty was like, "I have been doing all this bullshit to try and prevent myself from thinking about the information," there's a real sense that, "I thought my divine was being a loose cannon and actually, I think I understand what it's doing."

AUSTIN: Okay, does that make you feel--

ART: Fealty feels like they're waking up.

AUSTIN: That's a fight. You're fightin'. Véronique, can you become committed in this--committed and impulsive to me sounds like, you sense in Fealty that Fealty is still driven by belief and fealty in something.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Can you become committed to that? Does that reflect back into who you are in this moment? Like, alright, then we're fighting.

JACK: Yeah, absolutely.

AUSTIN: Alright, let's do it.

JACK: I could definitely see that. Terrified, though.

AUSTIN: I'm moving them close. I'm moving them close but [cross] I'm not moving them on.

ART: [cross] Oh, you're gonna do it?

AUSTIN: Whose turn is it?

ART: It's your turn I guess. I do it for the other two.

AUSTIN: You wanna do one of them? You want me to do one, you to do two, and me to do three?

ART: Sure, yeah, I'll do the second one.

AUSTIN: Okay, I gotta find the angle here because I don't know what the fuck it is.

ART: It's hard to say because I don't know that we're looking at the same--oh should I look at it on the stream, too?

AUSTIN: Look at it on the stream, see what it is. For me it's listing towards the queen side of the table. Like the back--that's what we need the queen for, the queen is--just, there we go. It's listing that direction for me.

ART: Can you zoom out just a little?

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's probably too much.

ART: Oh, you're placing the queen. Here's the delay. Okay so there's the queen, [cross] and you think it's listing that way?

AUSTIN: [cross] It's listing--yeah, see it on my screen? It's slowly going that direction.

ART: Okay. If the queen is north...

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's north.

ART: To me, on my screen, it's tilting west.

AUSTIN: Oh! Weird! Okay!

ART: It's very subtle. It's subtle on both.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it is subtle. But it's important because of the approach. Which, I'm gonna make my first approach now.

ART: Okay, I'm gonna go to the...

JACK: This is for fighting the first divine of this season.

AUSTIN: It is! I'm gonna t--can I--

ART: Second divine of the season.

AUSTIN: Am I allowed to turn down--no, I'm not allowed to turn down my mouse's sensitivity. I'm gonna keep it where it was. That would have been cheating. But know I could have done it.

ART: I'm almost like, we have to stop this, and when we're all together next, building-- [laughs, then gasps]

AUSTIN: It's going up. It's going up.

ART: It's going up it's going up!

AUSTIN: I think that was the right approach. I'm happy with that approach. Okay. Getting ready to drop it. Ready?

ART: [cross] Oh my god.

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh, my heart is pounding.

[pause]

AUSTIN: Hoo! One.

JACK: Oo!

ART: Okay, one.

AUSTIN: Art.

ART: One. Hold on, I'm figuring out my camera and my approach.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's like landing a fucking plane.

AUSTIN: It is. So we're at, 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9 right now.

ART: When did it fall the last time?

AUSTIN: Between...

JACK: Eleven, I think.

AUSTIN: ...ten and eleven?

JACK: On ten.

AUSTIN: It was on ten, or it was... Yeah. We're right at it. We're right there.

[pause]

AUSTIN: I don't like this approach...

ART: You don't?

AUSTIN: No it's all you, it's all you! You have to use what you see! [cross] You gotta use what you see.

JACK: [cross] Don't psych him out!

AUSTIN: No. [gasps]

JACK: Oh!

AUSTIN: [strangled noises]

[pause]

AUSTIN: [quiet and stressed] Okay, okay. Okay. We're good.

ART: I can't believe how nervous I am about...

AUSTIN: This is so nerve wracking. Great game, great game. [gasps]

ART and AUSTIN: *NO!*

ART: NO!

[laughter]

AUSTIN: That's ten fallen. Let's count them up. My guess is, one will not be the most num--what is--? Okay, 1-2-3.

ART: ...2-3...

AUSTIN: Three ones? [cross] Four ones!

ART: [cross] No, four is not. The four is a four.

AUSTIN: Let's group 'em, let's group 'em. Let's just do this. One, one, one...

ART: Two twos... [cross] Two, shit--that's a two.

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh, well--that's okay, I can fix it, I think I can fix it. I think I remember how to do this. Two twos.

ART: [cross] Two threes and a six.

AUSTIN: [cross] Three--no, three twos. Three threes.

JACK: And there's one still standing! [laughs]

AUSTIN: No, that doesn't count, the book is very clear that if there is one left that counts as fallen. [laughs]

JACK: [laughing] This is such a good game.

AUSTIN: Yeah. "If multiple values tie..." Da-da-da... "If the most prevalent value is already crossed off, cross off the second most. This means if enough numbers are crossed off even one die can lead to memory loss." So yeah this is, this is--number two gets crossed off here. Is this it?

ART: Is what it?

AUSTIN: I mean, you lose here.

ART: Well, I mean, we're damaged but we still escape.

AUSTIN: I'm asking, do we want to call it here or do we want to come back.

ART: I want to leave with the information of who Fealty's oath is and come back--

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: --but I do not want to obligate everyone to that.

AUSTIN: [cross] I could really go for--

JACK: [cross] Fine with me, I'm up for that!

AUSTIN: Yeah, alright, so--

JACK: What were you going to say, Austin?

AUSTIN: I said I could go either way. 'Cause to me, failing here is a great story still. We've still had a good run. But I'm happy to come back and pick up here [cross] and figure out how we escape--do you know what I mean?

JACK: [cross] Oh, yeah, time. Yeah, let's see Art's flash--

ART: [cross] Do you want to poll the live audience, you wanna get a uh...

AUSTIN: They're gonna want us to come back because these characters rule.

ART: Um... Yeah it's a shame because these characters won't be in the...

AUSTIN: I mean, they might escape!

ART: Sure!

AUSTIN: I mean, they won't if they lose. I mean, they won't if they lose or they won't if they win. If they win, they shouldn't show up.

ART: Yeah, right. I guess--

AUSTIN: Sometimes you get a great character for a, how long have we been going? Three hour game?

JACK: Four hours.

ART: We've been here for five hours. Or--

AUSTIN: I should eat dinner at some point, huh.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, four. A little over four.

ART: Oka--I would love to do another--

AUSTIN: Alright! Let's do it.

ART: --run of this.

JACK: Yeah! Okay.

ART: Like one more tower, I think, is my...

AUSTIN: We should do more than one, because if we only do one I don't think we got a full Live out of it.

ART: Well if we do, not if we do eleven dice.

AUSTIN: [cross] Oh I guess you're right, if we do eleven dice again you're right.

JACK: [cross] [laughing] Oh, I see. Yes, I see the point.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.

JACK: Do you want to--

AUSTIN: We should--

JACK: --the first flashback--oh go on.

AUSTIN: I was gonna say, we should figure out what this flashback is, and what this sequence looks like.

JACK: Oh yeah, I was gonna say, the first flashback was... Uh, Véronique asking Fealty what's war like? Do you just fully want to take the lead on this flashback, Art?

[pause]

AUSTIN: I mean, let's start in the moment, [cross] and then cut to the flashback.

ART: [cross] Yeah, we have, we have to get to the flashback. Sorry to keep you late, Jack.

JACK: No no, it's okay! This is, this is--

AUSTIN: Yeah, we--

JACK: --this is the show!

AUSTIN: We're almost done too, I think. I think this is it. I think that, to set-up a little bit of this, you peel off all of your statues to go fight. For real. For real for real. Even with Véronique bought in, even with the aid of the Orion vessels that are here to protect you and help you get through, it's just not enough. They pair off, and in terms of like--okay, I'll take on this one and you take on this one--that's just not how Fortitude is working. Fortitude is working like a series of walls closing in. They're always taking on two-v-ones. You know what I mean? They're always fighting

your statues off by sheer number. There's just--what are you made of? What are the statues made of?

ART: I mean, I had described it as like a chrome, so it could--

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: --be any sort of future-y metal.

AUSTIN: So the metal is just smashing apart, sometimes they're getting hit with like hot beams of energy, which again is a new thing; remember, Partizan didn't have a lot of beam technology. Like some melee weapons and that was it. But this divine is using that sort of an attack, melting them away. Globes of your old statues are floating around. What do you look like with all the statues removed?

ART: Uh...

AUSTIN: Is it just a silhouette, a shiny silhouette?

ART: No, I think it's *not* shiny. Whatever's under it has to be a matte, or a different finish, a stone or just like a brushed metal.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Garantine at one point says like,

AUSTIN (as Gucci Garantine): I can't believe you're going to get us killed.

AUSTIN: And at some point, one of these Fortitude units... They do the play that I pitched. One of them breaks off from the chaos and fires some sort of guided-by-wire hacking drill missile into your back. Right into the back of your neck. Right underneath the cockpit, which I believe is in the head, based on you looking out the eyes at one point, Jack. And the floor underneath you begins to vibrate as this drill begins to enter into, effectively the nervous system of Fealty. What's our flashback here?

ART: I think this is like, very early in the relationship. And it's, uh,

ART (as Fealty): What is fealty to you, Véronique?

[pause]

JACK (as Véronique): You have a team, and you want to stick by your team. And, I know this is the most basic version of it, right, but like, when we were running relay in school... And when we were deploying together last week, the thing that is motivating you is the care that you have for the people who look to you to protect them. And that care goes both ways as well.

We're looking after each other, I'm looking after them, they're looking after us, it's--we're doing this for the Stel.

ART (as Fealty): Mm.

JACK (as Véronique): Is that wr--

ART (as Fealty): That's the highest loyalty you can imagine?

JACK (as Véronique): To my Stel? I'm an elect. For Stel Nideo. What higher loyalty is there?

ART (as Fealty): I'm just asking a question, Anchor.

JACK (as Véronique): Is that the right answer?

ART (as Fealty): There's no "right." It's an opinion.

JACK (as Véronique): [laughing softly] I don't think we are in the business of having the luxury of opinion. Do you have fealty to the Stel?

ART (as Fealty): Of course I do. And I have fealty to you, and I have fealty to... To many. I am the embodiment of a concept. [pause] But never underestimate the luxuries you have. Especially now.

JACK (as Véronique): Do you... You've always been the embodiment of Fealty, right?

ART (as Fealty): More or less.

JACK (as Véronique): And you've always known what it, what it means?

ART (as Fealty): Is it--do I like things because I'm Fealty, or are things Fealty because I like them?

JACK (as Véronique): I don't know. What does it feel like? I don't know what it feels like. I'm the closest a human can be to knowing what it feels like to embody a concept in the way that you do, but...

ART (as Fealty): I think you know it more than I do. Because you have context that I don't.

JACK (as Véronique): You've fought in a thousand wars!

ART: [light laugh] I think that conversation's later.

AUSTIN: That conversation's later. We're going backwards in time.

JACK: [laughing] Oh, okay! Okay!

ART: I shouldn't have called you Anchor, is where I fucked this one up.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, it's fine. That could still be established in an even earlier conversation.

ART: Sure. [pause]

ART (as Fealty): But I've only ever been Fealty. You have been something else.

JACK (as Véronique): This is making me sad. This is making me sad! Can I – let's ask each other silly questions. Okay.

ART (as Fealty): Okay.

JACK (as Véronique): I'm gonna go first.

ART (as Fealty): Yeah.

JACK (as Véronique): We've got a long time to talk about Fealty.

AUSTIN: Real quick, I'm gonna incept a second flashback. When Fealty says, "you've been something else," you remember your coach being like,

AUSTIN (as Véronique's coach): Alright Garretty, on the line! You're next!

JACK: And just knowing like, "I'm gonna be fucking incredible at throwing this javelin right now."

AUSTIN: And you throw it, and it hits its mark perfectly, right? And everyone's surprised, this is the first time--it's not tryouts but it's like the first meet, and you break some sort of regional record, you know. [cross] No one thought you had it in you.

JACK: [cross] Name goes up on the board.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly.

JACK: Erritt Garretty! So-and-so school!

AUSTIN: Yep. Mhm.

JACK (as Véronique): [takes a deep breath] What's the first thing divines remember?

ART (as Fealty): Waking up. What's the first thing you remember?

JACK (as Véronique): I was in a stroller, I think. I was in a stroller at a track meet that my dad was at. And it was raining. And there were--the stroller had hard plastic over the top of it where I sat, and rain was coming down on the hard plastic of the stroller. And I could reach out with my finger and touch the raindrops as they... Do you know what I'm talking about? When rain falls on plastic? And if you touch it from the other side you can kind of push the raindrops around. And I was sat there for--I don't know, I was in a stroller. And I was pushing these raindrops around and watching them all flow together into big rivers of rain.

ART (as Fealty): That sounds beautiful. Thank you.

JACK (as Véronique): Great. Thank you.

AUSTIN: [cross] And they're on you.

ART: [cross] What a horrible memory for Fealty to forget.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. It's miserable. Um, you know, we get the visual of the raindrops that are being described to you falling and becoming like a, like a river of rain--

ART: Oh and it's sort of just like--oh, sorry--

AUSTIN: No yeah, go ahead! Go for it.

ART: And it like, becomes static. The falling rain becomes the falling static.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And it's just, shk! Gone.

ART: [mournful] Ah!

AUSTIN: How do you escape this?

ART: I think it's the opposite...

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.

ART: ...Of the escape plan. It's creating just like such a chaos of the attached figures that the mass can get away.

AUSTIN: And--

ART: And Austin I have like a, I have an A/B question for you [cross] in the Discord.

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah yeah yeah, you do, let me see here.

ART: [cross] Can you give me an A or a B and I'll get us out of here?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I gotcha. Yeah yeah yeah. Um. Yeah.

ART: And as they're just on the edge of comms, as they realize that their plan has succeeded and they're gonna need to find a way to generate a bunch of chrome bodies again, Fealty reaches out to Fortitude and says,

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

ART: [cross] And they're gone.

AUSTIN: [cross] And it floods you. The image floods both of you now. The purple that you saw at the edge of space, the Twilight Mirage, where it's always been, and yet, where it's been out of reach.

The Principality is a strange thing. Everybody in it can trace themselves back to somewhere else. Stels Kesh and Apostolos have Kesh and Apostolos. Columnar traces itself back to the planet called Crown which was ruined when the Perennial Wave struck the galaxy. And Orion, even as turned against itself as it is, has the Sol system. And in a sense, somehow, it still has Earth, though it is very far from the Sol system now.

But Stel Nideo cannot point to a single place of its founding, because the place of its founding is inside of the Mirage. Where they have sworn, from a blend of nationalist mythologizing and of fear, never to tread again. But it's like I said: the war has gone poorly. Columnar and Apostolos move with ferocity and brilliance, and they are aided by their quick study of the Kalmeria particle and their collective willingness to break things in the pursuit of newness. And deep within the Curtain, a protocol goes into effect. A final stab from the grave of its old dame, Crysanth. It's time to find a way back in.

Palisade is a star system and a planet at the very edge of the Twilight Mirage. It has served as staging ground and as resting place. And it served as the first stop for the then informally exiled Divine Free States, driven away from the Mirage due to their interest in expansion. But something happened. Between the time the Divine Free States became the Divine Principality, and from when they first arrived, they left Palisade behind, and they left it in the edge of that mist. And in time they lost track of it. The Mirage pulsed and changed, as it is wont to do. And as it lapped at the galaxy around it, the galaxy around it changed as the tide does to the shore. This season, from here forward, when we come back for more of this and as we go through the Road, and into whatever comes beyond, will be about this gateway. This door back to the Mirage. Who controls it, who lives there now, and whether anyone can use it to get at this place we left behind. In the words of the beginning of Deltron 3030, "we're going back, we had to go back, we were always going back."

I'm very excited to see how this develops. But those are the stakes. This is what we're playing with. Which I think it's important to know. You know how much we don't like to put past victories on the chopping block; empire does not care about us.

Thank you so much for hanging out! We'll be back sometime soon to see if Véronique and Fealty can get away!

JACK: [cross] It's been great!

ART: [cross] Yeah, this game extremely rules. Go, go--

AUSTIN: Go pick this up. Possibleworldsgames.com. You can get it digitally for six dollars. You can get it in print for \$13.95. I really--

JACK: The print editions are gorgeous.

AUSTIN: They're so gorgeous. I don't know--Tyler, if you're still in the chat, are there still--there are. There are the 2021 box set of Tyler's games, Possible Worlds Games, for \$59.95. It's extremely good. I think, we've played HOUNDS, have we played Wishless yet? I don't remember if we've played Wishless, I know we wanna play some other stuff from this. We played another one of Tyler's games before, Beak Feather and Bone, which was a blast. So, shoutouts to Tyler Crumrine.

JACK: Is Guess Whodunit a Tyler game as well?

AUSTIN: I don't think--mm? I don't know. I don't. Know.

ART: We can give credit for all sorts of games.

JACK: Yes it is! It is!

AUSTIN: There you go! Guess Whodunit. Shoutouts. All Tyler games right now. Killing it. Alright that's gonna do it for us, we should time.is. Ah, love to kick off a season.

ART: [cross] Oh my goodness!

JACK: [cross] Yeah! That was a fuckin'...

AUSTIN: It's a banger, babey!

ART: Everyone was like, "we wanna play the fun silly game," we did great.

AUSTIN: [laughing] We did fine, we did good. We did the other one.

JACK: Woah, Austin, you've broken your stream really spectacularly right now.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I know, it's really good, isn't it? I'm gonna leave it like this.

JACK: You've fractured time.is.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's good. I actually don't know how, can I just do--no, that's nothing. That's fun too though, let's do this! There's nothing there now. Oh boy, I went to a calendar, that's not what I wanted. Alright, eight seconds.

[sound of two claps]

JACK: That was the--I made the most, the weakest, babiestic clap!

AUSTIN: Alright. One more. Twenty seconds.

[sound of two claps]

AUSTIN: Alright.

JACK: Big clap!

AUSTIN: Big clap.

JACK: Strong clap.

AUSTIN: Strong clap.

ART: Alright. Tell your friends.

[AUSTIN and JACK laugh]

AUSTIN: Friendsatthetable.cash, you already know what it is! Peace!