

## Twilight Mirage 18: The Sun Pales to Its Brightness

Transcribed by Mike @SquidNoir [0:00-7:10] coyote #8594 [7:10-1:25:20]

[SONG "The Twilight Mirage" STARTS PLAYING]

AUSTIN (as Primary): Dispatch 170.

Satellite, I'm sorry, but no. I'm worried too; I am, and I... I know that we've broken some rules together. We both know that we were never meant to, well, be together, and I don't regret that at all, but... there are some lines I cannot cross. Crystal Palace is clear about this: primary observers have mission critical briefings, and satellite observers have enhanced assessment protocols. You tell me when something I can't see looks fishy, and then I tell you when it's time to intercede. We have to work together on this. So no, I cannot tell you more about Quire than you already know. About Independence. About Pretence. No, I cannot tell you more about the Iconoclasts than I have already said; that they are driven, indomitable, and terrifying. And more than anything else, Gray, I cannot tell you the conditions that require me, under oath and vow, to push that button.

[SONG "The Twilight Mirage" CONTINUES TILL THE END]

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. You can find me at twitter @Austin\_Walker. Joining me today to continue our game of The Veil, by Fraser Simons is Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: Hi, I'm Janine Hawkins. I'm @bleatingheart on Twitter. And also I've been streaming Magician's Quest, and y'all should watch that, on youtube.com/streamfriends.

AUSTIN: Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi, I'm Jack de Quidt. You can buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereale.bandcamp.com, and I'm also on Twitter @notquitereale.

AUSTIN: And...Alicia Acampora.

ALI: Hi! My name is Alicia Acampora, you can find me @ali\_west on Twitter, and you can find the show over @friends\_table.

AUSTIN: And you can also support the show over at friendatthetable.cash, take us- take you to our Patreon page where you can find out more about all of the fun, cool Patreon stuff that we do. It is fun, it is cool, I really love it. So definitely go check that out, friendsatthetable.cash. Cash as in money, not cache as in memory.

ALI: (laughs)

AUSTIN: Though in our sci-fi fantasy setting, you know, what's the difference?

ALI: Should pick that up.

AUSTIN: I, I have. I've been using cache on my notes in terms of it being money, I think it was a joke we made during world building. But I actually really like it as a...

ALI: (laughs)

AUSTIN: As a- not a money equivalent but like remember we talked about how there isn't currency in this world, but what there is is like kind of memory, like, Nier: Automata style memory caps, basically? Of like-

ALI: Oh, yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Or like, luxury good caps basically. Which is like, yeah, you know, if you need- if you want some cool stuff you can have some cool stuff, you just can't have all of the cool stuff at once. Um, speaking of cool stuff, you were all being sent to...there's not really anything cool happening, it-

JANINE: (laughs)

ALI: (laughs)

AUSTIN: Kind of, kind of bad, actually, right?

JACK: It's a gem mining operation.

ALI: Yeah, that's cool.

AUSTIN: That's true. It is a gem mining operation. It is the, the- you're being sent to the temple of Privine, who was the first of the third generation uh...Divines, where there's a gem mining operation happening and where there was a strange signal picked up, also where there was a uh, Earth government pod that seemed to go that direction after the killing of Gumption, um, and... I'm trying to see if there's any other information before we pick back up.

JANINE: It's a corpse monastery, right? Like, we're saying "gem mining operation" like, ooh, but weren't there like, monks doing all the labor inside the...?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah, they're like track...they're like trackless monks for gems.

AUSTIN: To be clear, they're-

JANINE: Inside the body of a Divine? Or adjacent to it?

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes, they're doing- That's exactly right. Though to be clear, like, like, they're not slaves, like, they're monks who voluntarily want to go-

JANINE: Right, it's a...

AUSTIN: To this divine place.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. But wait, why were you saying like, it was a corpse?

JANINE: Cause it's a dead Divine.

AUSTIN: Yeah, but though I was also pretty clear that like...I...none of you have been there, this is not a situation necessarily where it's like...I'm not sure that this is a Belgard situation, or if you know that it's a Belgard situation or not.

JANINE: (chuckles)

AUSTIN: The...It's a dead Divine the way...it's not a dead Divine the way, um, I'm trying to think of a good- again, it's not like Belgard where the whole thing is that; it was there, um, you believe it was a station built- Oh, there's another thing, to be clear, there was something else, which is that...it...hmm... I don't know if I actually gave you this yet so I'm not going to-

JACK: I don't think.

ALI: (laughs)

JANINE: (chuckles)

AUSTIN: There's another, there's another point here, you don't know.

JACK: I think the other point is that like, Ivy, the Beloved Ivy-

AUSTIN: That is another point, yes.

JANINE: Mmm.

JACK: Our shithead counterparts, uh, went off-

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

JANINE: Some of them are okay.

JACK: They're...bastards all.

ALI: (laughs)

JANINE: One's not, but...

JACK: They went off to uh...to do what we're supposed to be doing here, by all accounts.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: To, to trace the pod, and they just, just went dark, they've...we've heard nothing from them.

AUSTIN: Uh, they sent back that-

JACK: Although we've actually heard something- yeah we've heard that horrible, messed up signal that-

ALI: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

JACK: Morning's Observation had. See, this is like a great bonus for having recorded like, four days apart.

AUSTIN: Yeah! It's amazing, you still remember the things. (laughs)

ALI: (laughs)

AUSTIN: The other big thing here is that, um...there was another big thing, there was another, there was one more thing- Oh oh oh, is that, is that, Fourteen Fifteen, uh, now in a new body has kind of upset Worthy Of- Not Worthy Of Grace, as Worthy Of Grace, as Fourteen Fifteen in the Worthy Of Grace body, has upset Sho Salon because, not so much the body swap, so much as-

JACK: A sort of horrible realization of- what Fourteen Fifteen is and does

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

JACK: And the implications of that.

AUSTIN: Um, other big note; is that Castlerose got in contact with you, Fourteen- To say, "Hey. You have that one contract that you haven't finished yet, and the client is getting a little uh, peeved."

ALI: (chuckles)

JACK: Yeah.

ALI: I wonder why?

AUSTIN: Hmm. Who could say?

JACK: Hey. Hey, you, Tender, you can wonder as much as you want. (laughs)

ALI: (laughs)

AUSTIN: We should go over beliefs and then hap- hop right in. So, Tender, let's start with you.

ALI: Um, yeah, so my beliefs are "The boundaries of my mind are fading, I will crack the barriers that remain", "Fourteen feels like they owe me something, I'll take whatever they're offering", and "My gift is divine and cannot be taken from me, I will stop anyone who will try".

AUSTIN: Rad, Signet.

JANINE: Mine are, "There is no excuse to leave someone in a situation that will inevitably lead to their death", "Improvisation leads to oblivion, routines, rituals, processes and practices exist and endure for good reason", "Tender should use her divine gift only in service of the Fleet and the Orbit, I will not entertain its abuse".

AUSTIN: And, Fourteen.

JACK: Uh, "I don't know why, but Tender is important, always keep her in my sights", "Always shine a light into shadowed corners", and "I am not afraid of death, but others are, I will never manipulate someone with a deadly, but empty threat"

AUSTIN: Okay, so... Do you have... what do you want to do? How are you feeling, what are we up to? Um, this is not a thing where you have, like, we gotta go immediately, but it is a thing where you don't know what's happening, and as always, the clock keeps moving, right? So, the question for me is like, are you doing legwork, are you gonna research anything, do you have questions about this place you wanna answer before you get there, or are you trying to get there quickly to make sure that the Beloved Ivy are okay, that the people at the temple are okay, like, what are you prioritizing here, what are you doing?

JACK: There's a move I'd like to make which I really like in The Veil, and I'm just looking for it.

(laughter)

AUSTIN: Is it the one where you introduce a new NPC?

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah, where we do legwork by bringing someone in. What's that called.

AUSTIN: Uh, it is a peripheral move, and it is called Link. When you introduce a new NPC by name, look, and outlook, decide how you know and feel about them and roll, on a 10+ the relationship is in good standing, on a 7-9 it's strained or frayed in some way, and they have one faith on you. On a miss, in addition to what the MC says, they also have one faith on you.

JACK: Oooh, okay, hmm...

AUSTIN: So, who do you want to introduce by name, look, and outlook.

JACK: So, umm, I think I want to introduce, uh... can I tell you who they are and work on their name in as, hopefully that it'll come?

AUSTIN: Yeah, sure.

JACK: So, I wanna introduce a researcher, like an academic, cause we haven't had many of those in this game yet...

ALI: (laughs)

AUSTIN: The other side just got a good one, but yes.

JACK: Oh, really? Okay... Well we need to match 'em. So, I think this is a researcher on Curiosity, I think this is, uh, someone who was specialized in exploring these darkened spaces until they stopped, and I think they stopped because they found something that frightened them, so they left, they bounced completely, but their specialization is in, like, uh... again, I wanna make sure we're not getting too close to like, equating this thing with Belgard, but their specialization is in old objects, or is in dead objects. So I want some information on this, um...

AUSTIN: Okay... I mean there are lots of old dead objects, there are also lots of old divine parts and things, we've been over that, so like, I think that there are- well, Belgard is now in this special case, because the biggest thing that we left behind, that we didn't talk about in our wrap-up from last time, is that, uh, Signet is in the process of reawakening Belgard by sharing with it the components that she can collect by opening up to people and getting them to open up to her, so, I think Belgard at this point is a pretty unique position, but there are lots of dead

divines, there are lots of old facilities that have been left behind, there are lots of abandoned- I mean, space is big, right? So, um, where are they now, or is this, okay, what's their name?

JACK: I think I have a name. I think their name is Mount Everest.

AUSTIN: Good name.... are they at the Sky Reflected In Mirrors, or are they, have they-

JACK: No, they've fled, they've gone. And, um, while it's not fleeing, like they haven't fled with something on their tail, I think it's definitely like they're, um... I think Mount Everest uses he/him pronouns, and I think his husband and son were very much like, "Look, this is getting bad here, it's time for us to go".

AUSTIN: Did they know what he found, or was this a Close Encounters Of The Third Kind thing of like, "Hey, you are, you're not all here right now, like you're so obsessed with your work, you're clearly pushing yourself too hard, you're burning yourself, you know, burning the candle at both ends, we have to get you out of here," or was it-

JACK: I think it was actually an inversion of that, I think it was the Twilight Mirage's inversion of that, which is that right off the bat, Mount Everest came to these people and said "Look, I found something", and they discussed what it was. So they're not here any more, they've left, they've fled...

AUSTIN: Okay, okay... So where are you meeting him?

JACK: I'm gonna meet him... so we are, are we still on Seance?

AUSTIN: You're near, you're in the Seance orbit, yeah.

JACK: Yeah, I think that he's absolutely on Seance, with his family. Um, so I'm gonna roll...

AUSTIN: How do you feel, how do you feel about meeting up, with a...

JACK: 10+... Yeah, let's see, I think I'm going to roll... I think I'm going to roll scared, because I'm from this place, and I don't know what he found. Um, and I think since I know that we're going to be getting close, like Mirrors is in orbit around this place as well, I think I'm worried that he's going to tell me something that will make my home feel less like home to me. So I'm gonna roll scared... okay.

AUSTIN: That... is a nine, that's not so bad. So it is a strained relationship, or frayed in some way, and they have one faith on you, so make sure you make a note of that...

JACK: Yeah, I'll write that down.

AUSTIN: Where do you find him?

JACK: I think I go to his house, I think I said that I want to meet, and he invited me to my house.

AUSTIN: Umm... no, he invites you to a public place.

JACK: Okay [laugh].

AUSTIN: So it's frayed, I get to call the-

JACK: Yeah, that's fair, it is frayed

AUSTIN: In fact you, you knew him then, you knew him when he was on The Sky Reflected In Mirrors-

JACK: Working as a researcher...

AUSTIN: Yeah, and you've had dinner at his family's house, yknow? And so you say "yo, can I come by?" and he says no. Uh, he says, um, there is a shipyard, meet me there, y'know, at noon, and come alone. And by shipyard, what he means is like, a boat store, basically? It's like, it extends off the side of Seance- so to remind people, Seance is this kind of octagonal column, that has a city built on all eight sides of it, with like engines on one end, and then also there are things like skyscrapers and huge buildings that, like, go off on each of the eight sides, but there are also moments where it's like, instead of being a building, there will be, almost like a dock that goes out. And sometimes it's not very far, but it almost treats the Mirage, and space, as water. And so you're there, you're like, around a bunch of ships that are for sale, and a lot of them look like the ship that you all have, which has like, y'know, solar sails on them, or even smaller, there's lots of like, two-seater coupes, that are almost like space-cars. And he's basically walking around a lot with you, where like, the sun is reflecting off the windshields of these space-cars, and there is a sort of a solar wind moving through these sails, but also like, you're walking on nothing, right? Like, you're walking on these docks, but there is nothing below you, if you jumped off the side, you would, maybe fall? Or maybe you would fall and like, turn inward to the center of Seance, and fall into its gravity, but like, space is below you, as if it were water, so, and above you, and around you at the same time. And you just see him, he's like, looking out into space at the edge of this dock. What's he look like?

JACK: I think he's like, uh, on the older edge of middle aged, I think he's, maybe 55, 56, I think he walks with a cane, I think he's always walked with a cane, I don't think this is because of anything that he found there. I think it was an accident playing, uh, football or something in school, caused him to have to walk with a cane. I think he is, on his phone constantly, and again, that's just a trait that he has, has always had,

AUSTIN: What's he wearing?



JACK: Um, he's wearing a... he's wearing the sort of clothes, where it's clear that the clothes he'd like to be wearing are overalls and a belt with tools on and a lamp on his head, but he's on Seance, and I guess his husband has some fancy job on Seance that made relocation easier. Uh, so he's wearing like a button-down shift, trousers,

AUSTIN: That's like, a little too big for him, maybe

JACK: It's like a little too big for him, he doesn't look bad, he doesn't look uncomfortable, in fact the only way he looks uncomfortable is the way that he is looking at his phone, and the way that he's reaching for his belt, as though he'll be able to feel a pick or a hammer or something.

AUSTIN: Mhmm, um, he like, turns as you approach, gives you a nod, um...

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): They got ya in a new one, huh?

JACK (As Fourteen): It happens periodically, I've grown used to it. It's, thank you so much for coming out and seeing me.

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): It's good to see someone from home.

JACK (As Fourteen): [laughs] Well, you know, I'm not the person I once was. Do you get it, it's a joke about the fact that, uh, I keep changing.

AUSTIN: We get a wide shot of you saying that with, uh, the arm of Gumption sticking out of the arena in the distance, and then he just says, like

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Yeah, we're all changing. What do you need, Fifteen?

JACK (As Fourteen): I'm uh, I've been doing some work with the Beloved, of late, and we're about to begin a new assignment... I have some level of anticipation for this, we're moving into something that is beyond what I know about, but we're heading back into the orbit of Mirrors, which is exciting. But uh... have you heard of the Privign mining station and monastery?

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Mmm... Walk with me.

AUSTIN: And he starts walking away from the edge of the dock and like, through the rows of the ships as you talk.

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): I've heard of it. I haven't been. Is that where Mirrors is now, Mirrors is near Privign?

JACK (As Fourteen): It's, yeah, I think Mirrors is in orbit around Benthos, as is, well Privign seems to be falling into its atmosphere, but very slowly.

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Yeah, it's been that way since I've been alive.

AUSTIN: He is terse, I wanna be clear. This is not me finding a voice for him, he is... watching what he says to you.

JACK (As Fourteen): Is something the matter, Everest?

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Lots of things but, um, I'll help you however I can, what do you need to know?

JACK (As Fourteen): Well, I was hoping I could meet Steven and Robert, but I can understand that we might want to meet out here.

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): They're very busy, Steven, uh, is job, and Robert, uh, yeah, school, school, went away to school just two years ago... fashion, studying fashion, I'm very proud, a very smart boy.

JACK (As Fourteen): I'm sure he is. Umm... We should stick to business, shouldn't we?

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Hm... it's a star jammer,

AUSTIN: He says, and like touches the side of one of the ships,

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): They don't make em' any more, it's old, I think it's before Privign shut down even, I don't see them that often, but um... good ship, lots of, uh, lots of space. So what is it you need?

JACK (As Fourteen): I'm worried about what we're going to find there, I know that the monks on Privign, their number was lessened dramatically, by several hundred, as I understand it, and of late, this horrible signal, this horrible sound, has been echoing through the facility, umm... Can I play it for you?

JACK: Can I play it for him?

AUSTIN: Sure, what's it look like? How do you play it for him. Do you just have like a...

JACK: Umm, I think that, uh, I think that my dress sweeps into my dress sweeps into a waveform, and it just-

AUSTIN: (laughs) GMs, this is why you say “how do you do it”, because then you get dresses that sweep into waveforms.

JACK: When I say this, I want to be clear, that’s it’s not like a waveform is projected on my dress, I mean that the fabric moves, um, and I think we just hear it, it think that is a thing that happens in this body.

AUSTIN: Have I- I haven’t played you the thing that inspired this sound for me, right?

JACK: No, oh dear.

ALI: Oh, I think so.

AUSTIN: Alright, it’s this, it’s the sound that comes off of the rings of Saturn.

[A hollow, shifting static noise plays]

JACK: Jesus...

AUSTIN: [deep breath]

JACK (As Fourteen): And our friends are missing. And I know that you fled that place, and I don’t ask you to, I’ve never asked you to tell me what it is that you saw.

JACK: This is a lie, Fourteen has asked.

AUSTIN: Of course, of course, yeah.

JACK (As Fourteen): But I wonder whether or not anything you could give us, about the...

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): About Privign, about any of it?

JACK (As Fourteen): [sigh] Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, I think you are... I think this is... I’m trying to decide if there is, like, a roll here, but I think you’ve already made the roll, so, um, he’s willing to talk to you, the thing here is, um, I’m trying to figure out what he knows about this specific- or what you want to know, specifically.

JACK: Yeah... I think I want to know... I think that I see in him the spirit of the place we both came from. Um, and I think that... we both spent too much time walking into rooms where we didn’t know what was in them, and as exciting as that is, and as foundational as that is to our

culture, I have come to him specifically because he's fled, specifically because I want to go into this place where, ostensibly, my friends have disappeared, knowing a little more about it.

AUSTIN: Alright, so then he says, um...

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): That they disappeared doesn't make sense. The, um, that place, Privign, the resting temple of Privign, where they do the gems, uh, it's run by a small order of monks. They're capable, they're talented, they're armed, the Gleaming...

AUSTIN: No, that's not it, it's... what is it... The Jeweled Heirs, is what they're called.

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): The Jeweled Heirs... devoted, in a way that only monks to dead god can be. I've never met the leader of them myself, but she's apparently very capable, and uh, warm, and welcoming, which means that if your friends went there and are not calling back, then that means that whatever has them probably has the Heirs too.

JACK (As Fourteen): Do you think- and I should let you get back to your family, I've kept you too long- Do you think that one pod of Earth cultists, would they be a match for the monks?

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): I've never dealt with an Earth cultist, but I've dealt with things in the dark, and there are lots of things that are capable of... killing.

AUSTIN: And he looks you in the eye.

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Would you be able to overcome twenty monks?

JACK (As Fourteen): [immediately] Yes.

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Mm... It'd only take you one body? You wouldn't need another?

JACK (As Fourteen): [chuckles] I could do it in three or four.

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Well... How many do you have left?

JACK (As Fourteen): You know...

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Is that how it works, or is it a thing where you just add more?

[snapping noise]

JACK: A guitar string just broke.  
[laughter]

AUSTIN: That's ideal.

JACK: Sorry, um...

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Hey, where do you get those?

JACK (As Fourteen): They are... fashioned for us. Everest, I... what do you want me to tell you?

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): You're a good kid.

JACK: [laughs]

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): I wish you were in a different line of work.

JACK (As Fourteen): Oh... [sigh] It would have been nice to have visited.

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): No, it really wouldn't.

JACK (As Fourteen): Wh-

AUSTIN (As Mount Everest): Good luck, I hope your friends are safe, don't call me again.

AUSTIN: Uh, and he walks past you, and picks up his phone and makes a call, and you hear that he calls his husband, to check in and see how his day is going.

JACK: Ooof... Hm, okay, well I think that's, we got some good stuff...

[laughter]

JACK: Out of that.

AUSTIN: Anyone else have legwork?

JANINE: I... do. This... this might be weird, because, um... so I have access to a space that I want to go to, technically I only have access to it through Sanctuary, so the awkward part is like, I just came back from that? But the space is super relevant, so I think it's worth doing... um, I want to go to the second safe hold, which is the crypt of the dead order.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. Um, so do you have to roll that again?

JANINE: I guess? Because I have access to it through Belgard. That's the sort of second thing, my sanctuary has a voice that speaks to me and a way to another safe hold, the order's crypt.

AUSTIN: I see, I see, that's interesting. Okay, um... I'm trying to decide if I want you to roll for it or not, and the answer is always yes, basically.

JANINE: Heh, yeah. I mean the roll could also determine what I actually find there, not necessarily the success of getting there.

AUSTIN: Yes, that's what I mean, exactly, I mean that's the thing, that's why I want you to roll, is because I think that it's more interesting to have you... So maybe it's something where you like, you have to, yeah, use Asylum, so that you have to like, pass through it, in a sense, basically.

JANINE: Mhmm. Umm, so I just, I think I just roll my move for that. I always kind of, the rolling is so simple in The Veil that I always kind of expect like, oh, I have to add something, but I usually don't.

AUSTIN: No, it's always, it's always pretty simple. Unless there's advantage or disadvantage, or, yeah.

JANINE: Yeah... I think this is a sad roll, because it's the crypt of, like, all her friends. And like, not even necessarily friends, like I'm sure there are people there she never knew...

AUSTIN: Thousands of them, right?

JANINE: And people there that she knew super well, but it is specifically the crypt of, I think we decided her order was specifically the excerpts of the third generation divines, the divines that were created purely synthetically.

AUSTIN: The only ones left are- not even just purely synthetically, but divines that made divines.

JANINE: Yes, yeah.

AUSTIN: Not just synthetically designed ones, um... the only other person of that order then is the excerpt of Empyrean, right, like, you two are the last two and you're both of that order, and also is an active excerpt, versus, I guess you're becoming more active, every day.

JANINE: (laughs)

AUSTIN: So yeah, go ahead and roll sad, your sad is one.

JANINE: Uh, yes... I have to make sure I have this actual tab open...

AUSTIN: For the record, Fourteen's sad was also one back then... Alright, seven, seven's not bad.

JANINE: Oh okay, right, I saw six and panicked.

AUSTIN: It's red because you rolled a one, cause like hey, by the way, this was... yeah, okay, Asylum says "When you speak the true name of your sanctuary and roll, you withdraw to your sanctuary with or without clear explanation as to how you got there, and on a seven, you get to choose one: you can still watch and hear what is happening while you're there, you can re-emerge in a different place altogether, you're healed of all harm, you have to spend two choices for that, or you can bring someone in and out with you".

JANINE: So here's my question, because my sanctuary is attached to Belgard, does that count as emerging in a different location?

AUSTIN: I don't, I'm gonna let you have that one.

JANINE: Cause I feel like emerging in a different location should just be, like, that's when I come back.

AUSTIN: Well no, cause I think you can always, can't you always come back? Oh, oh oh, it doesn't have come back, huh, doesn't have...

JANINE: No, (laughs).

AUSTIN: Okay that's not, that's only some other thing, that lets you do that, I guess. Um, yeah...

JANINE: So I think, yeah, I should keep that move for like, not having to take a space bus out to the ship again.

(laughter)

AUSTIN: This crypt, so what is this place like? And like what's the... do you briefly stop inside of Belgard, or is it just too quick for you to even... for the camera to even see Belgard.

JANINE: Um, I think the thing that always happens is like, that recall, that automatic recall was originally designed to like, get her in the cockpit as quickly as possible when there was a crisis or something, like I think that is the purpose of that ability. So she always is there, but also, I feel like they know each other so well that like, there's no need to like, stop in and be like "hey, how's it going, I'm on my way to, y'know, I brought you coffee", I think it's just one of those

things like, when you pass someone you live, like, if you live with someone for like ten years and you're both in the kitchen at the same time.

AUSTIN: Right, right right. So I think the shot is just like, you blink once, and we just get a change in what's around you, it's an extreme closeup of your face from, like, the nose to your eyes, and you blink once and you can see the space behind you changes, and you blink again and you're in this new place. Where, what does the, "another safe hold where thousands of your order lay as skeletons" look like.

JANINE: Heheh, so, this place, I think, is probably... I'm not entirely sure where it is, I feel like it's probably attached to some other structure, but like, kind of like a basement that got bricked over, or like, that people just kind of forget is there, but like someone in charge maybe knows it's there, but most people just kinda don't think about.

AUSTIN: Is it... Is it in, where is it? Like is it on a moon somewhere, is it...?

JANINE: I kind of feel... (sigh)

AUSTIN: Because it would have existed before...

JANINE: Yeah... um... wait, before what?

AUSTIN: Before we were down to the final ten divines, right?

JANINE: Oh yeah, yeah, um... my thought for, well, my... it's tough, cause I kind of feel like it should be part of Memorious for its function, but I don't wanna define it as part of Memorious, also Memorious's structure makes that very difficult.

AUSTIN: Eh, Memorious, it could work if we wanted it to just be Memorious, it would just be a different place in Memorious every time.

JANINE: I think... yeah... I also think its function is different, like I imagine its function as, this place isn't trying to catalogue knowledge, necessarily, like all knowledge, it's very specifically like... when someone lives, they're not here, when someone dies, they are. So it's more like a time capsule kind of thing where like, once something starts to... once something is lost it gets added. So it's not quite like Memorious, it is something a little more specialized, and smaller in scope.

AUSTIN: Okay, but it is a free-standing, or a free-floating structure in space, it's not on a moon somewhere, it's not on a planet somewhere...

JANINE: Yeah, I guess it should just be, like...



AUSTIN: To be clear, you can have the freedom to tell me where, like, it could be on Quire for all you want, youknowwhatimean, like...

JANINE: I know, it's just, it's tough to find a thing that makes, um, cause having it on a planet makes it- I think it's a comet. I think it looks like it's a comet. Because having it on a planet is difficult when you live on a fleet, because you are always gonna be sort of... you're not necessarily always gonna be close to it, like things are in motion in a way that maybe makes that not an ideal choice, whereas a comet that kind of moves in a similar kind of way to a fleet, you wouldn't necessarily look at it as being host to anything, but it would also maintain a certain proximity. Yeah, that sounds, that sounds right. And inside is probably like a big, round room that was at one point really well-kept and really organized, but has gotten very cluttered because there's more there than is supposed to be there, y'know there's, there's a lot more that's been shoehorned in. Um, and the move says, or the description says it's full of skeletons, I imagine there are a lot of excerpts that, their skeletons aren't there, because they weren't recoverable, or... but they still have, I called it a time capsule because I think of it a lot like, um... when my mom died, I started just like, amassing everything I could find that was like, related to her, like photos, but also like, certificates from work programs, like skill programs that she'd done, and like, y'know, birthday cards that she had kept from when she was like, twenty-two, um, and just all this stuff, and I amassed cause I was gonna make a scrapbook, and then I've never really scrapbooked, so I didn't really know how to do that, so it's now just like, all together, like, in the pages of this book but not actually deliberately laid out. And that's kind of what I think of this as, like, there are bones here, for some of them, but for all of them, it's like, a collection of the stuff they left behind, black boxes, maybe, if there were incidents like that where they could be recovered, but also like, letters, and...

AUSTIN: But the thing that's interesting is, there are probably lots of skeletons for a long long long time, because they just died from natural causes. And then, y'know, in the last, more and more recently, what you get to is the last excerpt, and they are not there, the bones of the final excerpts are the ones that are missing. Y'know, I'm sure in cases here or there other ones are also missing, but like, if you charted it, it would be a decrease over time in the amount of actual bodies buried here, or, y'know, held here, and an increase in placeholders and objects meant to remind you of people. Um, so what are you trying to learn here, and how do you do it?

JANINE: So, what I'm trying to learn is, I want to go to, I imagine there are probably several of Privign's excerpts, right?

AUSTIN: Yes, there are probably, y'know, twenty-five thousand years' worth of excerpts...

JANINE: Heh he, yeah...

AUSTIN: Um, so yes, lots, lots lots lots. And excerpts live long, and so that might still be only under a hundred, but there's a lot.

JANINE: Um, so I think the most expedient thing to do would be, I think Signet would look at the first one that she has there and the last one. And maybe, like, I don't know if you wanna like, get into that now,

AUSTIN: I totally can...

JANINE: It might be a thing where she, like, downloads it...

AUSTIN: Well no, you should give me that roll now, which is Lift the Veil.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which says... "When you try to pierce the constant illusion of the Veil, search for information or recall something you may already be privy to, roll." So how do you feel?

JANINE: I think we're still sad, still feelin' sad- well, um... no, I think we're still sad.

AUSTIN: Yeah, roll sad, and sad is +1... Uuuh, "On a hit, the MC will tell you something new and interesting about the current situation, on any roll the MC will ask a question or two, answer them, on a 10+ I will give you good detail, on a 7-9 I will give you an impression."

JANINE: Okay... Aww, fuck me...

AUSTIN: Oh buddy, that's a five... Huh huh, um... I'm giving you this information, I'm also gonna ask you some questions, which is gonna be fun.

JANINE: I've got a list of spare excerpt names, if you ever need them.

AUSTIN: Oh, I've got some. The first one's name was "The treaty was not signed, it was marked with a vow of mind and flesh". Uh, and the shortened form is Vow. The first one, you learn something very interesting, which is... they are buried with, uh, with... their body is there, as is a collection of stuff from them, that is not from the Resonant Orbit or the Divine Fleet. They have pictures of people in uniforms from some sort of military, or other kind of uniformed armed services or organization, that have nothing to do with any group you have any knowledge of, and obviously you don't have a completely encyclopedic knowledge, but it's just of a different style completely. They have like, the proper vestments of an excerpt, but they also have, uh, clearly, there's a badge here, that has a language you don't know, or like symbols you don't know on it, and it's easy to derive from this that you, uh, that this person, the first excerpt of Privign, was not from the Fleet, um, was an outsider, which is not a thing that you get normally. Um, the last one, there is no specific, there is no skeleton for. Um, there is a date, no there is a, um... what looks like almost like a watch battery, that is like a holographic emitter, basically. And as you move into its presence, it lights up a light blue, and begins to emit a face, and the face begins to open its mouth, and the sound from Privign starts playing, it's that same

broadcast, but it is corrupt in the exact same way. Um, so those are the things I'm telling you, uh, on your failed roll. I have a question, which is, um, do you have sunglasses? Do you have any way to prevent yourself, if something was very bright, like, especially out in the dark, would you have any way of preventing yourself from being temporarily blinded, because there is movement at the doors of this place.

JANINE: I don't, I have an ear implant, but not an eye thing.

AUSTIN: It's bright like, you know how they say don't look at an eclipse, y'know how like, it's so hard sometimes to like, you walk out of the movies, and you go back out into the main theater area, or worse, you go from the movies, and for whatever reason, you go right outside, without that little middle period of your eyes adjusting, and it's just like "Ugh, I can't see anything", that is what it looks like, to you. Um, except there's one thing, which is like, you think you can recognize digits, like fingers, like three big fingers, as they begin clawing their way into this tomb. What do you do?

JANINE: Uh, I get the fuck out, with my cached "get the fuck out" power, um... I think, I think that's that, like I don't...

JACK: So this light, sorry, where did this light come from, as far as we can tell?

AUSTIN: It's coming from the, whatever the entryway to this place is, it's trying to claw its way through, and I think it makes eyes with you, and it makes a different noise, it is not that same noise that you heard on this thing, but it is, it is human speech, like, filtered through the vacuum of space, so it's like (inhales) like (inhales and says "very"), it's not just quiet, it's like, it's being pulled away with every word, and, um, it says...

AUSTIN (As unidentified creepy finger-thing): The sun pales to its brightness, and you are dimmer still.

AUSTIN: And then you're gone.

JACK: So, I fell out with a friend from years and years and years ago, and I think you're being attacked by a sort of... (laughs) a sort of light creature... Tender?

ALI: (laughs) I mean that par for the course for you guys...

AUSTIN: Mhmm!

ALI: I had an idea but it might be a little... it might not work... Um, I wanted to try to maybe speak to Cascara or maybe look into any of the like, databases at our ship to see like, if there were any like, final notes from the team that's missing, like I don't know if she has like, observance stuff on them that isn't like, public knowledge, or like...

AUSTIN: She has tons of stuff on them, yeah. Um, what are you, what sort of thing are you looking for here, or like, are you talking to her or are you just doing it, because those are two different rolls.

ALI: (laughs) I dunno, it's tough, cause I feel like she would have given us all of the information that she felt comfortable with giving, but I kind of wanna know what like, their last known actions were, and sort of the, like, maybe the research they did before they went in, or that kind of thing.

AUSTIN: Theeey... sure, yeah, that's fair. Are you asking her or are you just doing it?

ALI: I think it's one of those things where like, the three of us probably talk, and are like, "Oh, you go talk to that guy who knows about spooky things", and then Signet is like, "Oh, I can go to this place and get some information that I have access to", and then Tender stays kind of behind in the ship after they both leave, and kind of pokes around and like, hangs out, cause it's a space that she hasn't been in for a really long time, and it's like, she's comfortable and at home there, and then eventually ends up finding her at the same like, the, like, mission room that we got the mission in initially, um, and I think that it's, I dunno, it's probably kind of a forward conversation, like she just approaches her and is like,

ALI (As Tender): Before we head out, is there any other information you have, um, regarding the team that's missing?

AUSTIN (As Cascara): Basically what I said before, they arrived in the, in the system, they made a direct path towards Privign, and then they found this broadcast, they sent it back, and then we lost communication. That... is all I know, about what they were going to do. They went pretty much straight away, I believe that they dug into basic encyclopedic knowledge about Privign, but I don't believe that they spoke with any additional contacts, um... they were confident. They're always confident.

ALI (As Tender): Hm hmm, of course they are, um... do you have any way to access the communications they wouldn't have sent you?

AUSTIN (As Cascara): Uh, it would be, to be able to do that I would need to be able to access their personal ship, and that is also not responding to contact. It's not just not responding, we can't reach it, if you understand.

ALI (As Tender): Hmm... fair, yeah. Uh, hmmm...

ALI: Is this something I would have more access to if I tried to enter a digital space?

AUSTIN: I don't think so, like this is, she's not lying to you, she isn't like, there isn't more here, like, from them.

ALI: Okay, umm... okay.

AUSTIN: Okay. What you would get, the difference between it is you might get information about them if you accessed the digital space, do you know what I mean? But at that point it's about characterizing them and getting more information about them as people, but that's not really what Tender is looking for, so...

ALI: Right, yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: But that is why I asked you which way you were doing it, to be clear, it was like, well if you ask her, she's gonna tell you the facts of the case, whereas if you go do it yourself, then like maybe you stumble into this other stuff, but also maybe you shouldn't be poking around their private information.

ALI: Ahahaha, fair. Uh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Umm... Everyone meets back up on the ship, which still doesn't have a name and is supposed to have a name by now. Hmmm. Crossing my arms. Disappointed teacher.

[giggling]

JACK: What's the ship that, uh, Everest was describing? The Star Jammer?

AUSTIN: Star Jammer, yeah.

JACK: That's not this ship, but that's a good name for a ship.

AUSTIN: Now that I think about it, I think the Star Jammer is... is that a Marvel thing? The Star Jammers are a Marvel thing, I think Cyclops' dad is a Star Jammer.

ALI: Oh yeah?

AUSTIN: I'm pretty sure, yeah yeah yeah.

JACK: Is that like a musical thing?

AUSTIN: No?

JACK: Oh my god, they are, they're a fictional team of space pirates.

ALI: Oooh...

JANINE: Hmm...

AUSTIN: Anyway... Uuuh, so what are you doing? You guys ready to move out, what's the, what's the play?

JACK: Yeah, I think so.

AUSTIN: Does the whole ship go, or do you take a smaller craft? Cascara's left it up for you to decide if you want support in that way.

ALI: Um, I don't know that we would want to put the entire ship at risk in that way.

AUSTIN: Mokay. The tradeoff is that there will be slower communication when it comes time to, like, decrypt anything. That is the- but you're right, they will also be safer.

JACK: Yeah, I think that I would like to-

AUSTIN: Also, uh, there's another big difference, which is: if you go in there and lose communication too, then you can't talk to them and request help, or do anything else, and you'll be... y'know what I mean? So that's the other one, that's the other thing to keep in mind, is that you will be in the same position the Beloved Ivy are. I'm fine with either, I have not written this thing in either direction to where, like, it needs them to be there or not, but those are the tradeoffs, they will be in danger if you take them, and they will be, but you'll be able to maybe be in communication with them more easily, or they'll be far away and safe, and you might not be able to talk to them.

JACK: I would like to go without them.

AUSTIN: Everybody else good with that?

JANINE: I think so.

ALI: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, so you get into a smaller ship, which also doesn't have a name. What's the smaller ship look like? Is this the one that we took from Seance to here? Like, to the ship proper, Fourteen and Tender, or is this a different ship altogether, a smaller... thing.

ALI: Yeah, I mean I think of the ship that we took here as kind of like a shuttle, that like, other members of the Beloved can use, but like, is still... like, it's assigned to us for that purpose, you can't like, rent it and take it off for a private mission, cause you have to figure that out on your own. But we might have, like, our own... I feel like we should, right?

JACK: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Sure, I'm fine with it. I'm totally fine with you having, like, for missions like this, you take this thing, that like, can actually jump from star system to star system, that isn't just short-range, but it is probably very small, also, right? Like, I imagine this as like, a cockpit, an engine, and stuff like that, it's not a big walk-around ship, because those are expensive and big.

JACK: I think it's in the main ship, I think it drops out of the main ship.

ALI: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Exactly, that's what I meant, it would have to be on board, for sure.

JACK: So I reckon what it is it's, like, um, corridors that you could previously use to walk through, are now inaccessible, and it doesn't make whole bits of the ship inaccessible, but like, say you're back on the main ship, and you like, turn a corner, there's now just like, a curtain has been drawn over it, because you can't go down there cause that would, you'd just fall into the Mirage.

AUSTIN: Alright, cool, so you get into this smaller ship and take off, and leave the star system behind. Um, we haven't talked about what, like, long-range jumping looks like in this world, does anyone have any, like, cool visualization in mind for what that looks like? ... The one thing that I kind of like is that it is the moment when the sun sets, and like, you can actually see space is black for a moment, all of the colors, remember, 'cause like, the the Twilight Mirage space is always this like, mixed hues, from blue to pink to orange to red to purple, right? It's always- or you know, there are days when it's gray, right, like a gray morning, but it's always these like, early dawn or dusk colors, and so I think it all kind of like, whatever, if there's like a ribbon of color through the sky, it kind of straightens out, and so like you just get bands, instead of these like, nice organic curves, and so you just get like, blue, red, orange, and then they like, get darker and darker, they get more and more saturated, and then eventually they turn to black and you can see the stars again, and then you can see planets, and it's like, it's almost the opposite moment, Signet, of what you just had, which was this very bright moment, it's this very, like, dark, quiet thing, and then planets and asteroid belts and stars start slipping past you as you move from your system to your target one, and you see it there, and in the distance you see the Benthos system, which, y'know, has a star at the center of it, but the system is dominated by this, outside of the star it's dominated by this gas giant called Benthos with rings around it. You can see the, like, icon on the heads-up display of the Sky Reflected In Mirrors as it floats on the other side of the planet, and then you can see the notation of like, here is Privign and here is like, uh, what you see is it has three docking bays, there are two that are for, like, internal use only, and there is one for, kind of public docking. And of the two that are for internal use, one of them is like, totally shut down, the bottom one is totally shut down, and like, it's what Privign, like, the base, is falling into the atmosphere forever, and then the higher up one is accessible, but not to you, because you don't have the codes to get in through that docking port, but the top one is open, and there there are lights shining on it, and like, it's blinking. It's basically- this

base is basically built into a giant asteroid that is like, permanently falling into orbit, it's stuck there, because it's also like, using repulsors, pushing itself up forever, preventing itself from crashing, but not powerful enough to actually break and get back into a safe orbit. Um, and at this moment, you're still in contact with the home base, with Cascara and with everybody else. What do you say and do, as you arrive- Oh, there's one more big note, which is that the Mirage has turned black here, you get here and have expected this whole space to be back to being the Mirage, and I guess maybe it is still the mirage, like you can see it isn't just black, there are ribbons of, kind of color again, except the colors are only gray, and darker gray and lighter gray, it's like everything here is grayscale, and like, you look at each other, and you're also in grayscale here. There's maybe a hint, like the lightest hint, of color.

JACK: Can we just, right while we're still in contact with, uh, the team back on Seance, can we try and hail the Beloved Ivy, now that we're within range?

AUSTIN: Totally. Yeah, um, the signal goes out, you don't see their ship anywhere- actually, you that there ship is, they have a similar ship to this one and it is docked at the station. That is what you see, on first glance. So they're there, for sure. You send out a message, and it doesn't get received, like it doesn't ping back, like it sends out, and you can either turn on the vocalizer for this, to actually see, literally, it sends out a message and then makes like, a noise for transmission, and then it doesn't bounce back the way it's supposed to to confirm that it was received. You don't get a read message, basically- You not only don't get a read message, you don't get the message that it was received at all, let alone read.

JACK: So it doesn't even say "delivered".

AUSTIN: Right, it does not even say "delivered". It does say, it says, if this was a three-part thing that said "sent, delivered, read", you would have "sent", but you would not have "delivered".

JACK: Mokay, hmm, alright...

AUSTIN: What do you do?

JANINE: Good question.

JACK: We could try and hail the base, try and like, call whatever their air traffic control is.

AUSTIN: Mhmm. Uh, you can tell that, same result.

JACK: Oh my god, really, nothing?

AUSTIN: Like, it's not delivered, something is stopping signals from being delivered.



JACK: Mokay, we should report that back to the home base, so that they know that that's probably going to happen to us, and that at least they can anticipate it.

AUSTIN: Cascara says, like,

AUSTIN (As Cascara): That's about what I expected.

JANINE: Yeah, I was gonna say that we should probably like, just for the sake of it, tell her, like, the stuff we've seen and done so far, just the very baseline, like, it's all black-and-white here and you know that and we sent a message they didn't see that, and you also prolly knew that, just so she has that much information.

AUSTIN: Yup, she says recieved, confirmed, yeah.

JACK: (sigh) Okay, let's try, let's try and land, I mean, I feel that like, hailing them and not getting anything isn't, super the best start...

JANINE: Is there like, this is... this is probably like, kinda cheaty, or silly, or just completely not helpful, but I was gonna say is there something like the, the, the Mirage equivalent of like, a wireless repeater, like a little satellite that we could just kinda like, drop out here before we go in closer?

AUSTIN: If there is, you- there might be, yeah, like of course-

JANINE: Or like, wouldn't necessarily have?

AUSTIN: If you do, what I can do is make you roll for it, to see if you have it, do y'know what I mean, like that's, I think that's a cool thing, I'm totally fine with that, it would be a... you'd have to spend cred for it probably, or, um

JANINE: We haven't been keeping track of our creds, like, at all, we're supposed to have jams that do stuff, but-

AUSTIN: That's because- That's true, it just feels like not what this world is, um, I guess we could though, we could go back and do jam rolls, um... (quietly) whoops, i fucked up the thing on a character sheet...

ALI: Oh, right, yeah...

JANINE: 'Cause we technically had like, two months since we started with one cred, so...

AUSTIN: Yeah, we totally should be able to do some jam stuff... the thing is, that like, we've established that like, for this world, you're not gaining money, is the thing that's like, tough about

it, I think what you're gaining is like, capital that you can exchange temporarily, right? Um... y'know, I'm fine saying like, everyone can take three more, y'know, which is like, you cap has increased because of the services you've rendered. Um, but that's not like, you did this work and therefore you got three cred. It's like, my cap is three cred higher than what it normally is, so, so yeah, you can totally do that, and then yeah, we can go back and do, um, I think the roll is called... yeah, "when you enter a place in order to find something not readily available, answer the following questions and take +1 for each"... I guess the question is like, where did you get it from? Did you like, is this something that you requisitioned through Cascara, is this something you personally went and got yourself, because all of that stuff will help answer how expensive it is, and stuff like that.

JANINE: Yeah. Um, this seems like the kind of thing that would've been requisitioned specifically to be included on the shuttles, right? 'Cause you're sending those to sort of extend your reach, so you'd want a thing that could extend that reach a little further.

AUSTIN: Okay. So I need someone to give me a 10+, uh, or a roll, based on this, and based on the questions that are here, it's like like, is the place you're trying to buy this part of a corporation? I'll say yes, like in a sense, it's not a corporation but it is a big organization. Um, you don't have a wide variety of merchants, you're just like, we got what we got, uh, it is policed, it is regulated, saying "we need one of these" is a regulated thing, so you're gonna take +2 to this roll, then you're also going to take... I think you'll take another -1, there are questions like "are there thieves here?", and there are not thieves here, there is not a gang presence here, but there is a certain form of oppression, which is like, things are rough in the fleet, and so like, people are very careful about what they let people requisition, so you're gonna roll 2d6+1. You're still gonna tell me how you feel when you go shopping, but you're not marking, you're not spiking a thing from this.

JANINE: Uh, okaaay...

AUSTIN: I think it was your idea, so you should roll.

JANINE: Yeah, I was gonna say, someone else who's having better rolls today want, but yeah, okay.

ALI: (laughs)

JANINE: So it'd be 2d6+1. I think this would count, this would qualify as scared, even though it's not like a really obvious kind of fear, it's, y'know, I would consider caution a kind of fear.

AUSTIN: That's fair. Yeah, I'm with you. 100%.

JANINE: So that would, I don't have anything for Scared anyway, so yeah.

AUSTIN: Or rather I think you are spiking- are you spiking it? You are spiking it, you're just not rolling it. That's how it works.

JANINE: What?... Er, yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: You do it 'cause you are feeling that way, alright. Gimme that, gimme that roll.

ALI: Awww!

AUSTIN: That's a ten, hey!

JACK: Woah, hey!

JANINE: Hey, that's a ten.

AUSTIN: That's good! Uh, on a 10+ you find just what you're looking for. So it'll cost you three credits for it, total, you basically have like... tick tick tick, there it is, I don't know if each of you want to contribute one of your cache, or if, uuuuh...

JACK: Yeah, I'll, I'll give some cache. So we got, you gave us... how many more did you give us?

AUSTIN: Three total. Three each. So nine total.

JANINE: Is that on top of the one we had?

AUSTIN: Yep.

JANINE: Oh, okay, okay.

JACK: Okay, so now we have... I'm just gonna put this in my hold box, cause it's kind of hold.

AUSTIN: It is, it actually is kind of a hold that you spend and then get back, that's actually an interesting way of putting it...

JACK: But it's actually three credits... yeah... okay.

AUSTIN: Cool. So yeah, you drop this thing through like...

JACK: I have a proposal for what it is, if that's okay-

AUSTIN: Sure!

JACK: It's a symbiotic thing, it's a creature, it's a swarm of, um, like moths, or like a cross between space bees and space moths, they're not dangerous, nor are they big. I'm not picturing, like, heavy inverted commas "aliens" here, even though, they- they're like insects, and they just are on the outside of this shuttle, and they kind of come streaming off, in the way that birds do when you scare them out of a tree.

AUSTIN: That's really good. It's also good because now I get to picture Signet carrying around a cage of these things.

ALI: (laughs)

JACK: Yeah, yeah, umm, and I think something about their wingbeats, uh, transmits and conducts signal in a way that's really good and local.

AUSTIN: Cool, alright, so the thing I'm going to do with that basically is get rid of any sort of delay that would, like, once you get the signal working once you're in this space that doesn't have signal, you'll be able to communicate with them instantly, as if they were in the system.

JACK: Oh, cool.

AUSTIN: Instead of it being on a very inconvenient and scary delay. But as you pass through, as you do pass through in closer to Privign, you lose signal, you lose connection with Cascara. In fact, you lose connection with the moths. There is something else here stopping signals from leaving the perimeter.

JACK: Hmm (sigh)

AUSTIN: Are you docking, like what's going on? I need someone to take charge here.

ALI: Yeah, we should just dock, like...

JANINE: Mhmm

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: What else are we gonna do, like....

AUSTIN: So as you pull in- I can't be the one to say it, is the thing...

JANINE: I know, I know, I'm just sayin'...

AUSTIN: As the ship, like, pulls in, it has one of those, um... it has like, a ring of lights around a circular... what's the word I'm looking for, an airlock, that opens up like an iris and kind of guides

you in with a row of lights. It's a single iris, but then below, you can see that there's a rotating, it's like almost shaped like a fidget spinner, of landing pads, and you can see as you're coming down, the landing pad is rotating so that there's an open one for you. There are three pads, there is one one open one, or there were two open ones, now there is one open one, you're landing and taking the second open one, the other one that has a ship on it has the same type of ship that you have, it is clearly the Beloved Ivy's ship. So, so you are landing. Let me tell you about what you see as you land.

This place is... so, also it's not, it's not just that there are three, I should paint a better picture than that. It's not just that it's a fidget spinner. There are three, but they're not symmetrical. They're like, two of them are very close and one of them is further away, um, they're not all circles, like one of them is sort of an elongated, curved diamond shape, like a pupil, like a cat's eye or something, one of them is a square, and one of them is a triangle or something. Um, not a triangle, they all have, even the square one has rounded edges, they always have rounded edges. And as you land, you realise you're basically in what looks like a huge receiving room, or living room, with lots of furniture, lots of mirrors, like it's a docking bay, with ladders and like, landing platforms, and overlooking, there's like an area that looks down from a control center, but it's also just like, it's carpeted. Um, it has little statues on mantelpieces, and in front of you, again, all in this gray-scale, with like, a very light, VERY light desaturated color, a gray and pink woman appears who has on a gem-encrusted robe, and a sort of like an asymmetrical halo that looks sort of like licks of flame coming up off of a candle up behind her head, and she has like a sleeveless dress, or sleeveless robe on, but her arms are then covered by these coiled springs of metal around her arms and her hands, and she like, opens her hands up as you arrive, and she says

AUSTIN (As Gray and Pink Woman): Welcome, pilgrims, to the resting temple of Privign. Please remain, and relax in the foyer, until a member of the order arrives to guide you through the stations.

AUSTIN: And then, thirty seconds later she says

AUSTIN (As Gray and Pink Recording): Welcome, pilgrims, to the resting temple of Privign. Please remain, and relax in the foyer, until a member of the order arrives to guide you through the stations.

(laughter)

AUSTIN: What do you do?

JACK (As Fourteen): Hello!

AUSTIN: The projection, thirty seconds later, says

AUSTIN (As Gray and Pink Recording): Welcome, pilgrims, to the resting temple of Privign. Please remain, and relax in the foyer, until a member of the order arrives to guide you through the stations.

JACK (As Fourteen): You're not an AI?

AUSTIN (As Gray and Pink Recording): Welcome, pilgrims, to the resting temple of Privign. Please remain, and relax in the foyer, until a member of the order arrives to guide you through the stations.

(laughter)

JACK (As Fourteen): (cutting off, talking over recording) Okay, you're not an AI. Signet, I thought that they were a, thought that they were an AI, I thought we might be able to...

JANINE (As Signet): (also over recording) No, I gathered that that was what you thought, that you thought they were an AI, yeah...

JACK (As Fourteen): Yeah, it just uh... (inhale) well, we should probably proceed.

ALI (As Tender): Yup.

JANINE: Do we have, like, do we have spare keys to the Beloved Ivy shuttle that we could, like, poke our heads in there.

JACK: Oh, ho ho ho...

AUSTIN: Sure, it's, it's, a shuttle. Like, there's a bag of chips...

JANINE: So nothing, like, special... Oh, what kind of chips?

AUSTIN: Um, no, that's not true, you could probably like, look at their... that's not true at all, that's bullshit, that's totally, that's a good idea, I'll walk that back... What do you do- yeah, you can totally... you don't have spare keys, but it recognizes you as a member of the Beloved, and like, will open for you. It will also record that you did this, but it will open for you.

JANINE: Yeah, um... I think the big thing I wanna look for is if they have any sent, but not delivered messages, in their console.

AUSTIN: Yo, yeah, that's a good one, give me, give me a Lift The Veil here. And tell me how you feel. This is a good idea, in fact, take advantage on this, which means roll 3d6 plus you state instead of 2d6 plus your state.

(distant meow)

JANINE: Okay, um... man, I'm running outta stuff I can roll without spiking. (laughs)

AUSTIN: Here's, this is how it goes.

JANINE: Oh boy...

AUSTIN: Remember, no no no, remember you can roll opposite things to lower, so if you were joyful or mad right now, that would be good, I don't know that you're either of those things, but...

JANINE: No...

ALI: Have you been? No, I guess not.

JANINE: No, I like that I have never been mad or joyful in this game.

ALI: (laughs)

AUSTIN: The Janine Hawkins story.

JACK: I cannot be owned.

(laughter)

JANINE: Um, okay... actually, okay, this might sound cheap given the conversation we just had, but I could totally see Signet feeling, like, an immediate moment of irritation when she goes on the ship and there's like a, maybe there's like a "ping, this has been logged" kind of sound, and she's like "oh god, they're gonna fuckin, like, think that we're..." next time we see them they're gonna be like "oh, did you go through my shit" and it'll be fuckin thing, cause those people, ugh. That's a thing she would never give voice to, but like, that's just the kneejerk emotion that's gonna happen there.

AUSTIN: Right, right. What is your mad? Zero?

JANINE: Zero, yeah. So it doesn't... help one way or another.

AUSTIN: Just gimme 3d6 plus, just gimme 3d6 then, we take the highest two... That is still a seven, somehow. Fuckin, good you had advantage on that.

JANINE: Yeah... I'll, I'll take it.

AUSTIN: Uh, okay, so, that's Lift the Veil again, um, which says... on a 7-9 I'll give you an impression. So actually, I'll give you two things here. First of all, you have a, you get a map to this place, one of them probably, based on the quality of the drawing, Waltz Tango Cache, has done a drawing of the facility, and like, clearly did some work on the way of getting together, or scanning or something, the facility to produce a map that he then sketched out by hand, that says like "here are all the places, here is the comms place, here's where you dock, here's an observation deck," there's storage decks, there's an abandoned storage deck, there's a bunch of stuff. There are 10, 11 different places, something like that, in this facility, in Privign. The second thing you get is yes, you totally see lots of messages, there's nothing particularly interesting in them, it is, like, by-the-book reporting on like, "we've lost communication with you, we're putting these in memory, once we reestablish contact we will attempt to resend" but that is... Mmm, and then you get, you know what actually happens is that the third thing that you get is, you get a note that, they're pretty by-the-book like I said, and they say "we think that the signal is being jammed by something in this facility. We're going to try to deactivate it and send these messages".

JANINE: So the implication is that like, they came back here several times, or at least one time after arriving and looking around to like, be able to...

AUSTIN: Oh, no they... Yes, at least one time, yes, correct, yes. They came back here to use that- yes, exactly. Uh, y'know, you probably also have, in fact what you also see is that it's attempting to download messages that were sent from local, that were sent from somewhere else in the facility, but even inside this facility, there is something jamming communications, so, so yes, like, even here, the messages they've sent from other places here are not able to reach this ship. Um, the rest of you who are outside the ship, lemme just give you a little more detail in terms of what it looks like: there are lots of asymmetrical things in general, I mentioned the asymmetry of the landing bay, but even the room is this sort of like, M shape, except that the right side of the M is further, is like higher up than the left side, and that turns into a walkway out into the rest of the facility, um, there are like, I mentioned mirrors before, but there's also like, paintings with frames that have lots of like, flourishes, a lot of them do have jewels in them, a lot of them have what you think is gold, or another precious metal lining them. But lots of like, floral things, they're very rococo, right, it's very like, um, fancy, but also not symmetrical, very, like, in love with the way that a flower breaks from symmetry instead of being like "this perfect tulip". There is also, now that you're standing here, there's this constant low rumble of what just sounds like machinery in the distance, that's like, you can feel it more than you can hear it, you can feel it on your feet as you walk around. I can imagine there being a picture, or an image, of one or two of you looking at one of these mirrors, and seeing that there are tiny sculptures, like hand-carved sculptures, of the different, of the Divines, and maybe even some of the Excerpts, and some of the Cadents, maybe even some other important figures, you don't recognize all of them, Fourteen Fifteen, you don't know how many Divines there are, so I'm not even sure you could recognize many of these... and importantly, this style does not have its roots in the fleet. You haven't seen other places in the fleet that have this particular, like, throwback style. Throwback like, it's not throwing back to like, "oh yeah, remember 300 years ago", but this



specific style is not familiar to you, like, throughout the fleet. So that's the information you- Oh, and then, I think, given that you've done this, you've spent enough time here, a little thing, a little, uh... I guess it's sort of like an old-timey radio, like a curved at the top radio, do you know what I mean, like a, it's almost like an oval cut in half... do you know what I mean?

JACK: Like, they look a bit like, they sit on the desk, and they make a noise?

ALI: (laughter)

AUSTIN: That's what they look like, exactly. It's rolls in, on the ground, and it has... I'm trying to make sure I can describe it right... it has like a quartz chest, like the chest of it, or the center of it, it doesn't have a body, it's not a torso, but in the center of it, almost where the etching of a gravestone would be, there's a big piece of quartz, or maybe it's not quartz, it's hard to, there's no color here, things are very very very desaturated, which is actually a very interesting effect, because there's lots of like, very light catches of pink or gold here or there, but not fully saturated. Um, and in the quartz, it just rolls across the floor to you, again, it's probably like knee-high, something like that, maybe a little bit higher, maybe like thigh-high. It seems like it might be guided by a magnet or something, like it's clearly on a route, but it wiggles on and off the route by mistake sometimes, and in the middle of this large quartz gem in its center, it suddenly there's the sound of a laser emitter, and like a real, human, like one of our laser emitters, where it's like TCH TCH TCH TCH TCH TCH, y'know what I'm talking about, like rapid-fire clicking, and it starts shooting lasers into its own chest, into its own center, and it just says "surrogate chaplain this way", and it like, waits for you to follow it.

JACK: (laughs) Okay. Signet, are you out yet?

AUSTIN: Yeah, at this point, I this happens as Signet comes out of that ship and shares that information. I, I'm assuming she shares that information.

JANINE: (laughs) And then stares long and hard at the little... laser radio?

ALI: (laughs)

JACK: Yeah, I'm gonna draw my pistol, but sort of go to follow the weird thing.

AUSTIN: The back of it has a mark on it, like a trademark, or like a company name, and it's Junko, like a Japanese given name, but also it is just spelled Junk-Oh, so I dunno, maybe this is a Junko brand laser emitter surrogate chaplain, I dunno.

JACK: Oh it's, alright, okay... I thought it was leading us, maybe this is the surrogate chaplain, I'm not sure. We can find this all out, lets-

AUSTIN: Oh, yep, who, who could say.

ALI: (laughs)

AUSTIN: Uh, so you follow it?

ALI: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay, so as it leaves, it guides you through a door, and it takes you from docking, where you are now, into observation. The doors peel open, and it is, like, as it walks in, immediately starting to give tourist- not tourist, but like, um, basic information to visitors, like pilgrim information about what this place is, and it's like, it's typing it out in lasers on its chest, basically. And it's like,

AUSTIN (As Surrogate Chaplain): The observation deck offers the Jeweled Heirs an opportunity to stare into the abyss and consider the loss of Privign, our chosen divine.

AUSTIN: And like, it goes on for a while, like there's nothing of intense value here, but if you wanna know more about the very basics, I can bullshit some more, and give up more of what it's giving you on this station of its journey.

JACK: But it only gets through, like, half a sentence at a time before having to wipe its tiny screen and continue.

AUSTIN: Oh no, no, sorry, not half a sentence at a time, it gets through a word at a time, like "surrogate" takes up the entirety of this quartz screen, and then it has to erase it and rewrite "chaplain". It's very slow, like, you would have to sit down, this is one of those things where like, it would be an alternate ending to this video game, where you would sit down and watch this entire 30 minute lecture on what the observation deck is.

JANINE: Also, it's leading us, but it's writing on its chest, which would face front, right?

AUSTIN: Yep. I think it gets to a certain point and spins around, and stops, and says, like- it doesn't say it, but like, arrives at kind of a panoramic view of what the observation deck is, which I can actually tell you about, because I can't just speak through a single word at a time written on my chest in lasers. Um, it is, a large, seems like it has a glass dome. You didn't see a glass dome from above, but it looks as if there's a glass dome above you. It is an observation deck, it's a park, basically, and statuary. There are larger version of the handcrafted statues you'd seen on mantles and stuff back in the docking and living room area, and they are, um, some figures you don't recognize, but there are definitely, and both Signet and Tender you recognize that like, these are religious icons, many of them are divines you recognize, many of them are excerpts that you recognize who are particularly famous. There are others that are people you don't recognize. They are also not just solitary statues, each of them is framed by a jeweled structure, and has kind of a frame around it, or almost like a changing shade, do you know what I mean? Like a folded changing shade, but made of like, rock and metal.

JACK: Like a screen?

AUSTIN: Like a screen, yeah, they're like screens behind them, basically. They range in size, some of them are smaller than people, and they're like little, again, knee-sized, or they're about the size of Junko, and others are like your size, and some of them, a couple of them, are huge, are like huge statues that you would find in a statuary, or in a, y'know, as monuments, and not just, not just as in a statuary or in a gallery. And so that's like, the basics of what you see here as it's talking. And then you do hear something off in the distance, closer and towards the center of this park. Um, it... it sounds a little like... popping, like those poppers you would throw on the ground, y'know what I mean, on like, July 4th, or whatever, like little tiny, the things that have like a little bit of... is it just gunpowder, is gunpowder just in those things?

JANINE: I think it's just gunpowder.

JACK: I think it is just gunpowder.

JANINE: A small amount, but...

AUSTIN: That's wild. It's just like those. Yes, totally, you're hearing that in the distance. Um, and there's a sort of a rhythm to it, but not a... it's not music. What do you do?

JACK: (deep breath) Can I, how big is Junko?

AUSTIN: Junko is, like the size of... like of a dresser in- not a dresser, I have a little filing cabinet, it's like a filing cabinet.

JACK: Oh my god, okay (laughs), well, that's...

AUSTIN: You could pick it up, but like...

JACK: I was gonna think of taking them with us, but I had anticipated them as being about the size of an alarm clock.

AUSTIN: Oh, no no no, bigger than that.

JACK: Okay, well that's, that's, that's out the plan. Um...

AUSTIN: If you like, walk- are you leaving it behind, are you walking past it?

JACK: Well I was just wondering whether or not, like, since we're gonna be heading deeper into this thing, we might not want to march to the beat of its drum.

AUSTIN: (pause) Ah, you make decisions.

JACK: Yeah no, I'm not carrying a filing cabinet around.

(laughter)

AUSTIN: Alright, so what do you do?

JACK: Could we, uh, are the firecracker sounds coming from inside this room, or are they coming from an adjacent room?

AUSTIN: This room is a big park, it's just a big open park, and so yes, they're coming from like, the center of this big park.

JACK: Okay. Could I approach cautiously?

AUSTIN: Totally.

JACK: And sort of like hiding behind, like, a bush, or a small bench.

AUSTIN: Mhmm. Tender and Signet, what are you doing? Are you following?

ALI: Um, yeah, I was gonna suggest that like, Signet has a ear that can maybe get information before our eyes can?

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: ... Sure

ALI: (laughter)

JANINE: Um, well the thing... mmm... wouldn't I just get louder popping sounds.

ALI: (laughing) I dunno, I dunno!

JACK: You might get someone saying "quick, we can lure them over. For the trap we're about to spring".

JANINE: That's true... I'll give that a shot.

AUSTIN: What's the thing do, what are the abilities that it has?

JANINE: Uh, amplification, interception, and it's implanted and also unreliable. The interception would not be useful, but the amplification I guess...

ALI: Oh, it'd just be louder?...

JANINE: Would just make it- unless it's like, unless there's like tiny voices in the popping.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I, you hear- there are, there are things quieter than the popping, like, this is, like imagine fireworks going off in your neighborhood, you can't hear the people talking underneath the fireworks, so this is what that does, this lets you hear, one, that these, that popping sound is only quiet- Ah, it's not only quiet because it's far away, it is also not at its actual amplification, so you raise it up to until it's about the level of like, gunfire, and then you can also hear a few distinct voices,

(Music [The Twilight Mirage] begins playing)

AUSTIN: There is a woman with a british accent, who is, um, who says, um... what does she say... I think she just says

AUSTIN (As British Woman): You can come with me, or I'll activate the torch units.

AUSTIN: And then there's another voice, another woman, who says, um

AUSTIN (As Other Woman): We're not so afraid of you.

AUSTIN: And then there is gunfire.

(Music continues, and finishes)