

PALISADE 03: Today Is a Monday

Transcriber: anachilles

0:00:01.0

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

[music: "[Nothing is Stationary](#)"]

Austin (as Margate Lock): Cross, it's Lock. We're on, uh, day 10 of the hike down here. Got a broadcasting cable or a transmission tube or something, testing it out with this report. Ration supply solid, morale's okay, we're good on ammo. Been hearing some strange things sometimes, but the crew is, you know, they're solid steel. Honestly, I sort of hope we do run into some opposition, let 'em blow off some steam, crack a dizzy or two. One of these pilots, the Plough, young kid, doesn't have it yet, but wants it, you know, wants a taste of the real thing. You can see it in their eyes. They're a true believer, they got that holy cause in them. A good little disciple. Can't wait to show how faithful they are. You remember being that young, Maidstone? Were we ever? Maybe that's a Nideo thing, youth. You and me, we weren't always old. We were brats. We used to run through the streets, too, but... were we ever really kids? I don't know. First time we met I was trying to ask you out same time I was trying to lift your wallet so I could afford to buy us dinner. Shit, maybe that is young girl stuff. But look at us now — top merc outfit on the planet, exclusive invite from Mister Frontier himself.

0:01:25.7 We're doing okay. We're doing okay. Shit, getting all nostalgic but I'm the one who's supposed to be mature. It's just, it's this place. I wish you could see it. From down here, it's unbelievable. The scope, the ambition. Someone, someone sat down at a desk and they dreamt this place up: the walls, the fountains, the bridges, the stores, all of it. And then, they built it. And you can draw a line from back then, 5,000 years ago, to today, to us, to the whole damn Principality. That's what these people don't get, these fucking — these dissidents and the fence-sitters, and, hell, I know we both have family back with the Pact, but them too. All their slogans and their signs and their chants and their songs. They really think that poetry is on their side, that they're the only ones who know how to make art. Well, fucking look at me. I'm at the

bottom of a monument as big as a planet. The whole galaxy's a monument. A monument to greatness, a monument to what we can build together. I've been thinking about it. What if we, uh, when I get back, what if you and me learned that instruction pact. Exempt? Delete. Exempt, delete. Infective pedestrian. Sharp toll. Sharp toll. Sharp toll!

[music ends]

0:02:53.6

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. And joining me today, Art Martinez-Tebbel.

Art: Hi. You can find me on Twitter at [@atebbel](https://twitter.com/atebbel). You can find me on Cohost at [@amtebbel](https://cohost.org/@amtebbel). And, uh, should I just do friendsatthetable.cash right now?

Austin: Yeah, sure.

Art: That's where you can support us on Patreon. I think it usually goes last, but, uh, push the Patreon has been the watchword of the meetings lately, so...

Austin: Right, PTP, push the Patreon. We're always saying it.

Art: PTP.

Austin: PTP. Like, like with like a DDP, you know, cadence.

Art: Yeah, yeah. Bang.

Austin: Bang. Yeah, okay, yeah. Also joining us, Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hi there. My name's Jack de Quidt. Have you considered supporting us on Patreon?

Art: [laughing]

Jack: Uh, push the Patreon has been a watchword in [chuckling] recent meetings, with the slogan, "go for the Patreon," GFTP.

Austin: Giftip!

Jack: Uh, said in that cadence, Giftip!

Austin: Yeah, we always say this. Yeah.

Art: Boom!

Jack: You can — [laughing] find — you can find it at friendsatthetable.cash. You can find me on Twitter at [@notquitereal](https://twitter.com/notquitereal), or on Cohost [@JDQ](https://cohost.org/@JDQ), and you can buy any music featured on the show, including the theme, uh, for this season, which is very exciting —

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: At, uh, notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

Austin: You can also follow us on, uh, Cohost at friends — fuck.

Art: Dash table.

Austin: [Friends-table](https://friends-table.com). That's the one that always gets me. Uh, I always forget —

Art: Not friends fuck. I think someone else has that.

Austin: Almost certainly, someone else has that there. Also on Tiktok at [friends_table](https://tiktok.com/@friends_table). Shoutouts to Keith and Sylvi, who have been doing the social stuff, and have been doing a good job. Also, uh, Twitch, we're streaming a lot these days. Twitch.TV/friendsatthetable. I feel like we've been getting, like, at least a weekly stream or two, so —

Art: Yeah, two or three, yeah. And hopefully you just listened last week to the big premier.

Austin: That's right.

Art: Or that didn't happen and you won't be hearing this because Ali will cut it.

Austin: Because Ali will cut it, exactly.

Jack: We're sort of making a bet with ourselves, right now.

Austin: We do that a lot on the show.

Art: What a good time it was.

Jack: [chuckling] [unintelligible] the episode.

Austin: [chuckling]

Art: It went seamlessly.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. It was great. No problems, everyone had a good time.

Jack: I'll, I'll do another one. What a terrible mistake.

Austin: Oh, no, how could we ever have made that decision?

Jack: [chuckling] Oh, no.

Austin: Fools!

Art: Ah, the Twitch servers just blew up.

Austin: [chuckling] What's that, what's that line Juliet says? My ill-divining soul?

Jack: Oh, I have an ill-divining soul.

Art: [chuckling]

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. That's us right now. [chuckling] It's going to go great, don't worry about it.

Uh, today, we are continuing our game of Armour Astir: Advent, a high fantasy role playing game about rival pilots, soldiers against the odds, spies and diplomats twisting the world and striking back against an authority that seeks to control you. Uh, I will reiterate that it is not, says designer Briar Sovereign, a game of careful preparation and pleasant truces. It is hard to change the world without taking a risk. Our goals today are to portray a world entrenched in conflict, to let the players make a difference, to connect the magic and the mundane, and to play to find out what happens. And today is our first, uh, conflict turn, uh, which, wow, we're doing, we're doing a faction game again.

Jack: Wow!

Austin: Uh, as part of our, we don't know what we've recorded will be released, general strategy in life, uh, y'all want to talk like for like 5 to 10 minutes [chuckling] about why we're doing a faction turn? Let's say 5 minutes.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Let's do like a 5 minute —

Art: Each?

Austin: No, total. Total, you know? Uh, why are you, why aren't you, why don't y'all have characters in the ground game this, this season?

Art: Uh, I mean, that's a complicated question, right? Some of it is like, we, uh, for season two, we did COUNTER/Weight, and in COUNTER/Weight we had a main game and a faction turn. And that really went well.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: It was a blast.

Art: It helped everyone sort of keep drilled in on their characters, on the ground game side, and it also kept like the big picture stuff sort of, not like out of the hands of the players, but like, there's a lot less pressure to come up with the bigger picture stuff, if you know that there's, there's people whose, whose job that is, you know?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: And so —

Jack: And there was a really exciting sensation, being on the ground, feeling stuff move.

Art: Mmm.

Jack: Uh, and, you know, like the great motions of an iceberg, that sensation that something, uh, with consequence has happened, uh, but we don't need to know the total ramifications of it, only that which, you know, reaches us on say, the planet September or something.

Austin: For instance, yes, exactly. Uh, and unlike that game, where — I mean, really quick, I will also say, you know, one of our goals is to let the players make a difference. And this is all stuff that, uh, in other games is expected to be managed by the, the GM, uh, and here, director, which is the GM role in Armour Astir, is excepted to let players into this conflict turn. And that's the other half of this, is, unlike COUNTER/Weight, where we hacked that in, or Beam Saber,

where it's supposed to be the job of the GM, here, it is pretty explicitly meant to be, uh, it's in the game itself, the conflict turn is a thing inside of Armour Astir: Advent, and the players are supposed to get involved.

0:08:04.7 Uh, you can, and, and it says pretty straight out, you can do this a bunch of different ways. The way we're doing it is, the two of you and me are going to run this, uh, after sorties but before downtimes. That's the place we're going to put this in. Pretty much that's where it's best to go. I thought about running downtimes first, but that feels a little like, I'd rather downtimes be informed by the stuff that happens during our conflict turn. Uh, as members of the conflict turn, we all have a bunch of stuff to like, manage and look at and care about. Uh, uh, because the conflict turn effectively is the scale at which the cause and the authority interact with each other in this kind of grand way. Uh, I'll read from the book here, I'm on page 103 if we want to like hand some stuff off. I'm not going to read all of this stuff. I'm going to read this first graph, but as we move around we might need to read some stuff.

Jack: Yeah, it's worth going through it.

Austin: Exactly. The Authority and the Cause are the big players in any game of Armour Astir. The Authority is oppressive, powerful, and domineering, with its sights set on the world, or at least the slice of it our game takes place in. On the other hand, the cause is hopefully benevolent and driven. But it is just as likely scattered, conflicted, and scared. While the players tend to their wound and sneak precious moments, uh, in downtime, uh, these forces develop too during the conflict turn. Uh, I'm going to summarize this next bit, which is, both the Authority and the Cause are comprised of different subcomponents, I guess, is, is what I would say. I should probably pull up the Palisade sheets spreadsheet that we're using, and I will once again shout out its creator, who is, uh, Ida Ailes. You can find this at tinyurl.com/aaasheets. Uh, really, really super useful here.

Art: Oh, should I be on those, too? Should I —

Austin: Going to be on those also. Those and roll20. Uh, uh, but like, there's like a great, uh, tabs that have just like, here's how the conflict turn works, here's our step one, step two, step three, like, here's all the mini-games, et cetera. So that's, will be very useful. Also things like the dice pools for the mini-games. Uh, basically, the Authority and the Cause both have some, some things that build them up. We've already been introduced to one of the things that makes up the cause, uh, which is the Blue Channel, which is one of six, uh, different factions inside of the

Cause, each of which has a sort of type that, that gives it an opportunity to make some things happen during this conflict turn. The Authority, which in our case is the Bilateral Intercession, not the whole Principality, just the Bilateral Intercession here on Palisade, uh, is comprised of important actors or assets that keep them safe from player characters, a passive step, something that they automatically get in the beginning of the conflict turn, uh, pillars that they control on behalf of the Authority, and, we, we have three each. Uh, and outcomes that can be chosen when they are be victorious during a conflict scene.

0:11:16.6 Do we at this moment want to go over what our Authority divisions and Cause factions are?

Jack: We do.

Austin: And what the pillars, uh, on each of them are. Maybe not every actor and asset, because that's a lot of stuff, though I would love to have [chuckling] access to those, uh, because of how I have to run the other side of the game. We'll likely put those in threat and use them to put the players in threat. So maybe after the session we can share those between us. Uh, Jack, do you want to start with your, and I guess, I guess we're revealing here now that the three divisions of the Bilateral Intercession on Palisade are each being controlled, uh, by each of us, one for one. So, Jack, who are you, who are you playing as?

Jack: Yeah, there are, there are three of us, and there are three factions. Uh, I am going to be —

Austin: Mmm, three, three divisions. An important —

Jack: Three [laughing], three, that's critical.

Austin: Like, a distinction in terms of, in terms of the way to think about this, right? Which is like, uh, at the beginning of this, you know, the Bilateral Intercession is the Authority. And it has divisions, that you can think of with lower-case F factions. But they're not, there's a, there's something different about saying division than faction, right? A division is not autonomous. It's not, uh, it's part of a whole. And I think it's representing at the beginning of play, at least, these divisions are working in concert towards a single goal, even if there might be rivalry between them in some way, right? Uh, uh, you know, we'll, we'll talk about how that works later. But if one group creates intelligence, it might share that intelligence with others. If another group creates weaponry, it might share that weaponry with others. In the first, uh, uh, game of the season, we

saw a joint operation that had, you know, Altars from all three of the factions working towards a goal together. And though them being deployed together is fairly rare, that's not a thing that's impossible to happen, because the divisions are working in unity, the stability is at level 9. 9 of 9. Uh, [chuckles] and so nothing — and no one has any, what's called disfavor, yet. So, anyway, Jack, talk to us about your division.

0:13:19.8

Jack: My division, as opposed to my factions.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, this time around, I am — this time around —

Austin: This time around, finally.

Jack: I am, finally, I am representing Stel Kesh, uh, specifically through the form of the Curtain. Uh, in the interesting place that it currently is, you know, over the course of the road to Palisade, we saw the, uh, Peaceful Princept — I was going to say dismantle the Curtain, and that's part of what he did, but he also sort of reconfigured it.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, brought the Curtain into public eye, and at the same time reshaped it, uh, into the, uh, uh, the current form that, that he believes it exists in. Uh, and I am, just as a shorthand, calling this new kind of Curtain thing, the Bilateral Intelligence Services, or the BIS. It is just straight-up, you know, the Curtain was a, was a relic of spycraft. The Bilateral Intelligence Services is what we are working with.

Austin: It's a modern organization, for a new time.

Jack: Yeah, absolutely. You know, the Curtain, what's this bullshit? You know, it's called, the CIA. Or it's called, you know —

Austin: [chuckling] Right, yes.

Jack: MI6 or something.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Uh, uh, the Curtain [chuckling] the Bilateral Intelligence Services —

Austin: Broun! [chuckling]

Jack: Uh, [chuckling] Broun — have deployed on Palisade, along with the rest of the Bilateral Intercession, and control, uh, broadly, or seek to control, several large swaths of the planet. Uh, we can see them in the far west, uh, with the cities of Carleon-Upon-Wisk, and Carmathen. And then, uh, more in the center, uh, I can't tell — is — oh, no, Brownton is in the Shale Belt.

Austin: Brownton is in the Shale Belt, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: In the center of the planet —

Austin: Braunton, please.

Jack: Sorry, braun — [laughing] Sorry, sorry, Braunton, is the headquarters of the Bilateral Intelligence Services —

Austin: Sorry, say that again, because it's, it maybe sounded to listener that we said that Braunton was the headquarters because of how we interjected a name thing.

Jack: Oh, right, yes. Yes. In the center of the planet, the Bilateral Intelligence Services have made their headquarters in an appropriated castle on top of a mountain called Steeple Kasserich. I'll talk about that more in a second. And, their, uh, main military representative, uh, is based in a castle, or, or a mansion in the middle of a swamp, down in the south, called Tintagel, in an area called the Brechelian forest.

Austin: I'm sorry, what was the section that's down there, what's the, what's the bit that's down —

Jack: Uh, Tintagel, the Stargrave is based in —

Austin: Right. And the Stargrave is...

Jack: Oh yeah. I, we'll talk more about the Stargrave in a second, but the Stargrave is in charge, the Stargrave is a senior Kesh military representative. There are several Stargraves spread far across the galaxy and the Principality, uh, but this is, it would be like saying, "oh, the chief admiral has been sent to —"

Austin: Right, right right right.

Jack: To Palisade.

Austin: Right, and we've said that the Stargrave is partly named that because of, uh, titles like Margrave in our own earth history, but also because they can turn a star into a grave. They have the authority of, uh, to destroy the nearby star. They have the quote/unquote [chuckling] "authority."

Jack: Yes.

Austin: The Bilateral Intercession, and before that the Divine Principality writ large, uh, had given them, or you know, the Divine Principality in general, had, had given anybody of this role, the approval to say, "eh, just torch that one. Too much trouble."

Jack: Well, I think there is something, uh, within the, uh, within Kesh, uh, military ranking, very somber and ceremonial about this role. Although, on some level that is a mask of ceremonialness, you know.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: We see this in, uh, British and American intelligence services around the world, when, and police officers, when agents and police officers are told that they have —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: The capacity to kill, it is given with a real sort of solemnity, even though that is belied by the actual use of that in the world.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, I think about the way that America talks about the nuclear launch codes as, you know, something almost sacred. Uh, Stargraves are real dangerous pieces of work. Right now, the Stargrave sees no need to destroy the star, uh, [chuckling] and end this whole shebang.

Austin: [chuckling] Uh-huh! Yeah.

Jack: Uh, but that's because, uh, it all seems to be going kind of okay right now, and they have broader goals. Just in short, Kesh is on the planet doing the kind of thing that Kesh usually

does, uh, maneuvering in, uh, the shadows. They have plans and schemes, and we will get into them. Uh...

Austin: Can we, maybe we don't need to go over your division, your like conflict victory things, because we'll do that when we get to that. Uh, but maybe we should list the 3 pillars for each of these, as a potential —

Jack: Mmm, I would love to. So each, uh, —

Austin: And also the type. What type of — I mean, I guess we kind of can guess at this, but what type of division? What's the...

Jack: Yeah, uh, uh, the —

Austin: Whatever that's called.

Jack: Bilateral Intelligence Service, uh, is a subterfuge division. Their focus is deploying spies or agents to deal with things covertly. One of the nice things about having worked in this setting for [chuckling] so fucking long now is that we can very cleanly point at a group and say, “ah, the spies.”

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, each division has 3 pillars. These are, uh, representative of actual things in the world. You know, they might be, uh, ideas. They don't necessarily have to be physical things. Uh, but they are, they are actual concepts —

Austin: I think that they have to be — sorry, I do think that they have to be, they can be non-physical, but they have to be material, if that makes sense?

Jack: Yes.

Austin: They can't be the idea of patriotism. They can be, uh, an ongoing company to keep patriotism up.

Jack: Or a song, or, you know —

Austin: Right, exactly. Yes yes yes.

Jack: Uh, and through the, uh, erosion of control of these pillars and eventually sort of capture and destruction of them, the Cause will hopefully be able to make some headway.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: The three pillars of the Bilateral Intelligence Service are the Diadem Gravtrain. Written down here, uh, is wild, vast trench city on Palisade's equator lies abandoned. Kesh has reactivated its railway via an operation center in Carmathen. Uh, this is just a, an extremely fast train, that is able to, uh, circumnavigate the planet.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, it is extremely dangerous. It needs a name and I don't have one yet, but I'll get there.

Austin: Mm-hm. Also, really quick, uh, after, and, and, you'll see why I'm doing this kind of nonchalantly in a moment, but after the events of the, uh, uh, ground game session, uh, I think that, that, uh, a, it, one grip has been removed from it, uh, at this point.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: Uh, as there was an op, a successful operation, taking control of it briefly, where the Cause redirected some of those trains, uh, and that has led to some chaos. You may recall that the actual thing that the [chuckles] Blue Channel was supposed to be doing in that session was briefly giving control of the trains to, uh, the rest of the Cause. And they did that. So, I think that that, that that should, uh, be, be a grip from the Cause.

Jack: Yeah, I think so. I, I, yeah. Since we're here, I have a quick mechanical question here.

0:20:46.7 Uh, unlike toppling a pillar, which has to be done actively, that has to be something that the players, uh, uh, actively roll or act to do, can, uh, uh, losing grip like this be done almost more passively?

Austin: Everything can be done fictionally. There is nothing that can't be done because the fiction demands it happens. For instance, if the Stargrave blew up the sun, everything on this entire sheet would just disappear, because the sun would blow up and destroy it all, right?

Jack: [chuckling] Right. But I also have to imagine that the Stargrave —

Austin: Right, the rule — to, to do it, do it, and that means, for instance — yeah, finish your thought.

Jack: I have to imagine that in order for the Stargrave to blow up the sun, we would start a clock.

Austin: Maybe. I mean, I don't think so, Jack. I think if you decide right now the Stargrave blows up — and like, we have to live under that, like, we can decide that that's the case, and then we need to invent a fiction for why it is that, that the Stargrave needs to, uh, have a clock there, you know what I mean? We could decide that that's not the case. I think all the time about the dog eat dog rule, which is that the colonizer can, at any point, kill everybody in the, in the occupied, uh, uh, location, right? Uh, —

Jack: Yes.

Austin: That is, empire has no problem doing that. Uh, and, and that we don't do it is because we are interested in story — telling interesting stories, and because we know that people have complex psychologies. And I don't think that that's what the Stargrave does here. I think that's probably, that's probably a fail state for the Stargrave, in a way, right? Because you probably, you don't, maybe don't lose the title in a certain circumstance, but speaking, if things are going well —

Jack: You lose the entire operation.

Austin: [chuckling] Yeah, exactly, yes. Uh...

Jack: Like, we, the Bilaterals have a clear goal here on Palisade.

Austin: Yep, totally. Totally.

Jack: And if the Stargrave blows up the sun, it is, uh, not good.

Austin: Totally.

Jack: Let's talk about the Stargrave.

Austin: And I'm sure that there are safety mechanisms, for instance, in place to prevent the Stargrave, prevent someone who is not the Stargrave from getting in and doing it whenever, right? And we can talk about what those look like if that starts to come up.

0:22:48.6 Uh, but the, the more important thing I want to, I want to really underline is, there are lots of ways to fell a pillar. There are lots of ways to reduce or increase grip. While there, while many of those have, uh, mechanical like scaffolding around them, at the end of the day, if someone does the thing in the fiction through a combination of other maneuvers, and it makes sense, then it can happen, right? That's the joy of playing in a game like Powered by the Apocalypse, right? That like, if the players decide to go on a sortie that is, killing the Stargrave, the Stargrave will die, even if they haven't, in the conflict turn, successfully rolled to destroy the pillar, you know? Because what they've done is, successful rolled weather the storm, and successfully [chuckling] rolled, you know —

Jack: Right.

Austin: You strike decisively, and, and that gets the job done the same. It's just that, we are, there are also rules for playing in this kind of more abstracted space.

Jack: Yeah, totally.

Austin: So, Stargrave time, because that's your second pillar.

Jack: Yes. This is Stargrave Elcessor, uh, which is spelled ELCESSOR, to rhyme with professor. The, the second syllable is stressed. Leader of the Bilateral Intercession's action in both name and action, the Stargrave ensures Kesh's primacy in this effort. Uh, the Stargrave is a woman from Kesh. She has, uh, been — well, she presumably went to military school in Kesh. She is, uh, in the, whatever the equivalent of West Point or whatever. Uh, previously held a very senior role, and has been deployed on the planet. She collects vintage cameras, and she has brought packed in straw and in wooden boxes, 100 of her most prized cameras.

0:24:41.8 Uh, and in afternoons when she's not working, she goes out into the swamps in a river boat and takes pictures, in the swamps around Tintagel.

Austin: Amazing. Uh, and it's worth saying there, uh, she, like I said, she, or like I wrote and you read, she ensures Kesh's primacy in this effort because, Stel Kesh, the Bilateral Intelligence Service, I wrote that down right, right? That's what you called it before?

Jack: Yes, yes.

Austin: BIS?

Jack: The BIS.

Austin: Uh, is a major division, compared to Art and my divisions, which are minor divisions. It's a little harder to get one over on the BIS than to get one over on Art and my divisions, which we'll reveal when it's time to do that. Uh, you have a strength of 5, we have strengths of 3. Uh, when the, when the cause tries to win a fight, they have to roll over a 5 against you, and only over a 3 against us. So that is, I think, tied in some part to you having a Stargrave here in charge of this entire, this entire operation.

Jack: And, the longstanding history and bickering within the Principality —

Austin: Right. Yep.

Jack: Of like, who is the oldest faction of the Principality, and it's... probably Nideo, but who knows? [chuckles]

Austin: It's, it's both of them, right? In some ways, it depends on, it really depends on, you know, the Divine Principality was a joining of the Principality of Kesh, and the Divine Free States, formerly the Divine Fleet. And, and it's like, they're both very old, you know? And Rapid Evening predates, or, you know, Principality of Kesh predates them, but who... it's one of those great things to bicker over, because the answer is, it doesn't exist without the two of them coming together, you know? [chuckles]

Jack: Well, and that's why it's quite safe bickering —

Austin: Yes.

Jack: For people who are otherwise allies. This is —

Austin: Right, people who are like —

Jack: Uh, the many stars, many stars philosophy?

Austin: Exactly, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's like, well, you can be like, “Well, of course, Aram Nideo is the founder, and so Nideo comes first.” And then you go, “now, now, now —”

Jack: And it's like, "well, people have been on Kesh —"

Austin: "The First Divine was Past!" Right, yeah, exactly. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes.

Jack: Uh. [chuckling] The First Divine was Past. Bless their little hearts.

Austin: That's a thing, that's definitely a thing they believe, right? [laughing] Some absolute bullshit.

Jack: Uh, oh, dear. We know who the First Divine was, probably.

Austin: Who can say? Uh...

Jack: Uh, and our final pillar is the Paint Shop. The Paint Shop is a labyrinthine castle atop the planet's central mountain range, specifically atop its tallest peak, a mountain called Steeple Catterick. The Paint Shop is a remarkable building. It was not built by the BIS. It was — it has been up there, uh, but it has been, uh, uh, added onto. It is a castle teetering on a precipice, with cantilevered towers, hastily constructed ship launches, the Kesh ships, you know, dock at. The core of the mountain has been hollowed out and filled with all kinds of BIS equipment. Uh, the vibe that I am trying to get with this castle, the Paint Shop, is like a cross between Castle Gormenghast, uh, Anor Londo, and the great castles, uh, German castles in the Alps. Uh, it is an absolute mess up there, and it is bristling with spies. However, [chuckles] it says written here, "bohemian artist commune, or something more sinister, question mark?"

Austin: Uh-huh!

Jack: Well... well there's a lot of spies in there, but there's also a lot of bohemian artists, for some reason.

Austin: Oh, that's nice. So they're like putting on shows and doing paintings, and —

Jack: Yeah, holding, holding sort of Warhol-esque sort of —

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Come and, come and look at me splash paint on this big square, while downstairs, you know, 31 floors below them, a man is sitting wearing headphones and a listening device.

Austin: And I'm sure that's just a front. There's not like, any interaction between those two groups.

Jack: I think it's probably just a front, you know? Like those —

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: Like a, hairdresser's that actually turns out to be a, a ring for 400 spies.

Austin: Right. The propmakers certainly aren't working for —

Art: Well, and every bohemian artist commune has always felt a little sinister, right?

Austin: [laughing]

Art: No one's ever been to a bohemian artist commune and been like, “feels on the up and up, nothing bad's happening here.

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: When I played, uh, yeah, when I played, uh, what's that game? Immortality?

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: There's that movie with the artist, and I thought, “those artists seem all right.”

Austin: [laughing] Yes. Ugh... all right, well, those are your three particulars. The Diadem Gravtrain, the Stargrave — one more time. Elcessor?

Jack: Elcessor.

Austin: Elcessor, Elcessor, rhymes with professor, Elcessor. And the Paint Shop. Art, do you want to tell us about your division of the Authority?

Art: Yeah. I will be, uh, playing is not — representing —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Stel Nideo, and finally, at long last, I'll be doing commentary on religion.

Austin: Oh, [chuckling] finally.

Jack: [laughing]

Art: With [chuckling] the part of Stel Nideo —

Jack: I'm so glad we're stepping out of our...

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: Our roles here. [chuckling]

Art: Yeah. The part of Stel Nideo I'm representing is the Divine Crusade.

Austin: Ah, [chuckles], now something about that's religious, you say.

Art: They're, they're — yeah. They're like Genshin and several more people, but we'll get to some of them.

Austin: Yeah. What's Nideo doing here?

Art: Uh, I guess I haven't described Crusade on microphone yet, have I?

Austin: No, I don't think so.

Art: Uh, I, I envision Crusade as like a giant, stained-glass figure.

Austin: Mmm.

Art: Uh, I think of it as, you know, colorful and when the light hits it, it might even be beautiful, but it's, but it's really horrible. And it's sort of made with the Independence tech from Twilight Mirage.

Austin: Ah, yes. Great. I love, I love to imagine Aram Nideo going, “the thing that almost killed you all of us, what if we had one like that?”

Jack: [chuckling]

Art: Well, if you stain the glass, maybe you can't see the reflections.

Austin: Oh yeah. That's, yeah, totally, absolutely. [chuckling]

Art: Yeah, we're going to fix it — we're going to —

Austin: Oh, I love it.

Art: We're going to taking Grand Magnificent's error —

Austin: Well, now it's all colorful — uh-huh?

Art: And fix it.

Austin: Can I tell you, this won't be the only time we say the name Grand Magnificent today?
[chuckling]

Art: Great! I've —

Jack: That's weird.

Austin: That motherfucker — okay.

Art: Uh, he'd be pretty old, if you're still around.

Austin: No, I think, I think it's 500 years of just, inside of the Mirage is probably — I mean, you tell me, I guess.

Art: Uh... who knows what magical powers Arbit has.

Austin: Mmm...

Art: Uh, none, it's none, is the —

Austin: Okay. [laughing] It just moves like that!

Art: It just moves like that.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: I don't know, maybe it's magic. We'll figure it out.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Uh, the type for this division is curator.

Austin: Mmm.

Art: Which means, their focus is stealing and investigating that which doesn't belong to it.

Austin: [chuckles] Ah, the Divine Principality, now I see.

Art: Yeah. Ah, crusades. Uh...

Jack: [chuckling]

Art: And we didn't, we didn't go over the moves. So we just go straight to pillars?

Austin: Straight to pillars. I mean, we can talk a little bit about, what is the Divine — I guess, let's look at the map and talk about where the Divine — or where the Divine Crusade and more importantly, where Nideo is here. Though, there's some overlap —

Art: Yeah, Nideo has —

Austin: With your pillars here. So we can kind of combine those.

Art: Sure. And, uh, Nideo has the very easy strategic thing of having three sections of territory, completely unconnected.

Austin: [laughing] That's true.

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: They, are they the least — I mean, everybody is kind of unconnected. I guess, my division is sort of, my division is almost connected, except for the huge gash running [chuckling] across the equator of, of the planet. If, if that wasn't there, you could draw like an A shape, or like a triangle shape with my three sectors. Anyway, yeah. You're northwest coast, East Coast, like all of the northeast coast, I guess. And then dead center.

Art: Yeah, and then, yeah, dead center. Uh, the territory surrounding, I guess the second pillar on the sheet, but we can talk about first the Temple of the Threshold, built at the center of a massive bridge that crosses the Diadem, this serves as the home of New Asterism and its false prophet.

Austin: Yeah, there's just like a, Annie's done a great job here of building a temple —

Art: Yeah, it looks great.

Austin: Hung up on, like, uh, beautiful-colored fabric. I'm imagining these as like an entire bridge of incredibly high-tensile fabrics, uh, that lead to this massive temple in the middle of, in the middle the of planet.

Art: Yeah, I wouldn't go in that building, uh, if it were real.

Austin: If it were real, no. No. Uh, except, uh, you know, Gur Sevraq's in there, and everybody loves Gur Sevraq.

0:33:26.2

Art: Yeah.

Austin: So —

Jack: What a great speaker.

Austin: Mm-hm. I've always thought so.

Art: Yeah. Come and hear the words of Gur Sevraq.

Austin: Uh, maybe we should talk a little bit about like, what's up with New Asterism? What's the, the what's the religious project look like these days?

Art: Uh, the religious project here is about taking this territory. This is a full-on colonial effort.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Uh, we're going to conquer this land, we are going to, you know, I mean, I have really, we're going to, you know, destroy their... systems and beliefs and replace them with our own.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Art: And, I mean, no one says that. That's not like, part of the pitch, but like —

Austin: But that's what's underneath it, right?

Art: That's what's underneath it, yeah.

Austin: We've, we've kind of talked a little bit about like the settler colonial stuff happening here, where like, the... the, there's a sort of, to, to channel Gur Sevraq a little bit, it's about cultivation. [chuckling] You know? I don't think Gur Sevraq comes out and says, cultivate saplings, uh, uh, fake Gur Sevraq. I'm just going to call him Gur Sevraq, because for all intents and purposes, that is the public Gur Sevraq at this point. Uh, uh, but it's all dressed up in this language of like, get out there and improve the world, right? We can, we can make the world better, we can destroy these old corrupt buildings and build better ones in their places, we can, we can improve the world by adding gardens to it. Uh, whose world was it before? Don't worry about it. If they had been taking uh, good care of it, there would already be gardens there, right?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, uh, you know, kind of turning the, uh, it's not a field, it's a garden, on its head, and insisting that fields be gardens. Uh, and, as settler colonial projects often do, that comes with, uh, a lot of, uh, you know, pushing people off of territory they already live on, uh, so... which is, which is kind of all of Nideo's territory here, uh, do you want to do another one of your pillars?

Art: Yeah, uh, in the west coast area is the Bontive Valley.

Austin: Which we saw in our Wagon Wheel game, right?

Art: Yeah. And the, the text we have there is, blessed by the departed Divine Bounty, the valley provides the Bilats with fruit that never rots and hyper-nutritional grain. And this is like the, the heart land of this territory, and this is where I imagine you find Crusade and the Crusade team —

Austin: Primarily —

Art: You know, primarily walking around, you know, really associating themselves with the, with the food, you know?

Austin: Yeah. That makes a lot of sense, for a lot of reasons. Uh, it's easier to sell, to sell that you're here with food than here with knives, right? Or here with swords.

Art: Right.

Austin: Two, it's close to Carleon-Upon-Wisk, which, which is an important like, Kesh City. And we didn't say the word Fabreal Duchy before, but this is part of the territory that would have

been the extended Fabreal Duchy in the, the prearrival of the Bilats. Uh, and then, three, it's very close to two of the Cause factions, uh, to the northeast, which we'll talk about later. But it's like, Crusade is really up, is right near one of the major fronts of the ongoing conflict, right? So... makes sense to me.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: And that leaves us with your third pillar.

Art: Yeah, which is the Divine Resonance, the watchful guardian, doting caregiver, and ardent supporter of Nideo's colonial efforts on Palisade. Uh, the Divine Resonance, we've decided, is sort of like everywhere. Much like resonance is everywhere.

Austin: Right.

Art: It's the, the eyes and ears of, uh, Nidean, and like Bilateral in general surveillance on the east coast.

Austin: And like, I think of it as, it's, it's the difference between it and like, the Bilateral Intelligence Service, or the old Curtain. Uh, one, everyone knows it's there. Everyone knows they're being watched, because it's, it's projected as like, the parental figure of colonial effort. Uh, it's, it's the sort of, like, [sighs] it's sort of like the, the — it's like, not big brother in the way that big brother is brought out to talk about, like, big government. But it's big brother in the sense that it is when a colonial effort happens, the state actually will nationalize a lot of things, or will, uh, do its best to take care of its, of its settlers, and like, make sure that they're safe, and make sure that their needs are attended to. Uh, and so I imagine that it's like, the, it's, it's, you can set your alarm with the Divine Resonance, right? You can say, “uh, Resonance, can you wake me up early tomorrow? I have an early meeting.” Right?

Art: Right, of course.

Austin: Uh, Resonance can, can chime in and say, “it looks like you're a little low on sodium. You should eat more —” that's a classic thing, people are low on sodium all the time, right? [chuckling]

Art: Yeah. There's a big —

Austin: Or whatever.

Art: Salt shortage here.

Austin: [laughing] Yes, exactly. Uh, that sort of thing, of like, uh, not nanny state. You know? But also, kind of that, as part of a colonial project, explicitly, right? And also, hey, are there any terrorists here? Is Millennium Break actually here? I'm listening to all of your phone calls to keep you safe, and also to keep your neighbors safe, just in case, you know? So... love to have, uh, a surveillance state supporting, uh, a terrible crusade. Uh, any other stuff, Nideo stuff worth saying, worth talking about?

Art: No, I think we'll get to it when we get to it.

Austin: Yeah, that makes sense. Uh, my, uh, my division is the Frontier Syndicate, uh, and it's specifically the March Institute, one of the many subsidiary companies that makes up the, the Frontier Syndicate. I think the leading one, the Frontier Syndicate, is run by Exanceaster March. It is a — or it is chaired by and founded by Exanceaster March, the, uh, entrepreneur that we focused in on during our Upstairs and Downstairs game, the one who was, uh, kind of seduced away, kind of wooed away from, uh, the Pact of Necessary Venture, or the Pact of Free States now, uh, and brought over to, to, uh, the Bilateral Intercession. Uh, uh, and so, it's, you know, it's a little bit like Columnar, it's a little bit like Stel Orion, the way we think about it, or ancient OriCon, of being a bunch of different companies that are technically all part of the same mega-company.

0:40:19.4 Uh, I've written here, "soon after defecting from Stel Columnar, Exanceaster March and his Frontier Syndicate ushered in a new technological era for the Divine Principality, but they do not sit still on Palisade. They position themselves with a forward posture, pioneering new styles of, uh, technological military and social, and then I've run out of space here. Uh, exploitation, there we go, you know. Normal stuff. They are a research type in the research type division, which means that its focus is developing new enchantments and rhythms, uh, uh, of course, enchantments and rituals are, uh, two brand names [laughing] —

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: For the Frontier Syndicate of things that, you know, you can go to your local store and buy some new enchantments. That's like apps, an enchantment is like an app, you know?

Jack: Love apps.

Austin: Yeah, I love to have apps. Uh, they are spread, like I said, in a sort of triangular shape, uh, or like an unclosed A in the middlish of the map. In the southwest, there is a region that has a little town called Baseline. In the south east is Greenfield, uh, uh, which is a major asset that we'll talk about later. And then, they comprise most of the Shale Belt, uh, in the middle of the map, the kind of north middle of the map, just north of the Temple of the Threshold and Nideo's holdings there, uh, just west of Steeple Catterick and the Paint Shop, and just east of the Bontive Valley. Uh, the Shale Belt, as a reminder, is a big kind of mineral, you know, lots of plateaus. It's kind of like a mineral highlands, a mineral-filled highlands, that's where Braunton is, which is another city we went to in, uh, Wagon Wheel game. And, uh, the, the three pillars that I have are the Lone Marble Group, which is to the south east in, in, uh, uh, Greenfield, uh, built around a single artifact recovered from an Advent facility, this corporation develops the future of Bilat war machinery. Uh, hey, do you remember those Marbles from Twilight Mirage that used to be a different type of thing, and then they just never came up again.

Jack: Do you remember them, Art?

Austin: Art, do you remember them?

Art: Mmm... I think so.

Austin: Yeah, you — one of them, one of them, I don't know, one of them got away. One of them fell out of a pocket, or got left in a, in a room —

Art: Uh-oh.

Austin: Someone was staying in briefly. We never really found out what happened to those. Anyway, they got one of those and have built an entire [chuckling] company around it. The second pillar is the Divine Arbitrage, which is the amoral machine turned defacto treasurer, keeps the Frontier Syndicate a step ahead in all matters of commerce. I imagine the Divine Arbitrage is, uh, uh, operates out of Braunton, or at least that's the place of, where you go to communicate with Arbitrage. Who the fuck knows where Arbitrage really is. Uh, I mean the fact that, that they're on this sheet means, or the fact that it's on this sheet means that it is, uh, it is here on Palisade somewhere. It can be touched, right? Uh, uh, I wouldn't keep it away from here if, if it wasn't, if it was, uh, — being on the sheet means it can be touched, is really what I want to focus on. Uh, uh, and I want to emphasize that this is like, the version we saw of, of Arbitrage in, uh, Orbital, where it's really kind of leveraging itself as the future of commerce. Uh,

it rolled out a new, it rolled out a new currency that I think is an, uh, uh, a major currency on the planet, that's used across all of these different regions. What's that called, Glint? Is that right, is that what we called that at the time?

Art: I think that's right.

Austin: Uh...

Jack: Uh, yes.

Austin: So I think Glint continues to be a major currency here. [chuckles] Uh, and it continues to be a sort of, like, "I can get that for you. I'm tempting you with, with things." Uh, and then third is, Composure's Coliseum, which you can see off on a little island to the south, uh, of, of the southwestern, uh, frontier region. Operated by a revived Divine who instrumentalizes the data of both the death sport combatants and bloodthirsty fans. And this represents a larger Frontier Syndicate project and March Institute project in general. I think about, you know, if, if, if the Bilateral Intelligence Service and Kesh generally are about, uh, the great stability of things past, and the, and Stel Nideo and the Divine Crusade are about controlling the present through both armed power, through control of things like food, uh, through the surveillance state, uh, then, then much like Columnar, the Frontier Syndicate is about the future, and about predicting and controlling the future.

0:45:05.7 Uh, specifically, I think it's in conversation with a lot of, uh, I think our collective concerns and thoughts and interests in things like, uh, large language models, uh, like the, uh, terrible, uh, uh, data, uh, uh, uh, privacy invasion that come from big tech companies. You know, uh, a really good illustration of this is, there is a city here called Baseline, over on the, the bottom left of our territory here, of my territory here. Uh, and Baseline is a data town, sort of like the doom towns of atomic test sites, these like, incredibly clearly fake places, except people get to live there, "get to," quote/unquote, live there for free, in exchange for being subject to an endless array of social, medical, and psychological experiments, none of which they get to be informed about. They sign away their right to be, uh, uh, to be informed and to consent to individual tests in order to live here for free and have tests run on them.

0:46:08.7 And the same thing goes for the stuff that's happening with Composure's Coliseum, the final actual pillar. And so it's a lot of, it's, it's, it's hashtag big data all the way, and what can you get from that? What types of, I've been using this phrase a lot before, maybe not

on this show, but when talking about our contemporary moment, but monopolies of knowledge, uh, the ways that having access to information can open up new modes of, of action for you, uh, you can do different things when you have a lot of information, or when you have a monopoly on knowledge, or a monopoly on certain types of media. And so, that is, that is the kind of big push for the Frontier Syndicate. Uh, and also, like I said, they also have Lone, Lone Marble. So they're making a lot of new weapons, new technology, uh, derived from, of course, stolen things. So, I think those are the three big, big, uh, uh, divisions, in whole. Any other things on this before we continue? All right. High level, factions, and then we'll get into actual turn stuff. There are six factions. They are all named color, and then [chuckling] a type of, type of water, uh, source of some sort, because of how Gucci demanded they all have a, a throughline name. The Blue Channel, is of course the Blue Channel. I don't believe we will order the Blue Channel to do anything, because that's the ground game, right?

Jack: [chuckling] Those are people.

Austin: Those are people, I'm not going to say —

Jack: Those, those are our friends.

Austin: That Ali and Brnine have decided to do something that Ali hasn't decided to do, you know? So —

Jack: Mm-hm.

Austin: But there are five other ones. Do we want to like, go through this list one at a time? And, and read them, kind of... uh, I guess we could read straight down, under — one, two — I am clicking on something, I'm on the Cause and Factions page.

Jack: Mm-hm.

Austin: So, uh, Jack, do you want to start with — actually, yeah, Jack, do you want to start with Jade, with the second one?

Jack: Yes, this is Jade Kill, an organization based in Joyous Guard, in the north. Uh, this military arm of the Cause is operated by the Delegate liberation faction known as Reunion, and supported by Kalar Anakalar's giant unit — sorry, giant unit — giant-killing unit.

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: I think, actually, they're very small. Uh, and a wing of Swordbreakers. This is, uh, uh, August Righteousness, I believe.

Austin: Yes, that's correct.

Jack: Uh, up in the, who we first met working as a chef in, uh, a revolutionary chef in Joyous Guard, a formerly Fabreal city up in the north, uh, who, uh, appeared onscreen, and, uh, instantly executed a crusader king's plot with the help of —

Austin: [chuckling] It's true.

Jack: The characters in Wagon Wheel. Uh, what pronouns does August Righteousness use, Austin?

Austin: Uh, that's, I believe he/him. I'll double-check, but I'm pretty sure he/him, for August.

0:49:04.5

Jack: Yeah. Uh, he has, uh, effectively captured the [chuckling] grumpy leader of, uh, not even the leader of the Fabreal Duchy.

Austin: Not anymore, yeah.

Jack: The grumpy usurper of the Fabreal Duchy, uh, and is keeping him in, uh, grim house arrest.

Austin: Well, I, it's almost the other way. It's the, it's the ex-leader of the Fabreal Duchy, who is not pleased with giving the things up to the Stargrave.

Jack: Right, right, right.

Austin: And who was thus ousted by the barons of the Fabreal Duchy.

Jack: You're only as good as your barons.

Austin: You're only as good as your barons!

Jack: And it turns out that his barons were not very good to him.

Austin: Uh-uh. Uh-uh.

Jack: But he didn't get poisoned, because — [chuckling] because someone forgot how plants work.

Austin: [chuckling]

Jack: Uh, he is being supported by Kalar, Anna Kalar's giant killer unit. Kalar has been deployed to Palisade, uh, and a wing of Cas'alear's Swordbreakers. I don't know if Cas'alear is also —

Austin: Yeah —

Jack: Here?

Austin: Cas'alear is not here. I think, I think this is, I want to make sure that the galaxy still feels big, and like, not everybody from Partizan is just here again, you know?

Jack: Yes, absolutely.

Austin: This place has a gravity, we carry around gravity with us, uh, uh, and so like, for things like, oh, it makes sense to me that like, Gucci and Brnine and, uh, the rest of the Blue Channel, and, you know, even, uh, from the Oxblood Clan, oh my god, what is — Jesset —

Jack: Uh, Agon Ortlights?

Austin: No, not Agon.

Jack: Oh, Jesset City?

Austin: Yeah, so I think Agon Ortlights is elsewhere, working with, for instance, Exeter Leap, right? [chuckling]

Jack: Yes, totally.

Austin: Not directly, but in terms of, I think of it like, Exeter Leap and Agon Ortlights as being big, we're getting resources for Millennium Break people. And resources exist out there, in the galaxy. Uh, uh, and I think of Jesset City more on the front lines of this particular thing, because it's like, okay, I'm running — we'll get into what Jesset is running momentarily, honestly.

Jack: Yep.

Austin: So —

Jack: I went back and forth on whether or not Kalar was going to be on-planet. But I think so much of what Kalar believes is about striking — Kalar wants the war to end, very, very badly. And there is — the war is happening everywhere, but it is happening in a way that someone who desperately wants to see his family again might think is decisive on Palisade.

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Jack: And he knows that he's good at what he does, and his squadron of giant killers are good at what they do. So it makes sense for Kalar to be like, “all right, send me in to the purple planet, that turns out not to be purple when I get close to it.”

Austin: [chuckles] I think the skies are often purple here, you know? And looking at it from above, that, that, for whatever reason, it's reflected that way. I mean, it's taken on some of the Mirage into it's atmosphere, or at least the color of it.

Jack: Yeah. All right.

Austin: And, And, uh, Jade Kill is a military type.

Jack: Yeah. Uh, opposes and direct — sorry, opposes with direct assaults and force.

Austin: Mm-hm. Uh, Violet Cove. Art, do you want — well, I've started it, so let me finish this one. You can read the next one, because I already got to say the words Violet Cove, which is fun.

0:51:59.6 The Dim Liturgy claim to have seen Devotion's arrival coming in their sacred texts, a battered and corrupted backup of Crystal Palace's final predictions for the future. Now, the two cults work together to oust the Bilats and perhaps to do more intriguing things as well. They are a strange type of faction. They oppose with the weird and unexplained. Uh, a bunch of weirdos. Bunch of, bunch of weird oddballs hanging out over here on the, uh, the Isle of the Broken Key. Normal. Extremely normal. I guess we should say, too —

Jack: Uh —

Austin: Joyous Guard is up in a group, an area called the Caldera Stretch. The inside of a Caldera of a seemingly dormant supervolcano, a volcano as big as a —

Jack: Oh, like a Yellowstone-sized.

Austin: I, it's bigger than that, it's — look at it, it's huge. It's, it's as big as any region on the map.

Jack: Oh, that's quite big. Yes, that is quite big. It looks a bit like a, it's like a pole, honestly.

Austin: Like, what if Canada was a volcano, you know?

Art: Yeah.

Jack: What if the top of earth, that is to say, the ice that's up there, could be popped off —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Like the top of a boiled egg.

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah. Exactly. Uh, so that's Violet Cove, anyway. They are on that little island, uh, doing mysterious weird shit. Art.

Jack: I love —

Art: Go ahead.

Jack: Sorry, something quick to note here that you mentioned in the, in the ground episode as well, is that they signed up with Devotion less because —

Austin: Yes. [chuckling]

Jack: They believe in what Devotion believes, but because they predicted, correctly, that they would sign up with Devotion.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And there is something really spooky about that.

Austin: Mm-hm. I guess it's probably worth also saying, what's the difference between the final, corrupted backup of Crystal Palace's predictions versus what's inside of the, I almost said The Sky Reflected In Mirrors. What is the actual name of it, Jack? What's, what is —

Jack: Crown of Glass?

Austin: The reflecting, the reflecting pool.

Jack: Oh, the reflecting pool, yeah.

Austin: The reflecting pool, which formerly was the Divine Past, which formerly was Crystal Palace. Uh, the reflecting pool is filled with records of the past. The thing that the Divine Past had was information about the whole world. Uh, going back to pre... to, to COUNTER/Weight era, right? To like, we, there's a story about when, when Crystal Palace was built in Twilight Mirage. From there forward, you know, including all the records that were kind of pushed, put into it, it had all of those. And those are very valuable to have. Again, especially in an, in an age where people don't know any of that stuff, as we keep talking about. [chuckling] Uh, uh, and so, this is not that. This is the final, what, what, what the Dim Liturgy and now Devotion as part of Violet Cove have access to, is the last big predictions of the future, uh, from the, from Crystal Palace. How good are those? I don't know, but they predicted Devotion would show up, and they did, you know? And what's that even look like? You know, uh, good question.

0:54:54.9 Maybe they found something that looks like that, and, uh, justified it, but also, it seems to have, it seems like it works for them sometimes. So. All right, Art, do you want to read the next one?

Art: Yeah, the next one is Gray Pond. With members of the Oxblood Clan, the Company of the Spade, and the Shale Belt's Concrete Front, these blue collar revolutionaries are experts at getting the Cause the equipment it needs and maintaining what it has when that's only available option. They are a supplier type, and they oppose with new equipment or supplies.

Austin: Yeah. Uh, they are, uh, you can see them in the map here, uh, on, in a place called Sinder Karst. Uh, which, uh, I kind of imagine as being, uh, sort of like, you know, like the Sierra Madres, or, or any time you have a sort of big insurgency movement — not any time, but many times, when you have a big insurgency, one of the things the insurgents smartly do is go into the hills. [chuckles] Uh, it's very hard to get them out of the hills. And so you can see here, in the Frontier Syndicate's northern — like the top of the A is shaded Gray, uh, even though it's inside of the larger blue, because Gray pool — or, Gray Pond has taken that from, uh, the Frontier Syndicate here, and extended the front of Jade Kill a little bit. And so, you know, it's, it's, it's going up there, you know? I kind of really love, this is part of the reason why I love you putting Crusade in the Bontive Valley, Art, is because the, you know, Crusade, Divine Crusade feels like such a, such an ill-fitting Divine to try to like, get people out of a cave system —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Because it's just a big, beautiful war machine. It's probably great for sweeping tanks off the battlefield, but not built for this. Uh, which I love.

Art: How crusades usually go.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. Uh, Jack, I think, again?

Jack: Yeah. Uh, so this is Carmine Bight. BIGHT, not BITE. Uh, and it says, from ramshackle additions to the rocky shores of Rifle Island, which is an island shaped like a gun in the Sea in the southwest, it says — from ramshackle additions to the rocky shores of Rifle Island, Captain Skelton Nags and his fearsome flotilla launch rusted pirate vessels beneath the waves, guided by a coalition of hyphen navigators. These are submarine pilots. Submarine pilots?

Austin: Love it. And pirates.

Jack: And submarine pirates.

Austin: Yeah. Because, what's their type.

Jack: They are adventurers. They oppose with bold action and unpredictable tactics. This is a coalition of, you know, we keep making pirate fleets in Friends at the Table —

Austin: We sure do.

Jack: Uh, and this is a coalition, and, and long descendants of the Herringbone Flotilla, uh, and there was another pirate group —

Austin: The lineage Brighton.

Jack: The lineage Brighton, uh, they have, I won't say they've forgotten their lineage, because I think it is an important part of their culture, but they would say that, “oh, we are a new sort of pirate — we are the pirates of Rifle Island.”

Austin: Mm-hm. Uh, this reminds me actually, a really quick Blue Channel thing is, uh, I want to note that I think, along with the, the rest of the crew that we've seen, it, a moment, in this moment, there are members of a group called the Twill, who are also, if not permanently

integrated, temporarily under the protection of the Blue Channel coming off of the last adventure, uh, uh, the last session.

Jack: Right, yes.

Austin: We didn't really, we kind of wrapped things up in that session very quickly, and so it's worth saying that the states of things there is that — we'll talk more about the state of the things as we actually get into gameplay proper. We still have one more, uh, faction of the Cause to go, and that is Rose River. Though they are undoubtedly committed to the Cause, this unique research unit, combining Veronique and her Divine Fealty, with the out of time — with an out of time, uh, New Earth Hegemony sleep detachment squad, hope for a day when they can be something other than soldiers. They are a scholar type division, or faction, and they oppose with, uh, ingenuity and curiosity, and they are over here to the east on the islands, uh, on these kind of pink islands, uh, and they are, uh, uh, they operate in a town, or a city called New Oath, which is beautiful rendered, with, with, uh, the Divine, uh, uh, Fealty, kind of kneeling over it in a protective posture, I love it so much.

0:59:29.6

Jack: Gosh, we've never seen a Divine in that posture before, kneeling over a town in a —

Austin: It's fine, it's fine, don't worry about it.

Jack: Protective posture.

Austin: Mm-hm. Uh, because I don't know if any of our previous conversation or kind of preproduction conversation will make it out there, uh, it's worth [chuckling] it's worth saying that I, uh, some touchstones for Rose River, or for the NEH detachment at least, but also for Rose River in general is like, sort of the vibe of, uh, this, it's a very melancholy war story vibe. I think about The Thin Red Line, which is just as often, you know, this, it's, these, it's a very quiet movie that then suddenly, uh, violence breaks through, uh, during. Uh, uh, it's a World War II film, uh, by, uh, why have I blanked on his name? Uh...

Jack: Terrence Malick.

Austin: Terrence Malick, yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh, uh, an excellent director, who focuses — whose mode is fundamentally quiet, and then intensity breaking through, uh, uh, now and then, or if not

intensity, uh, grandeur breaking through, right? Quiet, enough quiet kind of snowballs up into an, uh, uh, uh, an emotional beat that, that overwhelms, you know?

Jack: Yeah. The thing we kept coming back to with, with them, as well as Malick, and I, you know, I think this is central to the way Malick makes movies, is that everything feels like it is operating in a dream —

Austin: Right.

Jack: At all times. There is something loose and strange and gestural about these people, which we think is perfect for, you know, when we last saw Veronique and Fealty, well, when we last saw Veronique, her cockpit was slowly filling with the colors of the Mirage —

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Jack: And, based on what we know about sleep detachment people, especially people who are now 5,000 years lost in time, you're going to emerge from those sleep detachment pods with a kind of dream-like grogginess.

Austin: Yeah. And you can think about other characters we've seen emerge from sleep detachments who feel kind of out of time, like Morning's Observation —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, it's worth saying also that the people who are in there, at least two of them, have technically shown up in, in *Friends at the Table* before. In the episode descriptions for *Godspeed Glory 1* and *Godspeed Glory 2*, kind of the pre-midseason finale of *Twilight Mirage*, uh, are some, some course, some like college course notes, like an outline you would take, you know, while attending a lecture. Uh, and the two characters there, uh, Lonny and T, who are 100 percent just Frank Ocean and Tyler the Creator as college kids, are, are in that sleep detachment. Is it sad that they were, that they were going to school and what they ended up doing is getting into a pod and being shot through space for... I don't know, 5,000 years? [chuckling] And then waking up and the war they thought they were being shot into, which they didn't even necessarily have strong feelings about, is not only over but replaced by another, different war that they immediately get caught up in? Yeah, I think that's kind of side, but at least they're on the right side of this one, you know?

Jack: And there's some beautiful Terrence Malick music playing.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely, yes, exactly.

Art: [chuckling]

Austin: Let Frank Ocean score a, a Terrence Malick, uh, film.

Jack: Oh my god.

Austin: I suspect it would be great. Uh, all right. Finally, over — there's one more little group. The Wayward Factions, over to the right, our third tab here. I only have two of them down. I, I can imagine more appearing. Uh, more could appear, theoretically, in play. Uh, Jack, do you want to go ahead and read the one that is highlighted currently? [chuckling]

Jack: [chuckling] Oh, sure.

Austin: I don't know if that was Art or Jack who —

Jack: No, that was, that was me, I was changing a typo.

Austin: Got it, got it.

1:03:11.5

Jack: Uh, the, uh, one of our wayward factions is the Crown of Glass. No, not that Crown of Glass, the other one.

Austin: Oh, fuck.

Jack: [chuckling] No, not that Rapid Evening.

Austin: [chuckling] Uh-huh.

Jack: The other one. Uh, the domain of the mysterious and arbitrary, Witch in Glass, the Crown is the largest non-Bilat city on the planet. It maintains its strength through the theft of assets, living and otherwise, from both the Principality and Palisade itself. Uh... yep.

Austin: What type is it?

Jack: It is... bandits! [wheezes]

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Uh, they oppose with robbery and sabotage.

Austin: We thought, for a little while, we thought the Crown of Glass might be one of the primary factions of the Cause. And then we kept thinking. [chuckles] And realized, never!

Jack: No. No. And not even like, this is absolutely something that cuts both ways. Of course —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Millennium Break does not want the Witch in Glass working with them, but at the same time, I think the Witch in Glass looks at the mandate of work with existing revolutionary structures on the planet and says, “I have a revolutionary structure here... why?”

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, there is no love lost between the two, although, uh, there's not quite as, I think, out and out animosity as there is between the factions and the, uh, authority.

Austin: Right. Uh, uh, we should say, a wayward faction as it functions can do a lot of things a Causes faction can do, except that they can do, they kind of work in any direction. We'll explain, we'll get to like how faction turn or faction actions work, uh, and Division, how conflict scenes, I guess, work in a little bit. But it's worth saying, wayward factions use the same rules as those with the Cause, in that they have types and outcomes and can be tapped or untapped in play. They differ, however, in that Wayward factions may choose to oppose the Cause instead of the Authority, tapping themselves to force a failure during a conflict scene or more broadly, tapping themselves to support the Authority during a sortie. Wayward factions typically become untapped as a result of director moves, which is to say, you know when I make a move as hard as I want, because someone failed a roll, or because things were quiet for a moment, or, or someone looks at me to ask what's going on? Those are, those are moments where the Wayward factions can, can become ready to be used again. And I think it's important that there is a — Clementine Kesh carries a blade, you know?

1:05:51.0 And it is, she does not necessarily use it to cut what you want. I think we've established that she is on terms in the Millennium Break folks here, and the rest of the Cause

on, on Palisade. Uh, uh, the Figure in Bismuth is currently on loan to that Cause. I think that in general, members of the Cause are welcome to come and spend resources [chuckling] in the Crown of Glass, for instance. [chuckles] Uh, happy to take your money. Not happy to listen to your orders.

Jack: Yep, totally.

Austin: That's generally the way we're imagining Crown of Glass.

Jack: And the Witch is, is doing something. We don't know what it is —

Austin: We don't.

Jack: And the, the Cause doesn't. Critically, the Cause doesn't know what it is, either.

Austin: No, no. I have an idea, but we'll find out, I guess, in play.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Art, do you want to read the other Wayward faction here?

Art: Yeah. The Five Afflictions. Terrifying and supposedly unholy beings who live in the dark corners of Palisade, and whose spawn terrorize any who veer too close. And they are despoilers, which is a fun word to say.

Austin: Mmm. It's so fun.

Art: I hope we get to use this a lot, just so we can keep saying despoilers.

Austin: What's that do?

Jack: [chuckles]

Austin: What's that —

Art: Opposes with unnecessary, imprecise force.

Austin: Mmm. [chuckles] That's good. Uh, is it —

Art: Uh, —

Austin: Yeah, go ahead.

Art: A fun thing about Wayward factions to note is that the, the Jade Kill have a very powerful move —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: But with the downside of, if they do it, they have to flip a coin and on tails they become a Wayward faction, which is, uh, fascinating.

Austin: Wait, is that true? What's the, what's the —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: What's the move?

Art: It's their outcome, on Jade Kill.

Austin: I didn't realize this. Can you, which, which, let me take a look at it. I feel like I missed —

Art: Fell a pillar with zero grip or destroy a vulnerable division, which is bonkers powerful.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Art: And then, flip a coin. On tails they become a Wayward faction, which I —

Austin: No, that is not — okay, you're — this is, this is why I was surprised by this. A destroyed, uh, I have to define this right, yes. A destroyed —

Art: Oh, the division becomes —

Austin: The division can become a Wayward faction. On —

Art: Oh, that's, that's interesting, too.

Austin: Yes. Uh-huh. Yes. From now on, yeah. When a pillar hits zero grip and is destroyed, when a pillar is destroyed — I'm sorry. When a division is destroyed, it used to, there used to be two different wordings in the book about what happened at that point, was, some of the writing was, it's destroyed and there's a power vacuum, uh, uh, and there's another version of it where

it becomes a Wayward faction. That is now, it's one of the other of those, but you flip a coin to find out which.

Jack: That's really interesting.

1:08:30.4

Austin: Uh, yes. Jade Kill will not become — I mean, Jade Kill can become a Wayward faction, through play. Anything can happen through play, right? But, but yes. Uh, is it — y'all, y'all want to know the names of —

Jack: I would love to go through this. So, something that I really loved was, uh, in episode one, we encounter — I think you describe it as like, a dragon made of knives?

Austin: Yeah, that's about right.

Jack: Uh, and straight away — because I knew that the, uh, the — let me just find the exact name. Yeah, I knew that the Five Afflictions were going to be in the game, and I saw that dragon and I was like, “okay, cool. Austin's got one of the Five Afflictions onscreen from the beginning.” Nope. That is, that is just like a pal of one of the Five Afflictions, right?

Austin: That's a pal, that is a, that is a, that is a, uh, I think I wrote the word minion and then changed it, because you can't say the word minion anymore. [chuckling]

Jack: Which sucks, because minion is such a great way to describe a certain kind of power relationship —

Austin: It is, it is.

Jack: But —

Art: Yeah, but now it's just — banana.

Austin: Now it's the banana.

Jack: It's the banana one.

Austin: Yeah. Uh, that, that, that pawn, uh, worked for a, an Affliction, or was an emanation of an Affliction, who knows. Uh, and the fact that each one has multiple names, I think is tied to the

fact that so many people have come and occupied this place. So, that one was called, by the New Earth Hegemony, Whetstone's Opposite, then was called by the Divine Free States and the, the Principality of Kesh in the earliest days of the Divine Principality, the Sanguine Hatchet. Which, again, 5,000 years ago, this thing was around, or some version of it was around. And now, and now it is known as, I mean, it's known as all of these. But it, it has called itself, or people have dreamt the name Cleave, CLEAVE. Uh, there are four other ones.

Jack: Let's go.

Austin: And they're on this map, and so, that's why I feel okay explaining their names, at least, and we kind of know what they are.

Jack: Which one is Cleave?

Austin: Cleave is the dragon over on the right, with the wings. It's the first one on —

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: The, the right side set of three.

Jack: The weird, is extended head.

Austin: Okay. Which one do you want me to tell you the name of next? The names of next.

Jack: Let's just go left to right except for the dragon, we'll skip over Cleave —

Austin: Except for Cleave, okay.

Jack: Once we get there.

Austin: Uh...

Jack: So we're looking at a long spiderlike thing, with one two three four five arms.

Art: Or a hand, reaching from out of frame.

Jack: Yep.

Austin: I have written, it looks like a massive loose brain neuron prowling the hills and valleys. And —

Jack: Hm.

Austin: NEH called that Labyrinth's Thread. Uh, the early Principality, or the early Divine Principality called it the Hedge Maze, and it is now called Ravel. Uh, you'll have to find out what its pawns and effects look like.

Jack: Great.

Austin: Uh...

Jack: Coming up now... a curtain. [chuckling]

Austin: Oh yeah, it's kind of, and there's like a little figure there.

Jack: With a figure emerging from between a curtain. [chuckling]

Austin: Yeah. Uh, I've written here, an abandoned theater which appears as if from nowhere. Upon the stage, a spectral projection of a human that no one knows. That is Yesterday's Re-prize, or re-prize, or Reprise [re-preeze]. Reprise, right? Yesterday's Reprise, also known as the Ghastly Chorus. And currently known as Refrain.

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: Who could say, what it does?

Jack: Then we've got our old pal Cleave, who I feel very familiar with now.

Austin: Then we have Cleave.

Jack: Because, I've, I've had, you know, a week to think about Cleave, so I feel okay about them.

Austin: Yeah. Uh-huh.

Jack: Wobbly person.

Austin: Wobbly person, uh, my, my note here to Annie for the art: what if a mummy could be a mech, shawled and wrapped and deteriorating?

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: So, yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: [chuckling] Oh, good show.

Austin: Pride's Mirror, which became The Looking Glass, and now has, has named itself Dust, or announced its name as Dust. And finally —

Jack: We've got someone with... maybe two faces in a gigantic, mmm, almost looks like a, a head of a cauliflower or something.

Austin: It does look like that, yeah. Note here is a slowly-moving statue, whose features are always be fluctuating under a stone shroud. Hell's Facade, The Empty Garden, Oversight. Uh, the fun thing about these names, uh, is that they are, uh, what are called, uh, autoantonyms. You may have noticed, Oversight, Cleave, Ravel, Refrain, and Dust, both mean the thing they mean, and they mean the opposite.

Jack: [laughing] They do.

Art: Mmm.

Jack: They do.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: They also, there is a certain, hm, you know, we live in a world where certain extremely powerful beings, uh, uh, take names that evoke, uh, a critical concept in the world.

Austin: Mm-hm. That's happened many times —

Jack: Smoke and mirror, mirror happening.

Austin: Uh-huh. Who could say, right?

Jack: Who could say.

Austin: I, I hope that people do discover the truth about, about these Afflictions and what their deal is, uh, because I think it's interesting, but we'll see. We'll see if people, if the game goes there, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, uh, so that's it. Those are the, those are the divisions, those are the factions. Uh... okay. Does somebody want to read from page 110, where it says, "playing the conflict turn?"

Jack: Yeah, I can do that.

Austin: Thank you.

Jack: Let me just tab over to page 110. Playing the conflict turn. During the conflict turn, you will play out scenes together, to depict the cause's struggle, to resist the authority and its endeavors. During each scene, you'll pick challenges, some of which involve roles, to add detail. Then you'll choose a resolution for the scene, based on how those roles went. You could play the conflict turn with your whole group, or just a few players. You might even play the conflict turn of a campaign with a different set of players entirely. I wonder what that would be like.

Austin: Ha-ha-ha, ha-ha.

Jack: Ha-ha-ha. Keith laugh. [chuckles]

Austin: [laughing] Keith laugh. Ugh.

Art: [laughing]

Jack: When playing out a conflict scene, you might temporarily step into the role of characters who are part of the Authority or the Cause, or even appear as your normal character occasionally. You don't need to make up characters ahead of time, but it can be helpful to do so, if you're not good at coming up with them on the spot. Characters you embody in the conflict turn don't need a playbook or traits, just a rough idea of who they are, what they look like, and what they want is good enough. Conflict turn characters can be captured or die during certain scenes, so be careful who you throw into them. There's nothing wrong with playing someone who feels a little disposable instead. It's what they're doing that will matter. There are three steps to the conflict turn. One: choosing which scene a division will start. Two: playing that scene by making challenges and rolling. Three: resolve the scene by comparing Cause and Authority successes.

Austin: Mmm. So, who wants to go first? Should we list what the scene types are, and then maybe go from there?

Jack: Yes.

Austin: Because here's also the big second reveal, is, what is a conflict scene like, and the answer is, uh, do you remember Mobile Frame Zero: Firebrands?

Jack: I sure do.

Art: I sure do.

Austin: Well, guess what? This game owes a bit to Mobile Frame Zero: Firebrands.

Jack: Who made, uh, Mobile Frame Zero: Firebrands?

Austin: The Bakers, uh, Vincent and Meguey Baker, uh, uh, I believe were both, I believe are both credit on that. I don't remember if Meguey is or not. I'm pretty sure she is. Uh, but we played that, uh, back [chuckling] as far as COUNTER/Weight, for the finale of COUNTER/Weight, and it has returned time and again. And here it is, uh, integrated by Briar, not directly integrated, but these scenes should remind you of that style of play. I believe —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Firebrands is directly shouted out here. It, it almost must be, uh, in the same way that Powered but the Apocalypse is, uh, somewhere in this, in this book. The word Firebrands certainly comes up, because of the type of thing. Maybe it doesn't directly come up here, but it's very much in, in the style of those mini-games. Uh, and those conflict scene types are an unfurling, an unfurling plan, a covert op — turning the page. An all-out war. Actually, these are all listed in our, in the conflict turn, aren't they? They are. Uh, a chase, one on one, and the [chuckling] discourse.

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: Uh, in short, you know, an unfurling plan, uh, is, uh, about some sort of, uh, nefarious or heroic — a nefarious plan, and the scene is about that thing unfurling, or the Cause trying to figure out how to thwart it. A covert operation, uh, is about what it sounds like, an undercover operation that is being led, uh, all-out war is open conflict. A chase, uh, is a chase, uh, uh, in which a member of the Authority and a member of the Cause are pursuing, in pursuance of each other. One on one is a dual or a, uh, uh, theoretically you could think of this as, as a non-physical dual, but the, the writing is all about, you know, this is the classic, my guard seems

to drop for a moment, will you roll or take the risk and strike? And then the discourse is, uh, a conversation. You discuss and public amongst yourselves as members of the Cause or the Authority.

1:17:59.6 Who has an opening gambit here?

Jack: I think I have an opening gambit. I want to say real quick that, uh, one of the things I love about the, uh, Firebrands style of, of game and of scene is that they are so intensely embodied and so easy to read as being about all kinds of physical and non-physical entanglements. There is something, you know, uh, very intimate about the way these scenes work. With that being said, I'm sad that none of these include actively kissing someone, which I believe happens in Firebrands.

Austin: It, that is correct. I believe, I believe in Firebrands there is actively, there is, uh, spending time alone, or something like that in Firebrands? I forget the exact wording on it. Uh...

Jack: This doesn't mean that —

Art: I think it's active kissing, is —

Austin: Active kissing —

Jack: Yeah, this doesn't mean that characters won't actively kiss, because this is Friends at the Table.

Austin: Right, sure, exactly.

Jack: Love can bloom, even on a battlefield.

Art: But it's not in the rules.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Jack: Yeah. Uh, I can begin.

Austin: Sure. Well, of course, as our leader here, I would hope, you know, that —

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: The Bilateral Intelligence Service would take the lead. Oh, actually, wait wait wait.

Jack: I mean, I want —

Austin: First of all, maybe we should actually slow down, because maybe before we get to this, even, it's worth saying that every turn a thing happens, when it's the Bilateral Intelligence Service's turn.

Jack: Oh, yes. As it begins —

Austin: I guess, I'm guessing that that triggers now. I'm going to see, double-check the book really quick to make sure.

Jack: So it's worth saying that every division of the Authority has a, a — it's not quite a passive power —

Austin: It is. It's called a, it's called a passive —

Jack: But it, but it happens automatically.

Austin: Bolded, passive. A passive step, a benefit they automatically provide at the start of the conflict turn.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So all of ours start immediately. We should all do these before we even get to our scenes.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: Uh, yeah. Which is important for lots of reasons, right? Like the timing — if anyone's ever played a card game, you know that timing is everything. [chuckling] So, so, Kesh, what is yours, and what do you do with it?

Jack: Yeah. I want to also just really quickly hit the idea of the Bilateral Intelligence Services being the leader. I think the leader of this operation is the Princtep.

Austin: Sure. Yes.

Jack: Uh, you know —

Austin: You know what I mean.

Jack: If Kesh is on top of things on the planet —

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Which they are, Kesh are reporting to, or rather, the Bilateral Intercession is, the Intelligence Services are reporting, perhaps, to the Stargrave, or are in concert with the Stargrave, and the Stargrave is reporting up to the Princept.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: This is very much like, knowing what we know about the Princept, I don't think he has just let a bunch of spies be like, "you go and run this."

Austin: [chuckling]

Jack: Uh, and I think, in fact, that Elcessor's presence on the planet is part of his... this is a, this is a principality operation —

Austin: Right.

Jack: Not a BIS operation.

Austin: That makes sense, okay.

Jack: So, uh, the Bilateral Intelligence Service's passive ability is, every turn, place one grip on a faction or pillar of their choice.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: This is very interesting, because it... worth saying in brief at this stage that the divisions of the Authority are seeking to gain grip on factions, or shore up facilities elsewhere, and can make plays for control, or for taking them off the board, or for doing something interesting with them.

Austin: Yes. It's also worth saying that grip is not a thing a division has over a faction or pillar. It's a thing that the Authority, or the Cause, with pillars, has. Uh, there is not like, we're not tracking, let's say you put one grip on the Blue Channel. Uh, that would be the Bilateral Intercession's grip, not Stel Kesh, the Bilateral Intelligence Service's grip. There's only one health pool, right?

Jack: Yes.

Austin: If you think about grip as HP, it's just an HP chart. There's not, we're not tracking this across every interlocking subgroup.

Jack: And this reflects, in part, how we are, we have differences but we are a genuine alliance on some level.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Like, we, we are working together for [chuckling] for the good of the Bilateral Intercession.

Austin: Uh-huh!

Jack: And the bad of everybody else.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Uh, I have a question about, uh, I'm not going to, so we don't need to get too deep into it, but it's, place one grip on a pillar of their choice.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, how would I use that, and how would it be reflected.

Austin: Uh, you could, for instance, get rid of the grip that was placed on the Diadem Gravtrain by the crew —

Jack: So I could remove a grip.

Austin: Of the Blue Channel. Yes, correct.

Jack: Place or remove one grip. Okay, you didn't know if it was for somehow taking swings at my own side?

Austin: No. No, no.

Art: And grip starts as full, right? The fact that all the boxes are unchecked means that —

Austin: Yeah, it's, it's, —

Art: We have grip.

Austin: You have grip. The added one here is, is the Cause taking grip, right? Taking control of it.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Sure, uh, —

Jack: That makes sense. Okay.

Austin: If that makes — yeah. The, the, it's also worth saying, once a pillar falls, it has fallen. There is no repairing a grip once it — or repairing a pillar, or reclaiming a pillar once it falls. Uh, it, as pillars are taken, as they've fallen, the Bilateral Intercession, the Authority's stability will drop, uh, and there's a note here: why can't the Authority retake pillars? This is to prevent a tug-of-war situation where your game lasts forever as pillars are traded back and forth.

1:23:15.2 When players fell a pillar, they're making a conscious choice to push the company and the authority closer to an ending, while the cause and the players might attempt to take pillars one by one, reducing their grip until they are exposed. They might also focus on attacking a division, taking more effort but giving them a temporary window in which they might fell multiple pillars in quick succession. Make sure they understand both options are available to them.

Jack: Right. Yep. Uh, so, I think that I am going to, as BIS, place one grip on Violet Cove.

Austin: Interesting.

Jack: The Dim Liturgy claim to have seen Devotion's arrival coming in their sacred text, a battered and corrupted backup of Crystal Palace's final predictions for the future.

Austin: What's that look like?

Jack: This is — a spy.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: This is, like, just a mole. Uh, this is a man, uh, with a stern face, and a, uh, monastic demeanor, named Marlon Styx, like the river.

Austin: Marlon, like Marlon Brando? Or Marlin like the fish?

Jack: Marlon like Marlon Brando. MARLON, space, STYX. Marlon Styx.

1:24:29.8

Austin: A spy, sent to Violet Cove.

Jack: He is, uh, put it this way. You could cast him very easily in, uh, Name of the Rose adaptation.

Austin: Mmm, okay, sure.

Jack: Big eyebrows, bald head, very pious, very stern.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, but his, uh, piety and his sternness is just the mask of an effective Kesh spy.

Austin: Love it, great. All right, uh, —

Jack: Oh, I think we just get an image of him in a, in a rowboat, pulling up.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm. Love it.

Jack: Uh, to encounter Violet Cove.

Austin: Uh, Stel Nideo, what is your every turn maneuver?

Art: Uh, I tabbed off the thing, but it's, uh, start or advance a four-step clock titled, "take something that isn't theirs."

Austin: [laughs] Great. Do you want to just add that, uh, to our scheme clock list over on the right?

Art: Uh, yeah. Ooh, this isn't roll20.

Austin: Nope. It is, it is our big thing. And I'll just say mine as you're doing that. Mine is, the director may force a reroll during a conflict scene this turn. So —

Jack: Exciting.

Austin: I'll just keep that in my pocket, you know?

Jack: It's very Frontier Syndicate, that they are not taking action straight away, they are planning for a maneuver that they are going to make this turn —

Austin: In the future, yeah. Uh-huh. Great.

Jack: It's very, uh, you know — we did this on purpose, but it is a little grim, when you were describing how, you know, Kesh has understanding and control of the past —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Nideo desperately wants to control the future, and the frontier syndicate —

Austin: The present —

Jack: Sorry, the present — and the Frontier Syndicate is thinking about the future, and it's like, "Bilats have got this covered."

Austin: Yep, uh-huh. Yeah.

Art: Those are the times.

Austin: Those are the times, you know?

Jack: Those are the times.

Austin: Meanwhile, the Pact, uh, Free States is all about space — is, I guess actual, they are also about the future. They are about the future and about, uh, Motion, which, you know, don't worry about Motion. Let Motion continue to be part of the galactic cosmos, having now been

dispersed [chuckling] along with elements of the True Divine, and, uh, uh, the Perennial Wave, you know? It's all fine. All that's fine.

Jack: Remains ghostly and horrible in the Palisade theme, you know?

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: Sometimes things are remembered in music. And other places. [chuckles]

Austin: Mm-hm. Uh, do you have an, an image for take something that isn't theirs? Or do you want to wait to fill that in when it fills up all the way, Art?

Art: Yeah, I want to wait to find out what we're taking.

Austin: Yeah, okay. But maybe, maybe just generally speaking, Nideo has mechs places, Nideo's putting up new buildings, Nideo's listening in.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: We've already described everything y'all are doing.

Art: Nideo is praising their noble pilgrims.

Austin: Right. Ugh, I love that. That's great. We, we didn't mention it, but your eastern area is kind of divided into an east and a west, and I didn't really consult you when I, when I put the names down here, Art, because, because this was like, I've got to get a map together quickly, thing. Can you read me the three places that are in your eastern province, what they're called?

Art: Uh, City City —

Austin: Okay, well, let's save City City for last, because that's the newest of them.

Art: Arm's Gate.

Austin: Uh, which was named, of course, for Aram Nideo, the, the founder of the, of the Principality, Divine Principality. Uh, and that marks the westernmost reach of the Divine Free States kind of colonization of this place 5,000 years ago. And they began over to the east at —

Art: At Cadent's Reach.

Austin: At Cadent's Reach. Uh, named, of course, for all the many Cadents of the Divine Fleet and the Free States, who of course were very important, even though we moved past that, that organization of society.

Jack: I'm frowning.

Austin: Why, what's wrong?

Jack: I'm frowning.

Austin: Okay, that's good to know. It's good to, it's good to frown sometimes. That's fine. Anyway, they've now moved well past Aram's gate, and to City City, uh, which I think is one of the biggest cities on the planet, City City. Uh, I had what I would call a sort of fever, not a dream... [chuckling] I had a sort of fevered, I don't know, uh, uh, it was, I was caught by a —

Jack: A visitation?

Austin: A strange mood, uh, in Dwarf Fortress —

Jack: A fell mood. [laughing]

Austin: It was, a fell mood has struck me, a couple of, like it's a couple, a couple of weeks ago?

Jack: Oh, it was great. Austin went on one in the chat.

Austin: I'm just going to try to find that from our chat here, uh, uh, —

Jack: I'm going to be, I'm going to be real, Austin. I have no idea what you were talking about, but I trust you, and I'm curious.

Austin: Yeah. I messaged Annie, and I said, "Annie, I have a truly fucking stupid request." Annie said, "ha-ha-ha, hit me." And you said, "I need you to rename Whitestar," which I was like, oh, they're going to name this for the Princept, that's a nice thing to do. Name the newest, biggest city for, for the, the Princept's second name. Whitestar Kesh, even Whitestar, gets, gets theirs, you know? Finally. And also it's a little twist of the dagger, because of Whitestar's history in COUNTER/Weight and blah-blah-blah. I said, "I need you to rename it to City City." And then I sent an image of Jessie from, uh, Breaking Bad, saying, "I can't keep getting away with it."

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: And Annie has named it City City, and then I linked y'all to a thing I'd read. And what I'd read was this. Quote, this is from the Siemens website, SIEMENS, technology company — “technology doesn't exist for its own sake, but to make people's everyday lives better, and this is what the idea of the industrial metaverse is all about.” Quote, “the industrial metaverse is a world, comma, which is always on, where real machines and factories, buildings and cities, grids and transportation systems, are mirrored in the virtual world. Why is this so important? In a digital environment, problems can be found, analyzed, and fixed quickly, or better yet, discovered before they arise. And all of this will happen in a world enabling a whole new level of collaboration, where people can break the barriers of distance and work together across countries and continents as if they were together in the very same room, in front of the very same machines or objects, where everyone can try out new ideas quickly and easily, and where innovation takes off. The metaverse is where virtual reality supports people who are working, uh, hands-on, onsite. A virtual realm, where we can travel into the past, and even into the future to understand problems and processes better and find optimal solutions.”

1:30:47.7 Uh, to which, Jack, you said — I don't know if you have this open, you said, “oh my god, lol. What if a city was a city?”

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: And I said, “it's a joint project between Nideo and the Frontier Syndicate. They're inventing the perfect city, a Divine city, the Divine City. The city city. City: The City. What's past a Divine? The City. The City. City City is the next City to be built on Palisade. It's also the next City to be built on Palisade. City City is the future. City City is the Past, capital P. City City comes next. City. City City is The City. I imagine your Curtain folks, uh, would, uh, could see, uh, this as, The City City, too. A City where City happens. A City where tomorrow is Tuesday, and today? It's Monday City. City is a verb in City City, but City, in City City? City is a noun, too. You're City. I'm City. Welcome to City.

1:31:48.0 So, uh, that's what it is. If you don't understand that, then I can't help you. So, uh, so that's the, that's the furthest west Nideo city on, in this eastern province of yours.

Art: Uh... I want you to know that, uh, and this is probably going to be in the episode's description, that we're not responsible if you, after listening to that last section, uh, while driving a car, drove off the road and died.

Austin: [laughing] Legally!

Jack: [laughing]

Art: Uh, we're not liable for damages —

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Art: Your heirs can't, uh, sue us. This was all spelled out in the description.

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: [laughing]

Art: Thank you for listening.

Jack: We appreciate your, your custom.

Art: Uh, yeah.

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Jack: Have you tried going to Friendsatthetable.cash? [chuckling]

Austin: Have you tried going to city.city?

Jack: What does it do?

Austin: I don't want —

Art: Do we have that?

Austin: No, I don't think we do.

Jack: No, error 106, a DNS error.

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. I bet someone owns it already, and is just sitting on it.

Jack: I bet it's worth a lot of money, city.city?

Austin: I bet it — yeah.

Art: Hold on, I'm, I'm looking.

Austin: I'm checking also. Can we get city city? There's an amount of money that I would pay for city city. I don't see it here. It's taken. We have to like, get people to go offer them money. I'm not doing that.

Art: No...

Austin: So that's a shame. That's a shame. Uh... what were we talking about? City City.

Jack: Oh, we're talking about the cities.

Austin: [chuckling] Uh... all right. Is it time... is it time to do a conflict scene?

Jack: Yeah.

Art: Uh, I still have City just circling in my head...

Austin: I know. You've just got to say other words. What are some other words you know?

1:33:16.8

Art: Uh, uh —

Austin: City — fuck!

Art: City. [laughing]

Austin: [laughing] Uh, I kind of see City City as the output of something like Baseline, the data town, right? They're doing the tests in data town, and then the results get put into City City, and then Resonance watches everything in City City, and so, it's also a data town. It's a different type of data town. It's a data City. Okay, I have to look away from City City. It has a gravity to it, it's —

Jack: All right.

Austin: It's pulling me back.

Jack: Let's go.

Austin: Give me your scene, Jack.

Jack: Pop! A champagne bottle opens, and people are laughing. Someone holds the champagne bottle to their mouth instead of a champagne glass. Uh, in their other hand, they are holding a cigarette. They put the cigarette down, and they pick up a paintbrush. They are working on a large, brightly colored, uh, piece in the style of, we would say in the style of like, Cy Twombly or something, big, uh, gestural piece, uh, on a wall of a horse, a knight on a horse. Bright red, bright blue. And we follow, down the hallway, uh, we can see out of a window that we are at the very top of a mountain. This is taking place in the Paint Shop, at the height of Steeple Catterick.

1:34:32.3 Further down the stairs, we can see, uh, two women, uh, sharing more champagne, laughing. They are doing, uh, like exquisite corpse drawings, uh, which are, you know, those drawings where you, uh, uh, draw like the shoulders, and then fold the page, and then someone else draws the chest, and then fold the page, and then someone draws the legs, and you end up with this sort of like, dadaist creature. Uh, the mood is of a party of, of active art production. Uh, and we go down further, past a door guarded by, you know, a man carrying some sort of a weapon. Uh, and things start to feel a little more ordinary. We pass a room where people are working at desks. Someone's typing on a typewriter. Someone is sketching on, uh, uh, like a massive butcher paper, hung up on the wall, but it's not clear whether what they're sketching is some new artistic project, or one of those, uh, like, uh, consequence diagrams, uh, from, you know, picked up from the, uh, from the Frontier Syndicate or whatever. Further down, deeper into the bowels of the, uh, castle, you know, we find people, uh, someone is, uh, working on art, but they're working on art in a brightly-lit, well-ventilated, uh, production room.

1:35:52.9 Someone has got, uh, uh, armor that a horse would wear, you know, leather armor that a horse would wear, slung up on a rudimentary mannequin of a horse, and is painting bright stripes on the side of that. Someone is painting stripes in a similar color. You know, we're talking like, uh, uh, ultramarine blue. Uh, vermilion red. And, uh, further down, deeper and deeper, until we end up in what looks, to all intents and purposes, like a 70s British conference room, where there is a large, uh, uh, overhead projector, like a clicking overhead projector. And people are filing in to, uh, listen to the opening presentation, uh, from the person who has been sent to Palisade to replace the acting chief of staff, uh, inside Steeple Catterick. So, for actors and assets, I would like one of you to take the role of the former acting director.

Austin: Uh, what is the type of scene we're playing, Jack?

Jack: We are playing —

Art: Great question, Austin.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: An unfurling plan.

Austin: This makes sense.

Art: Mmm.

Austin: I'm going to read from the book. Three conflict scenes are played during each turn, one tied to a different division of the Authority. Some conflict scenes will invite everyone to play, playing to take turns, choosing scenes, in this case, some players won't get to issue one, so this is, if we, if it weren't just the three of us, right, if it was everybody from the ground game here, for instance, so give priority to those whose ideas they're excited about. When you choose a scene, also choose — and this is a thing you're also going to have to do here, Jack, when you're thinking about assigning actors: choose which faction will be represented — or maybe we can do this collectively. I don't know how we want to do this. We should probably figure this out at this moment, before we get too deep in.

1:37:36.1 When you choose a scene, also choose which faction will be representing the Cause's efforts or interests during it, and tap that faction. If it's already tapped, the faction is destroyed. If you have no factions that aren't tapped, or just don't want to tap one, you can skip it. Still play the scene out, but the division automatically wins when you get to resolution. So, how do we want to decide if someone wants to, if a Cause faction wants to try to interfere with this first scene? Do we want to just talk it out? Do we all want to have factions the same way that we have divisions?

Jack: That's a great question — we've got six —

Art: Well, no, there's too many factions —

Austin: Mmm-mm, yeah — because there's —

Art: I guess —

Austin: The Waywards, too, there's actually one too many factions.

Art: Well, because there's 7? Not counting Blue Channel.

Austin: There are 7, not counting Blue Channel, yeah.

Art: Well, we could just decide that, uh, uh —

Austin: We could have a, we could have, here's, here's my —

Art: The Five Afflictions are not — but we could, we could like have a randomizer for the Five Afflictions.

Jack: [chuckling] They just exist in the world.

Austin: Well, they're never going to self-destroy themselves, and —

Art: Well like, you know, we —

Austin: And, they are going to... yeah. I think that they are just generally speaking, probably not — because, because the thing is, if you tap them, they have to get untapped, right? Uh, and generally speaking, you can't just untap yourself, I don't believe, right? So, so I think it would take a lot for them to tap themselves, in that way, you know what I mean? So, I think, I think yeah. I think we just ignore them for now, and kind of say, they are not — they exist and could get involved at the, at that level, uh, but, nothing yet has pulled them into, into the orbit of, of politics in that way, you know?

Jack: Yes. Other than getting, uh, fought — and it wins, it ends up fine, the knife dragon.

Austin: Yeah, it won. It, yeah, uh-huh. The knife dragon did just fine.

Jack: Destroys a big mirror.

Austin: Mm-hm. Uh, so yeah. So let's say, do you want to do 2, 2, 2?

Jack: Yeah, let's do it. Uh, I would like to take... let's go one at a time, like we're drafting.
[chuckles]

Austin: Like we're drafting, yeah. I'm, I'm — go ahead and take one.

Jack: I'd like to take Rose River.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: That is the Veronique, uh, dream, uh, dreamers.

Austin: Mm-hm. Art?

Art: I will take Violet Cove.

Austin: All right. I will take Jade Kill. Jack?

Jack: Uh, I will take Carmine Bight.

Austin: Mm-hm. Art?

Art: I, mmm... Austin, do you want the Crown of Glass? Because I'll take —

Austin: I thought Jack was going to take Crown of Glass, but I guess not.

Art: I did too, but, but I, we let them have two picks.

Austin: We sure did.

Art: So, but like, is the Crown of Glass closer to an Austin group than —

Austin: I will play what's, what's out there, you know?

Art: Than an Art group?

Austin: I'm, I'm, I'm doing my best to — collaborative storytelling, baby!

Art: All right, I'm taking the Crown of Glass.

Austin: All right, I will take Gray Pond.

Art: Wrap it up.

Austin: I'm taking the —

Jack: This is why I didn't take the Crown of Glass.

Austin: Uh-huh! Yeah. Art, we're going to see Art, uh, as, as Clementine Kesh this season, I guess.

Jack: The, the extremely best outcome after Art as Sovereign Immunity in the previous — [chuckling]

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Uh, yeah, and, and I'm going to tell you, the first time I play Clem, it's going to be a lot of Grand Magnificent, that's the thing of how I'm —

Austin: Sure, that's fair.

Art: Going to have to find my way to Clem.

Austin: Uh, what if Grand Magnificent had a bunch of Russian Sage sprouting from inside, outward?

Jack: And one finger is now a key.

Art: I — are we sure he didn't?

Jack: Well...

Austin: Great question. Uh, I will continue to control the Five Afflictions. I'm not, I'm probably not going to ever use them, but I'm, my director token has been spent. Let me continue to play them the way that they get played, because the long-term game —

Art: Yeah, I think you should.

Austin: All right, so, who... so who, I guess the other question is, how do we decide who is going to try to — is this a, first, first to raise their hand gets to say, “ah-ha, I'm going to try to interfere with this scene,” from the Cause? Or does the — who decides the Causes interfering, who's interfering here?

Art: I think that the person setting the scene can decide that a specific faction is the correct one, just based on the scene that they're setting up.

Austin: Okay.

Art: But like, in this case, Jack could decide, this is the cause, but if Jack does not have an idea, then I think it is —

Austin: Up to —

Art: First, first to buzzer.

Austin: First to buzzer.

Art: Family Feud rules.

Jack: No, I think I have an idea.

Austin: Okay. So...

Jack: I think it's the, I think it's Violet Cove. I think it's the Dim Liturgy.

Austin: There we go, okay. That makes some sense, to me.

Jack: People with predictive engines, you know —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Or, semi-broken predictive engines.

Austin: The output of the, of, of a predictive engine, of a long-dead predictive engine.

Jack: I want to be clear as well that it's like, uh, I don't know, you know, Art, you can choose how to inflect this as you want, but I don't know that this has anything to do with the fact that a spy has just entered their ranks, either. I think this is, the left hand and the right hand operating in different ways.

Austin: Sure. Mm-hm.

Jack: You know, sometimes the spy shows up on the same day that you also [chuckling] do something else, and those things are not related.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: Yeah, I think that's, only, only logical.

Austin: Also, we know Devotion, the Cult of Devotion is truly up to some shit. So, very easy to imagine them, on that side of Violet Cove, wanting to get involved here in some way. So, all right. Uh... going back to reading from, from the book, uh, where was I? Conflict, two — so we've chosen that, so that means that the, that we now have to mark Violet Cove as tapped. I've put a Z in there instead of an X, because they were sleepy. There we go, tapped. Boom.

Jack: No, that's Veronique's crew.

Art: Yeah, Z, for — asleep.

Jack: Asleep.

Austin: Let me quickly, uh, okay.

1:43:44.9 Play the scene, step two. Each scene has its own setup and instructions for play, detailing who players are, and what they are doing. Each also has its own list of challenges for players, including the director to make at each other. Some of these call for you to roll. When you do so, roll a single D6. If the scene is tied to the authority's major division, a 5-plus is a success. If it's tied to one of the two minor divisions, a three-plus is success, three or more is successful. Uh, keep note of how many successes and failures are scored during the scene. If the players wish, they may tap a faction to skip a roll, and add a success. I think that should be up to the individual faction players. Like, I could say, "hey, I'm actually going to help out and tap Gray Pond to help, and give you an automatic success here," right? Uh, but, versus, or you could say, "I'm going to tap my other division, my other faction to do it." I think that is fun to me.

1:44:43.4 Remember, if you're playing a division character during a scene and you have to roll, a failure is a good outcome for the division and you. Make sure to play out the challenge appropriately. Jack, do you want to read us the challenge that you're, that you're doing — or the — an unfurling plan. What's this say?

Jack: An unfurling plan. Everyone plays, taking the role of either members of the Authority as you hatch a plan of some nefarious nature, or the Cause, as you figure out how to thwart that plan. Decide together where this meeting is taking place, and who else is present. Who are you both, presumably all, playing? What history do you have? During the conversation, anyone may

ask anyone else for details on the situation and circumstances. Playing the scene. Players freely roleplay, eschewing challenges to escalate and complicate the scene.

1:45:32.2 Continue playing until at least three rolls have been made, or the scene reaches what feels like a natural end. Look at the resolutions below for what this might look like. During the scene, anyone may issue a challenge. I present evidence of a spy in our ranks. Roll to see if it's taken seriously. I point out a blind spot in our intel — will we recommit resources, reduce a beneficial clock by one step, or roll and take the risk? A step of our planning is left undone, who will roll and suggest a solution? My squad or group is eager to contribute — who will give us direction? Explain to me how this represents the Authority/ Cause's ideals. How does your plan better serve the common people? I'm hesitant to commit my resources. Who will roll and try to convince me? And then the resolutions are, a consensus is reached, who benefits the most? We leave without reaching an agreement, who acts alone? Or, the meeting falls to argument and conflict. Who feels most slighted?

Austin: And I should read here that resolve — resolution is just a thing that we just decide, uh, step three, resolve a conflict scene. Once all of a scene's challenges have been played, it's time to resolve it. Compare the successes and failures from the rolls. If there are more successes, the Cause comes out of the scene with a victory or advantage of some kind. If there are more failures, the division is victorious instead. In either case, as a group, choose a resolution. I guess, actually, uh, uh, this, this does say this. In either case, choose as a group, choose a resolution for the scene that you feel lines up to the events, as well as who came out on top, so it should inform our choice. The winning side then narrates their answer to the resolution, and chooses an outcome they earned through it. Feel free to flash forward to show the effects of a scene where you need to. When playing out conflict scenes, try to think of them as brief flashes to the broader events of the war. Keep them short and sweet. Conflict scenes are a great opportunity to briefly show off characters who don't have much opportunity to appear otherwise. Finally, the events of the conflict turn should be communicated to the player characters in fiction.

1:47:38.7 Naturally, downtime will provide a great opportunity to slip them this information, through newspaper reports and other media, relevant characters passing along accounts, and so on. So, jack, you were casting you us, I believe.

Jack: I was casting one of you, because I imagine —

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Art is going to be playing someone from the Dim Liturgy on the periphery of this, one way or another.

Austin: Or the, or, or Devotion, just, just from — from Violet Cove.

Jack: Or Devotion, or the — yes, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Uh, yeah.

Austin: Is that another spy? Is that someone else who's here that is spying from, from them? Is it someone who is reading...

Jack: Is it someone who is at the, the, the party above, and has somehow managed to find their way into the, the sort of the warren down below the Paint, the Paint Shop?

Austin: Again, is it someone who's just reading this happening in the texts?

Jack: Yeah, that's the other way. They're, they're on the island, they're —

Art: Oh, and they're just reading it in a book? That's so funny. It doesn't like, give a lot of — I guess it's sort of, it doesn't give a lot of opportunity to —

Austin: Well, think of it —

Art: It provides challenges, it doesn't provide a lot of, like... I, I guess —

Austin: Think —

Art: We give the Authority to narrate events of the —

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: There, it's, it's if you zoom out and not think of it as you're playing that character, you're playing the author, and you're, your, your pen is the character —

Jack: This is fascinating.

Austin: Reading the book, uh, and seeing how events unfold, and whether they're, whether they break for you or not. Which is kind of the whole thing with [laughing] the Dim Liturgy, right? They are not getting involved —

Jack: I love this.

Austin: But sometimes, Fate breaks for them.

Art: What, uh, this is one of those like, if you think about time travel —

Austin: [chuckles] It fucks you up, yeah.

Art: Too much you get nauseous.

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: Yeah, I've seen Dark.

Austin: Uh-huh. All right, so who am I, I'm playing the, you were saying —

Jack: Well, you could be playing the previous person, or you could just be like a junior agent here.

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm.

Jack: It is up to you..

Austin: Okay. I am playing, I kind of like playing... okay, what, who are you playing?

Jack: I am playing the person who has arrived to take on command of this operation. Of the —

Austin: I don't want the — yeah, do you, is it important to you that the outgoing person is still here?

Jack: I don't think so.

Austin: No, they're gone. They're gone, and everyone's been told not to ask questions.

Jack: Just off the planet.

Austin: Off the planet. I am a, I am a junior agent, uh, in the BIS, uh, uh, named... uh... Fool Factotum.

Jack: Fool like FOOL?

Austin: Yes.

Jack: What are you wearing?

Austin: Uh, I'm wearing a... what am I wearing? Let me think. Uh, I think I am wearing a — this is the, this is the more reserved space, right? This is the 1970s British SIS, like wood panel —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Big globe, like brandy snifter —

Jack: People are smoking, yes, you know.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: This is like a meeting space, so I don't know that there's a brandy snifter, but there would definitely be a brandy snifter in an office nearby. [chuckling]

Austin: Right, yeah, okay.

Jack: You're feet away from a brandy snifter.

Austin: I, yeah. If I needed one I could, if you asked for one, I could go get one for us, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, and I think I'm in a simple, gray, uh, skirt and jacket with big white buttons. Uh, I have a little hat on my, on my, uh, lap, that I've removed from my head. I am pale with, uh, wavy brown hair that doesn't quite reach, uh, my neck. Uh, uh, and I'm, uh, or like the nape of my neck. Uh, and I have cold, gray eyes and very thin, gaunt features. Uh, I am either 27 or 47. You cannot tell.

Jack: [chuckling] That's great. Uh...

Austin: Uh, and I use she/her pronouns.

Jack: And you are among a group of maybe 14 or 15 — why do we keep doing this? I truly didn't mean to do that.

Austin: [laughing] Ha-ha! Ugh...

Jack: We've done this since Friends at the Table started, like pre-Fourteen Fifteen.

Austin: Uh-huh. Mm-hm.

Jack: It's, I guess it's just a useful number.

Austin: Useful numbers, yeah.

Art: Yeah, that's a, it's, that's where the middle of the teens is.

Austin: Yeah, mm-hm.

Jack: Yeah.

Art: What can you do about that?

Jack: So —

Austin: And you are playing, the incoming person, unnamed, as of yet.

Jack: Uh, yeah. The way I think I'm going to do this is, give the short presentation, and then open it up to questions.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: And we can... this feels like it makes sense, right? The person making the pitch, and then opening it up to being like, "all right, let's decision."

Austin: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. Do you have like an old, overhead projector?

Jack: Yes. There is an old, overhead projector, and on the overhead projector is today's date, which is presumably 14, uh, 39?

Austin: Uh, 1439 is the, what, you're talking about the year?

Jack: Uh, 1420 — yeah, what year is it? It was 1423, it's been... it's 1429 or 1430, right? Roughly?

Austin: Uh, it is the year... 14, uh, I'm now thrown off, because, because I put — it was 1423, we ended in 1424, it is now 1429.

Jack: Yeah. I, oh, I'm glad I was, I was trying, I was doing this exact confused maths earlier.

Austin: Yes. I was trying to remember how old, uh, characters were at the beginning of Partizan, so...

Jack: Uh, so, uh, once everybody's settled, the lights go down, and you can see the, the, the date and the year on the overhead projector. And then a man stands up from the front row, where he had been sitting with his briefcase on his lap, and talking to someone, you know, quietly next to him. This man is utterly unremarkable looking. If you were to see him, you wouldn't think anything strange about it, but you wouldn't be able to accurately describe his features an hour later, other than to say he looks a bit like a white man in his late 40s or earlier 50s, uh, maybe mid-50s, I'm not sure. Uh, that's not necessarily great radio description, so I will say that if you draw a triangle, and at the top point of the triangle, you put Bill Nighy, and in the bottom right of the triangle you put Mark Rylance, and in the bottom left of the triangle you put Gary Oldman, this man is somewhere dead in the middle of those three.

Austin: Gotcha. Love that character creator.

Art: All right.

Jack: He's — [chuckling] yeah, drag the little thing around.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: He's wearing thick, uh, glasses with black plastic rims, very 70s British. Uh, and he stands up, uh, —

Austin: You were, you were describing like, George Smiley to me.

Art: Mmm.

Jack: This is absolutely George Smiley.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Uh, he says, “good morning. I'm not much of a speaker, so I'm going to try to keep this as short as I can. I'd like to extend my thanks to acting director Rod for holding down the fort until my arrival. I'm sure it's been a real trial to get this building into the operation center that we look around and see it as today. And for that, she should be commended.” And he has like a nice little pause for applause. Is there any applause?

Austin: Yeah, a little [claps]

Jack: People, like, the Paint Shop is working, it's, you know. It's in place.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. Rod, is Rod there?

Jack: Uh...

Austin: Rod does a little, just a little nod?

Jack: No, I think, I think like you said, Rod has gone off the planet. I think there is —

Austin: Oh, oh, Rod, sorry, I was thinking, I was thinking Rod, I thought you were saying that there was like an acting, like an in between the previous one leaving and the new one, and you arriving. But yes, I see, I understand now. Yes.

Jack: Uh...

Austin: Then, then in fact, there is no clapping, because Rod is not here to hear it.

Jack: Yeah. And there, there's something kind of awkward. They're like, “oh, he mentioned her.”

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. Yes.

1:55:44.7

Jack: Uh, and he makes a little gesture, and the screen clicks, uh, forward, and on the screen, it says the words “Adagio in G.” Uh, an adagio is a type of classical music, it's a fast-paced piece of orchestral music. “I'd like to begin with a quick introduction.” He says, “my name is Riah Connadine. All told, I've spent most of my professional career in the Bilateral Intelligence

Services. I graduated from Willinoor Square in 1395, where I specialized in psychological operations, along with folklore. Uh, I spent about a decade and a half as an operative on the front lines, and then took a position back at the Square as a teaching professor. Uh, watching the world turn from behind the professor's lectern, it is with no great surprise that I find myself called back to active duty, on the orders of the Princept. To understand our new mandate here on Palisade, I ask that you indulge me a slight history lesson. It is hard to leave the role of a professor behind." Little embarrassed smile. "For as far back as we can recall, and, as I understand it, further still, the intelligence services have been the backbone of stability and prosperity on Kesh. As anyone with even a passing familiarity will tell you, we are a principality of spies. Of course —"

Austin: There's a little chuckle.

Jack: [underscored by music: [Adagio](#)] "We know the extent of that understatement. Some 5,000 years ago, on our home planet, our predecessors employed one of the most remarkable psychological operations ever undertaken by the Principality. Using the immense future-seeing power of an oracle engine, they generated hundreds of thousands of near-flawless predictions — who would sit in government, the weather on a winter's day, the right career for the son of a surgeon, the number of toy boats in an ornamental pond, the color of their sails. These predictions were made in something like a loop, in which the Principality's citizens, whether they recognized it or not, were cast as actors. When 2,000 years passed between the overture and the final bows, the exact shape of the play becomes helpfully obscured to anybody but the director. A system of control and surveillance so comprehensive, so effective, so far-reaching, that it cloaked itself in its total obviousness. I've been sent to Palisade to bring this planet on-cycle.

"Of course, given the loss of the machine that drove the original project, the circumstances are meaningfully different, but Kesh has changed, too. We understand, as an old friend of mine once said, that the easiest way to ensure that any tomorrow is a Tuesday is to make sure people believe that today is a Monday. You will have noticed the workshops being constructed, I'm sure. Carpenters and costumers have been brought on the Princept's orders, prop makers. We are assembling quite the little paint shop. We have already begun distributing predictions. A star will fall over Carleon. Yes, it will. Our ships are in place to destroy the satellite. A text found in a library in Carmathen will describe a long-forgotten duke returning on a black horse with white fetlocks. We are working on the script. And, we have been given a gift in our alliance, of

sorts, with the existing Fabreal Duchy — a feudal society constructing themselves around holy days, elaborate quests, and displays. They pass themselves down to their successors in the form of liquid glass. We only need adjust its consistency.

2:00:20.6 “There is a unique vector of weakness here. We will come to these lords wearing their own clothes, and before too long, they will raise their cups in a toast that we have constructed, believing in their hearts it is some ancient, beautiful bastion of their own culture. Now, this process will not be easy, nor will it be quick. I am under no illusions that what we can accomplish will ever move with the grace and precision of what our ancestors knew. But, I hope that we are setting a metronome in motion. Today, we might only hear the click as it sets the time. Maybe in a few weeks, we will hear a violin join us. In a year, we will start to see the shape of a piece of music. And when we are long-dead, and our bones lie in spies' nameless memorials, our successors will look up at the sunset sky of home, and down at the complete score in their hands, and hear the great tempestuous rush of a symphony.

[music ends] “I'd like to thank you all for letting me go on for a bit here. You will already have found more information sent to your offices, uh, later this afternoon. And I'm happy to move on to a portion where I will answer any questions you might have. My proverbial door is always open.”

2:02:00.9 And he takes his glasses off and polishes them with his sleeve. Puts his glasses back on, shuffles his papers, stands at the lectern.

Austin: I think everyone is, has a response — I mean, not everyone, but a number of the people gathered here, of the 14 or 15 people gathered here, uh, have a, a look of... either confusion or awe on their, on their faces. And, one of them, excuse me, and one of them, uh, not [chuckling] Fool Factotum, I think says, “Sir... you want... people to dance to a song? What's this have to do with security, what's this have to do with intelligence?”

Jack (as Riah): That's a very good question. Perhaps it is, uh, more easy to answer that by thinking of Kesh as a broader project than how we have seen, uh, for example, our predecessors in the Curtain operating before the Princept's recent moves. Latterly, of course, the Curtain will ensure that, uh, an agent will be removed from the board if need be, will marshal resources to ensure that the future moves its plans. But our predecessors thought on a much larger scale. If a city, if a single person can move predictably, we can start to understand how they fit in with those surround — surrounding them, and start to orchestrate those predictable

moves. A city that we understand, uh, when we understand a city's limits, we understand the way we can use it to exert control. A planet moving to a dance, is deeply useful for us, especially as an ongoing staging point for our forward progress into the Twilight Mirage. And it allows for certain small measures of, uh, intrusion, or difficulty. Let us say that some revolutionary group makes a move, uh, and is rapidly squashed by Stargrave Elcessor's motions, or even by Stel Nideo in the east. Perfectly fine. We predicted that this would happen, we predicted the outcome. The populace understands that we knew that these guaranteed events would occur, and that they would be overcome in favor of the people sitting on the throne. Does that answer your question?

2:04:47.3

Austin: He stands up, and leaves. And you're not sure if it's to get to work, or to resign — or, maybe you're not, the camera isn't. There's just worry on his face. I have another challenge — that was, by the way, explain to me how this represents the Authority's ideals. Uh, I think that —

Jack: [chuckling] Yeah, Connadine's answer was, “control of all kinds is immensely useful.”

Austin: Uh, I think at this point, Factotum, Factotum raises her hand, like, very sharp into the air.

Jack (as Connadine): Yes, go ahead.

Austin (as Factotum): Sir, this makes perfect sense to me, except for one thing. We do not have eyes in the fortress of Joyous Guard, or in the caverns of Sinder Karst, or on the Island of the Key, or Rifle Island, or a number of other places across, uh, we simply don't have intelligence on what's happening in the Temple of the Threshold, in the middle of Nideo territory. There are many places where our eyes and ears do not go. How will we get those people in costume?

Austin: And this is me saying, I point out a blind spot in our intel. Will we recommit resources, reduce a beneficial clock by one step, or roll and take the risk?

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: We do not have a beneficial clock. I guess, we have the take something that isn't theirs clock [wheezes] that is a Stel Nideo clock, technically. I mean it's a, it's a division clock. Or it's a, it's a Bilateral Intercession clock, but —

Jack: Also, I, I want to check. As the Authority, we want these rolls to fail.

Austin: We would like these rolls to fail, yes.

Jack: So, so —

Austin: You would want to roll 1D6, and roll under a 5.

Jack: Yes. Yes. That makes sense to me, I was just, I was, I was figuring out how this would work, if you were a, a Cause member saying this. And the answer is, it would work the same way, except you're just hoping for a different outcome.

Austin: The same way. Yes, exactly.

Jack: Yep. [sighs] I think we need to roll and take the risk. I think what Connadine says is —

Jack (as Connadine): I can answer your question in two parts. The first is that what you're describing is a key concern of the project. Uh, when I said that this would not be easy, I meant it. I trust you, and I trust your spycraft, and I trust my years of experiencing working in this project, but I don't think that great spycraft and years of any experience a replacement for hard graph. You say we do not have agents in these places. Ensuring that we do and we work towards that is of the highest priority. The second thing I would like to mention it is that, uh, my research and others do not account for the exact moment that our ancestors on Kesh brought the planet on-cycle. I do not expect that they did it all at once, simultaneously. And I intend to follow in their footsteps. Bringing a planet on-cycle in one great moment would be foolhardy and impossible. Instead, we are going to start where we have a needle, a wedge, to begin to break the planet open.

2:08:06.1 My proposal is that we begin with those in the Fabreal Duchy. Their unique structure lends itself to our manipulation fairly easily. As a final point, I would like to, uh, assure everybody that I have come from similar meetings with Exanceaster March at the Frontier Syndicate, and with those with the Nidean forces to the west — sorry, to the east.

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: Well, they're everywhere. They're also in the west. Crusades to the west, Temple of the Threshold would be to the west of us, so —

Jack: Oh, that's true, yeah, I've probably been talking to Crusade in, in the west, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Uh, and I've been assured of, uh, mutual cooperation, in working towards this goal. So I'm going to roll in the sense of, this is just hard work. This is Connadine saying, to do it, do it. Uh... [chuckling]

Austin: Mm-hm. And that we don't have the extra resources to just spend outright, to just get it.

Jack: Yeah. Well, this reflects the early stages of this plan.

Austin: Sure. Yeah. So, roll 1D6, and we, the, the, the —

Jack: 1D6.

Austin: Bilateral Intercession wants a 1, 2, 3, or 4.

Jack: Yep.

Austin: Oh, ho ho!

Jack: Oh my god, that's a 6! Woah.

Art: Wow, that's a 6, that's the highest number there is.

Jack: Oh, Art, Art —

Austin: What's, what — yeah, Art, what is it that you see in the [chuckling] in the texts? [chuckling] Oh my god.

Art: I mean, it's, it's arrogance, right? It's... it's lip service. It's...

Austin: Mmm.

Art: They don't, they don't see the spies. They can't... they can't comprehend the things they can't comprehend, because, because of the, you know, it's, it's like the ivory tower of academia, right? Like, this professor, and I, I you know —

Austin: [laughing] With all love to professors —

Jack: Mmm, yes, Art?

Austin: Uh-huh?

Art: With all love to professors, but this specific kind of professor especially, doesn't understand — like, you can, you can be at the war college, but it's not like being in the war.

Jack: Right, and also —

Austin: Yeah, this works really well in your little table game of it.

Jack: Yeah. And —

Austin: And it might still work, but this is one, this is — yeah, go ahead, Jack, what were you going to say?

Jack: You know, Connadine openly admits, but maybe not a fully internalized, that he is missing the critical part of getting a planet on cycle. He thinks he can — which, which is to say, Crystal Palace making predictions.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: Uh, he thinks he can try and invent cycle from first principles, by, by manufacturing predictions. But, you know, more than 50 percent of how the original Kesh cycle worked is just gone.

Austin: Wait. Reroll it.

Art: Okay.

Austin (as Factotum): You said you got the March Institute. You, you talked to Exanceaster, and Exanceaster said, "I'll support you in this." That sounds very profitable to me.

Jack: We know Exanceaster loves to talk to people in backroom deals and be like —

Austin: Mm-hm. Roll it again. I'm using my ability, the director may force a reroll during a conflict scene this turn. It would be so funny if it was another 6.

Jack: It would be so great. God, the thing about it being a 6, though —

Austin: Jack, roll it.

Jack: I'm, I'm going to — yeah.

Austin: It's not.

Jack: [laughing] Oh, hoo hoo hoo hoo!

Austin: So what is this? What is this when you — and you, it's, it's as you're saying the Exenchest — it's as you're saying the Exanceaster March part of that, right? Uh, uh, something, something, oh, you know, and maybe, I don't want to put words in Connadine's, uh, mouth, but, but somewhere in, in his brain, maybe, what Exenchest, what Exanceaster said is, “we have ways of shining light into every crevice. I wouldn't worry about getting people to understand, uh, their place in the dramatis personae. They'll be eager to put on their favorite jerseys.”

2:12:09.9 Uh, and we see someone on a base, somewhere, on Joyous Guard or in Sinder Karst, or on the Isle of the Broken Key. Actually, liking on the Isle of the Broken Key, someone from the cult of Devotion, who we know loved rituals so much, going, “ah, the game's almost on.” And them turning their TVs on, right?

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: Because Composure's Coliseum is not just a place where data is being gathered from, the component, the competitors inside of blood sports. It is also gathering information and broadcasting out, uh, uh, you know, every, uh, it is ESPNs 1 through Ocho, uh, it is every movie channel you want. Uh, it is, uh, uh, lots of, uh, uh, presumably, uh, uh, we, we now live in this world for real, uh, but again, uh, uh, like GPT3 style, natural language processing, generated content. And that is being broadcast everywhere, right? And so, uh, you're getting the, the sports packages on the upcoming big fight, right? There's going to be, uh, I described that there's kind of two major sports on Palisade. One of them is basketball, and for whatever reason, March can't get ahold of that. Pickup games are, are where people, people love pickup games, right? They don't love the NBA in this world. People love to play basketball. Uh, but the thing that they love to watch is like, a, a more violent form of mech football, that also includes fighting, that also includes like, combat — you know, it's like mutant league football, but with giant robots, right? Mutant league football, of course, the great Sega Genesis and SNES game.

Art: Mm-hm.

2:13:55.8

Austin: And, uh, that is everywhere. That is being broadcast to everywhere across the, the entire continent, and across the entire planet, including into places where people go, “you know, I shouldn’t watch this stuff, but...” uh, and, and —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: That is a huge part of, you know, there’s those packages that run before Olympic events, where they’re like, “Jane Smith grew up in a little town in Ohio.”

Jack: Yep.

Austin: “And all she wanted her whole life, was to be able to jump the hurdles faster than anyone else.” And then she’s like, “the hurdles were really important to me.” And, and like, that stuff is just everywhere, uh...

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: And so, and so, yes, there’s a great deal of arrogance, but also thinking that you’re safe because someone else is arrogant, is arrogant, right?

Jack: Yeah. Uh... I have two things. Can I make a pitch? Which is that this is —

Austin: Please.

Jack: One of the ways that the Dim Liturgy’s book is broken. This does not reflect on the page.

Austin: [chuckling] Right.

Jack: You know, two doors down, someone is watching this game.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, but it is not clear to the, uh, to the monk. The other thing —

Austin: Uh, what do we think the Dim Liturgy’s text actually says. What do we think — because it’s not as clear as like —

Art: Oh, I think it’s like, I think it’s weird, like Nostradamus type junk, right?

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: Yeah, me too.

Jack: Art, I'm getting the impression you don't like [chuckling] Nostradamus very much.

Art: Well, I mean, his prose is, is vague, you know —

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: I, I feel like I haven't actually read any Nostradamus. I feel like I should quickly look at some.

Jack: God, I've got to see what it looks like in translation.

Austin: Give me, give me a page number from, from 1 to 3 — or from, let's say, because this doesn't start on page 1, uh, let's say this starts on page 10, 10 to 372.

Jack: Let's do 212.

Art: 86.

Jack: 86.

Austin: Oh, we've got two different number — 86, what was the other one?

Jack: 212.

Austin: All right. 86 says, uh, all right, we're going to get an option here on 86. Do we want 24, 25, or 26?

Art: 2... 5.

Austin: 25. He who will attain the kingdom of Navarre, when Cicily and Naples will be joined, he will hold Bigorre and Landes through Foix and Oloron from one who will be too closely allied with Spain. Great, and then, was it 212?

Jack: [chuckling] Yeah, 212. Very Spanish-focused.

Austin: Yeah, and our, our 212 here, uh, we have, uh, 96, 97, and 98.

Jack: Let's do 98, please.

Austin: Sure. Ruin for the Volcae, so very terrible with fear, their great city stained, pestilential deed: to plunder Sun and Moon and to violate their temples and to redden the two rivers flowing with blood.

Jack: [laughing] So it's like this shit, Art?

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. [chuckling] I mean, this other here is also — at 45 degrees, the sky will burn. Fire to approach the great new city. In an instant, a great scattered flame will leap up, when one will want to demand proof of the Normans. Yeah, it's this shit, [laughing] for sure. 100 percent.

Jack: [laughing] Well, this is Connadine —

Art: I do love that you're also like, reading this —

Austin: [laughing]

Art: With just like, the emphasis all over the place.

Austin: Yeah, I mean, that's, yes. [laughing]

Jack: [laughing] Oh god.

Austin: How could it not be, though? The royal child will scorn his mother, eye, feet wounded, rude, disobedient; strange and very bitter news to the lady. More than 500 of here people will be killed.¹ Great.

Jack: Oh.

Art: Yeah, and I'm sure the original text was a little clearer, but I think it's also just like, because it's so far out —

Austin: Like, only a little bit though, right? Because we know that people had to be trained over centuries for how to actually read this stuff, even when it wasn't broken and corrupted, [chuckling] you know?

Art: Oh, right, yeah. Yeah, so I think that's like, yeah. It's, you know, in the... in the east, there will be, uh, scholars of trickery, and once they will fumble, and once they will not, and —

¹ T/N: This should be “her people”, which makes *slightly* more sense.

Jack: [laughing]

Art: And loathe they be to those who are there to pick up what is dropped.

Austin: And then —

Jack: Whoa...

Austin: Someone next door is like, “I really think the Boars are going to kick the ass of the Knights this game. Like, I think, they have too much talent —“

Jack: Oh yeah.

Austin: You know?

Jack: Yep. And the livery on one of the mechs matches the paint colors that someone upstairs in the Paint Shop is working on.

Austin: Yes, yes. Right, because for them, what they want is for people to be wearing red and green, right? Or whatever. And it's like, it's that. It's the beginning of that. It's the, it's the subtle way. Love it. Great.

Jack: Uh, I also want to say, real quick, that when March, you know, when March and Connadine discuss the like, “oh, we can do this through sport —“ when March presents, “oh, we can do this through sports,” you know, or like, “my sports will work.” This is something Connadine is absolutely on board with.

Austin: [chuckles]

Jack: Uh, I don't... Connadine is, in a lot of ways, the professor in the ivory — he's deeply arrogant, or Kesh, the Bilats are deeply arrogant. But I think Connadine is a, is a pragmatist, and is like, “oh, shit, yeah, sports. Great.”

Austin: [chuckling] Great, I, I taught a unit on sports —

Jack: That's, that's the way to go.

Austin: And, and whatever —

Jack: He's a folklorist, right? He's a —

Austin: Right, yeah, yeah, yeah. Sports as the modern-day, blah-blah-blah blah-blah? Yeah.

Jack: Yeah. Well, no, his major was psychological operations, and his minor was folklore.
[chuckling]

Austin: [laughing] Right. Uh, we still need one more challenge here. It doesn't have to be a roll challenge, necessarily, but —

Jack: I'd love one from the monk.

Art: Uh...

Austin: Me — oh, right, yeah, same. Yes.

Art: Not from the book?

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: Well —

Jack: Well, yeah, okay, from the book being held by the monk.

Art: No, it's great if the monk can do it, because then I don't have to [chuckles] come up with weird prose.

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: [chuckling] And then I have to interpret it.

Art: Uh, I think that there are... starting to be leaks.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: Ooh.

Art: People are starting to hear, like, “oh, did you hear that this thing happened? It's because it was predicted, it's, it's — “

Austin: Right.

Art: But like, someone's like, "that's not what happened. They did it. They... they had the, they had the guy on the black and white horse."

Austin: Right.

Art: "That's not hard, you just buy — you just —"

Austin: [laughing]

Art: "You paint a horse."

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: They call it, that's why they call it the Paint Shop. [chuckling]

Jack: Horse Paint Shop.

Art: Yeah. I'm not falling for that! You, know, shoot!

Austin: [chuckling]

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: So is this, is this, is this the first one here?

Art: Uh, yeah, this is evidence of a spy, that someone is telling people that this is not on the level.

Austin: And so this is another roll to see if it's taken seriously.

Jack: Wow.

Austin: Art, you want to roll 1D6?

Art: Sure.

Jack: [gasps]

Austin: [gasps]

Art: Good lord!

Austin: That's the other 6! Which is —

Jack: Whoa.

Austin: And the thing that's wild here is, there is a spy in, in the ranks of the Dim Liturgy and, and Devotion. We know this, because that's what Kesh spent their, their thing on. Putting a grip on that.

Jack: Wait, so how does this — oh, mmm. Because I had been assuming that the spy would be —

Art: No, this is a spy the other way —

Jack: Someone in —

Austin: Oh, oh, I see.

Art: This is, there's a spy in —

Austin: I see. I thought you were saying, I, I, I was on another galactic, you know, uh, uh, galaxy brain maneuver. I thought you were saying the monk had figured out that there was a — I thought you were saying that, that, as part of the Kesh maneuver, they were saying that, they were, they were leaking things out of the Dim Liturgy into the rest of the world, except it was fake shit from the old Crystal Palace archives. Do you see what I'm saying? I see.

Art: No, yeah.

Austin: You're saying — yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: So there is a spy, the other way, up in Steeple Kaderach.

Art: Yeah, there's a spy both ways.

Austin: Ooh.

Jack: Immediately good stuff. This is — you know, you mentioned Smiley. We have now got like, “I think there's a mole in the circus,” levels of [chuckling] like —

Austin: And so is that what the monk sees in the text, is that this is happening?

Art: I think the monk saw that there was an opportunity to put a spy in.

Austin: I see.

Art: Or, you know, identify the person they could pay off, or whatever —

Jack: That's fucking funny. It's not just a spy, it's a spy from, [chuckling] from the Dim Liturgy, or the Cult of Devotion —

Austin: They have fully —

Art: Mm-hm.

Jack: They have swapped spies.

Art: Mm-hm. Yeah.

Austin: Well now there's only —

Jack: Incredible.

Austin: Right. And now, and now, we have a choice to make. Which is [chuckling] is Fool Factotum the spy?

Art: Oh... the other, the other option is, is the spy in... is the spy that already exists in Violet Cove some sort of like, double agent, like —

Austin: Ah, right.

Art: But like, a, a conflicted double agent, right?

Jack: Oh, Styx!

Art: A, a, someone who is working both side, so providing —

Austin: Marlon Styx is working, yeah —

Art: Intelligence both ways.

Jack: Oh my god.

Austin: Uh, because they read that, that they would do it.

Jack: Because they read it in the — yes!

Austin: Because they read it in the book.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: That's exactly what I was thinking.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Marlon Styx shows up, and opens the book for the first time, and, I love this, this is great, right, because this is —

Austin: Marlon Styx is, uh, what is Marlon's, Marlon's pronouns, so I write them down?

Jack: Marlon's Pronouns are he/him. Uh, Marlon Styx is from the new school of Kesh intelligence, right?

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Like, I don't know whether or not he's fully on board with like — uh, it doesn't matter whether or not he's on board, he works for Connadine. Uh, but he's like, “we can fake predictions, or whatever.” And he shows up at the place, and gets one single dose of Crystal Palace, —

Austin: [chuckling]

Jack: One shattered ancient dose — the drugs work quick, apothecary.

Austin: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Jack: And he reads, like, Marlon Styx shows up, but he's actually —

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: Well, he reads Marlon Styx shows up, and he's like, "yes, good, I'm glad this is, this is immediately proving fruitful."

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Well, it's, it's, well it's, it's not like that. It's like, you know —

Jack: [laughing] Yes.

Art: The, you know, "from the River Styx comes the finned fish —"

Jack: [chuckling] Yes.

Austin: Right, right. [laughing]

Art: And Marlon Styx is like, "that's Marlon, Marlon Styx."

Austin: That's — [laughing]

Jack: Yes, and then he's like —

Art: That's me!

Jack: "But his brain and allegiances is crosswise," and Marlon Styx is like, "fuck, wait a second."

Austin: Oh, fuck.

Art: Oh, that's what, what my allegiances are doing!

Austin: Yeah! [chuckling]

Jack: Ugh, you read one —

Austin: They divulge the position of the sun in the sky, like — yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: It's like, you know the, uh, "you are not immune to propaganda," image? It's like that except it's like, "you are not immune to reading one prediction —"

Art: [laughing]

Austin: [chuckling]

Jack: "From an ancient prediction engine," and it instantly —

Art: And convincing yourself it's about you.

Austin: [laughing] Yeah, it's a combination of that and the Garfield, "who's that for?" sign.

Art: [laughing]

Austin: Ugh... all right.

Jack: So he's just a full... I mean, well, it's, this is fun, this is a fun character we've invented, though, because it is, Marlon Styx is now a counterspy. He is working for the, for Violet Cove.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: But we also know that he's a man who believes very strongly in whatever he [chuckling] reads in the text, so —

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: Who knows how long he's going to be a counterspy for?

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah.

Art: Yeah, working for both sides, it's, still providing information to —

Jack: Wayward Faction: Marlon Styx.

Austin: [laughing]

Art: The BIS, yeah.

Austin: Soon enough. Oh, it's so good. Okay. Well, that's three. Uh, resolutions. How, how do we resolve —

Art: It's a tie.

Austin: It's a tie, it's one on one. What are the, what are, what do these say, what are our three suggestions here? Uh... so, what are our three possible resolutions, as listed?

Jack: A consensus is reached who benefits the most. We leave without reaching an agreement, who acts alone? Or the the meeting falls to argument and conflict, who feels most slighted?

Austin: This still feels like a consensus is reached who benefits the most. Uh, it's just that it, is... we're, we're going to do the plan, right? Like, like the BIS is going forward on this.

Jack: The thing that the, the Adagio in G, the operation, I think the thing that it is, is, everybody knows that it's audacious, and not everybody feels, uh, confident about it.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: But I do think that people are like, "all right, let's do it." You know, I don't think that — these are trained spies. I think they have seen a lot of operations that they go into being like, "ooh-ee, all right. Let's give this a go."

Austin: Yeah. Agreed. So, who benefits the most, and then who wins, who gets their outcome here? Is the question.

Art: It's a tie, and there's no...

Austin: There's no, there's no rule for ties go to —

Art: Is there no rule?

Austin: Oh, we, we decide, right? Again, uh, I think — compare the successes and failures from rolls. If there are more successes — if there are more successes, well — the Cause comes out of the scene with victory or advantage of some kind. If there are more failures, the division is victorious instead. I suspect we decide who breaks a tie here.

Jack: And I think that, based on what you were talking about earlier referencing dogs in the vineyard, Austin —

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: I think this is the, the division.

Austin: I'm checking the Discord really quick.

Jack: The state apparatus that they have, to —

Art: Yes, I also agree that the division seems to have —

Austin: I would like to keep it open, in the sense that there could be times when a tie feels like it breaks the other way, but with the weight towards the faction, towards the, the sorry, towards the division, towards the Authority.

Jack: Yeah, I think I agree.

Austin: The fact that it doesn't explicitly say that — because it could say, uh, if the, if it's a tie, or, you know, or better, then the division wins. But it doesn't say that. So I want to keep it open to interpretation. I think there's lots of language in here about interpretation, about, you know, figure — you figure out how it resolved. But I do think the resolution, in this case, is the division, right?

Art: And it's like a light division, right? That's, that's, I think —

Austin: Well like, because the goal was, do they do the plan, right?

Jack: Does the plan go ahead?

Art: Right, yeah.

Austin: Yes, exactly.

Jack: Yeah, I think so. I think it helps, uh, us, uh, get a sense that there are reverberations with the Paint Shop about this.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, this person coming in from outside, coming from presumably Kesh or something. Uh, and, you know, they've, they've put in all this work and someone shows up with an audacious plan. But I think they're also, like, “oh, this might be interesting.”

Austin: Right. Right. Uh,, so who benefits the most, and then we should choose for — from the Authority, from the Bilateral Intelligence Service, one of your three options for, uh, winning a conflict scene.

Jack: Uh...

Austin: [chuckles]

Jack: I think the BIS benefits the most. Or do you want, do you want it to be more specific?

Austin: I think that makes sense, I think that that's fine. I don't think we need to belabor this.

Jack: Yep. Uh... and, let me, uh...

Austin: What are your — what are the three things that a subterfuge group can do?

2:28:51.3

Jack: A faction with three grip is seized, which is interesting. The Authority learns a secret about the Cause or a faction, or the director may force a reroll during a conflict scene this turn. So that is what you used, Austin —

Austin: I did.

Jack: To get the one success.

Austin: Which is just my, my basic every turn ability.

Jack: Now, this is fascinating.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: I can't seize any factions because none of them have 3 grip. We're currently playing the enjoyable spy/counterspy game with Marlon Styx, but that's only one. I need to send two similar weirdos [chuckling] to the Dim Liturgy if I wanted to seize that. Uh, the Authority learns a secret is incredible. Uh... I'm so curious about, is this, a, a, a sort of discern realities type beat, Austin?

Austin: I don't know. We will discover it ourselves, we'll have to decide. Right?

Jack: Uh, but I think I'm going to take three, the director may force a reroll during a conflict scene this turn.

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: Uh, the question here that I'm curious about is: are you the director?

Austin: I am the director. But I'm happy to say that that is a Kesh maneuver. I could —

Art: We're going to, we're going to need it, though, because the minor [scene] themes are going to be rough.

Austin: Yes, yeah, exactly. It's, it's a lot harder to succeed on that side, right?

Jack: Right, right.

Art: I'm already struggling to pick a theme. Because I like, I have characters I want to introduce —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: But I don't want them to get introduced and then, you know, have them immediately lose.

Austin: Right. Uh... well... do you want to go? Is it, it is, is it time to — and also, really quick, the director may force a reroll during this is probably the operation beginning, right? Like, that is, part of the reroll is, we're getting things — is, the Bilateral Intelligence Service is beginning, in the weeks that follow this, right, beginning to get things aligned, uh, is that they can be predicted or influenced, right?

Jack: Yes. Their agents — something, when we were planning this, I said to Austin, “oh, something I would like a pillar is like, a network of Kesh spies,” and Austin said, “you're the Principality of Kesh. You have spies everywhere, basically.”

Austin: Right, yes. Yes.

Jack: You know, outside of the factions and stuff where that's going to be mechanically important. But, I think this is just a network of Kesh spies, coming online with goals, you know?

Austin: Right, this makes sense.

Jack: Meeting with local dukes, setting up various calendars, prepping certain scenes, et cetera.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: I think I am ready for a scene.

Austin: Okay.

Art: I think, because I, because I want — because of the outcome range I'm looking for, I would like to do the discourse.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: Ooh, exciting.

Austin: Can you read me the discourse?

Art: Yes. Everyone plays, taking the role of either members of the Authority, the Cause, or both, as key figures discuss and politic among themselves, idly or otherwise. Decide together where this conversation occurs, who else is present, and what the power dynamic between participants is. During the conversation, anyone may ask anyone else for details on the situation and circumstances. And I think the Gentian is holding like a reception —

Austin: Ugh.

Art: At the foot of Crusade.

Austin: [chuckling] God.

Jack: Gentian is Crusade's, uh, Elect.

Austin: Right, yes. Gentian, GENTIAN, is that right?

Art: Yeah, like the plant.

Austin: Like the plant. Uh, because that's what Elect names are.

Jack: God, that's sick as hell.

Austin: Gentian's pronouns?

Art: Uh... uh, I've gone back and forth on this. I am going to go with she/her for Gentian.

Austin: Okay.

Art: And Gentian is impossibly old.

Jack: Woah.

Austin: Impossibly old, interesting.

Art: Gentian is, you know, 250.

Austin: Oh, damn. Okay. Like Twilight Mirage.

Jack: Like, biblically old. [chuckling]

Austin: At, you know, old, like, not literally Twilight Mirage old —

Art: Yeah.

Austin: That's 5,000 years, but Twilight, like, Signet was like this. Except I'm guessing, Gentian does not look as young as Signet looked.

Art: No, I — doesn't look 250.

Austin: Sure.

Art: In the sense that she's not a skeleton.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Art: Or the cryptkeeper.

Austin: [chuckling]. Right, right right right.

Jack: [chuckles]

Art: And it's like, uh, whatever, whatever, whatever this is, you know, Crusade keeps their Elect alive until the mission is done.

Austin: Mm-hm. Mmm.

Art: Uh, and so there's like, there's like a supernatural strength and spryness to Gentian.

Austin: Mmm, sure.

Art: If, if needed. But most of the time, Gentian is very old. Gentian has 4 attendants.

Austin: Mmm.

Art: Gentian has 2 sword-bearers.

Austin: Okay.

Art: Uh, there's, there's a giant, there's a giant sword, that I'm imagining as like, Soul Edge.

Austin: Oh, sure. Yeah, the Soul Edge, of course.

Art: The Soul Edge, from the game series, Soul Edge.

Austin: Mm-hm. Not the Soul Caliber.

Art: Later, Caliber.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: No, not the Soul Caliber. And, like the Soul Edge, it can be split in two, and that is why there are two bearers.

Jack: Ooh.

Austin: Ohhhhhh.

Art: There are two people who carry half the sword.

Austin: So it's not a Cervantes situation.

Art: And it, they're still like —

Austin: Where —

Art: Well, it is sort of, because they each have a — each of the bearers —

Austin: Right.

Art: Has a Cervantes. And if, if Gentian needs the sword, it is put back together into Soul Edge.

Austin: They are, right, they are the bearers, they carry the sword. I love it. Great.

Art: They carry the sword. And they're like the, the, if we ever do like a chase, those are the ones that are going to be chasing for —

Austin: Yeah, this makes sense.

Jack: Oh, this is great.

Art: Uh, there's, there's one who, who, who holds a cup.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: Which is like a ceremonial cup.

Jack: Big cup?

Art: Uh-huh. And then there's someone who holds the book.

Austin: Mmm.

Art: And there's just a big book. The [chuckling] it's a big book of crusades.

Austin: Holds a big book. Holds a big cup.

Art: Holds a big book. And —

Austin: How big's the cup? Is the cup or the book bigger?

Art: Uh, the book's definitely bigger. The cup is just like, a kind of big, like, you know, it doesn't look like this, but you know, like, the, like a souvenir cup you get at like a sporting event?

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. [laughing]

Art: It's about that big. It's bigger than like a normal cup, but —

Austin: But is it like a, is it a chalice?

Art: It's not like a — yeah, it's like a chalice, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But a, but a, yeah, gotcha. What if 7-Eleven made a chalice?

Art: What if 7-Eleven made a chalice.

Austin: But the book is big.

Art: The book, I imagine the guy who carries the book, and the name I have for him is Clawed, but CLAWED.

Austin: Great, yep.

Jack: Wait, like, like, like clawing, with a claw.

Art: Yeah, like, like, like, if Virginia did claw you, you would be clawed.

Austin: Right. Right right right.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah. But she doesn't. She hasn't figured out how to act violently.

Austin: Aw, that's good. Love that.

Art: That's great.

Austin: Uh, and —

Art: And Clawed is huge.

Austin: Clawed is huge, okay.

Art: Clawed is, you know, Clawed's 6'5".

Austin: Okay.

Art: And, and muscular, and he like, struggles to carry the book.

Austin: Oh, okay. Big book.

Jack: Woah.

Art: So —

Jack: He's moving slowly.

Art: A big boy, who all he does is carry a big book.

Austin: Love that. I love that.

Jack: Is the book like, leather-bound, or is it like a sort of Book of Kells type thing where it's got like, gems on it? Uh, what's the book look, other than big?

Art: I think it's leather-bound, I think it also looks very old and worn. Uh, but I don't know that you ever see anyone looking at it.

Jack: Huh.

Art: I mean, maybe we'll get there, but like, it's not like, Clawed just holds the book. No one ever asks to look in the book.

Jack: Right. Right.

Austin: [chuckles] Does the book have a cover? Does it say, does it say anything on the cover?

Art: No, it's worn away.

Austin: Okay, cool.

Art: It's the Book of Crusade.

Austin: Right, it's the Book of Crusade, got it.

Art: Uh, the sword, the people with the swords, I believe are Ramondre —

Austin: Spell that —

Art: And Ignadiah —

Austin: Spell, spell Ramondre —

Jack: [chuckling] Spell that too.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Art: Uh, RAMONDRA.²

Austin: Yeah, Ramondre, got it.

Art: And Ignadiah, IGNADIAH.

Austin: Ignadiah, of course. And those are sword bearer one and two.

Art: Yeah, and Ramondre is she/her and Ignadiah is he/him, and the one who holds the cup is Perevel, PEREVAL.

Austin: Perevel.

Jack: These names are great, Art. You just nailed it.

Austin: You nailed it, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: We, we don't need to discuss this.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: And Perevel is they/them.

Austin: And Clawed? Is he/him.

Art: Is he/him.

Austin: And Clawed, okay, one more time. So there's sword, sword, book cup, is that right? Or is —

Art: Yes.

Austin: Okay. Okay, okay. So there's two sword-bearers, a cup bearer, and a book holder, a book —

Art: Yes.

Austin: And the sword bearers are, Ramondre and Ignadiah?

² Art spells their names differently than they're written in the episode description; this transcript is going with the episode description in order to make searching transcripts easier.

Art: Yes.

Austin: And Clawed has the books and Perevel has the cup.

Art: Has the cup.

Austin: I got it. Okay, love it. Great. There will be a test, I hope you have studied.

Art: [chuckles] And if anything happens to Gentian, one of these four will be the next Elect of Crusade.

Austin: I see, I see.

Jack: Oh, wow. How is that determined?

Art: Uh... I, I, that might be play to find out what happens, but —

Jack: Fair enough, yeah.

Austin: Oh, let's play to find out what happens. I don't want to answer that with a word. I want to answer that with a verb.

Jack: [chuckling] And the verb is, "conflict."

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Art: And Gentian is, of course, wearing this like, very embroidered robe.

Austin: Oh, sure. Sure sure sure. Would have to be.

Jack: Uh, I have a question about, the, I have two questions about the carriers.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Question one: do they have a name as a unit?

Art: I think they're attendants of Crusade.

Jack: Okay. Question two: in a video game made by From Software, would you fight them separately —

Austin: [chuckling]

Art: Uh-huh?

Jack: As different bosses, on the way to fighting Gentian? Or would they be, like a four-part boss, like Four Kings, or like Ornstein and Smaug, but with two more, that you would all have to fight them together, Sister Fried and the other one.

Art: I think it's three fights. I think you fight —

Austin: Oh...

Art: Perevel and Clawed separately, and Ramondre and Ignadiah as one fight.

Austin: The Sword Bearers, is what the thing says.

Jack: Right, right right right.

Austin: It says The Sword Bearers.

Jack: No, Austin, it says Ignadiah and —

Austin: So you think it's one where it's fair, and it shows you what their, each things, each of them have the, the name. It's not one where it says, "The Sword Bearers," and when you get it like, about halfway, you kill one of them, but then somehow they reenter the fight, uh...

Jack: Oh yeah, [chuckling] that might be right, actually.

Austin: When it gets down to one-third, yeah. No, I, it could be either. It could be either.

Art: Well, I do know that continuously, Gentian then comes and picks up the two halves of the sword, and then it's another fight.

Austin: And then it's a third, that's, the right, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm really glad that we are continuing, again, to make this game Armored Souls, the game I desperately want, and that we will never have, uh, immediately. So, so, the discourse. So it's these 5 characters, then, is, is, that who's available? Or are there also other people?

Art: No, I think, no, this is a reception. So other —

Austin: Oh, I see, I see.

Art: Members of factions have been invited, other Authority factions have been invited.

Austin: So when you say that it's at the feet of Crusade, do you mean that it's outside at the feet of Crusade, or is there a building that has been constructed?

Art: No, I think it's outside —

Austin: Love it.

Art: It's like Crusade is sort of like kneeling —

Austin: Sunny day, yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: Light coming through all the stained glass.

Art: And the light, through Crusade —

Austin: Right, right.

Art: Is like —

Austin: Sermon on the mount, like, that is, we are in [chuckling] We are doing, like, you are out there as a big group, as, basking in the glow of Gentian. Gentian? Gentian/

Art: Yeah, Gentian.

Jack: Gentian.

Art: And I think that there's even like, like, passed hors d'oeuvres.

Austin: Sure, love it.

Art: Like, little pinwheel sandwiches.

Austin: Oh, I love it. Fantastic. We're having a day out. We're having a, we're doing a little, we're doing a, uh, what's it called when, when characters in a, uh, uh, like a... why am I forgetting — why have all my words left me permanently? Why have I lost all of my words? Uh, you know, like, how in Emma, all of the characters go out —

Jack: A picnic.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, like, but like more than a picnic, you know what I mean? Like an outing, there's a word for that, —

Jack: Like a day out. Like a...

Austin: Yeah. So, anyway, it's a bunch of people here. Love it. What —

Art: I don't have an idea of what represents the Cause here. I guess the cause can just have full-on spies, here.

Austin: Well, the Cause, the thing that's important is the next bit of this, which is worth saying. Uh, players freely roleplay, issuing challenges to escalate and complicate the scene. Continue playing until the scene reaches what feels like a natural end. After the discourse, there is no winner or loser, and no outcomes are earned. Simply choose a resolution as a group. So —

Art: Oh, sure.

Austin: There isn't, because no outcomes are earned, I don't know that the Cause should show up and try to interfere. That feels like a — that feels like a —

Art: Yeah, I'm just setting up my things.

Austin: Right, and that feels like a bad reason to tap a, a, a Cause faction, you know? And maybe there'd be a time when it's important to do that —

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, the Cause is not public, in the sense that it is a unified thing. It is a unified thing, and they of course know —

Art: Right.

Austin: That Joyous Guard has been taken over by the group called Reunion, and maybe even know that Millennium Break has been helping them. Uh, but they don't know — and they probably suspect that they're doing, occasionally working with the concrete front in Sinder Karst

and throughout the Shale Belt, but they don't know that they're part of the same thing. They don't know that there is such a thing as Violet Cove, that Dim Liturgy has been supported —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I mean, there's a spy there now, so yes, they do know that there is, that there is a relationship between Devotion, The Cult of Devotion, and the Dim Liturgy. But I don't think that spy has reported back, and I think it's very carefully kept, even among members of Violet Cove, that they're working as Violet Cove, a unit in the Cause, the unnamed Cause, right? Uh, let alone that the pirates — they know there's piracy, but they don't know that the pirates are Carmine Bight, a unit in the Cause, right?

2:42:56.6 And I think that that is, that is an important — and I don't think that the Cause would risk revealing that by putting someone here, you know?

Jack: Right, yeah.

Austin: So... what's the frame — so, kick it off. What's Gentian, how does Gentian, Gentian rule this? Or kick this, start this, basically?

Art: Uh, I think it might be Perevel who like, opens it? You know, holding the cup, in, you know, both hands. With, you know. "Thank you for coming, welcome to the Bontive Valley. Please, sample of our —" [snaps fingers] What, what are we looking for, is it like food? "Sample of our —

Austin: Yeah, sample of our —

Art: Our, our —

Austin: What do you have in a picnic?

Art: "Our delicacies —"

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Art: And, you know, "bask in the warm light of Crusade."

Austin: Would you say that the vibe between these different, between the bearers, is — are they pleasant? Are they rivalrous? Are they —

Art: I think there's a very deep rivalry, because eventually only one of them is going to get to like, move on.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Art: But I think that it's deeply, deeply under this, like, requirement of being, like, a unit of serving Gentian and, and the Crusade.

Austin: Mm-hm. I'm looking at my options here, as, as our various challenges. Obviously we can just roleplay, also. But, uh, I imagine, at you saying that, people begin to, to eat and chatter. People are laid out on, on, or sat, sat carefully on blankets. Some people have brought little stools to sit on, and are waving fans. Uh, uh, you know, you have people here who are Columnar in build, synthetic in the way that Columnar are. You have people here who are from, uh, the, the, uh, Fabreal Duchy, who have those, those kind of glasslike bodies filled with the unctuous fluids, uh, that, that give them life. Uh, uh, and, I, I, my instinct is to frame this tight on these 5 characters you've introduced, because of there only being three of us. Does that make sense?

Art: Right.

Austin: Uh... I think, Ramondre, who is one of the sword bearers, says to —

Art: Ramondre.

Austin: Ramondre, sorry. Ramondre says to Perevel, Perevelle? Perevelle?

Art: Perevel.

Austin: Perevel.

Austin (as Ramondre): Nicely said. You always know how to start things.

Austin: Leaving out the obvious insult about finishing them. Do they have a term that they refer to each other as, in like a — not cousin, but like, you know, comrade —

Art: Yeah, they must, right? Yeah.

Austin: What's the, what is that, what is...

Art: Uh...

Austin: We'll get there. It's not important to —

Art: Yeah. It's like, fellow, it's like, uh...

Austin: Yeah, yeah. Peer, it's, uh, god, what if they just call themselves rival?

Jack: Ooh, hoo hoo hoo.

Art: Oh, that's good.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: Very crusade, too.

Austin: Uh-huh. Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. Rival as a term of endearment, right? It's like —

Art: Right, yeah.

Austin: It's an, it's a compliment that you would be mine, right? And so, yes, —

Austin (as Ramondre): You always know how to start things, rival.

Art (as Perevel): Try a finger sandwich, they're delightful.

Austin: Uh, and I do. Uh, Clawed talks, uh, flippantly — where'd it go, I had my eyes on it — about our duties. Does anyone admonish me? Clawed says — this is the big book knight, right? Uh...

Art: Yeah.

Jack: Yes.

Art: It's big, big book boy.

Austin: Big book boy says, uh...

Austin (as Clawed): [sighs] I have always loved to have these events, obviously, but isn't there more important work we could be getting to? Concrete Front's not that far away.

Jack: I think Gentian... you, you described, uh, her as sort of supernatural.

Art: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, in her, in her speed. Is talking to someone else, and just very, very gently, you know, leaves that conversation, and, uh, touches Clawed very lightly on the wrist as if to say like, "hello, I'm, I'm here now."

Austin: [chuckles]

Jack: And says —

Jack (as Gentian): What was that, Clawed?

Austin (as Clawed): I... I simply... you know I speak honestly.

Jack (as Gentian): Of course.

Austin (as Clawed): My lady, isn't it simply true that finger sandwiches are less important than the fingers that the Concrete Front tries to wrap around our necks?

Jack: [chuckling] Gentian, like, Gentian tries to restrain a smile.

Art: [chuckling]

Jack: Just like a tiny, like a, a flash of someone who has heard all this stuff before, uh, and I think explains, you know, very patiently, but also with a, I don't know, not a condescension, but in a sense that like, I spend all my time talking to these people, and they are my subordinates. Or it they are my —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: The power dynamic is very different between the Elect and the rivals, or the attendants, and explains that, you know, the project of Crusade is, uh, about, you know, fingers wrapped around throats, in one way, but it is also about these moments with the finger sandwiches. And she points out, you know, the woman that she was just talking to is a local duchess in the whatever, and that man over there has been supplying, you know, grain loyally in, in these — this person over there, uh, is a way into thinking about how magic works, specifically in this region of the planet, you know.

Austin: Mm-hm.

2:49:08.4 And, and weaves together how, how, this is how we win the war, in addition to, kicking the shit out of people, you know, at the Concrete Front.

Austin: Yes. Uh...

Jack: I mean, Clawed doesn't even do any of that, not with book holding.

Austin: No. No. Yeah. Definitely not. So...

Jack: Oh, but that's great. That's the character of someone on a crusade, right?

Austin: [chuckling]

Jack: Is like, the person carrying the book being like, "it's time to kill." Knowing, fully, that you're not going to have to do any killing, and you're going to be protected constantly by the stained glass Divine.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Yes. Right. But also, we're characterizing this as someone who's a big boy, who's 6'5" and, and built like a brick shithouse, right? Shit brickhouse — no, brick shithouse is right.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: I said that right.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: A shit brickhouse, much worse.

Art: I — [laughing]

Austin: Oh, no, this brick house is falling apart! We used the wrong thing as mortar! [laughing]

Jack: Built like a [laughing] shit brickhouse.

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh.

Jack: That is to say, crumbling, constantly.

Austin: Uh, I think someone arrives to immediately try to pull Gentian away. And I know exactly who it is, it is Kenneth Marian Colver, the Viceroy, uh, of Kesh on Palisade, who works underneath the Stargrave. Kenneth Marian Colver —

Jack: Oh, is this, this —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: “ You can't colonize your own home?”

Austin: Yeah, this is, “you can't colonize your own of home, uh-huh.” Uh, and I think this is the like, like, Jack, you said that the Stargrave effectively rules, uh, Kesh's stuff from Tintagel. Uh, north of the —

Jack: Tintagel, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, Tintagel, north of the Brecheliant Forest. Uh, uh, I think this is the person who gets sent out to like, you know, go talk to people in moments like this, you know? And I think, I effectively think he shows up to, to — this is, I press someone for their opinion on something, do you answer honestly? Or it might actually be, I offer to take someone aside to talk privately. I think maybe it's that, and is like, shows up and says —

Austin (as Colver): Our excellency, the Elect, uh, we really have to talk about these bread rates. Uh, I apologize, hi everybody, Kenneth. Uh, could you spare a moment to talk about the bread rates, uh, it seems to me like we have a, an issue with the bread, uh, it's not getting down to Brecheliant, and, uh, we've got to make sure that the, the — it all lines up. And like, does a little gesture, like, obviously, we have to go over there and talk about the bread rates.

Jack: Art, do you want to play Gentian here? I don't want, I don't want to take away you playing Gentian in her first appearance.

Art: Uh, I mean, I'm, I'm of course fine with however it goes. But I, will, uh, I will.

Austin: Uh, I don't even need to play this scene. I just need an unctuous, terrible person to show up and demand cheaper bread prices from you.

Art: Uh, and I think Gentian is, is just trying to stay in the, you know —

Art (as Gentian): Yes, of course we will talk about bread prices. It's very important. But it's just, it's simply not for right now, you will get what you're asking for. But please, don't take me away from the group right now.

Austin (as Colver): I see. I'll have to tell, I'll have to tell, uh, uh, the Stargrave that we, I came here to talk about the bread prices, the bread rates, not the bread prices. We wouldn't talk about prices at an event like this. But, the rates and, it turns out, you didn't want to talk about the rates. I suspect, I suspect the Stargrave will be disappointed.

Art: I think you get a flash of annoyance, and, and then just like —

Art (as Gentian): Perevel, please handle the bread.

Jack (as Perevel): Yes, my lady.

Art: And, yeah, and does so.

Austin: Right.

Jack: With a sword?

Austin: [laughing]

Art: No, Perevel is the cup.

Jack: With, with a cup. [chuckling] Okay.

Austin: A cup, Perevel's a cup, yeah, yeah, yeah. They, uh, they presumably, again, I think Kenneth is happy to pull them away and chatter about how the taxes are, are unfair, because you should be using the taxes in the point of delivery and not the point of sale, or something, you know?

2:53:14.9

Art: Yeah, and no one at Crusade cares at all about this.

Austin: No, no. And like, how could they? They're from the place where the bread is free.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah, totally.

Art: Yeah. Just, fill your car with bread and go.

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: Also, the fucking Divine Arbitrage is on this planet. If you're going to go talk to a Divine about bread taxation, you have picked the wrong one in the stained glass, you know —

Art: Uh-huh.

Jack: That's not what this is about, right?

Austin: Well, I think that there's — go ahead.

Jack: This is about being seen with Crusade.

Austin: I think, I think it's partly that, and I also think that certain people, I certainly think certain people like Kenneth would prefer to work with Nideo, than the faction that just betrayed their other faction. Not to say that there is a wedge between them quite yet, but I think on an individual level, someone like Kenneth Marian Colver has concocted this idea that this is a, this is a return home for Nideo and Kesh. And it's great, that Exanceaster March wants to throw in. It's useful to have all that technology.

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: But when I — bread is holy. I'm going to come to Crusade. I'm not going to go to Arbitrage. Arbitrage sells bread to commoners. We eat the Bontive bread.

Jack: Huh. Yeah, that's great.

Austin: Right? I think there's some of that happening here.

Jack: That's like old, old Kesh.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Exactly.

Jack: Whereas, Connadine is like, "I'll take the meeting with Exanceaster."

Austin: Of course.

Jack: "Can we get the shows on?" [chuckling]

Austin: [laughing] Exactly.

Jack: God, I bet this looks so beautiful. The light, and the hors d'oeuvres. Is there someone, is there like a band playing, Art?

Art: Yeah, it's like, it's like a, it's like a four-piece.

Jack: One that is — one musician has a sword — [chuckling] two has a sword split in two.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Art: Uh... like, what, what's, or I guess, it's like a string quartet, but older, right? I want like a lute and a harp and a —

Jack: Yeah, a Baroque — what was a Baroque quartet? Let's see.

Austin: Checking.

Jack: Uh, I want a, like a Baroque, uh, music, uh, ensemble? I'm trying to be like, it's a harpsichord, a — this is frustrating, because now I'm just getting names of the ensembles.

Austin: Yeah, I know. Yeah. Chamber ensemble, here we go. Uh... chamber music as a genre is not clearly defined... all right, there are, there were often trios, trio sonatas of, of chamber, uh, groups, that were often two treble instruments and a bass instrument, often with a keyboard or other chording instrument, like a harpsichord, organ, harp, or a lute, filling in the harmony. Both the bass instruments and the chordal instrument would play the basso continuo part. There's a huge list of possible ensembles here.

Jack: Yeah, a theorbo, which is like a sort of, like a bass lute, uh...

2:56:12.8

Austin: Flute, viola and harp. Flute, oboe and English horn...

Jack: God. Early instruments are fucking incredible.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Look at this thing. I'm going to post it in the Palisade chat. This is the theorbo.

Art: Yeah, that's great, that's...

Austin: Yeah, big, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's great, love that.

Jack: The gigantic lute, with a very, very long neck. In the same way that a bass guitar has a very long neck.

Austin: Yeah. So that's playing. I have a very important question. Who is it that directs a flirtatious comment towards someone, and does it take root? Which of these two, uh, bearers, these two rivals, which, which are the rivals that are flirty?

Art: I think the sword ones. I think Ramondre and Ignadiah.

Austin: Oh, yes. Yes, of course. Uh, we haven't heard from Ignadiah yet, huh?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: What's Ignadiah's vibe?

Art: I think he's also kind of like, a little, uh, you know, like Ramondre was a little acerbic?

Austin: Yes, that's correct.

Art: I think this is, like, this is the same kind of, like —

Austin: Mmm.

Art: You know, a rapier wit, to go with —

Austin: Right, and it's a steel sharpens steel thing, right?

Art: Being a sword person.

Austin: Where like, the two of them are just flirting and bickering at the same time constantly.

Art: Right, as they go and — they're the ones who like, do all the wetwork for the — you know?

Jack: Oh, that's great.

Austin: Right. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I love that. Uh... what's the, what's the opening flirtation here? Or what is the open flirtation here, maybe, is a better way of saying it?

Art: Uh, between the two of them?

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. What's the, what's it about? What are they flirting about, here at this party?

Art: Yeah it's, it's tricky, because like, they've sort of just been flirting for 20 years.

Austin: [laughing]

Art: And so it's [chuckling], it's like.

Austin: Ugh...

Art: Uh... I think it's, it's a, it's a contest, almost. They're trying to, like... be the most impressive or most like, in-demand person at the thing.

Austin: Ah, yes.

Art: And they're using it to like, barb each other, like, "oh, I just talked to the Duke, and he wants to —"

Austin: Right.

Art: "Have me hunt quail next weekend."

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: "Well, I just talked to the Duke, and he wants to have me hunt boar next weekend."
[chuckling]

Austin: Right. Right. Yeah, uh-huh.

Art: Mmm, a boorish hunt for your boorish technique.

Austin: [chuckling]

Jack: Yes, I'm sure we will catch you trembling and quailing before the small animals [chuckling] on your hunt.

Austin: Uh, maybe it's during this that we get to a resolution here, right? Because this, I feel like nothing, I mean, the resolutions are all, are all like this in some way, right? Uh, which is, someone or something breaks up our discussion. Who or what, and why? Our conversation is overheard, by who? Or, one of us makes a statement that history will look on as prophetic. [chuckling] Who and what is it?

Jack: [chuckles] Oh my god. From the eastwise, a creature comes —

Art: Who makes the statement?

Jack: [laughing]

Austin: [laughing]

Art: [laughing]

Austin: I mean, what was the horse arriving that, that was predicted? Or that was going to be put on, being part of this, this Adagio? A horse of black and white? What did you say it was?

Jack: Oh yeah, like a, a long-forgotten Duke on a, on a black horse with white fetlocks, you know, showing up.

Austin: A new Duke arrives. So, a —

Art: What?

Austin: Because, okay, like The Duke —

Art: Pray tell, what horse?

Austin: [chuckling] Pray tell, what horse?

Jack: [chuckling] Is this also Romeo and Juliet? Did I miss, “pray tell, what horse?”

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: When do they say, “pray tell, what horse?”

Austin: It's also the balcony scene, it's just buried in there.

Jack: Oh, okay, sure.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, of course. Uh... no, but like, okay, the Duke, uh, whose name I forget, because I have so many notes, and I don't know where my Duke notes went. Uh, just the Duke — oh, Perpetual Lustre, was the Duke of Glass. Uh, Perpetual Lustre, we know, has been kidnapped, and is take, is being held at Joyous Guard. But some other Duke arrives, wearing the crown of a Duke.

Jack: And this is a Kesh Duke. I mean, this is a, this is the Adagio, right?

Austin: This is, this is, I don't know, I guess — I'm asking — I don't know! It's a, it's a, it's a Fabreal Duchy Duke. It is a glass person Duke, right? Uh, it is like a different Duke arriving, uh, and claiming, like, like, here to, to, uh, arriving with a gift, for the, for Gentian, for Gentian. I'm going to say it right, eventually.

Jack: You're doing great.

Austin: Thank you.

Jack: God, it... this — ooh.

Austin: Uh, and, and is here again, with, uh, a train of Delegates, right? The, the, uh, those who, who have been kind of shaved away from effectively-captured Divines, or kind of instrumentalized, discarded Divines. No one has seen if those Divines still exist somewhere on this planet, the camera hasn't seen it yet, certainly. Uh...

Jack: Ooh.

Austin: And yeah, is this, this could be the Adagio. It could also be a Duke arriving — it could be an Affliction, right? It could be a lot of things. I'm happy to keep it a mystery at this point.

Jack: Yeah, I'm also happy to keep it a mystery at this point.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: It's hard to know whether, you know, Connadine could also have just been, it's not a specific thing that he could have been asking for, but the camera, you know, the television

version of this show, is like — oh, at the lectern, he was talking about a Duke showing up on this horse.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And now a Duke has shown up on this horse, and it's like, we don't know.

Austin: Right. Right.

Jack: And neither does the camera. But there, but there's a mirror image there. And the viewer's like, "well...?" And I like that tension. Uh, unless, you know, Art —

Art: Yeah.

Jack: This is your division scene. Is —

Austin: Right.

Jack: Do you want to be definitive about this?

Art: No, I love, I love it. Yeah. I, I love having this Duke show up at the thing. I sort of like leaving some mystery to the gift, but we should figure out what the gift is before —

Austin: Yeah. It's a, it's a, we get the thing, right? We get the like, it's a, it's a huge, beautiful case, a trunk. Uh, you know, an ark —

Jack: Carried by the, the Delegates.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, by the Delegates, by the slaves.

3:02:36.2 And it, we, it's opened, but we don't see what's in it. We, the camera, doesn't see what's in it.

Art: Right, you just see like the, the large grin go over Gentian's face.

Austin: Right. So it does please her, is what you're telling me.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Great. I'm just going to write, "the New Duke," and I will come up with a name, uh, next time, before next time, you know? Sometimes it's hard to know the Duke's name.

Art: Yeah.

Jack: There's probably going to be a few of them, we should, [chuckling] we should get some Duke names.

Austin: No, there's one Duke. The others are Barons. It's a duchy. That's why this is a big deal, is the idea that like, you know, to talk in Sangfielle terms, this is the old empress coming out of the sea, or out of the lake, right?

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Which is strange. It's strange that — someone has arrived, claiming to be the Duke.

Art: Mmm, so when we were talking about the Duke earlier, we probably meant the Count.

Austin: You probably meant the Count. Or the, or the Baron, yeah.

Art: Who wanted us to hunt.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I didn't want to like, jump in and be corrective on that, but, yes, probably.

Jack: Interesting. Wow, that's great.

Austin: And I think the claiming may be — I mean, I don't know the Duke's name yet. Uh, it, you know, the other one was named Perpetual Lustre. Does that mean that this one has to be something gleam, or can it be — you know what, let me actually — you know what? I'm going to look at my name list, and I'm going to pick a name from this list, that to me says —

Jack: We're just going to do it?

Austin: We're going to do it. We've got to trust ourselves, I have a name list, this is why you have a name list, right? Uh, let me look at my list of unused names. Let me find it, let me scroll. Here we go. Uh... this is the most absurd one I could possibly — no, it's not one, it's not that one, it's not that one. I'm going to save that one for something more in the parody mode.

3:04:17.7 Uh... this person announces themselves. Uh, as Constantina Malady, Duchess of the Fabreal Duchy. And she says, uh...

Austin (as Constantina): I have returned from my time abroad, to find our cousins from the stars arrive. What a blessing is this.

Austin: And she kneels, uh, and the Delegates move forward with the, with the box. Uh, she is, again, made of glass, and the glass is like, uh, uh, the, the head is pulled upwards like a teardrop or a flame, very high. Like, you know, a foot or two above where her head would be, as if she's wearing a very tall hat, or as if her, her hair had been styled into a, into like a wick, you know, or into like, you know, up like, again, like a flame, you know? Uh, and she does glow with a certain orange color, and wears like a, a single, long, uh, like a shawl or a robe. But it's not a robe, it's not a round — it's, it's, it's almost like a toga, is what she's wearing, right? Uh, uh, uh, with a, with a, with a belt keeping it closed. Uh, uh, and all of her, like, it's, it's as if all of her regality is, is in the entourage. Her Delegates are dressed very well. The, the, the crate that she sends forward, the huge chest is like, beautifully, uh, is extremely ornate, uh, uh, with trim and — and jewels, golden trim and jewels and stuff like that. But she keeps herself fairly simple, as far as you can tell. Again, but, her glow is, is magnificent.

3:06:09.5 Uh, and I don't think we need more than that, maybe.

Art: No. All right I did find a note about the cup —

Austin: Oh, sure.

Art: That I forgot earlier.

Austin: Yeah, sure, please.

Art: The cup is cut from an emerald, from a giant emerald.

Austin: Oh-ho-ho, that's an important note.

Jack: Whoa!

Art: And it's like etched with, uh, scenes of, of, uh, Crusade fighting.

Austin: Incredible.

Art: I did a lot of research on holy artifacts today, and, and —

Austin: And it's paying off.

Art: To copy — yeah. Although, the, the emerald artifact that I was copying off of, uh, in the 19th century it moved, and it broke, and they discovered it was just green glass.

Austin: Mmm mm-hm. [chuckling]

Jack: [chuckles] Wow.

Austin: Incredible, incredible way to end that. Incredible way to have that —

Jack: Adagio! Adagio!

Austin: [laughing] Adagio. Yeah, uh-huh! All right. No resolution — or, no outcomes are earned. No winner or loser, except us, because we got to see this sequence.

Jack: Hey, this game's great.

Austin: This game's great. All right. I'm ready to go, if y'all are ready to go. I'm going to do a chase. Two volunteers —

Jack: Oh, exciting.

Austin: Play. One hunter, and one hunted. They should decide between them, which takes the role of an Authority member, and which represents the Cause, on what level the chase is occurring, on foot, in Astirs or our case, Altars, et cetera, and why it is happening. Decide where the chase takes place, and who is at risk, should things get messy. Freely roleplay the chase. During it, anyone may ask anyone else for details on the situation on circumstances. Other players may embody bystanders, the environment, and so on where required. Playing the scene. Take turns making challenges, starting with the hunter. Uh, in this case, the Cause will be the hunter. Continue playing until at least three rolls have been made, or the scene reaches what feels like a natural end. Look at resolutions below for what that might look like. Why is the Cause the hunter in this case? Because, I'm going to rewind the clock a couple of weeks. Uh, in game weeks, to the end of the first arc. Uh, as the members of the Blue Channel, uh, are leaving the, the, uh, the Fundament node, uh, with the two members of the Twill and, uh, Partial Palisade, uh, and we're going to see that footage, uh, from a distance, as if being looked down

on from, from a hill, through a pair of, pair of binoculars, with some sort of digital enhancement. Uh, the digital enhancement also has an extra effect, which is, it's actually redrawing what it sees. Uh, in a sort of, uh, uh, liquid paint. Uh, so you can see, there's like, regular, regular binocular distance zoom in, totally regular visual. But then there's a second step, that makes it a sort of watercolor painting, a living watercolor painting, which provides more detail, because it can get closer, but less detail, because it's a watercolor painting, and, and not a, uh, you know, just real-life enhanced through digital enhancement, digital zoom. Uh, or, or literal, you know, mirror zoom. It's done all that stuff, and to get closer, it's a painting. It's, it's magic. Uh, and what we see is that, uh, members of the, uh, the authority attack on this place, the ones who had been shot away, uh, by the sort of table-like mech, uh, uh, that kind of shot that torpedo away, that was filled with people. Uh, those people got shot up to the kind of hill opposite, where the party came down, in that little valley, that strangely-lit green valley, at the bottom of the, the Diadem. Uh, and watched as, as what happened, happened. And they have a bunch of information at this point.

3:10:00.0 They've scanned this area, they know it was connected to a Fundament node, they know that this potentially, uh, is what led to, or they would learn, if this gets out, they will, people will understand that this is what happened with the railroads being messed up, the Diadem rail, uh, uh, being, being taken under control for this brief hour or so, by the cause. Uh, uh, they may even be able to figure out what the hell, who that person is, that's coming out. Or if not who the person is, at least hey, we need to send more people down here to find out what was stored in this machine. Uh, and so this person's trying to get away. And I think partly they go to where they're supposed to go for pickup, and it doesn't work, because it's one of these train lines. It's the Gravtrain, and the Gravtrain doesn't work in this moment.

3:10:47.3 Uh, and so this small group of, of soldiers, who are, uh, I think part of a unit that I guess I will introduce, uh, I think it's, it's, we're going to get, there's two, there's two characters here on the side of the division, on the side of the March Institute and the Frontier Syndicate. And they're both part of the same actor unit. Uh, they are, uh, uh, there is a group that works for, uh, the Frontier Syndicate. It's, I guess a subsidiary called Lock and Cross Security Services. It is operated by Maidstone Cross and Margate Lock, who are two divorced women who are two committed to their work together to fully separate.

Jack: [chuckles]

Austin: So, they continue to run this PMC together, even though they kind of have a lot of bitterness between them. Uh, uh, and I think that this is, uh, Margate Lock, who was running this operation, uh, uh, retreating. I think maybe the rest of her crew has been killed. Uh, she's the only one who's managed to get away. Uh, probably killed by other Afflictions, or had, you know, didn't survive the desperate escape-pod-style launch. But she has this information. She has seen it with her magic painting goggles. Uh, and is, is trying to figure out her way from the depths of the Diadem, back up to, I would imagine that she's probably trying to get to Lone Marble HQ. Maybe she's just trying to get to any major, you know, Bilateral, uh, location, from which she can get a pickup, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, I don't know who's chasing her. It's not the Blue Channel. Who do we have left? Who are our remaining causes?

Jack: Uh, all of them, right? Except for the Dim Liturgy.

Austin: Except for Violet Cove, right, exactly. Uh, uh, and it, and this doesn't have to be, oh, they know what's going on necessarily, even, right? They might not know the stakes. So this could be, Rose River is there, doing their own research, in the depths of the Diadem nearby, and gets a call saying, "uh, also, we think that one of them may have spotted us, can you try to go clean that up, right?" It could be, it's probably not Jade Kill, because they're up in Joyous Guard. It's probably not Gray Pond, for the same reason. They're up in the, up in the, in Sinder Karst, unless they're doing some sort of resource operation, down in the depths of the Diadem. Uh, it could be that, that, that she gets to a boat, and then it becomes a boat chase with Carmine Bight. Or it could be a Jade Kill operation, I guess it could be a Jade Kill operation, if it's like a group that's out and about.

3:13:33.6 It couldn't be, like, the whole unit, but maybe they do have scouts out here. Maybe Kalar, or, or, or a wing of Swordbreakers is out here. It's up, it's up to us. I don't know. Does anybody have strong ideas about who is on the Cause side of this chase?

Jack: I think Rose River would be interesting, encountering them in the Diadem.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, it feels very similar to, you know, the way we've been talking about, the way Malick has these bursts of action, you know, they're down there in the gray dust of the Diadem, lighting their way, and suddenly they get told, you know, all right, now move, it's time to go.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, let's, look, can we stop? Can we start on just that image, then? It's them, I mean we started on the image of the painting goggles, uh, and then we cut from that to them in [sighs] I think it's an, it's an, you know, a thing about the Diadem, I've said this before, is, it's sort of like a condominium or a mall that was, in many, in many cases, never used. No one ever moved into it. The, the nascent Divine Principality abandoned this place so soon after, you know, drilling this into the ground, that much of it was never used at all. But that doesn't mean that, it wasn't ready to be used. And so, I imagine there's actually a fully-stocked library, from 5,000 years ago, deep in this, this underground, you know, uh, uh, stretch of wall that has been carved into the planet. You know, it just, it's, not only is it dug down, but then the library is dug inwards, like into the — you know, above the mantle, presumably, uh, uh, but into the side of the planet, going inwards. And they're just in this, this library, uh, when this call comes in like, what is the, what are they going over? Are they going over books or maps or video tapes?

Jack: They are... someone is lying on their back, in a pile of papers. Not a pile, not like a pile of leaves, but there are papers on the floor, and someone is lying on their back. And, they are picking up the papers. Uh, almost without looking at them, and reading them, holding them over their head, you know? They've got a torch in their mouth, and they are like, shining the light on the torch as they hold these, these items above their head. I think this is a small squad. I think that, uh, I don't think that Veronique and Fealty are here. If they're here, they are like, way further down in the Diadem. You know, they might be here on this operation, but if you listen closely, you can hear them, you can hear someone down there singing a song, and that's like —

Austin: Mmm, mm-hm. [chuckling]

Jack: Veronique with her squad. Uh, I think that this crew is, I don't even want to say led. The people here are like are it's one on one, right Austin?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: So this is a young woman named Candles Penumbra, uh, a Penumbra is to do with a shadow. Uh, it's the, it's a — the, the darkest point of a shadow? Let me see, penumbra...

Austin: The umbra, I believe, is the... hmm.

Jack: The penumbra is the opposite. It's the partially shaded outer region of the shadow.

Austin: Okay. The outer rim of it? Yeah, okay.

Jack: Yeah. Uh, and Candles Penumbra has, uh, you know, like, uh, long, blond hair, that is not tied up, you know? It's, it's, it's getting dust in it. It's sort of like a, like a loose halo around her shoulders as she lies on her back, reading these, uh, these papers. Uh, and, how is she communicated to? Do they have like walkie-talkies? What's going on?

Austin: I think it is a walkie-talkie. Like, I think it is like an old-school, big, bulky, walkie-talkie, you know? Uh, and I think it —

Art: Mmm, with like the antenna you have to take out?

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly that. Uh, and I actually think what happens is, it's, it's up on a shelf, or on a table. I think it's on a shelf, because it, when it buzzes and it like, the, the, it doesn't buzz because it has a buzzer, it doesn't have like a, it's not like a phone vibration. The sound coming through is, is loud enough that it like, shakes it off the shelf, and it falls and it hits an old tape projector. And, uh, a video, basically a video about the Diadem clicks on, like an overhead, not an overhead projector, but like an old, you know, reel-to-reel style thing starts playing. And it's, the volume is off, but you can hear the sound of the tape moving, that, like — I'm not going to make the sound that a tape moves — you know what I mean though, right?

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: It's hard not to try to, but I don't know how it — I can't do it. Uh, and so the walkie-talkie lands, and it is, it is the voice of who else but Gucci Garantine, saying, uh, uh, because Gucci's going to use, I don't have a home base name for Gucci yet. What is Gucci, if, if everybody else is these various — we should have given Gucci a color and a water source.

Jack: Oh —

Art: No, isn't it like, isn't Gucci going to want to something, like, unique? Like, you know, uh, —

Austin: Maybe. What about, like —

Art: I mean like, Watershed —

Austin: Right, Watershed —

Art: Which like, has the double meaning.

Austin: Something about, yeah, maybe that, it's just Watershed, isn't it? Yeah, I think Watershed makes sense. Watershed is pretty good. Uh...

Art: Because it also means like revelation, right? Or like the tipping point —

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah, the tipping point, exactly. And I think, I think, immediately, it's just, uh, Gucci calling in to be like, uh, “ Rose River agent 17-1, this is Watershed, come in.”

Jack: Uh, Candles is looking at the hologram of the life in the Diadem, and she —

Austin: Oh, it is not a hologram. It is a projection against a wall.

Jack: Oh, right, yeah, uh, —

Austin: Like a screen comes down, like, it's, it's that.

Jack: I know I was thinking of like light in some way. Because, what she does is, she picks up the walkie-talkie with one hand, and it's kind of clumsy. She's still lying on the floor. And with her left hand, she puts her hand between the projector —

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: And the wall, and is playing with the dust motes, caught in the light on her hand. Uh, and she says, “yes?”

Austin (as Gucci): We have a, we have a, a loose end in your region.

Jack (as Candles): A loose end?

Austin (as Gucci): Yes. And it would be, it's imperative that we tie it off. I'll send the coordinates immediately.

Jack (as Candles): Huh. Okay. Okay.

Austin: Uh, and you get those coordinates. Uh... and, I guess, yeah. You see — who, which of, which of the two did I say it was? I said it was, Lock? Or did I say it was Cross?

Jack: Are they — are their, what's their first names?

Austin: It's Margate, uh, Margate, uh, Lock, and Maidstone Cross. They're both.

Jack: I think it was Margate.

Austin: I think it was Margate, also. They are both, uh, Columnar, they came over with — again, they'd been part of the Frontier Syndicate for years, but were very excited about this opportunity. They are the first private security contractor, uh, here on planet.

Jack: [chuckling] On Palisade. God.

Austin: Yeah, exactly.

3:20:53.1

Jack: Uh, all right. Let's get to it. I lead you into a trap. Roll to see if you can escape it.

Austin: What, what, how do you lead me into this trap?

Jack: One of the rooms near this abandoned library, uh, you've just been describing it like a mall, so I keep wanting to be like, shops, one of the shops.

Austin: I mean, the whole place does — there are shops around, there are parks around, there are — it is a supermall that people were supposed to live in. There's condos built into the side of these walls. There's walls between the two ends of the Diadem, it's huge. Look at it.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: It's like a, it's like a state wide. There are cities in here, you know what I mean? But like, I think mostly, the — it's around the walls and then there's lots of green space at the bottom, theoretically, except it's so far down and so fucked-up now that most of it's been ruined, you know?

Jack: Yeah. Uh, there is a shop that is selling, was intended to be selling bridal wear. Uh, and it has three people wearing beautiful white dresses in the front, and then statuesque, like decaying mannequins wearing dresses inside, just dotted with all these, you know, perfect images of, of, of perfect brides, in the way that bridal stores do. And as you get further back into the shop, which is where I'm lying in wait, they bought and never got to use a massive bulk

order of white silk, that has been hung from the ceiling, in sheets. So it's, it's like a, like sheet after sheet of gauze and of silk and of velvet. Uh, and, you are led into this maze of white fabric. Uh...

Austin: Uh, and this is doubly fun, because I think that Margate Lock is white from top to bottom. Uh, uh, like a porcelain figure, unpainted. Uh, or, or a porcelain body, but the, there's still kind of the sort of, like, uh, you describe these as looking similar to like the exos in Destiny before. We've talked about other types of, of influences on the way the Columnar look, and she's no different. She's like that, but the individual plates feel like they're all unpainted, or are pristine, you know?

Jack: Wow.

Austin: Uh, and so, I think, yeah, she moves, she moves in this direction. And I'm going to roll a die. And again, on this, this is a minor faction, so I need, what? I need a 1, 2, 3. You need a 4, 5, 6.

Art: Just 1, 2, right? Isn't it 3 or higher?

Austin: That's 4 — oh, it is — is it 3 or higher? It might be 3 or higher, you might be right.

Jack: Yeah, because I was looking for a 5 or a 6, right?

Austin: You were looking for a 5 or a 6. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm double-checking, but yeah, I believe that that's true.

Jack: And I can force a reroll, but I can only force it... or rather, I am forcing a reroll in favor of the Authority.

Austin: Correct, that is what Kesh has, yes. Uh...

Art: Yeah, we're on chump street over here in the minor factions, yeah.

Austin: Jesus, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's rough.

Art: Don't feel good about it at all.

Austin: Uh, yeah. Against the minor divisions, they only need a 3 or higher. Yeah, damn. Okay, here we go. That's a 5. So, fall into this trap. What's it look like?

3:24:11.7

Art: Hey, you can't be in here! Oh, no, my dress!

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: [chuckling]

Art: It says that I'm supposed to be providing background.

Austin: Oh, I see. Yeah. Well, no, there's, there aren't people in here, right? It's an abandoned, uh, bridal shop.

Jack: It is, it's an abandoned bridal shop. But I do appreciate this, this ghost of —

Austin: [chuckling] I mean, is it, yeah? Is there like ancient AI ghost [laughing] in that — is there, in this scene, a sort of, a dress tailor and a dress wearer, being projected from Twilight Mirage era holograms, like, just eternally trying dresses on over and over again, as a sort of a tract mode for the store?

Jack: Yes, that's really great. And standing in the projection —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: So that her face is, has got this image of this, like, perfect pride getting married to a perfect groom —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, or, yeah, that — yeah. It, it shows two things. It shows the bride getting fitted by the tailor, and then it shows them kissing at the wedding. Uh, and those two images are, it is deeply heteronormative, it is deeply —

Austin: Yep.

Jack: That, like, that sensation of, there is only one kind of bride, and we are going to make you be her.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And that is something to be desired. And standing in the image, at first, standing in the background of the tailor/bride scene, so she is just blending into the back wall of the image, uh, is Candles Penumbra, and you don't see her. And then, as the image changes to the couples' faces in profile, kissing, uh, uh, her face is directly in the middle of them, looking forward, so it stands out suddenly. You know, uh, her face is, is suddenly visible. And she draws a weapon. Uh, this is Sci-Fi fantasy, and this is my first time drawing a weapon, so, uh, I am excited. She draws a flail. A barbed flail.

Austin: God.

Jack: And just launches — sparks off of Lock's, uh, uh, body, porcelain body, as this like blond woman with her hair, dusty hair moving around her, just lays into you with a flail.

Austin: Uh, all right. I... uh, you know, it hits me, right? And it shatters the, uh, left, my — the second plate down on the, the 5-plate left arm that I have, right? Just shatters it instantly. It breaks like glass. Uh, it goes everywhere. Uh, uh, and then, I, uh, do something very strange, which is, I lift up my arm, and I smash my right arm against, against it. Uh, like, on the opposite side. So that was like the outer shell. I hit it with my, my, my right hand, breaking the inner one, uh, in a way that's like, meant to shatter that glass up at you, as a way to like, make space between us. I mean, using my armor as like a near, a close-range, you know, uh, uh, almost like a, almost like a shotgun of glass —

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: At you, right? Uh, uh, and, and with that space, uh, I find a sudden burst of speed in me. Roll to see if you can match me, as I push past you and move into the back hallways of this shopping district.

Jack: Uh...

Austin: And so here, you need, again, the very easy to reach three. [chuckles]

Jack: Yeah. Mmm, hm hm.

Austin: And you get a 6. Very easily. So you do match me here. What's it look like?

Jack: Uh, as the glass shatters and your arm is still visible in the frame, the camera is suddenly undercranked, and we go into super slow motion. But that slow motion of the, I

associate it with the 70s and the 80s and the 90s, where they don't quite have the framerate to accommodate for low slow motion, so there's a judder, almost. And we see the light reflect all the glass, uh, flickering through the glass, and the projector's still going. Uh, and in slow motion, we see Candles turn her head, and begin to run, with just like a, an expression of like, uh, fury and control in her face, and we hold the shot for as long as it takes for her to leave, which is a long time. And just before we cut, we get the glimpse of her hand rising juddily into frame, holding the flail, with the —

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: The ropes coming off it. And I tackle you, and we both fall a short distance, uh, on top of each other, get down like half a flight —

Austin: Right.

Jack: From outside, uh, this, this, the back of this bridal shop, to the back of another shop, uh, half a level below. [sighs] Uh, is it my turn to...

Austin: It's, anyone can issue a challenge. So...

Jack: Yeah, that's true.

Austin: So, if you want, if you have one.

Jack: I want to see if Art has one.

Austin: Yeah, Art, do you have one of these? That you think would be an interesting moment of this chase?

Art: I guess it doesn't if it's a roll or — the rolls are already decided.

Austin: Well, we could keep going. It's 3, it's at least 3, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Art: Oh, sure. Well, I want to see something magical deploy.

Austin: Absolutely. I deploy something magical to my advantage, what happens? You know, Margate Lock runs a, a, uh, Magical PMC, runs, works with, with, under Exanceaster March. It's

not like she's out here unprepared for anything, right? Uh... and I think she... where is it that we are at this point, Jack? What was the last scene that you drew for me? The last situation —

Jack: Uh, we have crashed through a balcony, and fallen to — behind another shop, half a level below.

Austin: Okay. Uh... there appears to be, when you — we get a shot of, uh, uh, Penumbra standing up, Candles standing up. Uh, and looking to see where, uh, where their, their, uh, prey, not prey, what's the, what's the — quarry, where their quarry is. And, they see her. They see Margate. 8 times. Uh, as 8 Margates begin running in different directions.

Jack: Hm.

Austin: Some, something has duplicated me. What are you doing? What happens?

Jack: Uh... I don't even think. I just, I go for one of them. You know, there's, there's no time to make a sort of, uh, like, a video-game-style, “well, I'm going to see if I can use [Earden] to, you know —“

Austin: Uh-huh, yeah.

Jack: Uh, uh, and, and, uh, Candles is working on a kind of like, uh, not bloodlust, but a mania, a sort of like, a dusty mania of this chase happen.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: And so I think that, that I just target one, and run following it.

Austin: Should we roll 1D8 and see if it's the right one?

Jack: Oh, ho-ho.

Austin: Or should we roll a lower thing to see if it's — you know what I mean? Or should we, should we, is this something instinctual, should we just roll, it doesn't say to roll for this, right?

Jack: Oh, we should just roll. We should roll as though it's a challenge.

Austin: Just regular roll. Yeah, go ahead and roll.

Jack: [chuckling]

Austin: There's one win for, for Margate, as you roll a 1.

3:31:54.9 Uh... it's the wrong one, right? You shatter it instantly. It turns to dust, right? It is, but it's physical. It is a physical thing. It is not a hologram, it is not your — your flail doesn't pass through it. It shatters it, uh, like ice broken into a trillion little pieces. And in fact, it melts when it hits the ground.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: Uh, so at this point, I think I have, uh, you turn, you turn a corner and lose sight of me. How do you find me?

Jack: Hm... oh, you startle birds. Birds just, uh, like, you look over on the other side of, not the Diadem, because it's massive, but like, there's like a, a —

Austin: Like this hallway of the Diadem basically —

Jack: Like a, a walkway, yeah, with the, that drops down to the bottom. There's a narrow bridge, and on the other side of it, I see like a flock of white birds, just —

Austin: Yeah, mm-hm.

Jack: Take off, and I cross the bridge, uh, towards you. Uh...

Austin: I think the bridge, the bridge is broken, right? The bridge is increasingly, uh, uh, dilapidated from years of disuse and weather and everything else. We dash through a dangerous area. Will you take your time, or will you roll to give chase?

Jack: I'm going to roll to give chase.

Austin: Let's see it. Oh! [chuckling] That's a 2. The previous roll was a 1, I don't know if I said that out loud. So now we are at, we, we are at Cause, Cause, Division, Division. We are at, we are at Authority, Authority, uh, uh, sorry. We are at Cause, Cause, Authority, Authority.

Art: That's Cause, Cause, Authority, Authority.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Yeah. We got to do one more roll, right?

Austin: Yeah, uh-huh. So what did you, so you give chase. What happens?

Jack: Uh, the bridge breaks. Uh... it, it —

Austin: Ugh.

Jack: God, yeah. The bridge just, just shatters. And I... oh. Uh, let's do Breq and Seivarden. The bridge breaks, and I fall, but I am close enough to you that I am able to grab at your belt or something, something that, uh, I am able to hold on, and you're not able to instantly just shake me off. Uh... and, uh, you know, you look down, and you can see the Diadem, you know, drop 40 stories. It's like looking from the top of, you know, a building, down into what you know isn't even the bottom of the Diadem, it's just the bottom of whatever this mall area of the Diadem is.

Austin: Mm-hm.

Jack: Uh, uh, and my question is, uh, I lead you into a trap. Roll to see if you can escape it.
[chuckling]

Austin: Oh my god. Uh-huh. Uh... rolling. Need that 1 or a 2. Oh! It's a 2.

Art: Wow.

Austin: I was ready to lose this character. Like I was truly to be like — I had a whole speech ready.

Jack: I was ready to let you reroll that final — you know, I was going to introduce a spy down there.

Austin: Oh, no, I was, I was going to have a whole thing where I was like, “imagine... I want you all to think about what this whole season is like if these bickering divorcees got to live, if both of them got to live.” And, and instead, they are going to get to both live. Because Margate has won this somehow, despite severe disadvantage, without the help of Kesh's reroll. Uh...

Jack: I mean —

Austin: What happens here?

Jack: Well, so here's the thing. We could both go down off that bridge.

Austin: Yeah, I mean, yes. That's true. But I succeeded.

Jack: You, yes, you could. You have. I'm —

Austin: [laughing]

Jack: I'm [laughing] I'm saying if the narrator — to do it, do it. If in this moment —

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: We want these two women to fall together from the — you know, the trap that, that —

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Candles led you into was — Candles is not getting off this bridge. Uh, and it's whether or not you're coming down with me.

Austin: I need to see something, I need to — what are, what are the things that I can do, if I win? And what are the things that you do if you win? Because that, I think that this, this colors things. If Rose River wins —

Jack: Oh yeah.

Austin: They... uh, key intel gives the party advantage when they next lead a sortie. That's interesting.

Jack: And if Lock wins?

Austin: Lead a sortie is a move that, that you roll. It's sort of like the beginning of a Blades in the Dark engagement roll, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Uh, and yes, if the March Institute wins, if the Frontier Syndicate wins, either the Authority learns a secret about the Cause or a faction.

Art: Oh, we get to chance that again.

Austin: The authority starts a new scheme or advances an existing one. Or, the director takes two extra tokens during the next downtime.

Jack: Oh, interesting. I mean, I think you won.

Austin: Uh, which — I, I, I'm, I'm — I'm torn. I mean I did —

Art: You'd definitely, you'd have to get two more rolls to lose.

Austin: We'd have, right, I, I won the rolls. This is true. I did roll, I did win the rolls. But only because we went 5 rolls, instead of 3, right?

Jack: There's a compromise here, right? Which is that the March Syndicate wins this, but you lose Lock.

Austin: Margate, yeah. Uh-huh. Uh, and I think that's it, right? I think that this is, the Authority learns a secret about the Cause or faction — no, it's not. It's, the Authority starts a new scheme or advances an existing one. Uh, and I think that there are, there are, uh, uh, it's the classic, like, you thought you won, but you didn't. Uh, uh, thing. We — the fall has been — I break the fall, right? You fall on top of me. The rest of my armor pieces shatter, right? Uh, the, the, they melt away, and it's just this empty Columnar frame, right? Uh, this is the humanoid equivalent of having standardized parts. It's very easy for me to repair my armor when I get back to base, and, and instead of investing in armor that would last a long time, I invested in armor that's easy to replace, because I'm a field agent. Uh, and my last action, I have a decision to make. I can either send the information — I can either, you know, for one moment, I get a bar of signal, you know? [chuckling] I get enough signal to send back the data I have on the little Twill village, on the Fundament node, on the, the, the person who left there, there's, there's, there's a figure.

3:38:17.4 Uh, on the members of the Blue Channel. Uh, and, and I — uh, maybe that *is*, Authority learns a secret about the cause or a faction. Uh, I don't — if it is, it feels too easily earned. I kind of feel like I, I'd rather have it be the beginning of the Frontier Syndicate beginning to do some sort of investigation. So I think, I think that's why I lean starts a new scheme.

Jack: Yeah. We'll get secrets.

Austin: Uh, right. Exactly. And so, I send that. In fact, maybe I've fallen in such a way where I, I'm able to find an uplink, or something that, that's able to transmit the data through the Diadem system. Uh, but in doing that, I've turned my back to you.

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: Uh, and we don't even see it, right? We just see the — maybe we just see the flail.

Jack: Yeah — oh, wait.

Austin: You know what I mean? Go ahead.

Jack: Uh, what if the thing you've connected it to is, I've got the Control hydraulic tubes on the brain. But it's maybe not a tube —

Austin: Uh-huh.

Jack: But you can see a point of light rise from the console that you, uh, had —

Austin: High, like, *up*. Like, yeah.

Jack: And it's not even like — yeah, yeah, endlessly, and it's not even that we track with the point of light. We just do a very Malick shot of the camera tilting back —

Austin: Tilting up, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: To watch the point of light, as it gets higher and higher and higher.

Austin: And it disappears, yeah. It —

Jack: And disappears.

Austin: Again, from down here, the bottom, towards the bottom of the Diadem, the sky is obscured by the walls of the Diadem. Even as far apart as they are.

Jack: And I don't think we — we don't even see the, the flail. I don't think we even get a sound effect, you know.

Austin: Mmm. Mmm.

Jack: Uh, I think, I think we get an implication of what's happening, because we've got a shot of Candles' face, you know, uh, —

Austin: Right.

Jack: You know, bleeding, and, and, and pulling herself upright. And then you doing the data uplink, and then the camera just tilting up to watch the light as it goes up and eventually disappears —

Austin: As it goes up.

3:40:07.0 And now I will say — imagine the season [chuckling] where we got Margate Lock and Maidstone Cross, bickering, and maybe falling back in love, or turn — betraying one another. Uh, and instead, I'm crossing Margate Lock off my list. The company of Lock and Cross, or Cross and Lock, whatever I said moments ago, uh, is, is still functioning. Uh, but Lock is off the board. Uh, we don't have to zoom in any further than that. I don't know what, what Margate is thinking, uh, in her final moments. Uh, I think she is, I think her actions speak for her. And that is something Maidstone knows. Well, the mission got done. And what is this we found? Something about these, these Fundament nodes. Huh. They've got to be other places. Let's investigate the Fundament nodes. So I'm starting a clock. And the clock says, "investigate the Fundament nodes." And that is a... how many steps is that clock? We should read about clocks. We should read about scheme clocks. I know we already started one, but —

Jack: Oh yeah.

Austin: We should probably just read what the book says about them.

Jack: We were explicitly told to start a 4-step clock last time, so —

Austin: Is that what it was, we were explicitly —

Art: Yeah, it's a 4-step clock.

Austin: Okay. So, the conflict turn says, division schemes: with the outcomes from the conflict scenes, divisions can gradually start and complete long-term projects. These schemes, if completed, should create a large advantage for the authority that threatens to completely turn the war in their favor, unless it is dealt with as quickly as possible. Alternatively, the Authority might undergo a long-term project, to regain some of its stability, building a new pillar or

otherwise. By building a new pillar, literally or otherwise. Schemes don't need to be one big MacGuffin that's being slowly constructed. A scheme might be developing a plan for one decisive military push, slowly accruing reserve forces for an unstoppable offensive, or even the inner political turmoil of the authority slowly resolving itself into a state where it's, where its true might can be properly coordinated.

3:42:17.6 Uh, and so, yeah, uh, you know, their, their examples for ongoing schemes are unsealing the sovereign crypt, the end of mourning, which is like the end of a mourning period for an empress, or binding the North Spine Mountain's tyrant. Love it. Great. And this one is, "investigate the Fundament nodes." And I think that that — there's no real guidance on how long this should be, but I think it's a 6-step. I think it's a pretty big one, you know? Maybe it's not investigate. Maybe it's like, "master," or, "uncover," or... you know? Uh...

Art: Harvest.

Austin: Harvest! Thank you, Art. Harvest the Fundament nodes. Uh, the Fundament nodes, as we kind of learned last time, are tied to something ancient, inside of the planet of Palisade. Uh, uh, Palisade itself, of course, being the corpse of the Divine Palisade, seeming, at least, the corpse, right? Uh, we've now seen that there is a person named Palisade walking around, who does not seem to just control the body of this, of this planet. Uh, if, if that's even what he did to begin with.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Uh, so, boom. And I think that is the end of our last conflict scene. Unless I'm missing something. Let's see.

3:43:42.3 We've done it. We've done our division rolls. Uh... so the Cause getting no wins today, to start things off.

Art: Yeah. Which is not going to hold.

Austin: No, not with these rolls that we can see. Uh, I guess, one small win, again, from last time is that there is a, uh, a single grip placed on the Diadem's Gravtrain, that's still there. Uh, the other ongoing thing here, we have two ongoing projects, we have take something that isn't theirs, uh, and we have harvest the Fundament nodes. Uh, I believe when you start a clock, you

advance it to one, I believe. Uh... oh, one other final thing, actually, that I remembered. There is another wayward faction —

Jack: Oh yeah?

Austin: That I'd forgotten about, that's not on here yet. Uh, and that is from the... from the, uh, Last Shooting game. There is Coriander [sic] —

Jack: Oh, Misericorde.

Austin: And Misericorde, have a little group of Pact, uh, loyal soldiers, who they've been convincing. They've been spreading the good word of the Pact of Free States. And I will add them ahead of our, our next faction game. Uh, but they are another, uh, uh, you know, certainly not allied to the, the unnamed Cause, but nor allied to the Bilateral Intercession. So I will add them, and we can think about how they might involve themselves in the future. Uh, I guess also, Rose River is tapped going into this next turn, an important thing to, to remember. Uh, because tapped factions can't, can't do much. Uh, they are, they become tapped as a result of this happening. Uh, they're out here doing this stuff, and then they had to go into military mode. So, they're tapped. Perhaps, uh, Blue Channel could help untap these factions in the next, in the next game. We will see.

Jack: Yeah.

Art: Good luck to them.

Austin: Good luck to them. Yeah, any messages for them?

Jack: Ugh, in character or out? We're trying our best!

Austin: [laughing] That's good enough for me, I think.

[outro music: "[Nothing is Stationary](#)" plays]