

Twilight Mirage 48: This Place Pushes Back

Transcribed by Jen @wronghandle#1989

[MUSIC - "The Twilight Mirage" begins]

AUSTIN: [reading] Sometimes violence moves too quickly to be registered in full. A blade swings faster than eyes can follow. A wound shifts from superficial to fatal before its recipient can confront the difference. A bang, a spray of blood or oil or both. A sudden collapse from heavy breathing to silence.

But when the Advent team set off Saint Wynter's drone-field alarm, everything happens very slowly. Projectiles float, wobble along through empty air. Missed strikes shake free loose leaves. And when blows do land, the moment of impact is stretched across time. A bruise. A broken rib. A stumbling retreat to safety— or finality.

Hidden under a canopy of distorted trees, trunks not quite attached to branches, vines taking up the same place twice, color through kaleidoscope mirror, Motive Motif (Volunteer of Seiche and new member of the Advent Group) begins an accounting of what is left. Asensory tents to rest and hide in. A snap-lock EMP device, for all the good it did buried at the bottom of their packs. A week's worth of ration patches. An Axiomatic scanner and a capture device to match. The concrete bat of his companion, Breaker's Baritone, the Particular assigned to the mission, who he can hear struggling with her air filter under a nearby tree. A temporal flare which - both surprise and not - he sees has already been fired.

"It's all here," Motive calls to Baritone, who exhales out a wordless acknowledgment before another voice breaks through the low misty chirping of uncatalogible insects. "I uh, I think I'm missing, I think I'm missing my ..." But Motive does not listen to what is missing. Because in front of him, wearing the stark white Advent Group uniform, is a total stranger. And whether he realizes it or not, there is something new among the group's belongings: a strange ache for something missing, a feeling that is at once present yet which gestures to an empty space.

[MUSIC - "The Twilight Mirage" ends]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual-play podcast focused on critical world-building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker. Joining me today, I should open up my roll20 so I can see who's joining me. [SYLVIA laughs] There! Andrew Lee Swan.

DRE: Hey! You can find me on Twitter at swandre300.

AUSTIN: Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: You can find me on Twitter at bleatingheart.

AUSTIN: Keith Carberry.

KEITH: You can find me on Twitter at keithjcarberry, and you can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton.

AUSTIN: And Sylvia¹ Clare.

SYLVIA: Hey, I'm Sylvia. You can find me on Twitter at captaintrash, and you can find the other shows I'm on at emoji-drome on Twitter and videogamechoochoo.com.

AUSTIN: Very good. Can't knock the hustle, again. You can find me on Twitter at austin_walker. Um, I can't think if there's anything else to say ahead of rolling in. As always, you can support the show - there it is! - at friendsatthetable.cash. We have a Patreon, lots of great stuff going up there. By the time you hear this, we will have done our first Primetime Adventures for the Livecasts, where we're playing a game of aliens who've come to Earth to become documentarians to tell their alien compatriots whether or not Earth should be destroyed. And to do that, they've gone undercover as baseball players.

JANINE: Where's the lie?

AUSTIN: It's called Aliens in the Outfield. It's— we're very excited for it.

KEITH: Oh man, you started describing it, and I was like, "Wait, are we doing that now? What's going on?" [AUSTIN and DRE laugh]

SYLVIA: Glad it wasn't just me. Oh my god.

KEITH: Am I in a different place?

AUSTIN: No no, I'm promo-ing other things going up by the time this goes live.

SYLVIA: Okay, whew.

KEITH: Yeah, cool. Definitely.

AUSTIN: Other stuff we'll probably have up by then. We will hopefully have, we'll about to be doing our Bluff City Wide World of Wrestling RPG? Sylvia, is that right?

SYLVIA: World Wide Wrestling RPG.

¹ The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.

AUSTIN: World Wide Wrestling RPG, yes. Yes. Very excited about that also. And some other great stuff up there. All the maps, all the character sheets go up to Patreon supporters. So go check that out at patreon.com/friends_table or friendsatthetable.cash.

So let's recap what happened last time, and then get into a little bit of what's happening this time. Does anyone wanna kind of go over some basic detail here, so I'm not just talking for twelve minutes at the top of this episode?

JANINE: I remember the very, very last thing that happened. [DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: Okay. What was that? We'll work backwards.

JANINE: St. Wynter was guarding the area (AUSTIN: Uh huh) that we'll be— that we're going into that will be explained in a few minutes, I guess. (AUSTIN: Yeah.) And then some Advent assholes showed up, and there's gonna be some sorta scuffle? Or.

AUSTIN: Yeah. A brouhaha.

JANINE: A brouhaha. Shenanigans.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Some sorta something, yes.

KEITH: And we very much want to stay out of the scuffle because ...

JANINE: Violence is bad.

KEITH: Doing violence in the zone is bad. (AUSTIN: Yes.)

SYLVIA: Who were we— we were retrieving someone from this, right?

DRE: Acre-7.

SYLVIA: Acre-7? Thank you.

AUSTIN: Yes, you're retrieving Acre-7 who had gone— who had not gone missing, who had shown up here. And word got to y'all through various sources that she was here. Signet, you talked to her. (JANINE: Yes.) Do you remember what she said, vaguely? I know it's been a couple weeks.

JANINE: I have it on a thing and can't turn the page. Okay, here we go ... uh, I. There's— wait, I don't remember if she actually told me that. This is good. This is great, this is great radio. (AUSTIN: Uh huh.) So she was standing at a bridge in a grey fog, (AUSTIN: That's true) with a

green light within that grey fog. (AUSTIN: Yup.) We're also already going into a weird glowy place, so I think it was an important distinction being made of a weird glowy place within a weird glowy place, or something?

AUSTIN: Correct. Absolutely. Yes. Two different degrees of fogginess.

JANINE: It's like a dense sphere, I wrote here.

KEITH: It's even weirder and glowier.

AUSTIN: Yes. Dense sphere of fog, yeah.

JANINE: She was tracing the perimeter. She said that this thing is dying but also it's wounded. And those are like, separate things?

AUSTIN: She did say that. I think she's referring to Quire there. Or this place. Right?

JANINE: Yes. And it's. So it's like, Quire's— this is Quire as it could have been, or as it ... was without memory of what it is?

AUSTIN: Yeah, very clear stuff that I definitely gave everybody last week. We got a little bit more clarity on that from one of Echo's things. Echo did some extra research with some of the materials that the—

JANINE: Oh oh oh. Sorry, I found it in my note.

AUSTIN: Okay. Go 'head.

JANINE: Above is Old Quire, below is Regret. (AUSTIN: Right.) And it lacks memory.

AUSTIN: Yes. Totally. So there seems to have been some sort of separation between the thing called Gnosis, the Gnosis virus. Which is what had previously given Quire the ability to understand people and remember, and build relationships? And the thing that Quire once was, which is this kind of wild planet that could still do all sorts of weird magical things but was not— sometimes it would help people, sometimes it wouldn't. It didn't have any sort of— it had kind of a goldfish memory. Y'know what I mean? Had a goldfish memory and near infinite power? And those two things are not necessarily good for people.

So yeah, Echo, you found out some more of that stuff. You put that together that there was an image of a church that kind of suggested, "What if Quire and the people of Quire had a different relationship before the Gnosis virus?" Without the Gnosis virus coming, without Independence ever coming, without any sort of outside influence. A very Wakanda-esque like, "What if nothing had ever colonized or interfered with the arc of Quire?" And also— I think this is the distinction,

if Quire had had a positive relationship with them. Instead of this like, antagonistic one, which is what it really had. Or ambiguous, inconsistent relationship is the other way to think of it.

Then what else happened? Dre, Even went to meet with somebody, right?

DRE: Yeah, I went to meet with Arin Till. They are a part of the— what is their group called?

AUSTIN: They're the Ever Forward, they are part of the Ever Forward.

DRE: Yeah, I thought they had like—

AUSTIN: Oh, Ternion.

DRE: Yeah, Ternion. There we go.

AUSTIN: Ternion research is like, the big science research group that all of these subgroups are part of. Right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You met with the Skein subgroup, which is Plane Page and Facet Forrester. And then the Garden is there also. It's the Saints, Saint Fall, Wynter, Summer, and Spring. But then yeah, you went to meet with Arin Till who you knew from the old days.

DRE: Yeah. From the old days on the Ever Forward. And they kind of confirmed for me that them and the Garden Saints were going to send in a crew to retrieve Acre? And they also confirmed that they had believed that Acre was acting on behalf of this other faction, which they like, believed made that other faction— that was Page and Forrester, right?

AUSTIN: The Skein subfaction was basically breaking an agreement. (DRE: Yes.) That they were going into— this place is called the Vale? It's like, a subsection of the Wound? And that they were going into the Vale without— they're doing it unilaterally, which is against the rule.

DRE: Right. And there was some back-and-forth where I think Till said, "Well, we reached out to Page and Forrester, and they didn't say anything." And I believe Page and Forrester said, "We reached out to them, and they didn't respond to us." But yeah, so they kinda confirmed that they were sending in their own group the next day to kind of go and try to recieve Acre-7 on their own.

AUSTIN: Right, totally. Anything else here? Gig? You tried to work on some stuff, and I remember a fail— a little bit of a failure there?

KEITH: It didn't really work. It was—

AUSTIN: Oh no. You figured out that Saint Wynter had these drones that then popped back up. You were the one who tried to figure out how to get into the overarching—

KEITH: Yeah, I tried to figure out the best way for us to get into the area without being spotted. Did I figure out the drones thing? I thought we all just saw that.

AUSTIN: No, you figured out that were those drones there. Which is why you couldn't just walk in anywhere? (KEITH: Oh, okay.) I know this because y'all did the engagement roll, and you got a mixed success on the engagement roll. And so the complication was, Advent arrived and set off all the alarms. [KEITH laughs] That would have caught you, but y'all snuck through. Y'all managed to sneak through (KEITH: Right) which— better than nothing.

KEITH: Yeah, they were busy gettin' caught.

AUSTIN: They were. So where— are we good to go otherwise? Are there any questions? Anything that's like, "Hey, this is a thing I don't quite remember or didn't quite understand?" Okay. Cool.

SYLVIA: No, I can't think of anything.

AUSTIN: So. I think instead of having the big fight scene here— y'all got through, it's happening behind you. And I think we're just going to jump ahead to y'all being just past that first perimeter. But you can still hear the sounds of everything kind of happening behind you. There are explosions, there are screams. You can hear the sound of Saint Wynter's Saint walking around smashing things. Trees fall over. You hear all that for a bit, you hear birds calling out. And then we get kind of a quiet moment with all of y'all. I don't remember, did you go in at night or in the morning?

DRE: I feel like we said morning.

AUSTIN: Like, you waited until it was daybreak, basically? In my mind, it was light out when this happened.

[overlapping]

DRE: 'Cause I felt like—

KEITH: Yeah, I th—

JANINE: Yeah, I think we like, spent the night and then ...

DRE: Yeah. 'Cause I think at one point we were discussing, "Do we just go in now to get the jump so we get in before this other group does?" (AUSTIN: Totally.) But then we decided to spend the afternoon/evening to— doing research and stuff.

AUSTIN: Right, totally. So let me give you kind of a general picture of what this place— how this place feels. I'm just gonna move you back to this weird map for a bit. So y'all are in this general zone. You're past the first layer. To remind you how the Vale works here— again V A L E, not V E I L. It's kind of like three tiers, almost four. There's the top layer which is the complete perimeter where it's forested. And there are— that's where the gates are. That's where the drones were, all along this outer area. Then it kind of dips a little bit and goes into a layered plateau, a big tier. And that is the area where you saw— when you were looking over footage, Echo, you saw a church with a different symbol if I'm remembering correctly? Do you remember that? Did I ...

SYLVIA: Um, all I really remember, and this is due to my bad note-taking for this session—

AUSTIN: It's also just been three weeks! So it's not—

SYLVIA: — was that it didn't have the same— the place I went to, all I remember is that it didn't have the same statues, but it looked the same as ...

AUSTIN: Right! You saw— right right right. That was the place, that's on the lower level. The one that you saw was the one— was the palace? But it didn't have the Apostolisian stuff, it only had Quire stuff.

There's also on the top layer, which is the old Quire layer - you can just see this as you start to explore it - there are things like, you know the church from Old Church? Except instead of having the planet there, it has a diamond-shaped thing in place of it. So it's two big doors, and then above the Old Church church is a diamond where the one you visited has a sphere, an image of Quire itself on it.

As you're on this first level, you're just seeing a lot of the ... I described some of the buildings from the underground city that you found forever ago, Even? From the first arc? I don't know how you described those buildings, that was eight months ago now, but that same style of architecture. So this place is kind of overgrown and urban? This first tier, the part of it you're in now? So think a little bit like The Last of Us or something like that, except instead of being overgrown by spores and regular vines, it's a lot of phosphorescent lichen. I remember we talked about that as being a possibility for their screens last time.

The actual place is covered in this lightly glowing lichen. But it's also a jungled area now. There's lots of trees and plants and stuff. And like I said in the intro, everything is kind of detached from itself in strange ways. Not as if it's been cut, there will be a tree trunk, and it'll grow up in the air. But on the 20th foot there will be almost like a slash through it. But not as if someone cut it, just as if it detached and is hovering just above the bottom half of it. Or like, you'll see car. Like, an old burned-out car or vehicle, and there will be two versions of it built into each other, just offset. As if you're looking at it with crossed eyes or out of focus.

Everything here has this— almost detachment, not even detachment but distance? Even in things that are not— even in things that you wouldn't expect to have that sort of thing. Here's a small one. You see a fire hydrant. And every fire hydrant you see, all of the caps are off. Like, that's just a thing that's happening here. So any time you can get a fill-in-the-gap in that way, think about this whole space as feeling a little bit separated and a little like there is distance even between singular things.

So. Again, you are basically here. I'm gonna say that we basically come to, and you hear the sounds of the Saints marching and stuff— er, the Saint marching outside, not very close to you, but nearby enough, in the neighborhood. And you're in the ground floor of like, a five-floor office building. You're in the lobby of it. And again, it's overgrown. It has this glowing lichen in it. And all of your navigational equipment is just fucked. All of it's— you don't know which way is which way. We as the audience, me pointing on this map like, "Oh yeah, you're about here!" but I don't know whether that means you're up here to the southwest or down here to the northeast. Right? You know you came in through here. But in the rush to get away from this fight, everything got wacky. And now your instruments are not doing you any favors.

So what are y'all doing?

00:17:46

DRE: I mean, I guess ... I don't know if really our instruments mean anything. 'Cause we're just looking for Acre, right?

AUSTIN: Totally. Totally. You believe Acre is further down. But what I'm saying is that you don't even necessarily know which way is the way to ...

DRE: Right. Like what's the further in and what's the way where we came from.

KEITH: Yeah. By further down, you mean further in?

AUSTIN: In. Yes, 'cause it's gonna drop down another layer. And then maybe another layer after that.

JANINE: Would my thing that I got in the last— well, I guess three of us have it, have those things that detect Divine stuff?

AUSTIN: Yeah. That stuff—

JANINE: Or weird stuff? Axiomatic stuff?

AUSTIN: Yeah. That stuff is going a little wild here. “Oh, everything here is just unbelievable.” If you take a look at the sheet for the planet Skein, you’ll see that this whole zone is like, Level 3 weird. [DRE laughs] This whole Wound. And you’re not just in the Wound, you’re in like, the most wounded part. The Wound is this huge mountain range— it’s actually, it’s a huge valley that cuts through a big part of the planet Skein. The Vale is a special place inside of the Wound. So not only— that whole area has the thing where the first time you perform a violent act, you have to resolve resist, or take 3 stress. In the Vale things are even more turned to 11 with weirdness? So I guess what I’ll say is— by default no, those aren’t helping you. If you have some way of tinkering with it or straightening it out, then maybe.

KEITH: I was thinking— I mean, until I was reminded about the Divine detectors. Er, the Axiom detectors?

AUSTIN: It’s like, uncanny detectors? Weirdness detectors? They’re scouters from Dragon Ball Z, except instead of power level they are— that’s actually only Echo’s. Echo is the only one with a scouter (SYLVIA: Yeah!) because you do have the eyepatch on, right?

SYLVIA: Ohh my god!

AUSTIN: So your eyepatch is now just a scouter. I think, Signet, yours works through the Exuvia. Even, yours just works ... because you’re a cyborg?

JANINE: It’s just like a barette. It’s just like, a hair clip. Just like, on there.

AUSTIN: Okay. Right, good.

KEITH: My eyepatch is still just an eyepatch.

AUSTIN: There’s a long-term project, if you recall, that is working on giving it to everybody. (JANINE: Mhm.)

KEITH: Oh, that’s true.

AUSTIN: So soon enough.

KEITH: Anyway. I have pretty high Rig. Initially I was like, “Hey, maybe I can Rig up something that will work in here, in terms of just finding what direction we’re going in?” But if we want to try that on these detectors, that’s also an option.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I would let you give that a shot. What’s that look like?

KEITH: In my head, I’m imagining a compass that’s swirling around like it can’t figure out how

which way is north? And just trying to find something that will balance it, so it doesn't think that it's moving when it's not?

AUSTIN: So like, you're not hacking this thing, (KEITH: No) you're not programming it. You're literally like— so whose are you opening up? Which person's scanning thing?

KEITH: Yeah, who wants to maybe lose their fucking thing? [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Yup.

JANINE: I'm gonna say not me, 'cause I'm the one who's making more? [AUSTIN laughs]

KEITH: It sounds like Dre's is the worst. So I think maybe Dre's.

DRE: Yeah, I was gonna try to assist on this too. (AUSTIN: Yeah.) Like, using my robot. So yeah, I'm down to being the guinea pig on this.

AUSTIN: Oh, good call. So is your robot here? Also wait, what was your robot like again? I keep forgetting what that is.

[overlapping]

KEITH: It was Jack from Gears of War.

DRE: It's name is B2.

DRE: Yeah, it's basically Jack from Gears. But it also has like—

JANINE: It's that one Contra hardcore boss. (AUSTIN: Gotcha)

DRE: Yeah. And it's got like, two large bolted-on arms. (AUSTIN: Right. Okay.) 'Cause it was a little spherical orb droid, and then I put arms on it. And I did a bad job.

JANINE: I say you make a second— you should just copy it and then stick them together in the middle, and then, arms and legs! Both of them and neither. (AUSTIN: Uh huh.)

KEITH: It was Banters from KOTOR 2 and now it's Jack from Gears of War. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Got it! [writing] Jack ... from ... Gears of War. Got it, add notes. And I'll add also "or that one Contra boss."

KEITH: By the way, I have been replaying KOTOR 2, and so I'm extra— everything is KOTOR 2 now.

AUSTIN: I get you. I saw that you were doing that. I've seen you on Steam. Like, "Aww, Keith, I feel you." [KEITH laughs] I saw that viridian lightsaber. (KEITH: Yup.) I'm there for it.

So what's this? I guess it's a Rig roll. Right?

DRE: And I take one stress to assist?

AUSTIN: Correct, you take one stress. We should remind ourselves of these rules because it's been a minute since we've done it. Obviously.

KEITH: Yeah. I'm not in a position for this, right?

AUSTIN: Ah, no. You definitely are. This is definitely risky because you're taking a chance. There's a chance something could go wrong here. A complication could occur. You could suffer harm. (KEITH: Okay) You don't want to blow this thing up. Also, what is the actual— oh, it's in the robot, you said Even?

DRE: Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

AUSTIN: Okay. So B2 comes over. And go ahead and give me— what is your Rig score?

KEITH: My Rig score is 2. What does that mean for my effect?

AUSTIN: I'm gonna say it's risky standard.

KEITH: And then bonus die 1 from the help?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Ooo, that's a four. So that's fine.

KEITH: A one, a one, and a four.

AUSTIN: Those aren't great rolls.

KEITH: So thanks for the help.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that woulda gone really bad.

KEITH: Yeah, it sounded sarcastic. I was being sincere because it looked like my two were the ones.

AUSTIN: What's that look— what does the help look like, Even?

DRE: So are we saying that my tracking gear is inside the robot?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think that's what you were saying.

DRE: Okay. So I think it's Even over his shoulder: "Watch that circuit, that's the circuit that I had to mess with to get the arms to work. Don't poke that part! And ..."

AUSTIN: Right. So two things happen here. It works, you know where you are. But because you got a four, there is still a complication. Even those of you who've not had Gig work on your trackers— there's a ping of signal pointing at B2, Even's robot. Which means that anyone else with active scanners now has gotten a signal from where you are. (DRE: Good.)

Two is that you haven't— it doesn't cut through the weirdness. It gives you general directions. You know what direction north is. You can now start working your way down towards the lower level here. But there's still an overwhelming amount of weirdness around you. So it's not like you can analyze— I think you see this as just like, a flock of birds flies by. And the way it works, you see their bodies fly by like arrows, just the middle part and heads. And then wings flap after them? And B2 is just like, "rrwwgh rrwww," just can't make any sense of what that is. And there's no data. B2 tries to scan, and nothing comes up. There's no way to analyze anything in here still at this point. So that is a problem.

But it basically works. So you have a general direction now. Do y'all just start heading that way?

[overlapping]

SYLVIA: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah, I guess so.

KEITH: Yeah, if we think that people now know where we were when that happened.

AUSTIN: Oh, I actually have another. Sorry, there is another important consequence because you got a complication in the zone.

KEITH: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: It's not the worst possible thing. But it's not the best either. So, for the two of you involved in this roll (DRE: Yay!) do me a favor. Type out and don't hit send yet. Type out who you distrust the most in this group.

DRE: Oh christ. Ummm.

AUSTIN: Just type it out. Go ahead and then let me know once y'all have typed it. I don't want you influencing each other, y'know?

KEITH: Got it.

DRE: Okay, hold on. I'm choosing between two people now.

AUSTIN: Mhm. It's good, it opens up some extra doubt. It means even if Dre didn't choose you, he might've! You might've been number two.

DRE: Or you could have been three or four.

AUSTIN: It's true.

KEITH: Hold on. I decided mine, I just need a second to make sure that I'm not forgetting anything.

AUSTIN: Just in this small group. Just to be clear, not the whole big Notion group.

KEITH: Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Not NPCs. Literally just the PCs, just the party.

DRE: Okay.

KEITH: I got it.

AUSTIN: Three, two, one, go.

DRE: Whoa! [SYLVIA laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh shit! Two Signets! Alright, neither of you can help Signet without resisting, doing a resolve resist first. What that looks like physically is, you kind of have a hard time seeing her. Like, she's there, but she's mostly robes and a voice. And a kind of indistinct one. There is like, "Yeah, of course she's here with us. She's here with us. She's here with us." But the way a new recruit would be. Or the way someone you never really worked with before would be. Which is not true. Gig, it is actually a little bit true for you. You've never worked with Signet. But you can't even really recall specific details about what her life was like as an Excerpt. Or how she helped with the— you know she helped during the Week-long War. But you can't really remember how? It's not an antagonistic relationship at this point. But it's like, you'd have to put yourself out there a little bit to aid her. Once you do that resolve once, once you do that resist once you'll be out of the shit, and you can do it as many times as you want.

KEITH: Including failing the resist?

AUSTIN: You can't fail a resist. The resist roll is just how much stress do you take.

KEITH: Oh, okay. Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is a tough one. So that's the state of things here. For Echo and Signet, neither of you have gotten involved in a complicated roll yet. So for now you're good.

00:28:21

You begin making your way down the street. And again, I'm kind of imagining it in my mind as—the architecture here is very rounded. It's very like— it's a couple of things. It's pre-Glass Age Quire which means there aren't very many skyscrapers. It's not in the kind of perfect golden age of this work, so it's lots of lower structures. They still modernized. They were a modern culture by the time the Gnosis virus arrived and made Quire an ally of the people. So you still get— it's kind of like a low, sprawling, Los Angeles-style city that you're waking through? It's almost like you're walking down a highway and seeing strip malls. But instead of being those really blocky strip malls that we have here in the States, they're rounded off on the corners, and there's lots of domes. And like, you can see into the dome, and there's a second floor. Like, the bottom floor will be a 99-Cent Store. And the top floor will be a hair salon. And you just look into that dome like, "Alright, I guess there's two things in there."

And you're slowly making your way down this highway. You've figured out which one to walk down that's gonna take you towards the next lower level. Actually, at this point we get a wide shot toward the sprawl of buildings that are covered over by vines and this glowing lichen. And then you can see that more dense fog off in the distance. And then you hear from up ahead the sound of two people walking. They kind of come into view through the fog. Not the super dense down-there fog, just the localized fog? The nearby fog? (SYLVIA: Mm.) They kind of come into view, and you can hear one of them is really dragging their feet. And the other one is walking regularly and holding them up. They are probably 80 yards ahead of you. There's also lots of parked cars and abandoned cars and vehicles and stuff like that here.

Either of— any of y'all do anything?

SYLVIA: Mmm.

DRE: Do they see us?

AUSTIN: No. They're headed in the same direction you're headed in. But they're not like, checking their back at all. It's quiet-ish so you can hear them mumbling a little bit. Actually, I think at some point they stop. And you can see, just past them, another figure? You can hear their voices getting a little bit louder. What do you do?

DRE: So we want to try to ... spy on them?

AUSTIN: It's not a bad idea.

KEITH: That isn't a bad idea.

AUSTIN: You do have an eye drone. [DRE laughs]

KEITH: Yeah! I'm just gonna shoot it out there.

AUSTIN: Okay. Are you trying to like, keep it hidden?

JANINE: Did you say shoot or shit?

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: Shoot.

KEITH: Shoot it out there. Shoot it out there.

SYLVIA: It's still a little too forceful for my liking.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's fair. That's fair.

KEITH: I'm just gonna pop it out there?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Pop it out. First we pop it. Alright, give me— are you trying to sneak up there? What's the play here?

KEITH: You know, in my [AUSTIN sneezes]

AUSTIN: "Scuse me. [sneezes again]

KEITH: It makes sense to me, bless you. It makes sense to make it sneak. But I do— I kinda feel like in this place, an eye drone is maybe a sort of hidden-in-plain-sight sort of thing. (AUSTIN: Oh, okay.) Where it's like, "This place is weird. Seeing this thing doesn't mean anything to me other than this place is weird."

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Like, "This is my fourth eye today!" [KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Exactly. Totally. So what are you rolling to get up there? And not— unless you are like— I think you have to roll something here to get information, basically.

KEITH: Yeah. I guess it'll be Study. 'Cause Helm— I feel like this is very natural for me and not something I have to pilot.

AUSTIN: Yes. I agree with that.

KEITH: Can I get help?

AUSTIN: So Study is like, finding the right distance, and then making it so you can see everything and take in what's happening. Alright, go ahead and give me a Study. Risky standard. Anybody helping? Are you taking any stress? You're at four stress now, we should note.

KEITH: Yes, I am.

AUSTIN: Four out of what, nine? Is that how this works? Yes.

KEITH: Hmm. When you hit nine, is that it? Or do you have to go one past full?

AUSTIN: When you hit nine, you take a status, is what we decided. I don't remember if we talked about that, right? We're not calling it trauma, we're gonna call it status. (KEITH: Mhm, yeah.) So you take one of those and then disappear from the scene and come back later at some point. So it is when you hit that ninth one. I don't know that anybody can help here. But—

KEITH: That's fine. I don't need help.

AUSTIN: Alright, so give me your one Study. Risky standard again.

KEITH: Alright, risky standard. Aaah! Man! What is going on? Out of the four dice I rolled, it's three ones.

AUSTIN: It's not good. That ain't good. That's a bad one. You got the "this side of the team" bug. This is the team that last time had really bad luck! Three of the four people here. I don't know—who is the person?

JANINE: Weird! I don't know. I think it's Dre? [AUSTIN and KEITH laugh]

AUSTIN: I'm glad we've turned this into a game of Werewolf. Who can you trust? I don't know.

DRE: Listen—

KEITH: No, I'm gonna push back on that. I don't think that we're having bad luck. I think that I'm rolling poorly to be incredibly rewarded in the near future.

AUSTIN: Good call! Good call.

SYLVIA: You're just doing it for the drama. It's fine.

AUSTIN: It's fine. It's fine. So you get up there. Again, this was a one on a risky standard which ... [reading] you suffer harm, a complication occurs, you end up in a desperate position, or you lose this opportunity.

It's another complication! Your eye drone gets up there. You can see clearly there are three people. One of them is limping. They're all in all-white uniforms, long white coats with white hard chest armour? I'm imagining—

KEITH: Is that familiar to me at all?

AUSTIN: This is Advent gear. This is the new hot Advent look? All white everything. Their chest armour is almost like a bulletproof vest, like a flat vest. I'm actually ... for Dre and Sylvia, I'm imagining D'Lo Brown's vest,

[overlapping]

SYLVIA: Oh my god!

DRE: Jesus!

AUSTIN: But all white. And the one with the face mask is obviously a Concrete Town Particular. She is having a hard time breathing. The one that was referred to in the opening, Motive Motif—Motive is a Volunteer of Seiche and I think is still wearing the Volunteer of Seiche armband? So you can recognize that.

And then the third person is— I'm imagining them almost as like. We already have Apostolisians in this world as fish people? But I think just like how Star Wars has multiple fish people, we now also have multiple fish aliens. This is a much more squid-like fish person.

They have a beard that's actually just made of tentacles and tentacle hair and hands. They don't have jointed hands, they just have tentacle fingers. They just have whatever, six fingers on each hand-unit area. But like, they just squirm around independently. There's no knuckles. They just kind of go whatever direction they want.

And they are like, "Yeah, the off-ramp we're looking for is a couple of exits away." And then you just hear Motive say,

AUSTIN (as Motive): Who ... leave us alone! Alright?

AUSTIN: And it's getting really heated.

KEITH: Wait, sorry. They're yelling at eye?

AUSTIN: No, *he's yelling at the squid person.

AUSTIN (as Motive): Leave us alone. Stop bugging us! My friend is hurt. Unless you can help them—

AUSTIN: And the squid person is like,

AUSTIN (as Squid): What are you talking about? We came here together!

AUSTIN: And Motive is like,

AUSTIN (as Motive): Fuck that! We didn't do anything together!

AUSTIN: I actually have a question. Two questions. One— the squid person says,

AUSTIN (as Squid): Motive, we went through training together.

AUSTIN: Are you reporting this all back to the crew, Gig?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Echo, you recognize the name Motive Motif. Motive used to run with you (SYLVIA: Oh shit!) when you were a low-level criminal. What's Motive look like? *He was just another person in your life, another runner just like you.

SYLVIA: Oh man, I wasn't expecting to have to think of what a character looks like today.

AUSTIN: That's fine.

SYLVIA: If *he ran with Echo, *he probably has a lot of *his own self-made equipment. (AUSTIN: Okay, cool.) And stuff like, clothes and whatever running gear *he has. (AUSTIN: Sure.) That's kinda the only detail I'm really coming up with right now.

AUSTIN: That's a good detail, that's fine. I think *his hair is up in a bun. His hair, it's he/him in the intro. And he has— I'm trying to think of what else. What's his deal? He has like—

JANINE: I have a hot dude with a bun in my character folder if we want to have a reference.

AUSTIN: Sure. Are you sure you want to waste him on a guy who's about to—

JANINE: I got a lot in here.

AUSTIN: A lot of hot guys with buns, got it. [KEITH laughs]

JANINE: This is a humble suggestion, I don't know. Just a touchstone I got sitting here.

AUSTIN: Lemme see your— lemme see. Oh yeah, that's a good hot guy with a bun. That's a good— he has a good beard. Who is this?

JANINE: Tony Thornberg. (AUSTIN: Okay.)

KEITH: Tony Thornberg looks like my Sea of Thieves pirate.

AUSTIN: I love that— he does, true. I also just love that D'Lo Brown is above him now. Good.

00:38:47

So I think what you see is— Gig, Motive takes out a hand-held— I'm trying to think if Advent had any cool— oh, you know what he actually lifts up is the baton. The heavy concrete baseball bat that his partner - whose name you don't know yet is Breaker's Baritone - that Baritone had but is now currently using as a cane. And Motive grabs that and threatens— points it at the squid guy, and says,

AUSTIN (as Motive): Back off or I'm backing you off.

AUSTIN: And the squid guy is like, "What are you—" and takes a step forward, and Motive clocks him across the face.

DRE: Oh! Whoa whoa whoa.

KEITH: Ah, man. We—

AUSTIN: He just drops. And there is your complication. There is your first complication. The people in front of you are now—

KEITH: Fighting.

AUSTIN: No, not fighting.

KEITH: Doing violence.

AUSTIN: It's over. It's done.

KEITH: Oh, that's it?

AUSTIN: That guy is gone. Yeah. That guy is on the ground. He might not be dead yet. But there is a person that you just saw get knocked out with a big concrete bat (DRE: Ahh!). And they—

KEITH: Oh, I missed the part where there was a concrete bat.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. It's a bat. It's like a baseball bat, but like, covered in— it's a baton. It doesn't have the fluting of a baseball bat really. But it does have a hard concrete exterior.

He's knocked out, and they step over him and keep walking? And they are on a much higher alert now? So anything you do around them will also be desperate now.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Okay, we need to check on the person who's hurt first.

DRE (as Even): Agreed.

JANINE (as Signet): Mhm.

AUSTIN: Okay. So you kind of trail past them, trail behind them? Keep your distance so that you can get there without being seen? (JANINE: Yeah.) Okay, cool. You show up, and there is a squid person on the ground.

And I don't know. I don't know if they're breathing or not. I'm gonna fortune roll this really quick. I'm just gonna do a 2d6. There's a success here. There's a six! Still alive, thankfully. Still alive and breathing very slowly. Is unconscious, but not— whatever damage was not enough to permanently injure them. Like, a six on this roll, the fortune roll I just did? I'm not gonna have him be— there's no CTE here, you know what I mean? Squid bodies, squid-people bodies are just different than ours.

So what do y'all do?

DRE: Oh boy.

KEITH (as Gig): They seem fine. Let's go.

DRE (as Even): They don't seem fine!

JANINE: I'm not technically a doctor, but I do feel an obligation to do something doctor-y at the moment. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) Is fine med kit like a class thing that I have? I don't remember.

AUSTIN: Where is it on your sheet?

[overlapping]

DRE: Yeah, I just have a regular med kit.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes yes yes.

KEITH: I think I have access to— oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Fine med kit is a special thing for you.

JANINE: I was gonna say— ‘cause med kit and fine med kit have the same weight. So I was like, “This must just be a class thing that I have.”

AUSTIN: Anything that’s above where it says “add” for you is a class thing.

JANINE: I’m gonna say I have it, then.

AUSTIN: Sure. And you had five armour— er, five load? So that takes up two of it?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. So what do you do?

JANINE: I think I ask for us to take a minute here? Just to let them know, “Don’t just keep going, I gotta do a thing.” And so I crouch down next to them and pull out this fine med kit. I think the thing that distinguishes a fine med kit from just a normal med kit in the context of Signet is probably that it’s a little— I don’t know what it is in the book, but it feels like one of those things that should be like, a med kit is just bandages and sterilization stuff, maybe some suturing shit or something? (AUSTIN: Mhm.) But a fine med kit is like, well—

KEITH: Gold filigree.

JANINE: No! Some mental health stuff maybe in there as well? Like, it feels like one of those things that should be a little more holistic.

AUSTIN: Right, sure.

JANINE: Just like whole— there are a lot of things that can happen to you that you don’t just stitch up.

[overlapping]

JANINE: I think she probably cracks it open.

AUSTIN: This has that set of— okay, cool.

AUSTIN: And then goes to work?

JANINE: Some kind of smelling salts? I don't what you do when someone with a very soft head gets hit in the head. [giggles]

AUSTIN: That's a good question. I mean, I think—

KEITH: It sounds like the very soft head helped.

JANINE: Hmmm.

AUSTIN: You should do this roll, and we'll see. We'll see what you can do. I think this is risky great because it's a fine— two things: it's a fine med kit, and you also have a fine bedside manner.

JANINE: That's true. I do.

AUSTIN: So I think those two things give you great effect here. Still risky, though. Anyone helping?

JANINE: Ahh, I'm trying to make sure I don't have any bonus shit I can put on here. I don't think I do.

KEITH: I don't think I have any— unless we think I can like, narratively Rig something to help whatever is being used to work better?

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: You also have to resist, though.

AUSTIN: That's true.

KEITH: I mean, might as well get that over with, right? [AUSTIN and JANINE laugh] I don't know, I guess I didn't— I kinda barely even thought we should help? So maybe I shouldn't help here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that seems more— if that was your impulse, then yeah. Alright, go ahead and— ey! That's a five, that's pretty good. So I think the thing that ends up happening, the thing that you see here is that the blow was distributed because of the way this person's body works? And so it didn't get into the brain. Their musculature is built so that any sort of impact gets distributed throughout the entire body. So instead of being wounded in a major life-threatening way, they're like, super winded. It feels for them that they just got— that they fell from really high. Or they like, got hit really hard center mass even though they didn't get hit hard center mass? Or just

like, they did a really really really really hard workout, and their whole body is just shutting the fuck down. So you're able to give them a combination of things to get their body jump started a little bit in terms of getting its energy back up?

JANINE: Gatorade?

AUSTIN: Definitely give them some electrolytes, and give them some things like that. You give them a senzu bean. [JANINE laughs] And they're back on their feet. They're good to go.

No, they are not back on their feet. They are actually still really really out of it? The problem is that they are now confused about where they are and what's going on. And they don't know who you are, so they also just don't necessarily trust all of you super well. But they are drinking their Gatorade ...

KEITH: Is in one of those little doctor-office waxy cups?

AUSTIN: Yes, totally.

AUSTIN (as Squid): Who are— who are you?

JANINE: That's a good fucking question. [laughs] I still don't have a good handle on how Signet would summarize this into one or two words concisely for a complete stranger. Does she say we're a patrol of some sort?

KEITH (as Gig): We're a patrol. Hi, we're a patrol of some sort.

SYLVIA (as Echo): We are a patrol. Of some sort.

KEITH (as Gig): [laughs] We're some sort of patrol, I think.

JANINE (as Signet): We were sent to—

SYLVIA (as Echo): We're patrolling in some way.

JANINE (as Signet): — to, to —

KEITH (as Gig): We could say that we're looking for someone?

JANINE (as Signet): — do something totally legitimate.

AUSTIN (as Squid): Are you— you're not Advent. You're not— oh, you're Ternion.

DRE (as Even): Nope!

SYLVIA (as Echo): Oh fuck. No!

KEITH (as Gig): No.

JANINE (as Signet): We're not any of those.

DRE (as Even): We're independent contractors.

JANINE (as Signet): That's true.

AUSTIN (as Squid): Okay. Um—

KEITH (as Gig): We're third-party mediaries.

DRE (as Even): Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Squid): Divine? Earth?

SYLVIA (as Echo): What?

AUSTIN (as Squid): Which?

KEITH (as Gig): Where we're from.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Ohhh. Like, we're from the Fleet. But we don't work there.

DRE (as Even): We're third-party mediaeries.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yeah. What he said.

AUSTIN (as Squid): Why— okay.

AUSTIN: He kind of stands up and slowly backs up against a car, and is looking for— as if looking for a weapon a little bit? Very nervous.

KEITH (as Gig): Do you remember what happened to you a second ago?

AUSTIN (as Squid): We were being chased. We were being chased by a mech.

00:48:10

KEITH (as Gig): Do you remember who you mean by we?

AUSTIN (as Squid): We were—

AUSTIN: Closes their big squid eyes. I think they have that— you know how a squid head has a cool little—

KEITH: Big eyes?

AUSTIN: That's also true. [DRE laughs] But I mean, you know how squids have the cool ... I don't know what to call them on the top of their—?

KEITH: Beak? They have beaks?

AUSTIN: No, no. On the top of their head.

JANINE: Fins?

AUSTIN: Like fins on the top of their head. Yeah. You can see those kind of bend in backwards as if deep in thought. D'you know what I mean? They like, bend right up against their— the rest of their head. They're very— they are very tall heads.

KEITH: They are just called fins.

AUSTIN: Okay, good. Thank you. And they—

KEITH: They're attached to the mantle.

AUSTIN (as Squid): I don't really ... I was sent here by Advent. We have to find— I mean, this is— if you're not with Advent, I can't tell you. I'm gonna go. Thank you. I guess.

KEITH (as Gig): Okay.

DRE (as Even): Hey, hold on. Hold on, hold on, hold on. We're not trying to interrogate you here, but like—

AUSTIN (as Squid): It feels like you're trying to interrogate me here.

DRE (as Even): I apologize

KEITH (as Gig): [softly] Just let them go.

DRE (as Even): I mean, you can go. I just want to make su—

JANINE (as Signet): Where are you going to go?

DRE (as Even): — I just want to make sure you're okay, 'cause you got hit pretty hard.

AUSTIN (as Squid): I'm alright. I'm just a little out of it. I'll find my feet on my feet.

KEITH (as Gig): Do we want to give— do you want directions to outside?

JANINE (as Signet): This is a—

AUSTIN (as Squid): No, my scanner's working.

JANINE (as Signet): Is it?

AUSTIN: They nod.

DRE (as Even): Oh wow. How did you— how'd you get that to work?

KEITH (as Gig): Hey, I got ours to work!

DRE (as Even): You kinda got 'em to work.

AUSTIN (as Squid): Advent's the very best. Ever since we started working with the other groups, it's just been— all of our stuff is exponentially better.

KEITH (as Gig): What other groups?

DRE: Even frowns. [laughs]

AUSTIN (as Squid): I came here with Advent obviously. I'm not from Quire. My people aren't from here. But the Volunteers and O Comm and the Particulars, they're all— they got some stuff figured out for us. They know the place better than us. I mean, I guess they're all us now. That's who I was with! I was with Motive and Breaker. No. Baritone. Earth has those weird names.

AUSTIN: Earth has those weird names where it's possessive.

AUSTIN (as Squid): Baritone. Breaker's Baritone, they were in my squad. And they—

AUSTIN: And you can see the memories like, coming back to them. And they like,

AUSTIN (as Squid): [sighs] Why'd they hit me?

JANINE (as Signet): They didn't recognize you.

AUSTIN (as Squid): This place is— this place is fucked.

DRE (as Even): That's a apt descriptor.

AUSTIN (as Squid): Alright. I'm gonna ... I have to finish my mission. I can't screw this up.

DRE (as Even): Okay. Fair warning—

AUSTIN (as Squid): Thank you—

DRE (as Even): — not like, "Fair warning, we're gonna do something." But we've been told that if you come in here and you attempt to do violence or other bad things, like, this place pushes back? So yeah. Just be careful.

AUSTIN: It's funny— so you say that, and then you can hear the sound of a foot crunching— like, a big metallic foot crunching a car behind you. About as far away from you as you were originally from the Advent crew, you can see Saint Wynter approaching.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Oh that's a fun twist.

KEITH (as Gig): We should book it. Let's just book it. [JANINE laughs]

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yeah, we should probably start with the whole running thing.

AUSTIN: So you all begin to run. What's this look like? And who is taking the lead? Is this a group action? Are you just trying to flee, are you hiding? What's the play here?

KEITH: I think this is a group action, right? We all saw— we we see the mech and we're like, "Oh, we should run, we should book it."

AUSTIN: Yes. Totally. Who is taking the lead on that for the roll?

SYLVIA: I can. Seeing as how I'm the one who is good at navigating places.

AUSTIN: Totally, totally.

KEITH: Yeah, good point.

AUSTIN: So I think this is definitely risky because you're being chased by Saint Wynter now. But you're gonna have great effect here because this person whose — I guess they give you their name also? They are Gigas Acano. They like,

AUSTIN (as Gigas): I just go by Gig, though. Don't ... [DRE laughs hard]

KEITH (as Gig): What?

JANINE (as Signet): Uh oh.

AUSTIN: And they know which exit you're supposed to take, remember? So they're able to give you that. In fact, maybe that's just a— what is it? Yeah, that's an increased effect. That's great effect, is what that is. (SYLVIA: Alright.)

So for group actions— here's a little reminder 'cause it's been a while. Everybody rolls whatever they're rolling, and the single best roll counts as the action result. But Echo, you will take one stress for any failure that anybody rolls. (SYLVIA: Oh boy.) So if you're just sprinting, that to me sounds like Scramble?

KEITH: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Yuh.

AUSTIN: Alright. Risky great. I'll make sure to add a clock for this. Oh, that's a failure. That's bad, Echo. That's a failure, Signet. [JANINE laughs] That's a failure.

KEITH: What if I'm riding Duck?

AUSTIN: Oh, do you want to have Duck with you? Suddenly?

KEITH: Yeah, I do want to have had Duck the whole time with me.

AUSTIN: I think you better take a— holy shit, this is going bad!

DRE: Yup. Uh huh.

AUSTIN: Even just rolled another failure!

KEITH: Oh no!

AUSTIN: I think you have to take stress to do that for sure. It's a flashback. Duck is pretty important to you. I think it's a one stress flashback to have Duck here with you. What's that look like? Is Duck suddenly here? Is like— all throughout this whole thing you've been on—?

KEITH: I think the whole time I've been riding Duck, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Take one stress.

KEITH: And I— also I have my hat on. I'm dressed like whatsisname. Alan—

JANINE: Fortune Napoleon?

KEITH: No. Yes, that's exactly who it is. No, Alan Whatsisname from Jurassic Park with his hat and his dumb ascot?

AUSTIN: Oh god. Alan Grant? Is that—?

KEITH: Alan Grant, yeah. I think that's what it is.

AUSTIN: Is it Alan Grant?

KEITH: Dr. Alan Grant with his buttoned-up shirt. I think it is.

AUSTIN: It's definitely Grant. Yeah, you're right.

KEITH: Yeah. No, you were right, you said it.

AUSTIN: Did I?

KEITH: Yeah. I said Alan, you said Grant.

AUSTIN: Oh. Okay. Weird. I believe you. Alright, sure, so now you have Duck here. That's useful.

DRE: Hey Keith, you better roll good. [laughs]

AUSTIN: You better roll good.

KEITH: Does that help? This helps my roll, right? This is a fast— Duck is fast.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Duck is fast. I'm in a weird situation now, which is I already gave y'all great effect. I'm not sure how else to give you a bonus here. I guess—

KEITH: That's a good point.

DRE: I also get potency on speed rolls, but I don't how that would give me anything in here.

AUSTIN: No, this is a speed roll. You have potency. Oh right, potency again is just about effect level.

DRE: Yeah, it's just about effect.

AUSTIN: Not about the dice you roll.

KEITH: Double plus roll!

AUSTIN: I mean, it's not as simple as— there can be a level higher than great. It means I could fill in this clock more. You know what I mean?

[overlapping]

DRE: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

KEITH: It does say “extreme” here. Effect extreme.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. So I'm gonna put this clock down here real quick, which is the “escape Wynter” clock.

KEITH: Okay, so I'm doing— am I doing ...?

AUSTIN: Give me a Scramble.

KEITH: Am I doing risky great?

AUSTIN: Yeah, risky great. Risky great.

JANINE: Should we be taking stuff for these failed rolls?

AUSTIN: No, you're not rolling desperate. (DRE: Oh right.) I mean, you will be in a moment!

KEITH: We don't have any bonus die for the group roll, right? That's— people with two dice is just because they've got better Scramble?

DRE: Unless you do a gambit.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you could spend— somebody could have spent a gambit.

KEITH: I'll spend a gambit! This is get— I mean, everyone failed, so.

SYLVIA: Please!

AUSTIN: Go ahead and spend that gambit. I'll drop you all down to one gambit. You were at two before, drop you to one. Go ahead and give me the roll.

[overlapping]

DRE: Oh thank god.

KEITH: Okay, five. Five.

SYLVIA: How much stress am I taking here? Three?

AUSTIN: Three, yeah. Do you—

SYLVIA: That's— it's okay, I just doubled my stress. I think it's fine.

DRE: Hey, do you take it even if you fail the roll and you're leading?

AUSTIN: Yes, you also take it for you. Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. Unfortunately that's how it goes.

JANINE: So wait. Sorry. We all take three stress?

AUSTIN: No no no no no.

SYLVIA: Just me.

AUSTIN: Just Echo, Echo is leading this thing.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So I'm actually gonna mark three, because even though you only got a five— it's a six-step clock to escape Wynter. And you got a five, which is a mixed success. But because it's great and because you had Duck— I think it's one of those things of like. How does this work?

KEITH: It's weighted more towards positive than some other five might have been?

AUSTIN: Oh, totally. I'm just thinking fictionally speaking. You know what it is? You get to a gap, and no one can clear the gap to like, draw— there's a gap and there's a truck on the other side. And the truck has a back cab that you could drop to make a bridge for other people. And Duck is able to leap across the gap. Nobody else can. (KEITH: Yeah.) And so you're able to leap across and drop the cab that fills in the hole. And like, everyone else is able to cross it.

KEITH: I'm gonna say even Duck probably does that too. Like, stomps on a lever or something?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, I gotcha. It's not even Gig, it's Duck who's like, "Jesus." Like, y'all stop and wait for a bit? And the camera goes back. And you can see Saint Wynter getting closer and closer. And then— I mean, you all get across, but then Saint Wynter just leaps over after you still.

So you're booking it. And you can see the offramp coming up. But you've not yet lost Saint Wynter. What do y'all do?

KEITH: Are we still in group action?

00:58:04

AUSTIN: I mean, that was one roll. Somebody else— you can do individual action here. You can do two— there's lots of ways to do this.

DRE: So are there a bunch of these like, abandoned-vehicle car things?

AUSTIN: Totally. You're basically on a big highway that's overgrown with vines and moss and shit. Some of it's glowing, some of it isn't. And then— I should also just describe a little bit what Saint Wynter's mech looks like and what Saint Wynter— so she's piloting a Saint which is a little bit like what y'all saw in the Crown of the Glass forever ago? She has kind of freckles, red hair, an aquiline nose, and like, a pageboy cut? She's very young. She's clearly 19-20. Like, she's maybe a little bit older than that, but not much more than that. And she has like three of those drones - the drones that she had guarding the area here - with her. And then two of the NEH-style little tiny drones, the little ones that Mother Story had forever ago? And those are called Rye and Buckwheat. That's what their names are. (SYLVIA: Aww.) [DRE laughs] And those are like, floating around with her. But her mech is like, stuck otherwise. She has a big sword, she has these drones, but that's it.

And it's kind of clear that she is— there's a way that the camera shows her, we get the anime-style pilot cut-ins, she's very eager to prove herself here. We definitely get a cut-in shot of her being like, "Now I have them! The rest of the Saints will never be able to talk shit about me again when I turn them in!" That sort of thing.

KEITH: I have kind of an idea.

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: I think that we can— I think that I can use—

AUSTIN: Oh! I just realized something! Oh wait. Maybe I didn't realize something. No, you were involved.

KEITH: I wonder if we solved this mystery of whether you realized something?

AUSTIN: I did. I need to know, Signet and Echo, who you don't trust. So same as before, [JANINE groans] because y'all failed— you were involved in that roll. Er, you didn't fail, but you were complicated. Echo, let me know when you have yours written.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think I got mine.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, go for it. [SYLVIA and JANINE explode into laughter]

KEITH: Excuse me?

DRE: The first cut is the deepest.

KEITH: I'm easily the most trustworthy person here. [JANINE is still laughing]

SYLVIA: "Ew, I don't want to help this guy."

AUSTIN: Oh hoo. True!

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, now we're being chased by a big-ass mech!

AUSTIN: Oh my god. God.

SYLVIA: Yeah, listen. Keith— Sylvia understands, but Echo doesn't. See? It's fine.

AUSTIN: Fair, fair.

DRE: Echo doesn't want to be monetized content for Gig.

KEITH: There is no monetized content!

AUSTIN: Alright. So same as before, no assisting with a resolve resist check. Alright. So sorry. Gig, maybe you can earn back some of that trust. What's the move you make here? What are you doing?

KEITH: Ah— man.

DRE: Do you think we could— do any of these cars or trucks look like they could be jump started or anything? Or are they completely like, trashed and grown over?

AUSTIN: I think it would be a roll to figure that out.

[overlapping]

KEITH: Ahh—

AUSTIN: I think— go ahead.

KEITH: My plan was, I was going to lead— which saint was it? Saint Wynter you said?

AUSTIN: Saint Wynter, yeah.

KEITH: I was going to try to sort of lead Saint Wynter in the wrong direction away from the rest of the group. (AUSTIN: Sure.) Because Gig is on a horse. (AUSTIN: True.) Like, could easily disguise where the rest of the group is moving just by sort of running past them.

AUSTIN: Right. I'm interested in that, if other people are. Or if Gig is. If Gig's gonna do it, Gig's gonna do it. That's a Sway roll for me. For sure.

KEITH: That's a Sway roll?

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely. Er, I would say so unless you have a counter. I can think of a couple things.

KEITH: I mean, I was thinking it was a Helm roll just because I'm like— (AUSTIN: Yeah.) But I have one in both, so it doesn't— I do like the idea that it's Sway. Like I'm trying to convince— I'm using Duck's body to convince a robot to follow me. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Right. Either one of those is totally fine. I mean, it's a robot with a human pilot. So. Yeah, I think that you're allowed to— I'd be good with either of those. So you just take off. What direction do you take off in? Is it like, forward more? Is it— do you take the wrong exit? Is it something like that?

KEITH: Yeah. I think that I'm taking the wrong— I'm taking an early exit. Or everyone else takes an early exit and I keep going straight?

AUSTIN: You keep going, right. Sure.

KEITH: It depends on how easily I can communicate this to everyone else.

AUSTIN: How do you communicate it to everyone else?

KEITH (as Gig): Hey, you guys take this early exit. I'm gonna keep— I'm gonna lead the robot this way.

DRE (as Even): Okay.

KEITH (as Gig): Cool. That worked.

AUSTIN: [doubtfully] Alright, if you say so. [KEITH laughs] Give me the roll.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: This is desperate standard.

KEITH: Desperate standard? Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah. You're like, trying to get the attention of a giant mech by yourself.

KEITH: This is— by the way, this is earlier when I said, “ All these bad rolls are just leading up to me rolling a sick roll,” that's what this one is.

AUSTIN: Gotcha, gotcha, gotcha.

JANINE: Well, you called it, so. (AUSTIN: Yeah.) [DRE bursts into laughter]

KEITH: One. [laughs]

DRE: Oh fuck.

AUSTIN: Ah my god. Well, that was a desperate roll, so that means you can mark that action's attribute. Did you go with— what, you went with Helm? So mark Prowess. Mark one in Prowess.

So here's— I can tell you exactly what happens. You're like, “Take this exit!” and they take that exit. You take the next one. And the next one goes up into the air? Like, the whole exit does. It's like an off ramp that loops up and around? And then just stops in the middle of the air. There's just a dead end. And it's empty. There's nothing there? And Duck is like, “ YOOOO!” [group laughter] and comes to a stop.

KEITH: As a reminder to everyone who forgot that Duck can kinda talk.

AUSTIN: Duck can talk. Kind of. Kind of talk, exactly. And Duck spins around, like, “Errmrrwrr.” And Sain Wynter is there. And she— you can see that her blade is out. And she takes her other hand on it? On the cross guard. And then like, grabs the cross guard as if it were a rifle handle and cocks it? And when she does, the regular singular blade splits open until it's like, three blade widths long. And there's a middle energy beam down the center of it that's a bright white energy beam. And then she charges at you and does a downward slash right at you.

KEITH: Did no one tell her that we're not supposed to be doing violence here?

AUSTIN: Well, you can see as this happens that the same sort of— there's a moment where she forgets— there's a moment where she follows through with the attack. You're about to take damage. You're about to take the "slashed" level one damage here because you get hit by this, 100%. Unless— again, you can always resist. In fact, actually it's a level two. It's a big mech weapon. You are just a person. It's you and Duck. So I think it's level two "slashed." So if you look at your harm there, you can just fill that in here. Or—

KEITH: Hey, what's that thing about always having armour? What is that? What is going on there?

AUSTIN: Oh, that is true. Do you always have armour? Is that the move y'all took?

JANINE: I think so.

KEITH: I think we did.

AUSTIN: Let's take a look. World Without End, duh duh ...

JANINE: I have armour permanently marked on my list of stuff, which I feel like I wouldn't have done unless we did that.

AUSTIN: Mm, I see you have not taken that. I see y'all as taking Light Touch instead.

DRE: Yeah, I thought we took Light Touch. (JANINE: Oh.)

KEITH: Bummer. Okay.

AUSTIN: You could still take armour. You could take that two-slot armour, and then spend it to not take damage here. D'you what I mean?

KEITH: Pff. No.

AUSTIN: Other thing you can do is resist. Otherwise you have to add a thing—

KEITH: Okay, okay. So let's talk about resisting and how much stress this means I'm taking.

AUSTIN: Okay, so. If you don't do anything, you'll take the "slashed" level two harm which means you'll have negative one die on anything you do, basically. It's bad. (KEITH: Okay.)

If you resist, that means you can roll with one of your three attributes - Insight, Prowess, or Resolve - you have a two in each so it's up to you which one you want to roll with. And when you resist, you take six minus whatever your highest die roll is. So if you roll a six, you get zero stress, and you don't get the negative effect. But if you roll a one and a two, you take four stress.

KEITH: And I get—

AUSTIN: And you get your first status, yeah.

KEITH: That sounds so risky!

AUSTIN: It's pretty risky.

KEITH: It's pretty risky. I'm just gonna take the hit.

AUSTIN: Or the other thing you could do. Oh, no. You went Light, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

JANINE: We went Normal, didn't we?

AUSTIN: No, you pick individually. You went Light, Signet. Gig went Light and only has—

KEITH: Gig travels light!

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can have armour, and that would cancel this out but destroy the armour for the— d'you know what I mean? Your armour would be two slots?

KEITH: So I would be trading two slots for—

AUSTIN: Not getting slashed currently.

KEITH: For not getting slashed.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Lots of choices here.

1:08:05

KEITH: Yeah. You know what? I'm gonna do that. I'm gonna do that.

AUSTIN: Okay, go for it. So then mark that you have two armour, and then mark where it says Armour underneath the statuses. Got it. Cool. So what's that— I guess it knocks you off your horse, and your armour— what's your armour? What type of armour do you have on over this, or around this Dr. Grant look that you have going on?

KEITH: I think it's under the Dr. Grant look to preserve the Dr. Grant look.

AUSTIN: Okay. So it's just like, armoured long johns? What is it?

KEITH: Or maybe it's like— he's got that hat, right? I can't— I don't even know what kind of hat it is.

AUSTIN: It's not a fedora, but it ain't—

KEITH: It's not a Panama hat, I can tell you that.

AUSTIN: No. If you go to fedoras.com/blog/jurassic-park-hats, there's a whole article here about the various hats.

KEITH: What ... kind of hat ... does ... Dr. Grant ... wear?

AUSTIN: It's a fedora.

KEITH: It's a fedora?

AUSTIN: It's a fedora.

KEITH: It's a custom-made straw fedora, yeah. Oh, or a Panama fedora, look at that!

AUSTIN: There you go.

KEITH: Anyway, I think that's the armour. And I think I take it off, and I block the sword with the hat.

AUSTIN: And it just crumples in?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It doesn't get slashed actually. I don't know what that material was, but it was great. Actually, I do know what that material was. That material was something that Lily Lysander made. Lily Lysander who recently came back up as the person who did all the decoration and like, mechanical design on Tannoy Kajj's ship. Who runs— who is a combination engineer/fashionista who is working with all sorts of experimental equipment and stuff? So I

think that armour that's like, "Oh, it's just everyday armour but it can withstand a blow really way" is— you can just see it says "Lysander" on the inside headband. [KEITH chuckles]

But it does, it completely crumbles. But it makes a screeching sound like a car crash almost as the blade cuts into it.

And I think at one point Wynter turns the mech sword so that the laser part of it starts to cut through the ha. Like, so the broad side of it now has this laser effect? But then manages to— you manage to push it aside. And I think maybe you and Duck are like— Duck is like, "Alright, I don't want to be here either!" and jumps you back down to the highway. I think at that point Wynter sees that this was a distraction because she has the height advantage and does a running leap back towards the exit where the rest of y'all are.

Let's go back to the rest of you. Any of you have another plan for getting way as Wynter bears down on you?

DRE: I mean, I'd like to try and see if I can find a working vehicle.

AUSTIN: Okay. How do you do that? What's that look like? Is it like a spot check basically? "That one looks like it might be working."

DRE: Well, 'cause like— yeah. So I'm looking through the different moves and figuring out what works for here 'cause there's not really a— like, I was looking for the analogue to Survey in Blades, and there's not a specific one-to-one?

AUSTIN: Study is that.

DRE: Is it Study?

AUSTIN: Yeah, Study is pretty close to that, basically. More or less. There's a couple ways you could do that. You could do Study. You could also do Attune because of how fucked things are here. But I think that— I think Study is probably the one.

DRE: Okay. And I think the way it looks is I almost— as I'm running, I think that Even's head tendrils are growing out. And they're just kind of like tagging cars as we go, kind of briefly touching. Like, "Okay, does this work? What kind of shape is this in?"

AUSTIN: Right. Give me— I think this is just a gather information roll. You're not— I don't think there's an extra bit of risk here. Where the risk will come is if you find something and then try to like, Rig it to make it work? That will be the bit where it gets risky.

DRE: So just straight up 2d6?

AUSTIN: 2d6, yeah. Hey, there's six! Totally. So what you end up seeing, it's— you find one and you turn to look at it. And it's one that has— uh, I said sword because I was looking at the word "sword" 'cause Dre you wrote, "I want that sword." It's two cars that are built into each other. And well, that works! But that's gonna suck. And thankfully your tendrils find another vehicle that's working. What type of vehicle is it?

DRE: I want a truck with a big open back cab.

AUSTIN: Okay. So that's what it is. You get it, totally.

DRE: Okay, hop in and turn that on. And motion for everyone else to hop in.

AUSTIN: Okay, what do y'all do? Do y'all get in?

JANINE: [cautiously] Yyeah?

SYLVIA: I mean, we don't really have that many other options here? (JANINE: No.)

AUSTIN: You can tell that Gigas is like,

AUSTIN (as Gigas): I don't know. I think I'm just gonna go on my own.

DRE (as Even): Not gonna force ya, but —

AUSTIN: Yeah. They keep running down the exit by themselves. They're not— they don't trust you. Someone could roll to change that, but that is where they're at.

JANINE: I kinda want to roll to change that.

AUSTIN: Okay, how do you— what do you say or do?

JANINE: I think as they're waffling— like, I'm picturing Signet sort of jumping into that back open portion? I think as they're waffling, I think maybe Signet just like, thrusts her hand out towards them as if it's sort of an assumption, "I'll help you in, and then we'll go."

AUSTIN: Okay. Feels like it's Consort to me?

JANINE: That works for me.

AUSTIN: Because you're not— it's not a Command. And you're not like, deceiving them with Sway.

JANINE: Yeah, Sway seems very deceptive to me usually.

AUSTIN: Go ahead and do it. I think it's just risky. I don't know that there's an effect level here, but there is a risk involved which is time. So risky standard's fine. Hey, there's a six! Nice work, you did it!

JANINE: Thanks.

AUSTIN: They're like— they go like,

AUSTIN (as Gigas): Fine. Finefinefinefine.

AUSTIN: Especially 'cause it's you. You're the one who gave them the Gatorade and helped them back on their feet and made sure that they had a muscle relaxer or whatever the fuck it is.

DRE: Wow.

JANINE: What!

SYLVIA: [laughing] They definitely shouldn't be running off on their own if they've been taking muscle relaxers!

AUSTIN: Well, because their muscles got all like, super tense after being hit by that—

SYLVIA: I don't think so!

JANINE: I'm also waiting to someone to send us a message like, "Hey, actually squids shouldn't have electrolytes 'cause the salt content would really fuck them up because they're all water and stuff."

AUSTIN: Well, then you gave them whatever— you have a fine med kit. (JANINE: Yeah.) You know, built for this alien species you've never met before. Alright, so they reach up and grab your hand and hop into the back of this truck.

At this point Saint Wynter has landed behind y'all. And then behind Saint Wynter is Duck and Gig. And y'all are running down this off ramp, down towards the lower level. You're not— you're going into the area that now you recognize from where you saw Acre-7, Signet. It gets more wooded and more forresty than jungly? The trees begin to take over the buildings entirely to the point where the scale is just off. There will just be a giant tree inside of which there is a post office. As if it's grown around the post office. The fog is getting denser and denser. And you can hear now the sound of streams and also the sound of that big glass creature that you saw in the fog.

JANINE: The elephant?

AUSTIN: The elephant, yeah. You hear like, “rrmmm,” whatever elephants— I think it’s deeper than that. “Rrrmm!” No, bad. Moving on. [KEITH laughs] Give me a— what are you doing. Are you driving?

DRE (as Even): Yeah, do we need to go back and get Gig? Or like—

SYLVIA (as Echo): Probably should.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Gig is— Saint Wynter is between you and Gig.

KEITH (as Gig): I’m good.

SYLVIA (as Echo): We did just get a new Gig.

DRE (as Even): True. Christ.

AUSTIN: I love that you’re playing out the fact that you trust Gig least. That’s good. [SYLVIA laughs]

KEITH (as Gig): It’s crazy that you trust me the least.

DRE: Alright, here’s what I want to do. I want to drive this truck between Wynter’s legs and like, sideswipe—

AUSTIN: This truck is as big as Wynter. Wynter— remember, Saints aren’t gods.

DRE: Oh, that’s right. Yeah. I forgot.

AUSTIN: The Saints are only— Saints are bigger than the Anglers are, but not by that much. So like, you probably couldn’t get through its legs.

JANINE: I was about to say, they’re probably like the scale of Scarlet Blade mechs, right?

DRE: Fuck it, can I just drive through the leg?

AUSTIN: That’s not a reference anybody but you, me, and John Carson will get, so.

JANINE: Or should get, frankly.

AUSTIN: Honestly. That is the scale. That’s the scale.

DRE: What if I just drove through its leg?

AUSTIN: You can do that.

JANINE: Doesn't this truck have an open back? That would be bad?

DRE: Eh, just duck. [JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: What I will say is that would be an act of violence.

DRE: Oh gosh, that's right.

KEITH: Sorry, what would be an act of violence?

AUSTIN: Driving this truck through Saint Wynter. I'm not saying you can't do it, but.

KEITH: I have a question. Is the— does an act of violent count if it is blocked or the damage is negated?

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's about you. It's about the person doing it. Not about receiving it, so you're fine, Gig.

KEITH: Okay. Is there consequences for Wytner for attacking me?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I described that her face kind of went blank for a second. That was her beginning to kind of dissociate a little bit here and lose parts of what was happening around her. But like, it's a resolve test. even at the lowest end if you don't have any stress yet, which she didn't. She came in— er imagine her, she had low stress. You're not just done because you failed that roll or because you did poorly on that roll.

The other thing is, you could just take the three stress outright and not resist it instead. Which, maybe that's what she did there? She just got a little bit more tense but not necessarily— did not try to resist that extra stress. And it's only the first time you do it, it's not each time you do it. So she kind of took that hit and is moving on. Oh, in fact she probably took that hit before because she was fighting them before. So yeah. That didn't even happen. She did that an hour ago.

KEITH: Oh, you only get it one time that you do violence?

AUSTIN: Yes, the first time you do violence inside of the Wound, yeah. I'd say, the first time per trip. Like, if you went back to Terncage the city and then came back, probably it would happen again. But inside of a single visit?

So sorry. Even, did you have something else to do with this truck?

1:19:08

DRE: No. I think I am gonna try to ram her and somewhat immobilize her.

AUSTIN: To ram her. Okay, let's do it. Let's do— what are you gonna roll for it?

DRE: I think Helm?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think that's true.

DRE: Try it on this truck. Does my— is this a speed-related roll?

AUSTIN: You get potency. Yeah, I think so. This is you trying to get up at— 'cause what I think it is is you have to dodge in between the other damaged— the other abandoned vehicles? And so you're doing that while also trying to gain speed. You know? Without actually slowing, weaving your way through. So yeah, I think that's what that is for sure. So go ahead and do— I mean, I think you might still be a little desperate now that she has her sword out and is bearing down on you? But it's great effect. So desperate great, Helm.

DRE: Hmm. Does anyone want to assist? Or should I take a gambit? We're down to one.

AUSTIN: You're down to one, yeah. Oh oh! You got another one because Signet get a six on a risky roll, so you're back up to two. That's useful.

DRE: Oh, okay. I might go ahead and take one then, if you're cool with that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, go for it. I'm just making sure that you don't have anything else that you're— yeah, you're good to go. I think— I'm making sure there's nothing else that we're missing.

DRE: Yeah. Uh, four.

AUSTIN: Four, that's not bad. I mean, on desperate it ain't ideal necessarily. So you do it, but there's a consequence. You suffer severe harm, a serious complication occurs. Hey, Even?

DRE: Mhm?

AUSTIN: I want you to take the level three harm "impaled".

DRE: I'm gonna resist that? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay, what's that— so what happens is, you were charging the truck toward her. And she just like, "Alright - stand!" And she cocks the blade again, and it goes back into a single longer sword, so it's like a pike? And goes down on one knee. And you do just completely ram into her and hit her hard, but the blade pierces right through your body.

So how do you resist that? What do you do? What's the— we haven't really done a real head-on one of these things. And we actually have to do two resistances now, right? (DRE: Right.) Because— or do you just take the three outright, with no resistance?

DRE: No, I'm probably gonna resist both. Because one of my moves is that I do get a +1d on resisting piloting consequences.

AUSTIN: Cool. Alright, so— you know what? I'll give you that to both of these things then because your violence was piloting. So ahead and take that +1d on the violence resist. Let's do that one first.

DRE: Okay. Is that Insight?

AUSTIN: That's Resolve. By the rules, it's Resolve. So 2d6 on that Resolve.

DRE: Five.

AUSTIN: Okay, so that means one. So take one stress. That's not bad. Alright, then give me one more for— What are you doing for the second one? What does it look like?

DRE: So I think it's like, I'm driving. And right as about— as I'm about to hit this sword, I spin the wheel. (AUSTIN: Oh, sick.) And I think I still hit the leg but I almost use the leg as a pivot? So I hit into it, and the truck spins around the leg.

AUSTIN: And you catch her with the backside of it?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool, give me the roll— the resist. Is that Prowess?

DRE: I think so.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I agree. I'm good with that.

DRE: Six.

AUSTIN: Hey! Look at that! And that's— [reading] when you roll a critical— oh, you didn't get a critical, you only rolled a six.

DRE: It's not a critical, yeah.

AUSTIN: Still though, you got no stress from that. (DRE: Whew.) Nice job from that! She, it— you hear the leg crumple? Actually, it doesn't crumple, it just snaps off. And her Saint just collapses forward and the blade just goes flying down the off ramp, basically? And she is defeated here. Her mech is done. And you can see her inside hitting buttons to send a message to the rest of her crew. Actually, I think one of the drones flies away basically to go try to meet up with them, like down the off ramp? Down towards the second, lower level. You can see she's messing around with some other stuff inside the cockpit. What do y'all do? Do you do anything? Do you confront her? Do you just let her be?

JANINE: I don't— okay, I don't think I have anything. Maybe we should just go?

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, I think we should just go.

DRE (as Even): Do we want to try to like, disable her drone system or anything?

JANINE (as Signet): I don't want to do anything that's gonna lead to her getting stuck here.

DRE (as Even): Fair.

JANINE (as Signet): I just want people to come and take her out.

DRE (as Even): Okay.

JANINE (as Signet): I don't want to interfere with her extraction. I just want her to not be on our ass, y'know?

DRE (as Even): Yeah.

AUSTIN: You hear the sound of the glass elephant again. And it's getting closer.

DRE (as Even): Well, good thing elephants don't eat people, so.

JANINE (as Signet): That actually— is that— is she gonna get fucking stomped on by a glass elephant? Is that—

AUSTIN: I'm shrugging over here.

DRE (as Even): Wait, can she like—

SYLVIA (as Echo): Probably shouldn't.

DRE (as Even): She can open her fucking door on her mech.

JANINE (as Signet): I don't know what the deal with that glass elephant is. It looked bad. Not like bad bad, but bad enough.

DRE (as Even): So what, do you want to invite her into the car as long as she's chill?
[JANINE sighs in exasperation]

AUSTIN: "Welcome to the Notion, everybody can hang." [DRE laughs]

DRE (as Even): I mean, listen. Gig's cool, but—

SYLVIA (as Echo): I mean--

KEITH (as Gig): Thank you! Thank you.

AUSTIN: Naw, he meant the other Gig!

KEITH (as Gig): Thank you— no, thank you.

AUSTIN: He wasn't talking about you!

KEITH (as Gig): No! Thank you!

SYLVIA (as Echo): Listen, ever since those teenagers, he's been dying to hear someone say, "Gig's cool." [DRE laughs] I think that there's a middle ground between taking this person with us and leaving them to get trampled by something?

JANINE (as Signet): Is there?

SYLVIA: Okay so I might have been misinterpreting this because I was thinking, "Oh, they're stuck and they're gonna get trampled." But I have been just misreading something.

AUSTIN: They can get out of their thing and try to run away. Like, they totally could. The thing—

KEITH (as Gig): Also, the elephant's not here.

AUSTIN: That elephant's coming this way. And like, I am putting this person— this character is in risk. I don't know what the result is. The result will be determined by dice or by the rest of the

events. Like, if you run into the elephant and fuck it up, then no, the elephant won't come and stomp on her. Right?

SYLVIA (as Echo): How about we take her for a bit and then let her out?

KEITH (as Gig): How about—

SYLVIA (as Echo): So that she's not in direct danger but we're abandoning her in a fucking forest? Never mind. [laughs]

KEITH (as Gig): How about we do something to make them be able to find her easier and faster?

SYLVIA: Does she have flares or anything?

AUSTIN I mean, she sent her drone, right? That's her equivalent.

KEITH: Yeah. Is there something we can do to make the drones faster or more effectively find the rest of the glass?

AUSTIN: I don't think so.

KEITH (as Gig): Then we should just go. Fuck it.

DRE (as Even): Is it worth getting this person—

KEITH (as Gig): No!

DRE (as Even): — as, hold on— as to help out Page and Forester? Like, in terms of— I don't know, showing that there's still cooperations, that we weren't sent as saboteurs from the Skein faction?

JANINE: There is that, certainly. Okay, fuck it. This— so the mech thing is sort of like one legged and fucked up on the ground? Is that— ?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: Okay. I haven't done any anime bullshit in a while. (AUSTIN: True.) So can I do some anime bullshit?

AUSTIN: What do you want to do?

JANINE: I would like that sort of— okay, so in this moment as she's sort of fallen to the ground

and is sending off her shit, and the car is maybe doing a perimeter? Like, swerving around her or something? Basically, as the car is passing her, I want Signet to stand up and do a bad-ass aerial vault to land on the cockpit. That's the thing I want.

AUSTIN: Okay. I mean, you can just do that. That's cool. I'm into it.

JANINE: I want to basically open the cockpit and pry her out of it.

AUSTIN: Okay. What's the—

JANINE: Maybe with my doctor underlighting on? Even though I'm not wearing robes, I'm wearing— I imagine a sort of oil-slick, beetle black kind of version of the Signet plug suit. I imagine that's what she would put on for adventuring, but.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Yeah, sure. I think you can do all of this. There's no roll involved for any of that stuff. Yeah, you— I guess the actual thing is that she does not want to open the cockpit. That is the— that is where you have to force the cockpit open. She doesn't know that you're not gonna kill her. You see her in fact reaching for a dagger inside.

JANINE: I mean, I'm unarmed. [laughing] I'm an unarmed doctor.

AUSTIN: Wait, how are you prying this thing open?

JANINE: Like, hands? Isn't there a release usually? Like, a thing that you turn and it goes "kachonk" and then the thing goes, "psht."

AUSTIN: That's [inaudible]? You're just doing [inaudible]? [DRE laughs]

KEITH: Those are all great noises. You're right.

AUSTIN: The thing goes, "boonk, kachunk, pchhh." An—

SYLVIA: I could, I could help here.

DRE: Yeah, I mean, I could also help here potentially.

AUSTIN: It is locked. She has the—

JANINE: She will definitely think we're all gonna kill her.

AUSTIN: [laughs] The cockpit is locked. Y'all just crashed a truck into her. I think she's in her rights to be like, "You're enemy combatants."

JANINE: Oh! Oh!

DRE: I mean, she started it. But fair.

1:29:06

KEITH (as Gig): This is a very confusing place.

JANINE: I have a thing I can do maybe? (AUSTIN: Sure.) I haven't used my Candies and Treats yet, and I would like to use my Candies and Treats.

DRE: Oh, you got a Snickers bar in there?

JANINE: No. So we decided when we were switching systems— so one of the options that a Stitch can carry is Candies and Treats. (AUSTIN: Yes.) And I felt that was kind of not Signet's style because it felt a little bribe-y. But what I picked for her instead is what I'm calling a scion deck, which is basically like a tarot deck but the images— they're metal cards, and they kinda like, move. It's a bit like I guess maybe Clow Cards? I realize I just gave Signet Clow Cards?

AUSTIN: They are! That's what they are! Okay.

KEITH: Wait, what are they? What?

JANINE: They're Clow Cards from Cardcaptor Sakura. I guess I did kind of accidentally do that. But—

AUSTIN: Accidentally!

JANINE: Sure. So we're gonna say Signet maybe has those on her right now. I marked them off. And she pulls out— I'm trying to figure out what, like, arcana whatever, archetype thing would be the best for this.

DRE: These are cool cards.

JANINE: And now I'm just thinking of the names of Clow Cards. I'm fucked now. I can't—

AUSTIN: Mhm. Maybe they're Divines? Are they different Divines?

JANINE: That makes sense actually. Yeah, 'cause there's a bunch of different Divines for different shit.

AUSTIN: There are 300 Divines, this is a 300-card deck. Or maybe your deck isn't? Maybe what you do is, there are 300 cards but you build a deck of however many cards that are like— that is a per—

JANINE: Relevant to what Signet would want. (AUSTIN: Yeah.) Like, the Divine of, fucking, Wrecking Shit Up probably wouldn't come up that often for Signet.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So you only have one of those in the deck. You don't need to top card it, you know what I mean? You don't need to draw that— it's not your core strategy, so.

JANINE: Right. She spent a lot of time on Reddit building this deck.

AUSTIN: I can't believe Signet netdecks! God.

JANINE: [laughs] Nah, it's fine. She actually just spent a lot of time with her deck wife, and her deck wife helped her build it out.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. I gotcha.

JANINE: So I think the card she pulls out of this deck is Shelter. And I want her— I just had this very strong image of her sort of slapping it onto the glass of the cockpit and holding her hand there to be like— to get her attention. Like, "I didn't bring a gun, I brought a fucking deck of cards."

AUSTIN: Okay. What do you want to roll for this?

JANINE: Can I roll Consort? Especially since I said I have my underlighting?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think it's— I feel like Consort is tough because Consort's about connections or friends or rivals. And rival is a reach here. And it's about gaining access to resources and information.

You can do it. The answer is always yes. The answer is yes. I think it's reduced effect because she doesn't fucking know you. Like, "Okay, you put a card on my— " You know what I mean? There's—

JANINE: Can this count as my Welcome Anywhere move?

AUSTIN: What is your Welcome Anywhere move?

JANINE: [reading] While wearing your medic garb, you are welcome even in dangerous places. Gain +1 to Consort and Sway when offering tending to anyone who is in need.

AUSTIN: Yes. Absolutely. So you would get +1 to Sway, if you want to do Sway here. Or you can use Consort but at lower effect. Do you know what I mean? This is one of those things where—

JANINE: I have two in Consort and none in Sway, so I think even at a lower, +1 with Consort would be better than the Sway?

AUSTIN: Is safer, yeah.

JANINE: Right?

AUSTIN: Yes, it just limits how friendly she'll be with you, right? You'll get a limited effect from Consort, and you'll get standard effect from Sway. So that is the— that is how this shakes out. A success will not mean— I want to be clear, a success will not mean that she doesn't trust you at all and she stays in there. You'll get the thing you want. But she will not be like, "Oh, okay, we're cool." She'll be like, "Alright, fine." You know? That is the distinct difference.

JANINE: I've been rolling bad enough with this stuff post-Miracle that I think I would rather take three dice with Consort and a limited effect.

AUSTIN: Okay, fair. So then it's controlled limited. I mean, that's the other thing. This is a controlled situation. You don't have much to lose in this situation. So— you're not gonna get stabbed here if you fail.

JANINE: Yeah, I just would like more positive outcomes, that's all.

AUSTIN: Okay. Gotcha. And that is a six. So I think she sees it and is like,

AUSTIN (as Wynter): Step back. Can you step back please?

JANINE: Signet does.

AUSTIN: And then she hits a couple of buttons, and then the— it actually opens in the back. And she slides out the rear of the cockpit. Again, the cockpit on these are these big, almost— in my mind almost look like a dodecahedron, like a d20, made of this glass at the heart of the Saint. And so she like, pops out the back of the Saint here and steps down. And is wearing— she is wearing— this is probably the most traditional Gundam-ass uniform we've seen. She has on a skirt with a dress uniform top and boots and gloves. And again, is kind of freckles, red hair, very Irish looking girl. And she's like,

AUSTIN: (as Wynter): Fine, I'm your prisoner. Can we get out of here? There are strange noises.

[clattering sound]

KEITH (as Gig): Oh, that was a strange noise.

SYLVIA: I'm sorry. [DRE and JANINE laugh]

AUSTIN: There it is. It's coming. It's coming for us.

KEITH: friendsatthetable.cash \$40,000 a month: in game foley work!

DRE: Yup. Even pulls the truck up next to her. [KEITH makes a horn sound] Is Duck in the back of this truck too?

AUSTIN: Duck and Gig have now arrived for sure. I don't know whether they're in the back of the truck yet.

DRE: I wanted an open-bed truck specifically so that Duck and Gig can hop up in here.

KEITH: I don't think Duck needs to be in the back of the truck.

DRE: Is Duck faster than a truck?

KEITH: Duck is probably as fast—

DRE: How much truck could Duck-Duck truck, if a duck—

SYLVIA: I hate this.

KEITH: Duck is probably faster than a truck would be on a highway full of abandoned cars.

DRE: Fair.

SYLVIA: I thought you wanted Duck in the passenger seat.

AUSTIN: If only.

DRE: Listen. In an ideal dream world, yes. But I know we can't always get what we want, so.

SYLVIA: I thought this was supposed to be a utopia. [everyone explodes into laughter]

AUSTIN: Ah fuck.

SYLVIA: Are we just awkwardly squished into this car, thought? With Keith and his weird horse on the back?

KEITH: No, I'm next to them. I'm on Duck out of the car.

SYLVIA: Okay. Alright.

AUSTIN: He's riding along next to it, yeah. So I think we— did you put Wynter in handcuffs or anything, or is she just like—

JANINE: No! I think Signet probably was like,

JANINE (as Signet): Okay, one, you're not our prisoner. Two, we do definitely need to get out of here. But to be clear, you are not a prisoner.

KEITH (as Gig): Maybe like, it's not the worst idea.

AUSTIN: Oh my god, I can't believe you're cops.

JANINE (as Signet): No.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Um, the, so she's like-

KEITH: You can— you don't have— you can restrain someone without being a cop! She almost killed me!

DRE (as Even): Sounds like—

AUSTIN: Total cop.

KEITH (as Gig): If it wasn't for my armour hat, I would be dead.

AUSTIN: Mhm. So she's just sulky. She's just being kind of a sulky brat in the car, and is like, "I'm not gonna talk." She says out loud—

AUSTIN (as Wynter): I'm not gonna talk to you. Don't try to get any information about me. I've been trained.

DRE (as Even): Huh, well, I guess the Garden Saints aren't really that different from the other Saints.

AUSTIN (as Wynter): What's that supposed to mean? You know the other Saints?

DRE (as Even): Oh, I thought you weren't gonna talk.

AUSTIN (as Wynter): I'm not. This is not— I'm asking the questions here.

DRE (as Even): Oh, okay.

JANINE (as Signet): It's an interrogation.

AUSTIN (as Wynter): What's up with your hair?

DRE (as Even): It's pretty cool.

DRE: And I make it— actually, no. You what? She knows it's weird because I don't even have my hands on the steering wheel. I just have my tendrils on the roof of the car.

AUSTIN: Right. Right, great. Good.

AUSTIN (as Wynter): Are you Skein?

DRE (as Even): Uh-uh.

AUSTIN (as Wynter): Are you—

AUSTIN: She looks at you close.

DRE (as Even): [quietly] Oh gosh, we're doing this again. [louder] We're third-party mediaries.

AUSTIN: I think actually— you go, "We're doing this again," and I really want Gigas to be like,

AUSTIN (as Gigas): They're third-party mediaries. [everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: And then she's like,

AUSTIN (as Wynter): Wait! You're— I was chasing you! You're those guys who broke in.

AUSTIN: And then Gigas is like,

AUSTIN (as Gigas): Yeah. Yeah, we broke in.

DRE (as Even): Aww, see? We're bringing people together.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that always works well, right?

JANINE: Oh, shut up!

AUSTIN: You wanna bring, you wanna fuckin add—

DRE: God damn it, Austin! You—

AUSTIN: More people in the Advent group? Yeah?

DRE: Motherfucker.

SYLVIA: Listen, I mean—

AUSTIN: They would do very well if Ternion switched from NEH to Advent, lemme tell you.

So yeah, you're just in this car and going down towards this— you're going down this long long ramp. And you can hear the braying of this glass elephant. And I think we get to, this big overpass continues through the woods. And again, the trees are all this weird distorted, detached— it's ...

I have in mind this image of these paintings of the woods done by a bot. Done by an AI. Where like, it doesn't understand that there's supposed be one thing. They don't— the bot doesn't get like, "Oh, this tree." The trunk of the tree continues indefinitely. Or like, the hanging branches are part of the same unit. They just— it just knows that, "Oh yeah, there's brown near this other brown." [laughing] And so it doesn't know how to do it.

So it's very similar here. Quire's— this part of Quire is broken in such a way that the old Quire version of it is— it remembers that these things are near each other. It remembered that there were— or it doesn't even remember. There's an echo of that stuff, but it's distorted through time basically.

1:39:20

AUSTIN: But we hear the braying of the elephant, and the truck comes to a stop at this little bridge. It's like a footbridge. There's no way the truck can go across it. And we're back where you first saw Acre, Signet.

KEITH: Gig and Duck cross it immediately, sort of as like a, "Oh what, you can't do that in your dumbass car?"

AUSTIN: So as you — do you go into the darker, the fog? Do you pass through the fog gate?

KEITH: No, I just cross over the bridge and then look back like, “Uhh, what’s going on?”

AUSTIN: Okay, so right across the bridge is that gate. Like, you go through the fog as soon as you cross the bridge.

KEITH: Oh, okay. Hmmmm... Yeah, I’ll do it.

AUSTIN: Okay. As— this is just timed this way, and we’ll find out why in a moment. As Gig passes through, the kind of green of the fog - there’s this kind of glowing low green - changes to a purple. Very, like, low-level dispersed pink-purple.

KEITH (as Gig): I changed it with my heart.

AUSTIN: [neutrally] Mmm. Inside, Gig, you see— so you see this image of a Quire that never was, a Quire that was never hit by the Gnosis virus, a Quire that never grew into that specific Golden Age and instead grew into its own one, one that could never have been, because Quire itself, um, Quire itself would never have developed in such a way as to be— or by the time there were people on Quire, it was already past its point of living the way Acre-7 does, where Acre-7 has its own sort of sentience that is able to think and feel and remember people. It had moved on to being a sort of planet that was— its own consciousness was just kind of spread out and dispersed across all living things, and it was just everywhere, and it wasn’t specifically trying to do any one thing. It just kind of did stuff, not necessarily at random but not in any sort of singular, willful way. But it’s almost as if it’s imagining a world in which it could have been a better version of itself, when people were around, without the Gnosis virus there, without the rest of its history. And so it’s almost imagining its own micro-utopia, without any of the Apostolisian influence, without Independence landing and fucking stuff up.

And so you kind of pass through, and everything takes this pink-purple thing, pink-purple color as you specifically see this kind of gouge down the middle of this beautiful metropolis. It’s like a different version of the City of Glass, the Crown of Glass, that’s been cut down the middle with this gouge that was green, and then it turns this pinkish-purple. And a strange, like— it’s almost like a ribbon, comes up out of this gouge that’s as big as the city is. It’s like a ribbon held at length, not tied into a bow or anything like that. But it does, as it moves, the way it moves — and again, it’s as big as a city is — it folds over itself in hard angles and steps into the earth and makes huge, more gouges through this city. And you can see kind of jumping and flying around the city are the other three Saints. You can— you can’t see it, the camera sees that the other two members of Advent are here. And that on top of a building, looking down on all this with fear - or not with fear but with distress, maybe, a sort of like distant distress - is Acre-7.

So Gig, you’re looking at all this from the other side of this bridge. And you’re kind of up on a plateau looking down on this city and on this weird ribbon thing cutting into the ground. And I have two questions. One is actually not a question. One is just you feel this deep ache, this deep aching in yourself at the sight of this thing. And the second thing is, on seeing it, there is

some memory that comes back to you. Some regret, some— like, one of those things that even though it's dealt with, even though it's long in your past, every now and then it just sneaks into your mind, "Man, I can't believe that happened. I can't believe I fucked that up."

[MUSIC - "The Twilight Mirage" begins]

AUSTIN: What is that thing?

KEITH: For Gig?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Hmm.

AUSTIN: It can be from—

KEITH: Oh, duh. I know what it is.

AUSTIN: Oh, go for it.

KEITH: It's the post-Volition broadcast.

AUSTIN: [intrigued] Mm! That you didn't tell the truth— or the post-Volition or post-Independence?

KEITH: Independence. Yeah, sorry. Independence.

AUSTIN: Right, right. That you didn't show the world what was really happening down there? And instead you did this kind of cheesy, like, "Beachfront property!"

KEITH: Travel vlog.

AUSTIN: Right, travel blog, right right right. That's interesting. I like that a lot. Cool. Everybody else, think of yours. We'll be back next time figuring out what the Axiom Ache causes all of you to feel.

[MUSIC - "The Twilight Mirage" ends]