

Twilight Mirage 64: Futura Free Pt. 1

Transcribed by Jen @wronghandle#1989

[MUSIC - "Twilight" begins]

AUSTIN: [narrating] Once, floating in the sunset-hued safety of the Twilight Mirage, the Divine fleet hummed and pulsed, its ships bright beacons of culture and technology in an age when both were under threat. All through the fleet organic and synthetic citizens worked side by side to protect a utopia that the universe thought impossible. But today, in the wake of Independence and Volition and the Miracle and Our Profit and Schism, many who once called the fleet home have now found their idealism grounded. It has been complicated by contact with others, by paralyzing self doubt, by wavering faith, by the promises of others, and by the simple desire to survive together.

And some still dream yet. And those who do now confront a hard dilemma. What does a more perfect world truly look like? And how might we get there?

It has been one month since the Feast of Patina, 300th Divine of the Resident Fleet. In that time tempers have cooled though borders remain firm. While the New Earth Hegemony and the Divine Free State maintain their status as the system's most major powers, Seneschal's Brace, now backed by the pirate republic of the Rogue Wave, has gained official recognition as a third state, giving Even Gardner, Fourteen Fifteen, and the Excerpt Tenderness one more chance to unify the fractured Mirage.

The Qui Err Coalition, meanwhile, continue to push for decolonization in the system. And they have gained allies in the fight — allies like Gig Kephart, Echo Reverie, the Sailors of the Ark, and perhaps surprisingly the Waking Cadent, whose own efforts to leave the system have been foiled thus far by the sheer impermeability of the Mirage's interior walls. But with the recent arrival of Signet in Kamala's court, doors once thought permanently sealed now creak open.

The boundaries of the Mirage have not been problem for the plunderers of the Advent Group, whose special catapult can launch goods — and as Grand Magnificent knows well, people — beyond the borders of the Quire system.

But in the wake of Our Profit's attack on the Rapide Evening and with connect re-established with Crystal Palace during the attack on Schism, Keen Forrester Gloaming has authorized the group's final contingency plan.

The message was sent, and of course before it could even be received the plan was already set in motion. A blockade of specially armed capital ships now patrols the border of the Mirage, destroying any vessel that manages to escape. Each day their weapons become more

accurate, their patrols more precise, their strategies more prophetic. All of which can mean only one thing: Crystal Palace draws near.

[MUSIC - "Twilight" ends]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual-play podcast focused on critical world building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host today, Austin Walker. And today we are playing a game called Futura Free or Future-a Free, depending on how you want to pronounce that font name, which is a hack of The Quiet Year by Avery Alder and Mobile Frame Zero: Firebrands by D. Vincent Baker and— that one is just D. Vincent Baker, the more recent release has multiple people. But Firebrands is D. Vincent Baker alone.

Joining me today for the finale of Twilight Mirage, Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hello there! You can find me on Twitter at notquitereal and download— boy, I guess the complete soundtrack to Twilight Mirage at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

AUSTIN: Sylvia¹ Clare.

SYLVIA: Hey, you can find me on Twitter at captaintrash, and you can find my other show Emojidrome on pretty much any podcast app.

AUSTIN: Keith J. Carberry.

KEITH: Hi, my name's Keith Carberry. You can find me on Twitter at keithjcarberry. You can find the Let's Plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton and the Patreon for that show at contentburger.biz.

AUSTIN: Andrew Lee Swan.

DRE: Hey. You can find me on Twitter at swandre3000.

AUSTIN: Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: You can find me on Twitter at bleatingheart.

AUSTIN: Arthur Martinez-Tebbel.

ART: Hey. You can find me on Twitter at atebbel, and you can listen to One Song Only at onsongpod on Twitter.

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

AUSTIN: And Ali Acampora.

ALI: Hey! You can find me at [ali_west](#) on Twitter, and you can find Friends at the Table at [friends_table](#) on Twitter.

AUSTIN: As always, you can find me on Twitter at [austin_walker](#). And you can support this show, as we kind of come to the end of the season if you've enjoyed your time here - I'm sure you'll hear me say this again in the coming weeks, but - you can go to [friendsatthetable.cash](#) to support us on Patreon. I just want to thank the entire cast because this has been a really messy, ambitious project this season. It's unlike anything we've done before in terms of tone, in terms of style, in terms of content. And I'm so happy to have played with y'all, and I'm so happy that we can do this because of the support of people like you the listeners. We've have the Patreon going for about a year now.

And I will say this really briefly— is one, I am overawed constantly by the degree of support that you show us. It really means the world. And two, please let people know. We are— I sometimes think that we have succeeded on our charm roll or on our Sway roll in convincing the world that we are bigger and better than we may be. A lot of people think of us as being in the realm of the Critical Roles, and we are much much much much smaller than that still. So please share the word, let people know. We don't do any advertising. We don't do any advertising in terms of letting people know about the show. We also have turned down the opportunity to put ads on this show because it's just not what Friends at the Table is. We kind of live and die on your support. So again, [friendsatthetable.cash](#)— if you enjoyed this show, consider tossing us a buck or two. There are some rewards for every possible tier, so go check that out.

Our goals today— and you may recognize these various goals from the various games we've played all season that I've kind of mashed together because they're all very important. One, make the Mirage cool, weird, and touchable. Make it political and make it personal. Think geographically and communally. Play easy, play fair. Get into messy entanglements and let others make their own decisions. And play to find out what happens.

So what is Futura Free? Like The Quiet Year, Futura Free is a map-drawing game in which you collectively explore the struggles of a community in the wake of a crisis. It's a game about difficult choices, time, and landscapes. When you play, you make decisions about the community, decisions that get recorded on a map that is constantly evolving. Parts of the map are literal cartography, but other parts are symbolic. Players work together to create and steer this community, but they also introduce problems and tensions into the game. Unlike The Quiet Year, which asks players to explore events, projects, and trends of thought in the community as a collaborative, dispassionate group of narrators, in Futura Free players embody particular characters who belong to and shape the community directly.

Like Mobile Frame Zero: Firebrands, we will see these character in action through a series of mini-games that see them fall in love with their enemies, allying with their rivals, and fighting with their friends. You should play easy, play fair, and always let other players make their own decisions for themselves. Try to get your character into messy entanglements with others. Whenever anyone asks you a question about your character or the current situation, answer it. If you don't know the answer, make it up. Never feel bad to ask for some suggestions from the rest of the table.

But unlike Firebrands, which allows players to choose one of its mini-games at will, the scenes in Futura Free will be played within the The Quiet Year's larger structure, corresponding with various actions and card results. Also unlike The Quiet Year and unlike Firebrands, Futura Free has a GM, which is me, and that makes is sincerely and in a big way different. I prepped a bunch of events to happen during season transitions, and there will be some framing scenes according to certain card draws. Though my factions have project clocks, friends, rivals, enemies, and resources, they are not fully analogous to you and your factions. I will give the table updates on my NPC factions as their clocks finish, then in between seasons.

I will also say that all of the stuff I just said kind of is a fuck-you to both Firebrands and The Quiet Year? Those games have stated goals and precepts that are very well considered and have a lot of careful thought put into them. I'm not saying I didn't put thought into this, but Firebrands is designed to played very loose. It has metastructure and kind of a bird's-eye view plot and politicking, but those existing to kind of scaffold and support scenes that are about personal relationships. And The Quiet Year is the reverse of that. It takes at its core the community, that is what it is about. It's these characters as supporting players in a much larger story of the group. The Quiet Year urges you as a player to have restraint and it asks that you focus on the community's wants and needs instead of the individual's. We are not doing that. You should be focused on what your character wants and needs and seeing how that intersections with the wants and needs of the community. In some ways Firebrands is a game that says heros determine history as a side-effect of their personal goals, while The Quiet Year suggests that if heroes exist at all, it is only because history framed them as such in the camera.

This game, the one that we're playing now? Is kind of the question of that. Right? Twilight Mirage has been— this question has been at the center of Twilight Mirage. It's a conversation you can find even happening inside of the Twilight Mirage. You can imagine different characters debating whether or not history makes people or if people make history. It's that tension between individuals and communities that's driven us to this moment, right? I've said before that I thought we would be playing Kingdom or I thought we would be playing Firebrands. I didn't really know what this would be. But it was kind of always there. Right? An excommunicated priestess. A disabled criminal. A chronically ill contract killer. An alien hybrid career soldier. An artist in leisure. An exiled saint. And a Youtuber. Do these people make the world, or has the world made them?

All of that is to say that I'm excited to explore this game! I think that these systems are really good by themselves. I've done a playtest and a half of this, let's say. Or maybe one full playtest between— Jack and I kind of ran the numbers yesterday, and I did kind of half a playtest before that. But it could fall apart. It could totally fall apart, and if it does, I'm sorry. But it was better to try this thing and see what we could do.

I'm going to talk about the map right here on the table for all of us. Up top there is a kind of chart that can track all of the projects that we do? The Quiet Year happens from week to week, and so as that happens, things that different factions and people are working on will advance. And so that's that big area up top where there are some clocks already? Those will be the things that advance. Over on the right there's a list of resources. There are big system-wide resources like the Mirage itself, and there are also individual things. So for instance the Divine Free States has a lot of territory, so you see it has +territory there. Ahh, thinking of other stuff here. Below is the map. This is the second version of the map, the first one was uglier but then I lost it. I wanted to do a really good version of the first map I drew? But I lost it, so I had to do a rough one again. And so this is the second rough one. But it kind of gets there, right?

In the northwest is the New Earth Hegemony, in the northeast is the Divine Free States, and then the three player actions - the Qui Err Coalition, Seneschal's Brace, and Waking Cadent are at the bottom. You'll note that some planets have an A next to them. Those are planets that actively have Advent stuff on them? Those are Moonlock, Brighton, and Gift-3. And then Advent also has the catapult kind of dead north on this map.

Let me think of some other stuff here. Let's see. So I'll read this thing about clocks: [reading] when communities begin a project, we place a clock on that map - we'll put them up here, probably - and we update those again turn by turn. Other stuff— so we need contempt tokens here somewhere. What I'll do is just make— let's see. What's a good one? I got an idea. Here we go.

JACK: Six chickens. [DRE and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: [off mic] Let's do—

JANINE: I have a bunch of transparent old coins if you need a GIF, JPEG.

AUSTIN: Yeah, do you have one of those? Well, I was going to look for a frowny face. That doesn't—

JANINE: I made some of my own tokens when I was playing Fall of Magic with the other group.

AUSTIN: I would love that, then.

KEITH: I love the sort of heathered tee effect on the planets.

AUSTIN: Thank you. Let me tell you what I did there, is I did something pretty impressive I think. Which is, you open up a program - I think it's a Windows program, I'm pretty sure it's a Window program - called Paint [KEITH laughs] and do a fill. And then there's solid color fill, but there's also other types of fills. There's marker fill or crayon fill. I think what you're looking at there is the oil fill. Maybe the natural pencil fill, who could say?

JANINE: I think I deleted these coins. Sorry.

AUSTIN: Okay, it's fine.

JANINE: Can you just make little blue rectangles or something?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's what I'm going to do. That's what I'm going to do, I'm going to make little rectangles.

JANINE: I feel like they should be tall and thin.

AUSTIN: What is the color of contempt?

JANINE: Blue. Like slate blue.

ART: What?

KEITH: I thought it would be—

JANINE: Slate blue.

DRE: I was going to say red.

KEITH: — red.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I also thought it would be red.

JANINE: Contempt isn't that active and simmering.

KEITH: Could it be close to an envy green?

AUSTIN: How about that? Uhh, no. It's—

JANINE: That seems like hatred is all I'm saying.

AUSTIN: Okay, well, blue? I can do a blue.

JANINE: Or maybe a green.

ART: How about a yellow? Like a— angry yellow.

KEITH: I'm thinking tan—

DRE: How many colors can we say?

JANINE: Oh, like a yellow-brown. A yellow ochre.

KEITH: It's purple—

AUSTIN: How about that? Does that look right?

JANINE: That looks like contempt to me.

KEITH: — because it's red for angry and it's green for envy.

ART: I'm taking a contempt token for this contempt conversation. [AUSTIN laughs]

KEITH: Because contempt is like halfway between hatred and envy, right? That's what contempt is?

AUSTIN: I'm going to put these here. I'm putting these here. So there's a rule— all right, let me read this contempt thing. [reading] These are contempt tokens. They represent any tension and frustration that exist within the community. Here's a huge difference between this and The Quiet Year. You can say, "Contempt!" as often as you want, but you can only ever have one contempt token. And there's a reason for that, which is you can spend them in this game. And if I let you just get as many as you wanted to— one, it would be OP to just collect them constantly. Two, you would never spend them because you would just hold on to it forever. Because who knows? So you gotta get that quick economy going. Spend those contempt tokens!

KEITH: Okay, hold on, hold on. I—

ART: You're still encouraging more contempt.

AUSTIN: Fair!

KEITH: I might have missed something. What— so we each get one contempt token.

AUSTIN: No. Whenever you feel contempt, you're allowed to say the word, "Contempt."

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: That should be in-character, that should not be out of character in this case. In The Quiet Year it would be out of character because there's no characters.

KEITH: There's no characters, right.

AUSTIN: But you can only store one at a time. So when you have contempt, you let me know and I'll give you a contempt token. Does that make sense?

KEITH: Okay, gotcha. You can only store one at a time. And then what do we spend it on?

AUSTIN: I'll get there. I'll explain momentarily.

KEITH: Okay, I thought I missed it.

00:17:29

AUSTIN: No, you did not. You're good. So you'll note in the top right there's a turn rundown. I'll walk you through this really quick. The active player begins every round by drawing a card, reading the relevant text aloud, and resolving it. There are four decks of cards in this game. Right now you can only see the first one. I think we're going to call it the Dawn Deck? Instead of doing Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, because those are already pretty stacked terms here on Friends at the Table, we're going to do Dawn, Morning, Meridian, Twilight. And then in our case there will be a Midnight phase also.

So you'll draw a card, you'll read the relevant text. Whenever you draw a king, what would traditionally happen is— I'm not going into what traditionally happens. Whenever you draw a king, if everyone else has already played a week this go around, then we will advance to the next season. If not everyone has played a turn this season, then you shuffle that king back in, you draw a different card. If the king is re-drawn at this point, we are still going to advance. So we kind of get one gimme, if that makes sense. Traditionally in The Quiet Year that doesn't happen. You just play through all of Spring, all of Summer, all of Autumn. And then in Winter the king has that effect, where it's like when the King is drawn, the game is over? But for pacing, because there's seven of us, I removed three cards from each deck very carefully. I've chosen them very carefully. And then I've put this rule into place, which is again, if the king shows up and everyone's already gone, then we play the king and move on to the next season.

Again, there are four seasons, four decks. The cards of Spring will ask us lots of questions which will establish more about the landscape and inner workings of our communities. We should use Spring to become familiar with the mechanics and structure of the game. There won't necessarily be a lot of tension or conflict during Spring, and that's fine. I think in general

it's a good idea to think about the balance between building stuff and tearing stuff down. As we go through the kind of day from Dawn til Midnight, there will be more and more and more stress and a little bit more in terms of proper threat. I'm not saying there are no threats out the gate, but.

So the way the weeks work— again, you draw that card. You resolve that card. Then any projects that are out - and those include NPC projects - all advance by one. If they are finished, then we resolve it and we say in a couple of words kind of what happens. And then the active player decides to do something.

There are four actions that you can take. You can discover something new - and I'll read through this as we get to our first actual turn, I'll explain what these are - you can hold a discussion, you can start a project or contribute to a project that's already been started, or you can attack a project or a resource, which is wholly new to this hack of The Quiet Year.

At any point in that sequence of events, from reading your card through having an action you can choose one thing to give a Firebrands scene to. You don't need to, you can take a turn where you don't do any kind of close zoom-in scene where you're actually playing your character. You can always just have that loose narration and be like, "Okay, well Gig drew this card that say he worked on food supplies this week, so I'm going to work on food supplies this week." And we get a shot of Gig working on food supplies with some kids or whatever. Right? And maybe we have that whole turn and we never have to zoom in on a specific mini-game from Firebrands. But you could also decide, "Oh, actually I really think we should have a scene where we're having a conversation around dinner" which is one of the games in Firebrands. The thing to note is that two of the attack options that you have— and attack options, again, let you hurt projects or resources, which we'll get to in a second. Two of the higher levels of those— there's kind of an investigation level, then light, medium, and heavy. Medium and heavy require you to frame a scene, and so you should take that into mind before you make your decision.

All of this will become clearer as we start playing, as it did with Jack and I yesterday. We kind of sat down and ran through this, and it was just like, "Okay." Once you get the feel for it, you get the feel for it. Uhh, lots of honking outside, apologies.

All right. So we should talk about the terrain. [reading] Before the game begins, we must establish some facts about the communities of the Twilight Mirage. We begin with a brief discussion taking two minutes at most of general terrain and habit of the area. While much of the system has been filled from the last year of play, there are still blank spaces when it comes to these key factions. So is anything missing here, from this sketch of the Twilight Mirage? All the planets are here. I have the Restitution of All Things up here, I have the catapult, I have the Sky Reflected in Mirrors, I have the Brink in the bottom there. I have Privign, which is where the Waking Cadent is hanging. Anything obvious that's missing here? The Shore isn't on here, the actual asteroid belt isn't. But imagine it's there.

KEITH: Now I'm seeing it.

AUSTIN: Thank you. Thank you for your imagination. All right, if no one has anything obvious here to add. I mean, obviously we can add detail to the planets. The reason that the closer planets are big is so that we can draw on them? You can zoom in a lot. You could zoom in until your whole screen is one of these planets basically. So and then if you bring up your sketch tool or your drawing thing, you can pick the thin thing and draw really tight little sketches. So everybody will have an opportunity to draw stuff on this map today, so that will be fun.

At this point everyone should— actually, thank you for writing “Hi!” on Volition. Who did that? I'm leaving it! Volition says hi! [group laughter] I advance the Volition— no, I'm not going to do that. But I could! [more group laughter]

Here's what we should do is— we should each start by talking about— wait, who is where? Who is in which faction? Let's start with Jack. Which faction are you in, Jack? Sorry, I should go back. Fourteen?

JACK (as Fourteen): I am in the— sorry, I just saw that Volition has a little smiley face as well. This is bullshit. I am on Seneschal's Brace, the cool blue looking planet and that whole area?

AUSTIN: Cool. Echo?

SYLVIA (as Echo): I've joined up with the Qui Err Collective.

AUSTIN: Okay, and so they are on Skein and Moonlock as you can see. You'll note that Skein and Moonlock are also half inside of the New Earth Hegemony because they're kind of co-owned, those planets are. Keith? Er, Gig?

KEITH (as Gig): I am also with the Qui Err Collective.

AUSTIN: It is Coalition, but that is fine. It's QC on the map so easy to get that confused. Dre— sorry, Even?

DRE (as Even): I am with Seneschal's Brace.

AUSTIN: Okay. Next up, is Signet.

KEITH: It's actually Seneschal's Brake, but.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's a hard C.

JANINE (as Signet): I'm with the Waking Cadent.

AUSTIN: All right. Grand Magnificent?

ART (as Grand Magnificent): I'm all the way north, right? I'm over here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you're on the catapult, yeah. And Tender?

AL (as Tender) I'm also with Seneschal's Brace.

AUSTIN: Okay, so [reading] although the millions that live in the Quire system are hopeful and faithful, the Mirage remains geographically and politically fractured. That means that though the Divine Fleet was once a post-scarcity society, we must now all pay close attention to certain resources. Though the system remains splintered, each community does share certain abundances and scarcities. So at the very top - and this is just represented on the map as the actual— the map is pink because that's the Twilight Mirage - you have access to the Mirage itself, and you don't have— so you have +Mirage itself, you have -escape. There's no way out for most people. And that's everybody now. It used to be for everybody except for Level Five factions or factions that had special things that let them do it like the catapult? But now because of the blockade by the Rapid Evening, no one can leave. It's great, it's fantastic. But you'll notice there is one other abundant resource on every single faction here, which is DIY knowledge which is what Gig earned for everybody by completing that long-term project. Everybody has this DIY knowledge including Advent and Volition. [laughs]

KEITH (as Gig): Hey, it's for everybody

AUSTIN: It's great honestly. [reading] While these resources are often spent throughout the game, please remember that their primary both mechanically and fictionally is to prompt and limit narrative action. An abundant resource of fresh water might be spent to advance a project to make something complete faster, but its presence could also simply allow you to frame a scene next to a lake, or to provide fictional foundation necessary to start a project like fishing harvests. These are not the only key resources in the system. Starting on the left— I'm actually going to start with Jack, and then Grand, I'm going to skip you. Starting with Fourteen, skipping Grand. One by one, list a resource that is important to the Twilight Mirage and especially for your faction. Don't yet decide if it's abundant or scarce.

JACK: Starting on the left of what?

AUSTIN: I have my list of characters. Oh, you know what? Let's use the character list that's probably the same one for everybody, right, because the bottom of the screen is probably different for everybody.

JACK: Yeah.

KEITH: I think it's actually the same. I think it goes: Austin, Jack, Sylvia, me—

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. Well, that's accurate.

KEITH: Yeah, it's the same for everybody.

AUSTIN: Let's do that, then. Let's do that. Start with Jack. Fourteen.

00:27:05

JACK: Okay, so I get to list an abundance that I have? Or I get to list a thing?

AUSTIN: No, you get to list a resource that is important to Seneschal's Brace.

JACK: Okay, just important.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm just going to write this down on the scratch over here. What were you going to say, Grand?

ART: Where— are we taking things from this list? Or these already—

AUSTIN: No. No no no. The world, the world exists. Those are things I'll get to, those are things that already on the list for those factions.

ART: So we're just—

AUSTIN: The world.

KEITH: Adding—

AUSTIN: What is important?

ART: Just anything?

AUSTIN: Just anything.

ART: Just a resource.

AUSTIN: A resource that is important to Seneschal's Brace.

JACK: Okay, so I think Seneschal's Brace has diversity.

AUSTIN: Is important to them. That makes sense.

JACK: Sure is.

AUSTIN: Echo, for the QEU what is an important resource?

SYLVIA: Oh boy. Do you think morale would work well for this?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Totally. Gig, give me another one for the Qui Err Coalition.

KEITH: Let's go with communication.

AUSTIN: Cool. Even, give me another one for Seneschal's Brace.

DRE: Ooo, let's say experience.

AUSTIN: Whoops, I did this wrong. Experience, good. All right, Signet, what's important for the Waking Cadent these days?

JANINE: Divines.

AUSTIN: Uh huh! Good one. That was the one I used in the playtest twice, so.

JANINE: Yup!

AUSTIN: So let's skip you for a second, Grand. Tender, give me one more for Seneschal's Brace.

ALI: Is population one?

AUSTIN: Absolutely, that was another one that I used in Seneschal's Brace [ALI laughs], so.

ALI: Cool.

AUSTIN: All right, so. Now— Grand.

ART: Yes, I was skipped.

AUSTIN: You were skipped. Let's finish doing these, and we'll come to Grand because Grand's is special. I've already skipped Grand—

KEITH: I would like to do one thing. I would like to say this joke here. I like to put a joke in this spot.

ALI: Okay,

AUSTIN: Yeah?

KEITH: I think it would be really funny if we did a six-hour long finale, and we just did the whole thing like, "We're gonna skip Grand for just a second." [group laughter]

DRE: Aww, poor Art.

AUSTIN: "One second, we'll get there in a second, Grand."

KEITH: "We'll get there!"

AUSTIN: "We'll get there."

ART: Jess knows where waaay too many of you live for that. [SYLVIA and ALI laugh]

KEITH: I'm safe!

AUSTIN: All right. Now decide which of those you currently have as an abundance. The Waking Cadent's easy. You have one, that's an abundance. So Waking Cadent, you don't have a lot of stuff. You only have one thing, but it's an abundance of Divines. And DIY knowledge! What more do you need? [JANINE and ART chuckle]

Qui Err Coalition, you have morale and communication. Which of those is abundant, and which one is scarce?

KEITH: I have a good idea about this.

SYLVIA: Go, yeah.

KEITH: I think that maybe communication is abundant and morale is scarces.

SYLVIA: Yeah. I like that.

AUSTIN: Okay. Why is that? And also, how do you want to represent that on the map?

KEITH: So I helped build their communications?

AUSTIN: Sure. Do you want to draw a little antenna on Skein, maybe? [ALI giggles]

KEITH: Yeah. And so the reason that the Qui Err Coalition is a different faction from Seneschal's Brace is due to a lack of morale. Or partially.

AUSTIN: Partially, sure. Or maybe that lack of morale has built out of that they've split. Right?

KEI: Sure, it's sort of a very snap, unilateral decision too.

AUSTIN: It sure was. Signet, do you want to add something that represents Divines near Privign?

JANINE: Oh yeah, I'm doing it, don't worry. Don't worry.

AUSTIN: All right, thank you. Seneschal's Brace people. Population, experience, diversity. What do you have? What are the ones you don't have?

JACK: It's probably population, isn't it?

KEITH: Is it two-to-one abundance? Which one are you—

AUSTIN: It is. You get one. You get one abundance.

JACK: There are a lot of people in Seneschal's Brace, right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The way to think about this is maybe the lack of diversity here is not having lots of diverse people? It's that the diverse people aren't unified? We can also change that diversity if you think that something that you do think is not only important but it is at least a neutral?

DRE: Well, I was—

KEITH: Or just difficult to separate from population.

AUSTIN: Right, that's actually a good point too.

DRE: I mean, I was also thinking the lack of diversity could also be that the Qui Err Coalition basically told us to fuck off last time we talked to them. [KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN: Totally. It redraws the lines of diversity. The fact that they have the DFS and also New Earth Hegemony people, that's not diversity enough. Yeah, I like that.

JACK: Totally, it's very much like, "We're diverse here in Seneschal's Brace." "Yeah? How diverse are you?" "Well, multiple factions have told us that we can go fuck ourselves!" [ALI and JANINE laugh]

AUSTIN: And you don't have experience because despite having two really great leaders in the Cadent under Mirage and Declan's Corrective, you don't have— you'll note that the DFS, the Divine Free States, one of their abundances is the deep state [JACK laughs] because they just are filled with fucking bureaucrats who are lifelong civil servants.

JACK: Ambassadors and spies and diplomats.

AUSTIN: And spies and— yeah, exactly. And scientists and— aww, thank you for the butterflies around Privign, that's great. Ahh, that's all the factions, right?

JACK: Yeah, I think so.

AUSTIN: All right. And then—

JACK: Oh, should we go over what the nonplayer factions have?

AUSTIN: We will once— we will in a second, there's still one more player faction. Sort of. Kind of. Grand? Are you there?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: For each other resource listed, abundant or scarce, name a resource that Advent has and who they took it from. So everybody else listed various resources, abundant and scarce. For each one they listed, which by the numbers is six, I need you to list seven— er, six rather, abundance, abundant— for each—

ART: For each one, I'm doing one— I'm not doing six for each one. (AUSTIN: Correct.) That'd be 36, right? That's a lot of things.

AUSTIN: You do one. Correct. You're not doing 36, you're doing six total abundant resources. Tell me what they are and who Advent stole them from.

ART: Okay! Access.

AUSTIN: What's that mean? How would— go ahead and tell me what that means.

ART: You know, like— like— [softly to himself] like access, having access to things.

AUSTIN: Well, what do they have access to?

ART: I think I mean this informationally.

AUSTIN: Okay, maybe it's better to have just +information because it should be very specific. If it's access to places—

ART: Yeahhh. What if it's physical access? No, that's not good. That's not good.

AUSTIN: I mean, it could mean— is is access to all the different planets? Have they bought their way onto every world?

ART: Yeah, I like that.

AUSTIN: Okay, so +access. I'm going to make more little As on every other planet.

ART: I don't know what one faction it makes sense to have gotten that from?

AUSTIN: Brighton maybe? They're the politicsy people.

ART: Sure, yeah. It becomes weird when it's literal boots on the ground.

AUSTIN: Maybe it's literally they bought their way into— they hired some fucking diplomats away from the Brighton Lineage.

ART: Mmm. Yeah, that's a good one.

AUSTIN: Like got their rolodexes. That's one, what else?

ART: It's tricky because there's a lot of stuff I don't want them to—

AUSTIN: Now, be honest. You didn't do this. Advent did this.

ART: Right. Material.

AUSTIN: Sure, like building material, raw materials?

ART: Raw materials from the Qui Err Coalition.

AUSTIN: Okay. How'd they— was that just a military strike? Was that just out from under them, pushing them away?

ART: Yeah, military but— what's a military thing when no one really— no one shot anyone. But they showed up and took it.

AUSTIN: Gunboat diplomacy style.

ART: Yeah, gunboat diplomacy style.

KEITH: Gumbo?

AUSTIN: Gumbo diplomacy.

ART: They came up with some real good stew, and while everyone was distracted [group laughter], all their soldiers loaded some stuff on to the—

JACK: I'm going to go on record: gumbo diplomacy is great.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I'm pro-gumbo diplomacy. We tried that last episode, it don't go great unfortunately.

JACK: [laughing] No, it did not go well.

ART: Is taking information control undermining the communication— ?

AUSTIN: No. These are things that will be spendable.

ART: Okay. That's another big one, I don't know who you take information control from. I've— I should've—

KEITH: Oh, you could take it from— oh wait, they're not a faction.

AUSTIN: I mean, you could take it from Quire in that— you haven't taken it from them, but maybe you're passing signals through the Sky Reflected to Mirrors or through a satellite system that they set up. Or from the Brink? The Brink has the ability to— or from the NEH who has one of those broadcasters?

KEITH: Yeah, that's what I was thinking, the cult. (ART: Yeah.)

AUSTIN: Yeah, Our Profit has the ability to broadcast to everybody using the same device that Gig has. So maybe they've stolen one of those?

ART: Yeah, that sounds like a good one.

AUSTIN: Sure! Three more!

ART: It's rude of you to give them fear for me.

AUSTIN: Volition? Volition has fear.

ART: Yeah, but I don't want to take fear.

AUSTIN: You don't have to literally take things that are here.

ART: No no, I know. I think I've generally been off of that. (AUSTIN: Gotcha.) But like— I want fear, but fear's already on the board. I don't want to double up fear.

AUSTIN: Is intimidation different than fear?

ART: Yeah, maybe.

AUSTIN: Is that something you took from Volition? Is that something from— is that represented through— I keep saying “you” but Advent, there's a distinction. But Advent ahh— oh, is that something like the fact that Castlerose is now part of Advent who runs assassin crew?

ART: Sure, yeah, that's a good one. (AUSTIN: Good.) I was thinking like from some big splashy action?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's good too.

ART: But what qualifies as a big splashy action anymore?

00:37:43

AUSTIN: Yeah, good question.

ART: And I don't want to be like, “The big thing happened before this game started.”

AUSTIN: Maybe it's the— maybe it was the time Advent almost killed everybody in this sector. And there's no proof—

ART: Mmm, you think that's intimidating?

AUSTIN: Yeah, a little bit. There's no proof that it was them, but word gets around.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: We need two more. Currently you have access, material, information control, intimidation. And then you'll have more, and you'll also have DIY knowledge.

ART: Guns!

AUSTIN: Yep. [ALI giggles]

ART: Just guns. I just want one that's just guns.

AUSTIN: Got it, got it.

JACK: Does that include the body of the robot, the mechs that you've just— all the Independence mechs?

ART: I mean, I think those are under this umbrella, but those are not literally guns.

AUSTIN: Right. One more.

ART: Innovation!

AUSTIN: Love it. I love stealing innovation. [DRE and ALI laugh] Where'd the take it from?

ART: I mean, they got Grand Magnificent.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Is this just like that great tweet about the invention of the Arnold Palmer, where he's like, "I'd like a drink. Great! I invented this!" [ART and KEITH laugh]

ART: Yes.

AUSTIN: Cool. Great. Love it. All right. I'm going to go over what all of these are now. [reading] System-wide— so again this is anything— as I will explain in a second, anyone can spend this first one and the second one affects everybody, which is the Mirage itself an abundance and escape is a scarcity.

For Advent, they have access, material, information control, intimidation, guns, innovation, and DIY knowledge.

For the NEH, they have the Splice, population, DIY knowledge, and they're lacking unity because Our Profit has a bit of a split with Templeton's Fair, the leader of the NEH kind of

military. They're not at civil war or anything, but they just don't have unity, and they really badly need it.

The Divine Free States have territory, they have two whole planets to themselves, lots of space on both. They have a deep state, as I described. They now have DIY knowledge, and they do not have any Divines.

Volition has Axioms, Iconoclasts, fear, DIY knowledge. And it does not have mobility.

The Rapid Evening has weapons, stealth, prophecy, DIY knowledge. It does not have allies or population.

The Qui Err Coalition now has communication and DIY knowledge, but it does not have morale.

The Waking Cadent has Divines, and it has DIY knowledge.

Seneschal's Brace has population, DIY knowledge, and it's lacking in diversity and experience.

Thank you for drawing a cute face on Skein. It's a different type of antenna than what I was expecting [KEITH and DRE snigger], but very good regardless.

JANINE: Does it have a beard?

[overlapping]

KEITH: It's a smile.

AUSTIN: I think it's a smile.

AUSTIN: It's like, "maaugh maaugh I'm smiling," That's the face it's making, for people at home who are curious. All right, before we continue we should go over character traits. Echo, what are you three character traits?

SYLVIA (as Echo): Mine are courageous, fiery, and mighty.

AUSTIN: Love it. Even?

DRE (as Even): Mine are daredevil, desperate, and weird.

AUSTIN: Love it. Fourteen?

JACK (as Fourteen): I am passionate, determined, and sturdy.

AUSTIN: Okay. Gig?

KEITH (as Gig): I am resourceful, kind, and handsome.

AUSTIN: Grand Magnificent.

ART (as Grand Magnificent): Brilliant, rich, and conflicted.

AUSTIN: Signet?

JANINE (as Signet): I am good-hearted, resolute, and strong.

AUSTIN: And Tender?

AL (as Tender) I am bold, charming, and devoted.

AUSTIN: Ooo. Okay. I am trying to figure out if I can edit this thing to make it— I actually can't do these little squares. I don't think y'all can move them, so I'm going to add a new type of token [SYLVIA laughs] that'll be contempt tokens.

KEITH: Can we do like a frowny face?

AUSTIN: I can do a ghost.

KEITH: Oh, that's good. I very much am in contempt of ghosts.

JANINE: Oh my god. [AUSTIN and DRE laugh]

AUSTIN: There you go. The ghost of contempt.

JACK: Have I ever been contemptuous towards a ghost?

ALI: Probably.

KEITH: I absolutely have.

AUSTIN: Have you ever stabbed a ghost? I'm going to continue. So [reading] the basic unit of play is the week. Each week is a turn taken one player, proceeding clockwise around the table. I already figured out an order that I really like, so it's going to Echo, Gig. I should have put these characters in that order. In fact, I'm going to do that right now. So we will proceed according to that order: Echo, Gig, Signet, Even, Fourteen, Tender, Grand Magnificent. During a week, again, draw a card, project clocks are filled by one, finished projects are updated, activeplayer chooses an action.

For now I think it's time to start. And we'll go over the actions as Jack who goes first and who has— Jack does not go first anymore, Echo goes first. Fuck. Well, then Echo you're going to draw a card, and you're going to resolve it, and I'm going to explain what your actions are. Sound good?

SYLVIA: Awesome. Yes. I don't know how to play this yet. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Well, it'll be fine. It'll be great! All right, I'm going to draw a card and place it on the table. Because I want to make it big. (SYLVIA: Okay.) Wow! Immediate! So we drew the King of Spring, which means I'm going to now recall it [ALI laughs] and draw a second, different card.

JACK: Did you shuffle the deck, Austin?

AUSTIN: Ahh, I will shuffle it. Yes, there we go.

ART: Ooo the chances of everyone getting a turn just went dramatically down.

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

JANINE: That sucks.

AUSTIN: Mmm hmm. Welcome to the game!

SYLVIA: Sorry! [AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: I shuffled it ahead of time. Trust. All right. You see a good omen, what is it? Or, you see a bad omen, what is it? So the first thing that we're going to do is resolve this card. The way you resolve the card is that you read the two. You pick one of those two possibilities. We've drawn the Jack of Dawn in this case, the Jack of Spring. I'm just going to say Spring. I wanted to do the other thing, but the cards are just going to say Spring, and I'm just going to say Spring. Shout outs and apologies to Spring in Hieron, coming up in just a month or two.

So here's what you can do this turn, Echo. You can resolve this card. You have to pick one of those. And you can decide if you want to frame a scene around it. Do you want to show us a scene of Echo seeing a good omen or seeing a bad omen? By default you can always say, "Yeah, Echo is out in the field and sees a shooting star and like, 'Oh, that's cool.'" That's not framing a scene, that's just a little bit of narration, that's fine. Framing a scene is if you want to go to Firebrands and be like, "Oh there's a cool mini-game called A Dance, I want the good omen to happen in the middle of this dance." Right? That would be framing a scene. You just pick one of those. After that, all the project clocks change, and after that you get an action. And the reason I'm explaining this is because if I don't— you may want to frame a scene now instead of later, I want to make clear that you get one of those frame scenes per thing.

So later, when it's action time, you will either discover something new, which is introduce a new situation. It might be a problem, an opportunity, or a bit of both. Draw that situation onto the map. Drawings should be small and simple, smaller than an inch, finished within 30 seconds. Whenever things seem too controlled or too easy, we can use this action to introduce new issues or dilemmas. It's also a great first step in fixing a community's problem or looking for a way to expand in some way. Where it's like, "Oh yeah, I want to discover"-- the Qui Err Coalition has a morale problem, maybe you discover something that could help boost morale and then next turn start a clock that would increase the possibility of it helping. Right?

The second thing you can do is hold a discussion. And there are kind of two levels of this. One is again, the kind of no scene version and you'll always do that if you're going to hold a discussion. To do that, you can open with a question or a declaration— starting with you and then going through our list of character names. [reading] Everyone gets to weigh in once, sharing a single argument comprised of one or two sentences. If you open with a question, you get to weigh in last. If you open with a declaration, that is it for you. Each discussion should be tied to a situation on the map. When the discussion ends, mark the situation it's affected with a small dot. So you could be, "All right, I want to hold a discussion with everyone at the table. We're agreed fuck Advent, right?" And then we go around table, and everyone have a sentence or two. And then we come back to you, and if that was a question, then you'd be able to say something. And if not, you just wouldn't get to say anything. You can of course frame another scene there. So if you want to have that abstract discussion and also be like, "I want another dinner scene" you could do A Conversation over Food or A Sword Fight that is sort of like a conversation. So that's hold a discussion.

Third is start or contribute to a project. Choose a situation and declare what your community, meaning the faction you're part of, will do to resolve it. Add a clock to the map to represent the project. You may also spend a contempt token, an abundance, or a character trait and use your turn to continue any project you know about, but only if that project's player allows it. If you do so, advance that project's clock by an additional step this turn. So let's say you set up a project this time, and Gig, you wanted it to go faster? You could spend your turn being, "Oh, I'm going to help." And the way you do that - again, I'm going to walk through these again because these are important - you can spend a contempt token. You can be like, "Man, I'm so pissed off, I gotta put that energy somewhere." You can spend an abundance, you can reduce— really, let's just say a resource. I'm actually going to fix that. Because you can spend a resource. Meaning you could— the Qui Err Coalition could be like, "All right, we're going to use our communications network in such a way that it goes from being an abundant resource to just kind of being a neutral there resource." Or you could use a resource that's not listed here at all. You could be like, "All right, to solve this problem, we're going to use all our wealth and go broke and add a new scarcity of wealth" for instance.

The reason that is maybe not a thing you want to do is that in the epilog of this game, we're going to look at what the resources are to help tell the story of what's happened. So if you end up with— I mean, Jack, we did a playtest yesterday where at one point you were like, "What's to stop me from just constantly building up a strike force or population, just constantly killing people?"

JACK: Destroying battalions of soldiers. And the answer is: that sucks to do.

AUSTIN: That sucks to do.

JACK: That's really bad to do! And you reflect that.

AUSTIN: At the end of the game, I'm going to come around to all of you and be like, "All right, tell me what pluses look like. Tell me what the abundances look like in the world that comes after this game." And with the negatives, I'm going to be, "All right, tell me what that looks like."

JACK: "I did a draft, and everyone on my planet is dead. I won. It's bad."

AUSTIN: Right! [laughs] And then I'll say, "Okay, well you have six more of those. What happens next time?" [JACK laughs] And that's a lot!

The third thing you can spend is a character trait. So Echo, whatever you do, you can say, "Oh, I'm going to spend my courageous. I'm going to strike through my courageous." And that's it, you don't get that courageous back for the rest of the game unless you do a project get your courageous back. Or to add a different trait, for instance.

JACK: It's really crucial, but it's not like you're getting rid of this, (AUSTIN: Yes.) It's not like, "By doing this, I'm no longer courageous." (AUSTIN: Yes.) It's like, "I'm doing this and now I'm exhausted. My courageousness is exhausted."

AUSTIN: "I've tapped my courageousness for this season of my life. (JACK: Yes.) I fucking did that thing, it was good, I really pushed myself." And at the end of the game, we'll come back to anything you've struck through, and I'll say, "Hey, are you still courageous? Is that still a thing? Or has this changed that about you, because you expended it?" And that will be how we wrap the character stories at the end. We'll look at these traits, and we'll say, "Hey, how is that thing serving you in whatever comes next?"

KEITH: I have a question about contempt tokens.

AUSTIN: Totally.

KEITH: When you issue contempt, do you get a token to then spend, or do you give that token to the person—

AUSTIN: No, you get it. It's sort of like— you know, sometimes anger makes the world go around. It gives you something. But play honest. I know who Gig Kephart is. Gig Kephart has not moved around with a lot of contempt compared to, let's say, Ferro? And I'm not saying, "Don't take contempt tokens." But be honest about what is contemptuous.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And that should be about action. That should be about projects— you can't take contempt about Volition filling a clock by one sector, do you know what I mean? If the end of that, you're like, "Yo, that's terrible, contempt" cool. But each little step shouldn't be one.
(KEITH: Yep.)

So that's the third thing you can do is, is start or contribute to a project. You'll see that in the rulebook there are— if you start a new project, it has different lengths. The lengths are determined by who it helps. So if you're doing something that only helps you, it's a one-week project. If you're doing something that helps you and your family and your friends, it's a two-week project. If it helps your faction, it's a three-week project. If it helps your faction and its allies? So things like resources fall into that category. That is a four-week action. If it helps everybody in the system, that's a five-week action. And if it helps everybody in the system except for whoever you want to exclude from that thing, that's a six-week clock. That's the highest it goes. We're not going to go to seven- or eight-week clocks. NPCs have that because they're kind of big huge factions with agendas that are a little bit more complex sometimes. But for y'all, it's from one to six. There are very few one-week clocks. Like, "I want to get money for me" is maybe one of those. So maybe Grand [KEITH laughs] can put together some one-week clocks. But nothing—like, a character trait is at the very least a three-week clock, probably a four-week clock.

KEITH: Can Grand even have more money?

AUSTIN: Yeah, sure. Of course! There's always more. That's why they call it money. Everybody needs money.

And finally, you can attack another project or resource. And those also take resources— we can get into that when it's time to do an attack. I don't want to get into what all these things are. What I will say one of the most important things is, you can choose to investigate a project. So you don't know what Advent, DFS, NEH, Volition's or Rapid Event's projects are currently, Echo. You could investigate one of them, which is just I choose one and then I reveal what it is. And then you learn what that project is. Then after that, there's a light attack, a heavy attack, and a medium attack, which again, we can get into when it's time to get into one of those. But long and short, they hurt the project or resource in some way.

JACK: And you cannot attack a project if you don't know what it is.

AUSTIN: You cannot attack a project blind because how would you even know? The last thing is the medium and heavy attacks require you to frame a scene and a risky scene. You can't just like, "Oh, and also" — there's a chance that those things would fail, and so we play one of the games from Firebrands. And if it falls apart, it falls apart.

00:53:17

All right. Echo, you've drawn the Jack of Spring. You see a good omen, what is it? Or, you see a bad omen, what is it?

SYLVIA: Question really. What scale should I try— can it be person— any scale for the cards?

AUSTIN: Any scale. Think communally. Again, let's look at our goals here. make the Mirage cool, weird, and touchable. Make it political and personal. Think geographically and communally. Play easy, play fair. Get into messy entanglements and let others make their own decisions. And play to find out what happens. So I would say keep the community in mind. Think about your character as a camera into the larger space, if that makes sense.

SYLVIA: I think I'd rather start this off with a good omen.

AUSTIN: Sure, I agree with that.

SYLVIA: I needs to be something that happens in a communal space, and I'm trying to think of something that works for that because I want it to be something that a lot of the people in this group see.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So is it something literally in space in the border between Seneschal's Brace space and Quire space?

SYLVIA: Yeah, that could be—

AUSTIN: They kind of have that big area, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah, for sure. Maybe it happens when they're out on Iota Pretense's ship? (AUSTIN: Sure.) And I think— you know what I like? It's not quite the shooting star thing because that's a little too normal for the Twilight Mirage [AUSTIN laughs] but— remember the — I can't remember the name of ocean in the Mirage that sort of floated through.

AUSTIN: The Wandering Sea.

SYLVIA: Would it be weird if we saw just a part of that that had splintered off in the thing. And like, "Oh, that's cool!"

AUSTIN: Yeah, because it left and it kind felt deflating in a sense that it was leaving? But what if it left behind a copy of itself, a smaller— not Connecticut-size but Rhode Island-size.

KEITH: [sings] Little baby!

SYLVIA: Yeah! Little space rugrat.

AUSTIN: I like it. I like it. You want to draw it on the map?

SYLVIA: Yeah, sure. I don't know how big Rhode Island is so I'm not going to be doing this to scale.

AUSTIN: It's tiny.

KEITH: Rhode Island is really small. You can fit like five Rhode Islands inside Massachusetts, I think? (AUSTIN: It's true.) Those are two states I know best because that's where I live.

ART: How many—

AUSTIN: All right. Second step. Second step is: all the clocks advance. So Advent, NEH, DFS, Volition, and Rapid Evening's clocks all advance. Third step is you take an action. (SYLVIA: Yeah.) What are you going to do?

SYLVIA: I think I'm going to start by discovering something new. I feel like— and what I was thinking I could discover on here, or that I think could throw an interesting wrenches into things? We haven't really done too much stuff with the Stitches lately. Are those still around, right?

AUSTIN: Those are 100% still around.

SYLVIA: I was thinking maybe we find one those near one of the bases or wherever we're settled on Skein.

AUSTIN: Sure, what's it connect to?

SYLVIA: I don't know. I think maybe we need to find out what it connects to, is the thing.

AUSTIN: Cool. Is that a scene you want to do, or do you think that that's kinda broader? You think that's like—

SYLVIA: I don't— I'm kind of struggling to think of anything close to go into right now.

AUSTIN: No worries. Do you think that's just— y'all are doing one of your old— do we just get the shots of Echo off in the wilds the way that you were back during the This Year of Ours game, leading a little patrol group?

SYLVIA: Yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think this is like— we always talk about liminal spaces. So you're in Skein, you're in the kind of jungles, right? What's a cool mountainous jungle liminal space? Um. I think it's kind of scary. Here's my pitch. I think you go into a a weird mountain cave to rest and recover. And you stay in there for like 20 minutes— you and your other guards, your other explorers. And then you come out, and you're not where you were before. What you come out and see is that you're looking down from a different mountain at a kind of wasteland? And there are just countless Iconoclasts, the weird black ones from the Schism attack, that are just boiling on the ground and bubbling over each other?

And you're just like, "Everybody get back in the cave. Ahh, I think we're on Moonlock? This is bad!" So the thing is, you know it connects Skein and Moonlock, but it does that in a place that not necessarily safe so you can't add it to your resources. What would be cool is — could you draw that on the map on Skein and Moonlock. Like a mountain or something?

SYLVIA: Yeah. I'll gonna give a little swirl here for the entrance.

AUSTIN: Yeah, gimme that cool swirl! Hell yeah! [ALI laughs] Wow, this has a cool earring on! [KEITH laughs]

SYLVIA: Trust me, Skein is going to look impeccable by the end of this, I promise. And you wanted me to draw the mountains on Moonlock?

AUSTIN: Yeah, and maybe draw a little kind of spiral there too, maybe. Do both.

JACK: God, opening any kind of door and just seeing Iconoclasts bubbling on the other side of it! It's like—

AUSTIN: It's bad.

[overlapping]

JACK: -- no no no! Close the door!

DRE: Bad time.

AUSTIN: All right. So that's your first turn. Turn over. Nice work. All right. Gig, are you ready to go?

KEITH: Yeah, hi.

JACK: [tensely] Please don't be a king.

KEITH: Oh, that would be terrible.

AUSTIN: That is the ten. So you have an option. There's another community somewhere on the map. Where are they? What sets them apart from you? Or, what belief or practice helps to unify your community?

KEITH: Huh. Well, there's a lot of communities on the map. (AUSTIN: There are.) So I think I'm going to go with what belief or practice helps to unify your community?

AUSTIN: Sounds good.

KEITH: Can I ask again for a refresher on how the Qui Err Coalition works? (AUSTIN: Totally.) It's like a lot of little communities, right? They're scattered?

AUSTIN: So there's one big one now primarily— there's one big one on Moonlock, there's one big one in the Sky Reflected in Mirrors. Those two come from the same place, They are clones of the original Qui Err people who lived on Quire, who recorded themselves before Independence drove them all to death. Like, killed them all basically. Then there is Parhelia, which is that city that you helped bring into being with Quire. That is an alternate-reality Quire people who still have all four arms, for instance, and are a different culture. But the two of them recognize in each other a shared history and so have formed a coalition. So there is a pretty big distinction, right? One of them comes from the most perfect version of the world and was brought into existence from Quire's dream of a more perfect world. And the other one lived through genocide and have come back from it— saw the world at the worst place it could be, came back, and and was like, "Yo, why are there so many strangers here? Also, what happened to our planet? Why is it eight planets now?"

And so that is the basic setup. The Parhelia part, the group that is the crystalline city from Skein— that is a collection of a bunch of different villages and towns and cities? There's one big city that's that capitol sort of? But it's kind of a— I kind of described it previously as being a group that's very much about separating itself according to naturally occurring borders? And so it's like, "Okay, this is the river basin group, this is the group that exists inside of this particular forest." Using a lot of natural borders as a way to separate each other into different communes, basically. So that's not like— and then they report up, bit by bit by bit. So you have the group that's in the southern base, and there's five of them in there. And those all then report up to one group that kind of helps with all of them. So yeah, it is also a big collection of different mini-groups.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Also the Sailors of the Ark have also— are also hanging with y'all now. (KEITH: Right.) I don't know that they moved the Ark here. They're just sending supplies back and forth and sharing information and hanging occasionally. I suspect some of them did move here, frankly. But I feel like moving their whole Ark here would be a project.

KEITH: Okay. All right. So— belief or practice ... so you say that they— all right. I know what it is. They throw a lot of parties. basically they can communicate— they're sending communications to each other, right? Because they report upwards. But then whenever someone needs to go from one place to another place to like transfer supplies? They send a party, a literal party.

AUSTIN: That's great. So they get there, and they're like, "Hey, the supplies we need to make it through winter are here, let's a cool feast/dance party!"

KEITH: Yes.

AUSTIN: Awesome. Cool. I love it. So there's just this kind of culture like— whenever there's giving, there's celebration. (KEITH: Yes.) Or sharing. Okay. Into it! Cool. So next step: I advance clocks. Advent is now at two of eight. NEH is at two of six. DFS is at two of six. Volition's at two of eight, and Rapid Evening is at two of seven, basically. They have five left. [JACK sighs heavily] Uh huh! Good sound. Gig, what do you do with your turn? Discover something new, hold a discussion, start or contribute to a project, or attack a project or resource. Attack or investigate is really what that should say.

1:03:42

KEITH: Yeah, investigate's the top one there?

AUSTIN: Or it's— no, so investigate is like— I'm going to change the way it's worded there. Discover something new is "add something to the map" basically which is what Echo did last time? (KEITH: Right.) So I'm just going to do "investigate/attack a project or resource." There we go.

JACK: Investigating is what lets us act on clocks that we don't know what they are.

AUSTIN: Right. So if you were like, "Hey, what the fuck is the Rapid Evening doing?" that would be investigate. And you would need to do that before someone said, "Hey, let's stop them from doing whatever it is that they're doing." Which you can choose not to do if you want.

KEITH: I know what I want to do. You gave me the idea. I want to the Ark to become a mobile Ark.

AUSTIN: Cool! So you're gonna make it like a space ark.

KEITH: It's gonna be a space ark, yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Love it. This is so good. Okay. So do you think that that benefits your faction?

KEITH: I think it benefits my faction and allies.

AUSTIN: All right. So that is going to be a four-step clock then. Right?

KEITH: Yeah. So wait— what's the five-step? It's everyone, right?

AUSTIN: Five-step is everyone in the system.

KEITH: Okay, no. It's just four, it's four.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's four. So I'm adding a five-step clock under this, and I'm going to add a word underneath it. That's your turn. Awesome. There's not a scene there? You're not— what's that look like? Tell me what it looks like at the very least. If you want to do a scene we can do a scene, but I feel like we can keep it moving given that this whole episode had a lot of me explaining rules?

KEITH: Yeah. We can keep it— I'll talk about the parties, though. I think all of the—

AUSTIN: Wait, so is there a party associated with setting up this Ark rocket?

KEITH: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Okay. So they bring— so all— I'm thinking everybody— this is a big project. This is a long thing, this is important. I think that every major Qui Err city is sending supplies, and that exponentiates the party? Because they're all bringing the part—

AUSTIN: Right, because they all have to bring party stuff too.

KEITH: So it is a fucking bash. It is a bash.

AUSTIN: All throughout the Ark-en-Ciel Amovement Park. Love it. Great. Can y'all see that it says "Ark rocket " here underneath this clock? Great.

KEITH: No. Can't see that.

AUSTIN: What about now?

KEITH: Yes. There it is.

AUSTIN: All right. So that is Gig's turn. Signet, are you ready?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The three of Spring. Either: someone new arrives, who? or two of the community's younger members get into a fight, what provoked them?" And here we're talking about the Waking Cadent's community, which will be an opportunity to sketch that out a little bit.

JANINE: Yeah. Shit. This is hard because I don't really— this is also Signet just showing up there.

AUSTIN: We've been there— you should have been there now for a little while. You can play Signet as having adapted already? Or maybe not as adapted as say, Blooming is but more adapted than this new— or if you want this to be "someone new arrives" and it's you, we can play that easy.

JANINE: That's easier for me to imagine that Signet being there for a few weeks and just laying low, to be honest.

AUSTIN: Okay, that's fine. So what does your arrival look like?

JANINE: I think my arrival is notable because it's separate from Belgard. I think Signet brings Belgard to a point, but then probably transfers to a ship that's going that way or does— there's a transfer point, maybe she uses her suit to close the distance. But I don't think she takes Belgard there all the way. (AUSTIN: Okay.) I don't know if this should be a Firebrands thing.

AUSTIN: It might be. There's a pretty broad one. There's couple of really broad ones, right? There is Solitaire which is literally a kind of open-ended free-play kind of thing? There are basically prompts. And we are not using the exact prompts here because we, for instance, are not ever going to be entertaining interloping offworlders on your family estate? Right? But you can expand from that. We could expand from "you've been off duty, drinking and relaxing with your fellow soldiers" and then choose one of the suboptions there. Right? In this case we can also just frame something around a conversation or something. Right? So there is the A Conversation over Food one. That could be fun. I know Signet loves conversation over food. [JANINE laughs] But we could also have A Dance, we could also have— I don't think you're making out with anyone yet, so Stealing Time Together is probably a little too quick. "Hey everybody up here, who is making out with me?" [JANINE and AUSTIN laugh] "I got all of my partners in one place, they're all creepy and perfect."

JANINE: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: Uh huh! But I think maybe just a kind of a free Solitaire-type thing makes sense unless you would want to do A Conversation over Food, which is fun.

JANINE: What if I just eat food with Polyphony? What if we just do that?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's a good idea.

JANINE: That just seems quick and fun, right?

AUSTIN: That does seem quick and fun. Totally. So what's it look like? Well, I guess I'll give you a little bit of what Privign looks like in my eyes, which is— when we first described Privign it was this Rococco temple filled with jewels. And then it got fucked up by that giant rainbow Iconoclast. I don't know if you remember that? (JANINE: Mhm.) And then you beat that Iconoclast and kind of spread it to— drained all the color of it— I mean, it had drained away the color from the system. You gave the system back its color and then beat that Iconoclast until it kind of dispersed. The Waking Cadent showed up, and she ghostbusted together that ghost and used it as glue to reconnect Privign Station. And so there is just a low jewel-tone glow constantly throughout Privign Station now because it already had all of these jewels built into it? That are now constantly being— there is just a low level of light pulsing in all of these giant jewels that kind of stitch the place together.

But since then Polyphony has arrived? And there aren't that many people. Again, if you look at the bottom of the scratch sheet, there's a list of everybody. And I just thought of someone else, so I'm going to add them. At the Waking Cadent place these days - there we go - the Waking Cadent; The Seal Was Broken by Silver Blades Slipped Neatly under Letter's Edge, who used to be known as Massalia D'Argent, now as Silver who is the Excerpt of Barricade who was recently turned into a Divine; Blooming, who used to be the Excerpt of Emphyrean and is now the Excerpt of Compulsion; Polyphony, who is the Axiom that reshapes the world around them according to the wishes of those around them; I've written Belgard here, but you just said Belgard is outside of this place.

JANINE: I think Belgard could get here if that's a thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Totally. And then Bounty and Nebula. Nebula was originally Czar, the doctor from the Siege holiday game? And Bounty was Bountiful, the Axiom that was turned into Bounty. And also Iluna Vouje who is the priestess of Privign who led y'all around a little bit.

But let's just do Polyphony and Signet. I think it's a lot like the first time you came to Privign, where you're kind of— there's a sort of like— that automated church drone, you do remember that one, that leads you around? (JANINE: Yeah.) Leads you almost— as soon as you land, you are led by it into a dining hall where Polyphony is already seated. Instead of the blues that they had, the light blues that they were wearing during— when you met them in the town on

Gift-3, they are now wearing a maroon dress with baby pink flare-like trim. No parasol this time, they do not have the parasol with them in there. They are not outside in the sun. But they have a very nice hat on, and they are already sipping tea. And there is a warm cup of tea for you, ready to go at whatever seat you want to be at.

JANINE: Okay. Do I ask questions? I don't know how this works. [laughs]

AUSTIN: So if we're doing A Conversation over Food— I'll read the rules. [reading] Ask your chosen partner how you two came to be eating together. We've done that. Other players can join in freely if it makes sense for their characters to also be present. It doesn't. What do you notice about each other? What have you heard? And then during the meal, anyone can ask anyone for details about the setting, occasion, or circumstances. Conducting a conversation: take turns. The person with the lowest social standing takes the first turn. If this isn't clear, have another player choose who takes the first turn at a whim. Ahh, who do you think has the lowest social standing here?

JANINE: Who the fuck— I don't—

AUSTIN: And Excerpt and an Axiom. I think the Axiom Polyphony is all about doing what you want. (JANINE: Yeah.) So does Belgard want to speak first or speak second? Er, not Belgard. Signet.

JANINE: I think Signet would want to speak second.

AUSTIN: Okay, so then they will speak first. [reading] On your turn, choose one or more of your conversational partners and choose an action. Ask a topical question, engage in actual improvised conversation, pass saying something instead about the food, or leave the conversation. The conversation ends when everyone has passed or everyone has left.

1:14:00

So I think they immediately say— I'm looking at the list of topical questions here. They immediately say,

AUSTIN (as Polyphony): Signet, it's been so long! You look fantastic. Do you need anything?

JANINE: The think Signet needs is for Polyphony to listen, I think? I think that's probably the request that gets made then— is like,

JANINE (as Signet): I have some stuff, and I don't know if you know, and I want it to be known.

AUSTIN: They move to sit at whatever the best listening spot is— whether that's next to you or across from you for eye contact or perpendicular? And bring their cup of tea, and then they pour tea into your already full teacup. It doesn't increase in volume, it just changes in color as the liquid hits it. And it's a good speaking tea. When you sip at it, it makes it so your mouth is the perfect amount of moist but without being too wet and making mouth sounds? Do you know what I mean?

JANINE: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah, I hate when tea makes your mouth so wet you can't speak.

AUSTIN: Or dry. Either way. It can go either way with me, depending on the drink.

KEITH: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Listen, let me say this as someone who's spoken a lot into a microphone and has to be like, "Fuck, there's too many mouth sounds in this." Or you can hear that I just took a big ol' sip of water. Either way.

JACK: Fair. Fair, honestly.

KEITH: Yeah, you're right. That's why you gotta have the driest ginger ale you can find and the wettest water you can find, and that's a balanced mouth.

AUSTIN: That's it! Well, we both know that water isn't wet. Anyway!

JANINE: I'm just saying in the context of Signet and Polyphony's history of flirting, that's a weird thing. Moisture-control tea? Okay, it's fine.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. It's very pretty.

JANINE: Mhm. Some of that butterfly pea flower tea.

AUSTIN: So now it's your turn. You can ask a topical question, engage in actual improvised conversation, or pass, or leave the conversation.

JANINE: I don't know if there's a thing—

AUSTIN: I think this is actual improvised conversation.

JANINE: I think this is Signet telling Polyphony about what she learned in the whole temple-y thing about the Waking Cadent and the hypothesis about Divines inevitably becoming a slave to humans.

AUSTIN: Right. For those who were not here or have not caught up on that part of the show, while they were on Altar, Tender and Signet learned a couple of things. One is that the original Kamala Cadence basically betrayed the Fleet and slowly— betrayed is strong. Her initial goal was to protect Divines from being killed by people, that's why she made the Fleet. It was not to in fact protect people Divines as most people believed. But also eventually she took a much firmer control over Divines and started to swing from it being a perfect balance to being humans in control of Divines? And then a second thing here is a hypothesis that formed that eventually Divines are going to be enslaved. The thought of that kind of wormed its way into the minds of Divines, and that is a big part of why many of them died. Is like, "Well fuck it, I'm going to be a fucking slave anyway one day, fine." And in a lot of cases where they naturally would have reawoken, they did not. This terrible terrible terrible doubt in the back of their minds.

So those are the two things they learned. So now Signet is telling that to Polyphony. Great. Polyphony, who is literally constantly enslaved to whoever is around— who says— who doesn't say anything as you explain this, who just listens. Right? And offers the occasional— not like, "That's so interesting" but a response that's about acknowledgement. I think at some point they ask you,

AUSTIN (as Polyphony): Do you fear the Waking Cadent, then?

JANINE (as Signet): I suppose so. I fear the Waking Cadent in the way that a parent or child or anyone could fear a bad association in the life of someone they care about. It's not a direct fear. I don't particularly care if Waking Cadent does something to me or not. I'm worried about the Waking Cadent— I'm worried about that the Waking Cadent will perhaps do or will lead to for others.

AUSTIN: They nod and then say,

AUSTIN (as Polyphony): She has not had much guidance. I know her well. Her relationship to the Divine is not like yours because it hasn't ever been like yours. She doesn't have many role models

JANINE (as Signet): Does she want role models?

AUSTIN (as Polyphony): She wants what is best for her people, and she wants to feel less anxious. And I have been helping with her feeling of control— her need to be in control and her inability to recognize the degree to which partnerships allow you to have control. When I first arrived, she doubted my intentions. But over time she's come to see that letting me in does not take something from her.

JANINE: That might be scene.

AUSTIN: Yeah, probably. That could be scene.

JANINE: Yeah, I don't know—

AUSTIN: What's Signet's reaction to that, I guess is my question. Visually speaking, what's the camera see on Signet's face?

JANINE: I think maybe there is one of those half-blinks of surprise but it's mostly overwritten by a kind of relief. Maybe not a completely relief, but that is maybe better news than Signet expected to hear about Polyphony's being there.

AUSTIN: Right, sure. All right. So that is your card. Let me advance clocks, including the new Ark rocket clock. Boom! Rapid Evening, Volition, DFS, NEH, Advent. Four steps until Advent completes, three until NEH, three until DFS, five until Volition, five until the Rapid Evening. Three until the Ark rocket launches. Signet, what are you doing this turn?

JANINE: I want to know what the hell Volition is up to!

AUSTIN: Good call. What's that— in short narration, what's that look like?

JANINE: Is there— I'm trying to think of who, like Massalia, would be up on things like that— who the—

AUSTIN: That would work. They would be—

JANINE: I'm trying to think of someone who's intense enough to be looking out for bad shit.

AUSTIN: Totally. I think any of the people who have been— anyone in the Waking Nights, which are the Waking Cadent's Beloved, which I guess now are getting to be pretty— so that's Blooming, that's Silver aka Massalia D'Argent, and that's Nebula of the Axiom— sorry, not the— the Excerpt of Bounty. All three of them could probably be— they're in war mode already? They're in the war room, so to speak, looking over stuff. And maybe you see it. I think you're the one who actually puts it together because they don't have the Iconoclast experience that you do?

JANINE: Blooming kind of does, but only from that one thing.

AUSTIN: Yes, only from that one thing. And you had it as— not a lifelong thing, but a much longer experience. So I will just read the Volition clock. I will read what will happen if Volition's clock completes. An eight-step clock, it says, "Iconoclasts return to the body of Volition, building

a ladder of glitched-out video bodies until they leave Moonlock's atmosphere, and then they are sort of vacuumed back into Volition. They will counter the next attempt at attack." So they basically provide a full shield from attack if that completes.

JACK: What did you say? Glitched-out what?

AUSTIN: Glitched-out video bodies.

JACK: Amazing.

JANINE: Aww.

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

1:24:02

JACK: That's my zine! [AUSTIN and ART laugh]

AUSTIN: So I'm going to put "Iconoclastic shield"-- er, "Iconoclast shield" because the iconoclastics are different. And I'm going to do that. Okay.

JACK: And now we can target Volition.

AUSTIN: Now you can target Volition if you wanted to, correct. That is a turn! Next up is Even. Let's draw a card at see if it's the king. It's the king! Ohh, it's the king. It's the king of Spring.

DRE: God damn it, Austin!

JACK: Oh my god! Whoa.

AUSTIN: This is early.

JANINE: Oh god. This sucks!

DRE: [crosstalk] 1:24:37

AUSTIN: It's exciting!

SYLVIA: Wow.

JACK: We did not plan for this! Well, we planned for this. We did not experience this.

AUSTIN: We did, we absolutely did. No we did not. I mean, I pulled cards out. Jack and I did a playtest yesterday, and we hit a season that would not end. It would not end. And so I did something that was recommended, which is I pulled cards out of the deck. The book suggests pulling four cards out per season, but that's too many cards for a couple of reasons. And a big one is that—

JACK: A lot of people.

AUSTIN: — we have a lot of people. It's also different because we are advancing on double king. We're not advancing on the whole deck being walked through? All right, so this is exciting! I'm excited. All right. Sol mean— we'll advance seasons at the end of your turn.

KEITH: I have a question. Is the season— when the next season starts, do we start back at the beginning of the rotation? Or do we start—

AUSTIN: No, we continue the rotation. (KEITH: Okay.) We continue through the rotation. We're not interrupting the rest of this deck. What will happen, though, is new clocks are about to appear. [laughs]

DRE: Good. Great.

AUSTIN: Which is fun. But for now, let's talk about the kind of Spring or the king of dawn. Even, either “a young boy starts digging in the ground and discovers something unexpected, what is it?” or “an old man confesses to his past crimes and atrocities, what has he done?”

DRE: I like “a young boy starts digging in the ground and finds something unexpected.” I'm just not sure what you can find on Senechal.

AUSTIN: Do you want me to tell you what it is?

DRE: Yeah, sure.

AUSTIN: Because I do know what it is, because I actually already wrote this down. I have a couple of cards that have things that I believe they should be, and I can suggest them. So two things. Both of these things are going to happen. Let's do the young boy one at the end of the turn. I will tell you what the other— what the man confesses is.

[overlapping]

JANINE: Uhh.

KEITH: The young boy found that body of the person— the old man.

AUSTIN: That's it, that's it. You put it toget— that's the Marielda one. Right? Ahh, the young boy starts to dig. You tell me where this happens. But the last piece of Gumption is found.

DRE: Oh!

KEITH: Sick.

AUSTIN: Where is it?

DRE: I don't even know where it would make place for that to be.

AUSTIN: The Seneschal's Brace territory is Seneschal and Brighton. Maybe something— Seneschal was the By-and-By. By-and-By's pretty big. Maybe Gumption was trying to— maybe it's a piece of Gumption that Gumption put on the By-and-By to keep it protected during that attack at the beginning of the season?

DRE: Yeah. Let's do that.

AUSTIN: Is it like a kneecap? What is it? And what does this look like from Even's perspective?

DRE: Hey Keith, what does Gumption look like again?

KEITH: So I'm glad you talked to me because I have one bit of flavor I would like to add, which is— there's a lot of pieces to Gumption because he has had a lot of parts. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) And so this isn't the last piece of Gumption, it's just the last piece that they need to him working.

AUSTIN: Yes, to be clear. Exactly, exactly. They might be able to get him working without this piece, but it's a substantial piece missing.

KEITH: Yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, you can get a car working with three tires, but you really need that fourth one.

KEITH: Right, right. You can be a museum with a dinosaur skeleton without this giant leg bone. But you can tell, "Oh, there's a giant fucking leg bone missing from that skeleton,"

AUSTIN: Exactly. [DRE laughs]

KEITH: That's not how Gumption looks. Gumption looks like a bunch of fucking dirty old machine parts snap-welded onto each other in— not in any way that was someone trying to design something that looks excellent, but was, "Ahh, I gotta put this thing here real quick!" [AUSTIN giggles]

AUSTIN: Humanoid though, right?

KEITH: Humanoid, yeah.

AUSTIN: I always imagine Gumption in my mind as— if Mecha Souls ever happens? My dream game? The game where you play as— it's like Dark Souls, but also there's mech-scale combat where you get into a mech and the big giant canyon you were just walking through then becomes a place where your mech flies through very easily and then you're fighting on— anyway. Gumption would be the onion knight equivalent. What's the character's name who has the big goody onion stuff in all the different games. There's like three of them?

DRE: Oh god.

KEITH: I have not played these, but I know who you're talking about. I've seen the armor because he's got a big onion head.

AUSTIN: Siegmeyer is one of them, and Siegmund. The Catarina people, yes. The various Catarinas. Yes.

KEITH: I have another sort of touchstone for this, because I have not played the Souls games. Imagine what a mech would look like if there was a guy that owned a junkyard, a scrap metal junkyard, and you found out that he has been secretly building a robot out of junk metal?

AUSTIN: That is the Megas XLR version of this? Which is a surprisingly good mech show that used to be on Cartoon Network. I guess that one's actually looks more like a real truck now that I look at it. I guess actually the funniest bit of that was the cockpit was an old Camaro on top of a body? Mega XLR was all right. So that's it. So that's what it looks like. So what is it, what is the piece?

DRE: I like the idea of it not being— that the body is pretty much together, and there's something they can work around.

KEITH: Oh! I know what the piece is. I can tell you what the piece is.

DRE: Yeah. Yeah, hit me up.

KEITH: The piece is the part that let him attach other pieces to him. It's like the fix-himself piece.

AUSTIN: Right, so he can fix other things, he just can't fix himself is what I like. Without this piece.

KEITH: Right, without this piece.

AUSTIN: So this is the important thing: Seneschal's Brace has this piece. They don't have Gumption. DFS has the rest of Gumption. And so actually in this moment, I'm just going to clear

a clock. The DFS clock is useless because that was going to give them the Gumption-resource abundance. And so now I'm just gonna mark this with an X because it just doesn't complete. Because it can't, because you have the part that they've been looking for. So I guess Even takes it? Or does Seneschal's Brace take this part?

DRE: Uhh, I mean, I think yes. If Even is part of the crew that finds it, he would definitely report it. So I think Seneschal's Brace would take this part.

AUSTIN: I very much believe that this is a thing where it's like, either it's been attached to a giant— in my mind, it's been attached to a weird skyscraper. Or it's been buried in kind of a roughshod part of one of the towns along the— I don't know if you remember this, but Senechal kind of has that long elevator of the By-and-By stretched across its entire body of the planet. And along it, almost like a spine with arms that go out, again and again. And each one, that is an extension of a city. I kind of like, "Oh yeah, this has always been here." And then a kid bumps up into it and rubs a thing and the realizes that it has the Gumption Divine symbol on it or something? And then calls it in basically. And is like, "Come this way, mister!" And you see it immediately and are like, "Oh shit, that's the thing from Gumption that lets Gumption heal itself! That's a big deal!" Some kids turned it into a fucking treehouse. [JACK laughs]

DRE: "This is my lucky hide-and-go-seek spot, mister!"

AUSTIN: Exactly. Oh, thank you for drawing the weird video bodies of the Iconoclasts, I love it.

JACK: Like someone had a Photoshop brush that was "Ant". [group laughter]

AUSTIN: Perfect. All right, cool. So you have that now. I don't think it's a resource, but it's a thing you fictionally have. You should draw that onto Senechal somehow? I don't know how. Someone in Seneschal's Brace should maybe just draw a little— maybe it's an arm? Maybe it's a hand? I don't know.

So the second step is that clocks advance— continue to. Ark Rocket, advance. Rapid Evening, advance. Iconoclast shield for Volition, advance. NEH, advance. Advent, advance. Now it's your turn. What do you do? What turn do you— what do you do?

DRE: All right. I've got two things in mind here, I gotta pick one. So I guess from my friends in Senechal, I'm interested in what you think would be more prudent. I was thinking of investigating Advent. I was thinking of attacking Volition. Or I was thinking of starting a project to do something with this Gumption part.

JACK: I would probably trend toward investigating over starting a project at this point? There's that saying, "Don't use your workbench if it's on fire."

DRE: [laughing] True.

JACK: And I feel like— are we more worried about— I don't know. What do you think, Ali?

ALI: I mean, it depends on if we think that we'll— I mean, what happens when the clocks fill?

AUSTIN: Something happens.

JACK: Not necessarily bad things, but in the cast of Advent almost definitely bad things.

AUSTIN: Right. So like—

ALI: The reason I ask is because I don't know if we should investigate something if we're not going to have the turns to do anything about it?

AUSTIN: So you—

ALI: Maybe that's—

JACK: If Even—

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

JACK: If Even investigates something, I can try and make a move on it on my turn. (ALI: Right. Okay.) And you can make a move on it on your turn. I want to make sure that I don't just try and manage the clocks, that I don't just treat this game as though I'm watching clocks and go like, "Ah, I'll fix the clocks when they get too big." This is an opportunity to do what Fourteen would do, and if that means ignoring some clocks that I, Jack de Quidt, am very frightened of [ALI laughs] then I should probably ignore those clocks.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Same with Even, in that case.

JACK: Yeah. That said, I want to fuck Advent up, and it would be good to be able to do that.

ALI: Yeah.

DRE: I believe that's also what Even probably wants to do, so.

AUSTIN: So Even, are you going to investigate?

DRE: Yeah, I want to investigate Advent.

AUSTIN: All right. So fun things. What's that look like? How do you investigate them, is actually what I want to say?

1:35:04

DRE: Gosh. Are you asking for this in terms of flavor, or are you asking this in terms of resource?

AUSTIN: Flavor. Investigate doesn't cost a resource.

DRE: Right, okay. I almost think it could be as simple as Even gets a ship and is just like, "I'm going out there, who's coming with me to check out what's going on? Because we need to keep tabs on what's happening."

AUSTIN: Sure. So I think while you're out there and you're doing that investigation, you catch something above Skein, which is you see that— Advent is now everything, Advent has access to everywhere. And what they have picked up is— what you've picked up is they have kind of a— not cloaked raiding party, but they've just kind of hidden their raiding party behind a bunch of different asteroids that are in orbit and satellites and stuff like that? But they are prepping a raid for the Qui Err. They're going to go take a resource from the Qui Err when the clock finishes. In your scouting ship you don't have enough to do anything about that.

All right, that's a turn. Right? You know what, I'll put it to the table really quick. I think that we should advance from Spring. We should leave Dawn behind and move into the Morning, move into Summer. That said, we could also hold— we could say, "Okay, that happened, this was the first turn. It feels like we're burning time or something, it should fire as soon as Grand's turn is over." I'm happy with either, but up to y'all.

ART: I think we're going to regret if we make this longer and then we have a turn later where the king is the bottom card.

AUSTIN: Yes. That is how I feel too. (JACK: Mhm.)

ART: If we finish this and like, "Oh, the finale"— one, finale's not gonna be too short. We've already been doing this for two hours. [everyone laughs] But I guess we could get to a point when the game says the game's over and we didn't have enough stuff happen? (AUSTIN: Yes.) But that's probably a lurking—

AUSTIN: It's unlikely. There's a lot of stuff to come still.

KEITH: I also— I think that if we switch seasons now, we can always hold extending one season— keep that in in our back pocket for a different thing.

AUSTIN: Sure. If we get king-king again—

KEITH: I'm sorry, my mouth is too wet, I'm talking weird.

AUSTIN: See? See what I'm saying?

KEITH: But it was from my calzone. [JANINE cracks up]

AUSTIN: If Signet had wanted a calzone that made her mouth appropriately moist, (JANINE: Euckk!) she could have had one of those.

ART: That's a bad calzone, I think. [KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN: All right. Any— are we good? So we're going to advance?

KEITH: Yeah.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Let me resolve what happens with the king. The other half of the king: an old man confesses to his crimes.

JACK: Wait, do both halves of the king resolve?

AUSTIN: Yeah, because of a thing that I've written down here (JACK: Oh, I see) that says, "I'm the GM and I can make both halves resolve." [group laughter]

JACK: Oh, okay,

ART: Write that down!

ALI: Love to write the rules.

AUSTIN: I write the rules. [JACK laughs] GM fiat! Even, while you're out on the ship— what ship, first of all— oh, y'all have The World Without End still, right? Y'all kept it.

DRE: I believe so.

JACK: Yeah. Definitely.

DRE: Oh yeah, because it's Jack's ship.

AUSTIN: Okay. So while the three of you are out on The World Without End the message hits, and Keen Forrester Gloaming's face appears? And he lets you know that— not you, the system. I haven't prewritten this. But from the Dome, I guess,

AUSTIN (as Keen): My name is Keen Forrester Gloaming. I am the chief intercessor here of the Rapid Evening's efforts in the Twilight Mirage, the Quire system. After OP's attack on our leader, Crystal Palace, actions have been taken. The arrival of the Axiom Schism has made it abundantly clear that the being known as Volition, an annihilation-class being I mind you, cannot be allowed to continue existing. It is for that reason that I am letting you know that Crystal Palace is on its way, as is the bulk of my organization's military force. Let me be clear, you will have an opportunity to seek refuge. But if Crystal Palace arrives and you have not yet dealt with Volition, then we will.

AUSTIN: And then it goes off. So two things happen here. One, immediately this blockade becomes more intense. You already have the -escape thing that hasn't changed. So that's staying that way. And two, you have until the end of Winter to deal with Volition. If you do not, they will blow up the system with a stellar combustor. Or leave, you could also leave. They will offer refuge when Winter comes. That is the message.

JACK: Stellar combustors are so good. We can't can't have a sci-fi finale without a stellar combustor showing up for it. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Without one stellar combustor. [ALI giggles] Yeah, exactly. So that is the message.

KEITH: I had some headphone troubles. I heard the whole speech, but I missed what the old man specifically confessed to?

AUSTIN: That he has summoned the genocide machine. That he has brought the atom bomb.

KEITH: Okay, he said, "I'm confessing that I'm actually from—"

AUSTIN: "I hit the button." From— well, OP had previously said, "Oh hey, this person is a member of this group called the Rapid Evening." And he's, "Yup, that's true, and we're coming to blow all this up if y'all don't deal with it." And also Crystal— at this point now, it is not just-- in The Quiet Year it's written that, "Oh, at the end of the Winter the Frost Shepherds arrive." For us it's Crystal Palace, and now we know that in-setting. That's a big distinction, right? The Yogg is coming, and you know it's coming. This is not just, "Oh, there might be a storm one day." So that's a pretty big distinction.

Hoowee. So I've added clocks for the next season. You'll note that on top of the current clocks that are still in play, Advent, NEH, DFS, Volition, and Rapid Evening all got new clocks. So that's good. That's a good thing to have happening.

What else happened? I've switched out the deck. We now have the Morning deck aka the Summer deck.

JACK: I'm going to grab contempt because—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Same.

AUSTIN: Everyone should feel free to grab a contempt.

JACK: — because Gloaming was like, “We’ll wipe you out.”

KEITH: I’m gonna decline to take contempt on this.

AUSTIN: Really? Gig does not feel contempt at this?

KEITH (as Gig): It’s a pretty reasonable thing. Volition could destroy the whole universe!
I feel like it’s kinda fair. I don’t like it, but—

AUSTIN: But you understand where it’s coming from.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. That’s interesting. Okay.

DRE: I think Even is also in that same mindset.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. Yeah, there’s a lot of, “There but for the grace of being born into the Divine Fleet instead of the Rapid Evening go I” between Even and Keen Forrester Gloaming in my mind. Okay, so that means it’s time to do the nxt turn, right? I’m not missing anything? I’m not forgetting anything?

ART: I want to watch you shuffle this deck. [JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: I just did. I’ll do it again. Ready? Shuffle. Boom!

DRE: Don’t close your eyes.

AUSTIN: Did you see it?

ALI: No.

ART: No, it doesn't turn red or

KEITH: That's true.

AUSTIN: It doesn't say. Well, I'll do it again. Shuffle. If I draw the king first, everyone will know this is on Art Martinez-Tebbel. [KEITH laughs loudly] Because I just shuffled twice.

DRE: And you can contact and write Austin at— [AUSTIN, ALI, and JACK laugh]

AUSTIN: Okay, so that was Even's turn. Fourteen, it is your turn, right?

JACK: Mhm!

AUSTIN: I'm going to draw a card. Are you ready?

JACK: Yeah. Sure am.

AUSTIN: It is the eight of Morning.

ART: People are going to start sending us random-occurrence based hate mail. [DRE laughs] That'll really be a bad chapter of this show. [laughs]

KEITH: I think it's—

AUSTIN: I've taken video. People can see the proof if you need to see the proof. I've shuffled this deck. The eight of Morning, Fourteen Fifteen. Either someone tries to take control of the community, in this case Seneschal's Brace, by force. Do they succeed? Why do they do this? Or a headstrong community member decides to put one of their ideas in motion. Start a foolish project.

JACK: Okay!

AUSTIN: As a reminder, here are people who are part of Seneschal's Brace at this moment: Cadent Under Mirage, Declan's Corrective, Cascara, Kent Brighton and the Brighton Lineage in general, Will the Excerpt of Harmony and the High Captain of the Rogue Waves Armada, and then Anticipation who is the Divine attached to one Excerpt named Tenderness.

And then other— of course, if you scrolled down there are lots of NPCs who are adjacent. Like, I would say Sui Juris is adjacent to y'all but not necessarily one-to-one. So Open Metal, Chiron, Armstrong, the Fisherman. I'd say Morning's Observation and co. Grey Gloaming, Demani Dusk are close. Janie and Surge are close but not fully committed in that same way.

I have a list of every NPC, and there's just a lot of them. I also have descriptions for everybody if anyone's forgotten. My favorite descriptions are part of the Qui Err Coalition, and they are the ones for Yam and Duck. [DRE laughs]

JACK: Yam's is "yam" and Duck's is "horse." [ALI and KEITH cackle] It's very good, all the other ones have about a sentence. I ahh—

AUSTIN: Which of these two things happens?

1:44:50

JACK: "A headstrong community member decides to put one of their ideas in motion. Start a foolish project."

AUSTIN: All right. Who does it?

JACK: In the chat to the right [ALI giggles] of the Roll20 [clapping as AUSTIN laughs] an incredible plan has been proposed. I had a different idea that was sadder and weirder, but this is such a great plan. When you imagine a foolish plan, this is great. The plan that is being proposed by my dear friends is Kent Brighton attempts to steal Gumption. [general giggling] So I think what this is [so many people laughing now]--

AUSTIN: Dre, do you want to read your tweet— er, your message? It reads like a tweet to me, I don't know.

DRE: Yeah, it is. "Kent Brighton slaps his ship, 'Sure could fit a lot of Gumption parts into this bad boy!'" [KEITH laughs]

JACK: So yeah. I don't think we get a scene here?

AUSTIN: This is a foolish-ass project.

JACK: I think [laughing] — all right, okay, maybe we do get a scene here.

AUSTIN: You want to do it? Okay, what do you want to do?

JACK: Maybe this is A Conversation over Food, Austin?

AUSTIN: It could be. It's not A Chase? It's not a — [ALI giggles]

KEITH: No, this is a dinner. This is like dinner shit-talking.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: No, so this is A Conversation over Food, and I think the framing of it is this. I think Kent Brighton has asked Fourteen Fifteen to meet him at a restaurant and has explicitly said, “Do not tell anyone!”

AUSTIN: Okay. What’s the restaurant? It’s on Seneschal’s Brace or it’s on Brighton?

JACK: It’s on Brighton. Home turf! It’s the restaurant of some incredible— it’s a seafood restaurant, and it’s just, it’s just the best. I think it’s probably like lobster.

AUSTIN: Okay. Kent orders a steak.

JACK (as Fourteen): Kent.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Fourteen, it’s so— oh, I’m so sorry, I didn’t think. You’re of course a big robot-knight thing now. Will this food be okay for you?

JACK (as Fourteen): Um, yeah. I can— I don’t think we’ve really met properly before, but it’s really nice that you’d take the time to say hi.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Well, I spent some time on The World Without End, and I looked at—

JACK (as Fourteen): We bumped into each other, you know?

AUSTIN (as Kent): Right, and I read all the files on everyone. And I think I have just the opportunity for you.

JACK (as Fourteen): I’m sorry?

AUSTIN (as Kent): [meaningfully] I have just the opportunity for you.

JACK (as Fourteen): Oh. Okay. I thought this was just like a meet-and-greet.

AUSTIN (as Kent): That’s why I ordered the steak, yes. A meat and greet, yes.

JACK (as Fourteen): Okay. Do you know Gig? Have you two— you two’ve hung out, right?

AUSTIN (as Kent): I am dear dear friends with Gig Kephart, and I hope he’s doing well. He’s on Skein now, right?

JACK (as Fourteen): Yeah, he— yeah, we went down separate roads for like a bit, but we'll see him again.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Okay, well, first and foremost I need you—

AUSTIN: And this is a topical question.

AUSTIN (as Kent): — to reassure me about your loyalty to Seneschal's Brace. Can you reassure me of that?

JACK (as Fourteen): Well, loyalty is broad. [KEITH laughs loudly]

AUSTIN (as Kent): [to himself] Maybe this is the wrong person.

JACK (as Fourteen): I want to make this system better, and I want to work to take apart the things that would make the system worse. And—

AUSTIN (as Kent): Taking things apart and making things better! It's so funny that you picked those two phrases. That's exactly what— hmm. I'm sorry, I'm getting ahead of myself. Maybe you have a question for me.

JACK: Well, it's funny you should say that. [reading] Something gives you away to me. What is it?

AUSTIN: On the— so there's a placemat—

JACK: [laughing] Is it just a piece of paper?

AUSTIN: — he has already drawn Gumption on it in crayons.

JACK (as Fourteen): Hey, Kent?

AUSTIN (as Kent): Yes? Sorry, I doodle sometimes when I get nervous.

JACK (as Fourteen): What have you drawn there, Kent?

AUSTIN (as Kent): This is Gumption, the Divine.

JACK (as Fourteen): It sure is! It sure is. [ART laughs]

AUSTIN (as Kent): I suppose— I hope— I hope to convince you that we have

AUSTIN: And then he gets up from his side of the table and goes and sits down next to you. And then pivots his entire paper placement so that it's facing both of you. And then writes "golden opportunity" and underlines it three times. And then gestures openly— does like a big wide open, and says,

AUSTIN (as Kent): A Divine opportunity!

JACK (as Fourteen): Uh huh.

AUSTIN (as Kent): I need to convince you to help me go get Gumption. I know we have the most important part, but there must be another seven or eight parts to that thing. And if we can get those [JACK sighs heavily] then Seneschal's Brace could have its own— a second one. We of course have Anticipation already, but with Belgard gone a lot of people are saying maybe the Cadent Under Mirage ... Harmony of course would be the third— things are best in threes! So can I convince you of that?

JACK (as Fourteen): [upset] No! No! What does this— the DFS— we are not at arms with the DFS!

AUSTIN (as Kent): [quickly] No no no no no. No no no no no no no no no. No no no no no. No. No. No. I'm not saying we only take the arms. [KEITH explodes into laughter as JACK and ALI giggle] The whole thing, Fourteen Fifteen.

JACK (as Fourteen): [viciously] So— take? This is a theft! We're gonna steal a Divine?!

AUSTIN (as Kent): Fourteen Fifteen, we are—

JACK (as Fourteen): It's just Fourteen. Fourteen is fine.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Fourteen. We are a pirate republic—

JACK (as Fourteen): No! *You* are a pirate republic. *We* are Seneschal's Brace!

AUSTIN (as Kent): We are a pirate— yes, it was the royal we. [clapping as ART laughs]

JACK (as Fourteen): All right. Fair.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Are a pirate republic.

JACK (as Fourteen): And you're going to go steal a Divine.

AUSTIN (as Kent): *We* are— say it with me! Say, "We are going to steal— "

JACK (as Fourteen): The royal we? Or is this the collective we?

AUSTIN (as Kent): Well, that part of it's up to you. But you say it.

JACK (as Fourteen): So we'll tell Cascara, and we'll tell the Cadent.

AUSTIN (as Kent): That we've gotten them Gumption once it's complete. Yes, exactly.

JACK (as Fourteen): No no! No. No no no no no. No. That we're— and I'm not even gonna go!

AUSTIN (as Kent): And I'm thinking— these things have pilots, yes?

JACK (as Fourteen): They're called Excerpts—

AUSTIN (as Kent): I think I would just look incredible in—

JACK (as Fourteen): Kent!

AUSTIN (as Kent): — the uniform of a distinguished Divine— we should have a name for those.

JACK (as Fourteen): [outraged] We just met! We've just met! And already you're—

AUSTIN (as Kent): I read your file, Fourteen Fifteen. Just Fourteen.

JACK (as Fourteen): So you're asking me to both help you steal the Divine Gumption—

AUSTIN (as Kent): Recover. Get the language right.

JACK (as Fourteen): And then—

AUSTIN (as Kent): I've written here, "recover the Divine Gumption."

JACK (as Fourteen): And then help sort of instate you as the Excerpt?

AUSTIN (as Kent): Well, we can call it something else. We can call it the Good Lord Kent Brighton and his pet Divine, Gumption. No, that's too strong.

JACK (as Fourteen): Pet Divine?

AUSTIN (as Kent): The Okay Lord, Kent Brighton.

JACK (as Fourteen): All right. Here's the deal, Kent. Brighton. I do not want to steal the Divine Gumption. And while I like you— you seem nice, the steak was a strange choice.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Well, they had to bring it in from outside, so it's better. The seafood they just get here.

JACK (as Fourteen): No, but— all right, fair enough. I— see, this is why— you're great. You're great. I don't know if you're Excerpt— I'm not Excerpt material.

AUSTIN (as Kent): *We're* not Excerpt material. Please, say it with me. *We* are not—

JACK (as Fourteen): Okay, we are not Excerpt material. But— you've seen what Volition is planning, right?

AUSTIN (as Kent): Exactly, yes. Cover itself in all the strange video bodies.

JACK (as Fourteen): And I think we could— so, I'm not coming. I don't want you to be the Excerpt. And you didn't hear this from me, but ... erghh!

AUSTIN (as Kent): [craftily] You know where it is.

JACK (as Fourteen): No one gets hurt.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Never.

JACK (as Fourteen): No one knows that we had this conversation.

AUSTIN (as Kent): This one, the one we're having right now?

JACK (as Fourteen): Yes.

AUSTIN: That's how the bit goes.

JACK (as Fourteen): This is like a plausible-deniability thing.

AUSTIN (as Kent): I'll have it erased from my day planner.

JACK (as Fourteen): Okay, Kent. Please [sigh] make me feel good about this?

AUSTIN (as Kent): One second. Michelle? Michelle, could you remove the meeting with Fourteen Fifteen to discuss the acquisition of the body of Gumption from my day planner?

JACK (as Fourteen): Oh my god.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Thank you so much. [KEITH cackles]

JACK (as Fourteen): Oh my god. All right. Kent, it's been lovely to see you.

AUSTIN (as Kent): You too, always.

JACK (as Fourteen): I really hope that you don't make me regret this.

AUSTIN (as Kent): It would be the first time I've ever done that, wouldn't it? I've never disappointed you before.

JACK (as Fourteen): You have never disappointed me before.

AUSTIN (as Kent): That's the truth.

JACK: Okay!

AUSTIN: What— how big is this clock? Is this four steps?

JACK: This is a “helps us and our allies.”

AUSTIN: All right, I'm going to add it to the map under Seneschal's Brace. Four-step—

JACK: Oh lord. I feel really bad about this one.

DRE: Oh, I was going to take a contempt token, but I can't touch this.

AUSTIN: Because you already have one, right?

DRE: No I don't.

AUSTIN: Oh, do you not?

DRE: Nope.

AUSTIN: Oh, and you can't take that one? I'll fix it.

KEITH: Oh, that's a good point. I contempt this.

JACK: Yeah, fair!

AUSTIN: Fair to contempt.

1:54:28

JACK: I will say that the card says “Start a foolish project.” The project has to start.

AUSTIN: You’re saying— I should advance it by one, is what you’re saying.

JACK: No, I’m not saying— oi, Kent is still here! Kent Brighton. That card doesn’t say “choose whether or not to start a foolish project.”

AUSTIN: Right. No, totally. Of course.

JACK: I mean, it does, but that conversation had to end with Kent going off and doing it?

AUSTIN: Yes, 100%.

JACK: Yup.

DRE: Oh. We’ve all got—

AUSTIN: Everyone’s contemptuous right now. Totally.

JANINE: Extremely haunted. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: So that was— very haunted! So that was the card. Now I do advance projects, including the “steal Gumption” project, the Ark rocket, the two Rapid Evening projects, both Volition ones including the one you don’t know what it does, DFS one, both of the NEH, and both Advents. Love it. What is your action, Fourteen Fifteen?

JACK: I’m going to try to launch a heavy attack on the Iconoclast shield.

AUSTIN: Ooo, okay. Time to talk about attacks. So there are three tiers of attacks. Oh, you can’t!

JACK: Oh damn, can I not?

AUSTIN: You framed a scene already.

JACK: Is it not that you just get a scene with a heavy attack?

AUSTIN: You do not. You get one— no no no, you have to choose that ahead of time. You don't get to frame two scenes.

JACK: Oh damn! All right.

AUSTIN: So this gives you a little bit of a different— I'll go over the attacks though. So one is investigate, which we've already done. That's just you saying, "Oh, I'm going to spend my turn investigating this," and I'll reveal what the clock says. Two is a light attack where you strike out a character trait, reduce a non-scarce resource available to your faction or to the entire system, or discard a contempt token. And in exchange, you can choose one known project and add two additional steps to its clock, you can choose one known abundant resource and reduce it to neutral, or— I think that's it. Those are the two things that you can do there. You're not doing the traits. We could also do the traits, but I decided it was too antagonistic. So that's a light one. So you could say, "Hey, I'm going to do a light attack, and I'm going to strike through" — what was the word we came up with yesterday? Not exemplify, not energize. "I'm going to activate one of my character traits." And— or you can discard a contempt token. And again, with a project clock you would be adding two steps to it or pushing it back by two steps. And to a resource, you can take an abundant resource and reduce it to neutral. So you could say, "Hey Volition, you don't have +Axioms, you just have regular Axioms. No plus, just regular."

The medium attack is strike out any two of the following in number— again, you need a combination of two, in which you could pick one thing twice if you wanted. Character trait, non-scarce resource, or contempt tokens. And then you have to frame a risky scene to perform one of these attacks. And it is either a project, in which case you freeze it and then until the end of your next turn, it's frozen and doesn't advance. Or you choose an abundant resource or a neutral resource and reduce it to scarce. So if someone has +territory and you want it to be -territory, you can do that with a medium attack.

And with a heavy attack, you do three of the following in any combination up to three: character trait, non-scarce resource, contempt token. And again you have to frame a risky scene and if it's a project, you remove it from the game entirely, and if it's a resource, you increase your faction's hold of that resource and reduce the opponent's. So you steal it, effectively.

JACK: But I can't frame a scene.

AUSTIN: You cannot, which means you cannot to a medium attack or a heavy attack.

JACK: But I can do a light attack, and I think—

AUSTIN: You can, and it doesn't cost as much, either.

JACK: Yeah. In fiction, Fourteen sort of just like, "All right, we've gotta throw everything we've got at the Iconoclast shield," and then pauses and goes, "All right, fine, we've gotta throw some

of what we've got at the Iconoclast shield." [AUSTIN chuckles] Yeah. So I think what this looks like—

AUSTIN: I should note as you're about to describe it, when I— two things. One, attack should be understood as broadly as possible. I wanted to find a different word, and I didn't find one that fit the right balance? But attack should mean attack sometimes in terms physical military action, sword fights and chases and all that. But it can also mean a debate. It can also be A Conversation over Dinner. Right? An attack it can be political, can be personal, it can be physical, it can be emotional or psychological or anywhere in between. Ideally it's all of those things rolled into one in some way. As you do frame scenes in the future, when you look at that full list of scenes in Firebrands, you don't have to do a military action, you don't have to do a Free-for-All to do a heavy attack. You can just as easily do a debate, A Heated Argument or whatever. And that should be understood fictionally also. Though in this case I suspect you're going to take some sort of military action.

JACK: Well, kind of. So I'm going to discard my contempt token. (AUSTIN: Okay.) Just move that ghost up there.

AUSTIN: Ghost lives up there now.

JACK: Oh wow, he went way further than I thought he was going to. [ALI giggles] He started leaving the top of the screen. All right, there he goes. This contempt at the fact that Gloaming is planning on sending in a stellar buster is broadcast by Fourteen to members of Seneschal's Brace. And they broadcast it to their friends and allies, and word gets around through the semi-courageous ships of Seneschal's Brace, be they attack ships or be they freight ships or traders or. I'm sort of thinking of the image of Dunkirk, of all those little— all the sorts of boats. (AUSTIN: Yeah yeah.)

And what they do is they begin to make flight passes over where the Iconoclasts are built. Not close enough to get grabbed by the Iconoclasts, and maybe some of them do go down. But instead, it's almost like the cow's tails swatting away the flies as they attempt to land? The Iconoclasts can't build up through the moving ships. (AUSTIN: Right.) Maybe sometimes they try, and a ship goes down and then a gunship moves in and takes out a couple Iconoclasts.

AUSTIN: I think it's probably even— we should lean into the visual of them being made of living video? I like the notion of the tracking gets messed up (JACK: Yeah yeah yeah). And the signal breaks in some way, and the what was once a good— a solid foundation splits into two and there's ghosting in the images and pixelation and Youtube artifacts.

JACK: And there's this fleet— because we've described Mirage ships as being of all kinds. So there's sort of balloons, there's ships with sails. There's ships that are powered by oars, by people rowing. There are classic spaceships. Just this cloud of small strange ships buzzing and

needling at the bodies of the Iconoclasts as they're trying to grow up. And I think that takes two away from the—

AUSTIN: Perfect. It does. So Volition is knocked back down to three, now has five more weeks before it fills in. Nice work.

JACK: Rad.

AUSTIN: Two things I'll note real quick. One, obviously you won't be able to keep up with these indefinitely, even if all you do is attack. Two, I think the way it's going to work is, let's say that there's like six unfilled clocks somehow at the very end of the game. So long as— fiction first, if the combustor blows everything up, then it blows everything up. Right? But in the case where it's conceivable that those clocks continue until they complete, they continue until they complete or we reveal what they are. I will have more to say about that when we get to the end of this game. But okay! Cool. That is your turn. Nice work.

Tender, are you ready for me to draw a card?

ALI: Hi, yeah.

AUSTIN: It is the nine of Summer. Either "A project fails" - and that would be one of your projects - "which one and why?" [ALI laughs] or "Something goes wrong and supplies are ruined, add a new scarcity."

ALI: Oh, boy howdy.

JACK: Look, we have an opportunity here. [AUSTIN laughs] We just have an opportunity here to undo some— this is— we made a very ugly clay pot and our elbow might just—

AUSTIN: Fuck that, steal Gumption! [yells off mic] Steal Gumption! [JACK laughs]

JACK: — our elbow might just catch it.

ALI (as Tender) Um, I love Divines.

AUSTIN: Yes!

ALI: God! Okay. Fuck, man. It has to be one of our projects? [giggles]

AUSTIN: Yes, it has to be one of your faction's projects. Also someone please draw something that has to do with Kent trying to steal Gumption from Gift-3.

ALI: God!

DRE: Just draw his dumb face with a crown on it.

ALI: "Add a new scarcity..."

AUSTIN: Mhm.

AL [blows her breath] What do we— oh god. What do we have.

AUSTIN: Yeah, let's go over it one more time. What do you right have now?

ALI: We have an abundance of population, a scarcity of experience, an abundance of do-it-yourself knowledge, and a scarcity of diversity. I feel like the most appropriate one is— it's the most appropriate, and I don't want to say it! But I feel like it's trust because we're actively working against another—

2:04:27

AUSTIN: So does word get out, basically?

ALI: — faction? Yeah, because I think—

AUSTIN: I love it! That's good.

ALI: Yeah. I'm sorry. [laughs]

JACK: No, it's like— oh god. Cool!

AUSTIN: That's the game.

ALI: [laughing] I could be doing better at this, but I don't want to. [JACK and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: Friends at the Table, everybody! [ALI is cracking up]

ALI: Yeah, so I think it's like, "Oh, what are they willing to do to sort of stick their elbows out?" Is that it? Is that my—

AUSTIN: That is it. You can frame a scene around it, or you can save that framed scene. If you want to do a hard attack later, for instance, or wanted to do something around a clock or something else. Totally up to you.

ALI: Yeah, so Jack, you took an action against Volition and got their clock down?

AUSTIN: Yeah, so Jack lowered their clock by two.

ALI: Okay. [laughing] For full disclosure, I'm deciding whether I want to do a medium attack on the Rapid Evening or the Advent clock.

AUSTIN: So you can't do it on Rapid Evening because you don't know what it is. (ALI: Okay, okay.) You have to know what something is to attack it. Which means—

KEITH: So you can investigate the Advent clock.

AUSTIN: Right. Which literally means that if no one— so the Rapid Evening clock is going to complete unless you investigate it now and Grand hits it in the next turn? If that's a think you trust could happen. (ALI: Okay.) Alternatively, on the other hand, if you don't attack the Advent clock, then either Grand would have to hit it or— who comes after Grand? Er, no, that would be it because the turn that something is going to complete, it will complete before that person takes the turn. So right now the NEH clock is about to complete you notice. That's going to complete before you take an action. So even if you had investigated what that is, the way turn order works, clocks that have one step left are going to complete that turn.

KEITH: So Rapid Evening, NEH, and Advent clocks are all— those are— there's no—

AUSTIN: Rapid Evening could be stopped by Grand if Tender—

KEITH: No, because—

AUSTIN: Oh, you're right, you're right.

KEITH: Yeah, only Advent can be saved. Out of these, only Advent has a chance.

ALI: Okay. I guess I assumed the Rapid Evening one was the one he confessed to, or is that the second clock?

AUSTIN: No, that's a different clock. He didn't confess to either of those. Those are specific things that Rapid Evening are doing right now.

ALI: Eww! I think in a way of turn best usage and also story best usage of like, "Oh, it's getting out around town that the Seneschal's Brace isn't willing to help other people" but then Tender privately being like, "Oh, this information came across my desk." And I'm spending my contempt and I think my Bold to be—

AUSTIN: To go after—

ALI: Yeah, the thing that I want to do is to prove that this is going to work and—

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. So let's get to that in a second. First I need to advance clocks. So "steal Gumption" advances. The Ark rocket completes. Gig, what's that look like? And represent that on the map once you get a second.

KEITH: Oh boy. Okay. So y'all remember Jimmy Neutron? [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, I do. [in the background DRE is choking with laughter]

KEITH: Well, in the movie for Jimmy Neutron, they have turn all the rides in the park into spaceships to fly to the other planet. (AUSTIN: Correct.) Well, the difference in this one is that it's still an enclosed unit. (AUSTIN: Yeah.) So you've got this huge— oh, so they have the generator, right, that makes this huge shield?

AUSTIN: Yeah, they do.

KEITH: And so that is now the exterior hull of this giant chunk of land with parks on it, but now the parks also move independently of each other.

AUSTIN: So they kind of split the four park into— there was one big park that had four sectors in it, four lands.

KEITH: No no no. That whole thing, that one big thing is the ship with the generator as its— imagine the generator covering the whole thing like its hull.

AUSTIN: The shield is the whole thing.

KEITH: Right, right. But now, yes, sections of the park—

AUSTIN: Inside of that shell.

KEITH: Inside of that are also mobile.

AUSTIN: Are hovering? Inside of the shell.

KEITH: Inside of the shell.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool, love it.

KEITH: And can leave. Can move, leave, and come back.

AUSTIN: Can leave the shell.

KEITH: It's now like a mothership.

AUSTIN: Gotcha!

KEITH: That can shoot out carriers, and the carrier's a rollercoaster.

AUSTIN: The carriers are the music land and the place had all of the— the Epcot Center equivalent can shoot out by itself. (KEITH: Yeah.) Gotcha. Great.

KEITH: And so while this is launching, you've got essential members of the— oh, while it's happening, the ground— you know, you can walk around the park still— big fucking party.

AUSTIN: Huge party.

KEITH: Essential hands on deck, and then everybody else is having a bash.

DRE: Loving it, loving it.

AUSTIN: Okay, well, we should move that towards Skein or Moonlock probably. Can you figure out how to draw that? Have fun.

KEITH: Do we move— no, nevermind.

AUSTIN: No, you want to move—

KEITH: I was thinking, "Do we move Gift-3?" I was like, "No, that doesn't sound right."

AUSTIN: No, that's— you can't— you're not stealing planet! That's not one of them yet. [KEITH laughs] All right. So then the first NEH clock finishes? The NEH— OP announces the creation of the Anti-Volition Alliance fleet which adds a single system-wide abundance called "strikeforce."

KEITH: Cool! That sounds good.

AUSTIN: So they have donated a ton of military vessels, basically.

KEITH: We should steal their robot.

AUSTIN: Who?

KEITH: I'm kidding. I'm being them. [ALI giggles]

AUSTIN: Oh, oh, okay, I see, I see. I gotcha. So yeah, that's the NEH. OP has basically said that the time for independent— like, "We can't solve a problem like Volition by ourselves." And so they're starting this and hope that others will join in.

So then Tender, you get to go. So what you were gonna do was what? You're attacking Volition, right? Er, no, you're attacking Advent. You're attacking Advent.

ALI: Yeah, yeah. I'm halting their project.

AUSTIN: All right. So that is a medium attack? Right? (ALI: Uh huh.) So one more thing I want to explain because we're going to do our first medium attack. [reading] Medium and heavy attacks require risky scenes. And so risky scenes are any scene in the book - there's not a specific set of risky scenes - but any scenes where you could fail. They're scenes where you may not get what you want. If you fail a medium attack, you get refunded whatever you spent. So if you spent for instance a contempt token and what is the - Bold, is that what you're spending?

ALI: Ah, yup.

AUSTIN: Then if you lose that medium attack, no big deal. You'll get those back. If you fail a heavy attack, you lose those. You've anted up, you put those in the pot. Those are your bet, and you're out on them. The last thing I'll add about attacks is that you're always able to look at the table and say, "Does anyone want to help me with this?" at which point they can spend something of their own. So you're doing a medium attack?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: So are you— you're attacking the project? (ALI: Yes.) So that will freeze the project. What scene are you doing? I guess first and foremost, how are you doing this?

ALI: Okay, how am I doing this? Is it— can it just be as simple as giving a heads-up?

AUSTIN: No, this is a risky scene. This has to be something you could fail doing, and the word "attack" is there because it has to be something direct. Er, maybe not direct but something aggressive whether that's again something political or—

ALI: Hmm. would it be something like asking the people of Quire to help me do this? But I don't know that that's risky on Tender's side, right?

AUSTIN: No, yeah. That's definitely putting them more in the line of danger than they already are. [ALI laughs] You could ask someone like Open to do this with you. Right?

ALI: Oh, okay. Yeah, she just runs a fucking group of fixers or whatever. This is something that certainly needs to be fixed.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So do you want to do that as a conversation over food? Do you want to do An Animated Disagreement? I think those are the ones that come to mind for me.

ALI: The one that called out to me was A Chase.

AUSTIN: Oh, totally.

ALI: Which is like, she's onboard but it can go bad.

AUSTIN: Right. Okay, well yeah, we could do that. We could do a chase scene where then it's already— she agrees to do it, and y'all are there, and the chase is whether you get out safely or whether you— tell me what it looks like. What is the actual— are you planting a bomb? Are you stealing something from Advent and trying to get away?

ALI: Yeah, I think that I'm maybe trying to destroy the units that they're sending out to the Qui Err?

AUSTIN: Okay. Before they're launched or something, while they're still super vulnerable?

ALI: Yeah, when they're en route essentially.

AUSTIN: All right. So yeah, I think Open is there with you, and you and Open will both be there. But the chase will be between you and someone from Advent as your opponent. I think it's— it's a pretty recent person who's joined up here. I guess paint the picture and then they'll show up. So you're like in space?

ALI: Yeah, I think that this is— I feel like this is almost like a ship-to-ship combat sort of thing? I don't have a mech anymore, but we're probably in— she has a pilot among her troupe.

AUSTIN: So you're using Open Metal's ship, not taking The World Without End?

ALI: Yeah. Or no, it actually probably should be The World Without End because I was thinking of a cool ship with spears, and I was like, "Oh, that's completely what we have."

AUSTIN: Oh that's— you have that one, yeah. [ALI laughs] But you don't have a full crew anymore, and so she and Sui Juris come on board. Are Fourteen Fifteen and Even also here? Is Even piloting this, are you just leading the attack?

ALI: If y'all want to be here, you can.

DRE: I mean if you— yeah, if you're doing stuff against Advent and you want me there, I am there.

AUSTIN: Totally. All right. So let's say that you have— let's do the chase then. That sounds good. I'm just kind of— the stuff with everybody else who's in that ship is kind of for fictional setting stuff? This chase is going to be between you and the character Soft Stone, who we have not seen in probably nine months of play, who was— I mean, I'll reveal them in a second. [reading] Only you and your chosen partner play. Choose which one of you is the hunter and which one is the quarry. Are you being hunted, or are you hunting?

2:15:29

ALI: I'm hunting.

AUSTIN: Okay, so then Soft Stone is the quarry, and the quarry has— the kind of fictional setting is, Soft Stone has been put in charge of basically— imagine a passive aircraft carrier, basically? It's been filled with Advent robots or something, mechs. They're just robots, not mechs. Not piloted ones, like automated robots that are raiding robots that are meant to be deployed. And they're going to drop down and— oh, you know what? They're not automated robots. I know exactly what they are. They're the first batch off the fucking whatdoyoucallit, assembly line of Independence. Yeah. Of the mass-produced Independence bodies. And so Soft Stone is overseeing that and is gonna lead this attack.

Soft Stone is a synthetic. They have a chrome head. They were in Contrition's Figure a long time ago, they were one of the three people playing chess? And they revealed at that weird dream fight - and now they're revealing again - that they have huge metal talon spider legs, sharp legs underneath these robes that they have on. Just a person-size person, but then they grow really tall and weird and reveal that they have these giant spider robot legs that are metal-sharp. And they also are the person who has the launch codes for these Independence units. So if you can take them out and get those codes, you'll freeze this for the turn while Advent has to scramble to replace it, basically.

So [reading] the quarry conducts the chase. So you are. First say where you're going. Lead the hunter-- er no, sorry. I guess the quarry is Soft Stone. So I will lead the chase, and I will lead you through a series of four challenges and admissions. Choose freely except that the third one must be an admission. During the chase, you and the hunter gain coins representing the distance you're each able to gain on the other.

So I'm going to offer you a challenge. I think is this great, this is an easy one. [reading] I know this ground well. Follow me if you dare, but throw. On tails, you're plunging heedless into danger, and I need not choose any admissions during the chase at all. So that means— the setting here is The World Without End is chasing the ship that Soft Stone is on, and I mean

literally on like a giant spider on the side of this other metal ship, this other chromed-out ship. It looks like a dagger in space, and on the side of it is this humanoid figure who has giant spider legs and a big silver chrome face? And The World Without End and you, Tender, are chasing it. So do you dare to follow?

ALI: I do.

AUSTIN: All right. Heads or tails? Because you have to throw.

ALI: Oh, where's the coins?

AUSTIN: I'm just gonna flip a 1d2.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Head is one, two is tails. All right. One is heads, so you've successfully done that.

ALI: Hell yeah!

AUSTIN: All right, now you have a—

ALI: Take a coin, right?

AUSTIN: Does it say to take a coin?

ALI: Oh no no. Okay.

AUSTIN: No, but you just don't lose anything here. All right, so. [reading] I scramble up a steep incline. Follow me if you can keep up, but throw. On tails, the way is exhausting and I gain a coin. So I think that their ship goes to this asteroid that has— it's a very dense asteroid that has a ton of surprise gravity. And so there's a moment where it's like, "Hey, can this ship withstand this sudden gravitational pull?" Do you give? Do you continue to chase?

ALI: I want to [?] through the admission. [laughs] Does the game end once I choose an admission or— ?

AUSTIN: No, I think it's— let me double-check it one more time. [reading] Lead the hunter through a series of four challenges and admissions. Choose freely except that the third one must be an admission. So you're just answering these chase things. You don't have to— I have to admit something next. So—

ALI: Okay. I'm just making sure because I feel like I've never played this game before.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think we did— we may have done this game once during COUNTER/Weight. I don't remember it.

ALI: But, yeah, I'll still— I'm not giving up.

AUSTIN: All right, so throw again. One is heads, two is tails. Ooo, that's a two.

ALI: Waahh!

AUSTIN: All right. So on two I get a coin. So I'm one ahead. Oh, so this is— [reading] there are other enemies ahead of me, and I must suddenly change my course. Throw, on heads you gain on me and so gain two coin. So this is where you can catch up. Do you want to roll on this one instead of me?

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: I think this is probably Sui Juris - and Fourteen, if you want to be your mech - to cut them off maybe?

JACK: Yeah.

ALI: Okay, that's heads.

AUSTIN: Chase— so now you're at two.

ALI: Yeah yeah! Two coins!

AUSTIN: Two Tender, one Soft Stone. And the last challenge— oh, this is good. [reading] I lead a dizzying course through switchback and blind. Follow me if you want, but throw. On tails, you're lost and won't be able to find your own way back. So this is not about coins at all. [ALI laughs] Do you want to throw again? Or do you want to roll the dice, is really what I mean.

ALI: Yeah. Oh yes, sorry, sorry. [laughs] I keep thinking I have the option to just not to.

AUSTIN: You do. You would just leave, you would just give up, basically. Right?

ALI: Okay, right.

AUSTIN: So on tails, you get lost and won't be able to find your way back. So I think they lead you into a very— they lead you inside one of these asteroids, one of these very dense, high-gravity asteroids. And the ship comes crashing to a halt. They come crashing to a halt next to each other? And you tell me how this goes, but you win that fight. What does Anticipation Tender— what's Tenderness look like in combat?

ALI: Oh man! The last time we saw Tender fight someone, they— it was— she just killed them.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it was the sword, right? That was with Robin's Song?

ALI: Yeah. And I think specifically them being someone from Contrition's Figure and Tender having so many ideas about what rehabilitation looks like— I don't think it's— because she has the yarn powers, essentially, it's not an aggressive move. It's— she ties their arms up because she can do that at this point. And then is also like, "I'm gonna take you prisoner. We can talk this out." But—

AUSTIN: So you yarn-ball this robot up? Great.

ALI: Yup. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Where do you store them? The World Without End doesn't have a brig.

ALI: Oh! [ART laughs] Can I do the thing that we suggested doing, which is locking them up where all the food is?

AUSTIN: Yeah, 100%. They're just in—

ALI: Just lock the door to the food pantry.

AUSTIN: Great! Good. Put them in the fucking freezer. Uh huh.

ALI: "You can eat and drink as much as you want. Here are some pillows and blankets. I'll talk to you tomorrow, but you can't leave this room."

ART: I've also seen The Shining, and that works out great. [group laughter]

AUSTIN: Great. So here's the little twist to this is because of that previous roll, you're lost and won't be able to find your way back. So you're stuck in this asteroid field. Not just you, this whole group is stuck in this asteroid field.

I actually have a question because this is an Advent facility that you got lost in. Grand, you see The World Without End has popped up. I don't know where you— I mean, I know where you are. You're on the catapult somewhere. Right?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Where are you that you see that The World Without End got stuck in this thing? Do you just overhear it from somebody? Do you see it on a screen?

ART: I feel like I overhear it. I don't think anyone would give me the information directly.

AUSTIN: Right, right. Yeah, me either. Unless you've been— so you haven't left yet because the catapult is being blockaded. Right? There's a blockade that's keeping you from launching stuff out. In fact, I can just tell you that you've tried. Not you, but Advent has tried. And it's a really funny weird thing. Whatever the weapon is that the Rapid Evening has deployed— their loophole for the Quire anti-gun rule— you know how sometimes guns just explode here? Or they turn into confetti or whatever when you shoot them? It's just magically they fuck up? That's what happens to whatever gets shot by the Rapid Evening's ship weapons.

JACK: Oh my god!

AUSTIN: They'll shoot— so the catapult will launch a huge container filled with stolen artifacts, and the Rapid Evening will shoot it, and it will turn into rose petals. Or into tree leaves.

KEITH: Wait, so it makes whatever it shoots act like if it was a gun that had fired?

AUSTIN: Right, like if it was a gun. And sometimes it just explodes. Yeah, right, 100%. Yes. And so that's the effect it has. So you've just watched them continue— like, "All right, we're gonna try to time this one. The patrol's kinda far away, let's try to sneak it out." Maybe one in 30 things succeeds? But many of them get blasted out of the sky, and so you have not yet jumped on board one of these things.

But yeah, you're given this opportunity to send them basically the labyrinth clue. You can kind of guide them out of this. Do you do it, or do you leave them lost?

2:25:15

ART: This is frustrating for Grand. Stopping this project was gonna be Grand's turn next. [ALI laughs].

AUSTIN: You could still destroy it.

ART: And I, as a player, am feeling frustrated as my wont has been been frustrated.

ALI: You should have said something!

ART: I didn't feel like the right thing to say.

AUSTIN: There's other stuff on this board that's bad. You're gonna have stuff to do.

ART: But it's the most— it was the most dramatic coming-out party for finale Grand. But yeah, I think that Grand is interested in doing.

AUSTIN: What's it look like? Do you just send words? Do you come across the radio?

ART: No, I don't think that's important to Grand. I think— could just be like, "Ding! Here's three steps of a map" or whatever. Just something that would— because a full-on transmission feels a little obvious and I'm not ready to be obvious for five more minutes now. [AUSTIN laughs] Or I guess now I get to be a little less obvious. So yeah, it's a coded— but a code that Grand would know that Even knows?

AUSTIN: Okay. Like some sort of Divine Fleet— is it a Divine Fleet child's game?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Some very light version of a tap code or something?

DRE: Ohhh, I be I know where it came from. You remember our first fucking episode where we couldn't tell the difference between lycanthropes and lichens? [KEITH laughs] I bet very serious Even sat down and was like, "Okay, we've gotta figure out a code communication system so that these sorts of mess ups don't happen again in critical situations." [someone snorts]

AUSTIN: "Say 'werewolf!'"

DRE: That was the code. [KEITH laughs]

ART: That's much better than what I was planning, which was a weird joke on duck-duck-grey duck. [KEITH laughs very loudly] My favorite weird—

KEITH: Regionalism?

ART: Yeah, American regionalism, which probably didn't survive.

KEITH: Is that Michigan? Is that where— is it somewhere like—

AUSTIN: I think so. I think it's—

ART: It's Minnesota. And it's wrong. I say that as someone married to a Minnesotan. They're wrong.

KEITH: Yeah. Ethically! Yeah, it's ethically wrong. [AUSTIN sighs]

ART: Yeah. Ethically and morally wrong.

DRE: It used to be a lot more interesting and challenging, though.

ART: Challenging? You're saying challenging?

DRE: Yeah, because you're saying "duck" in both words. Whereas "goose" is very different.

KEITH: Well, to be fair, if I know my duck-duck-goose, it's—

AUSTIN: We can't do this! [group laughter]

KEITH: — It's not that you say "duck" both times, because when you say "grey duck," you say "GREY DUCK!" and you're already running.

AUSTIN: We cannot. We're gonna keep moving.

DRE: Sorry.

AUSTIN: It's fine.

ART: From what I understand, the real challenge is—

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

ART: — saying other adjectives that start with goo.

JANINE: Space is dying!

AUSTIN: Space is on fire!

KEITH: So is America's regional dialect!

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Using that code, Grand manages to ferret out the— like, "No, turn left. Left!"

KEITH: Duck-duck-ferret.

AUSTIN: Okay. Do y'all believe it? You get that code, Even and Tender and Fourteen, do y'all say like, "Okay, we'll do this thing Grand Magnificent is telling us to do from across the system."

DRE: Yeah.

ALI: I think Tender would.

AUSTIN: Fourteen, is this a good— are you— is this a contempt token? [laughs]

JACK: I think Fourteen is like, “Fuck it. We’re stuck in a gravity thing, and space is dying. I dunno, if he wants to help us out of here, fine!”

AUSTIN: Great.

JACK: It’s like, “Does my enemy want to give me \$20?” and I’m like, “Okay, I’ll get \$20.”

AUSTIN: Sure. Fine. Great. Good. All right. That is your turn. Grand Mag, you want to draw a card?

ART: Yeah, gimme a card.

AUSTIN: Three of Summer. There’s a lot of bolded text here, huh? Ooo. [reading] Summer is a time for production and tending to the earth; start a project for food production. Or, summer is a time for conquest and the gathering of might; start a project for military readiness and conquest.

ART: Why couldn’t I draw the project fails one? [JANINE and ALI laugh]

AUSTIN: Sometimes it be like that!

KEITH: There’s always a five-week project.

AUSTIN: Right, that’s exactly right. Or six weeks and you say that it’s everybody but Volition.

KEITH: Or everybody but Advent and Volition.

ART: Does Volition need food?

AUSTIN: No, but Volition could use a +food that’s system-wide. What if all the food became an Iconoclast? If you give me anything with Volition, I promise— if you don’t think I have ideas about how to turn that DIY shit around on you? Mmm.

JANINE: Is Mayor McCheese a food Iconoclast? [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: Oh, we don’t have time for duck-duck-grey duck, but we have time for Mayor McCheese. [group laughter]

JACK: We always have time for Mayor McCheese.

AUSTIN: He's a mayor, Art! He earned that respect. [someone is laughing really hard]

ART: I don't think he's been on tv in the lifetime of most of our listening audience.

KEITH: No, he's too busy trying to fight the Hamburglar and the Grimace!

ALI: We can't do two of these in a row [DRE laughs] is my only rule.

AUSTIN: All right. Well, let's— so which is it, Grand?

ART: I will start a six-week food project.

AUSTIN: All right. Is Grand assigned to do this, or does Grand trick people into letting him do this?

ART: I mean, nothing on this say we have a ton of food.

AUSTIN: That's true.

ART: So I think this is Grand's attempt to like, "Look, I can help with this stuff. We need food, let's do a lot of food stuff!" And just not— the fact that it's helping a lot of people is a feature, not a bug.

AUSTIN: Right. So what is the food project, and can I make a suggestion if you don't have one?

ART: Yeah, I would love to hear it.

AUSTIN: You already know someone who has great ideas about food. His name is Morning's Observation. [ALI laughs]

ART: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: Make Calci-Yum real!

ART: All right.

AUSTIN: A Calci-Yum bar in every ... pot.

ART: I mean, if Morning'll take that call. Or do I know enough about Calci-Yum?

AUSTIN: You know enough about.

ART: Am I ripping off Calci-Yum? [ALI gasps]

AUSTIN: You could set up a licensing agreement. Morning would take that call. Well, do you tell Morning's Observation what's really going on?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is, "They were gonna make me make mechs that I already gave them the designs for, or I could make a food project." [laughs]

ART: A big wasteful food project that will benefit everyone.

AUSTIN: Except for Volition, presumably. And the Rapid Evening? Who doesn't get this?

ART: Yeah, I would also cut off the Rapid Evening.

AUSTIN: Okay, no Rapid Evening, no Volition. Everybody else gets to eat.

ART: Everyone else gets some sweet Calci-Yum.

AUSTIN: Love it. Morning's Observation is like,

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): This isn't how I wanted this to happen. You know I wanted to do this on my own, I wanted to give it that special flair. But I see that this could be big for both of us, and also fuuuck Advent. So.

ART (as Grand Magnificent): I'm working on it.

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): Are they listening to this?

AS as: I hope not. If they are, I just gave away the whole thing.

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): If they are, fuck you! How about that? How about fuck you! [KEITH chuckles]

ART (as Grand Magnificent): Uhh, if you're a cop, you have to tell me.

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): I'm not a cop. Are you?

ART (as Grand Magnificent): Okay. No!

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): Are you a cop for Advent now? Is that the whole thing?

ART (as Grand Magnificent): No.

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): Advent is like super cops.

ART (as Grand Magnificent): I know.

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): They're like cops but also criminals but not good criminals.

ART (as Grand Magnificent): Just get at me in a couple weeks.

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): I'm going to send you all my design documents. I have 70 PDFs.

ART (as Grand Magnificent): Great. Awesome. I'm gonna make so many people read all of them. [AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: All right, then we advance clocks including the Calci-Yum project. Also this one you don't know what it is. Can someone make a note that Advent froze— that "raid the Qui Err" froze on Tender's turn? I guess I'll—

KEITH: How long is it frozen for?

AUSTIN: Until Tender's next turn. Did I get to the "steal Gumption" one, or did I fuck up? When "steal Gumption" star? That started on Fourteen's turn?

ALI: Even's, Even's.

AUSTIN: Even's turn?

ALI: No no no no. Sorry, sorry.

[overlapping]

ART: No. Fourteen.

DRE: Fourteen's turn.

AUSTIN: All right. So Fourteen, Tender, Grand. So that one's at three. The second Rapid Evening one just finished, and everything else is getting close to finished. So let me tell you about that second Rapid Evening one. Yeah. Maybe it's good. I don't remember. I have a list of all of this. And maybe it's a good one. Oh, that's fun.

KEITH: You didn't say that in a way I liked.

JANINE: Did someone just get murdered in the street?

AUSTIN: I have to decide on something really quick. Do we count— so I need a number for each of these remaining operating projects. Starting here. One, two, three Advent. Then four NEH, then five DFS. Then six, seven Volition. Then not the Rapid Evening's. And then "steal Gumption" is the last one. So what is that? Four, five.

ALI: You don't want to go the other way, so at least everybody gets hit once?

AUSTIN: What do you mean, everybody gets hit once?

ALI: So if you go Advent, NEH, and then everybody instead of all of Advent's clocks. Do you know what I mean?

AUSTIN: I'm rolling a die. I'm rolling a die and one of them is getting hit.

ALI: Oh oh, okay.

AUSTIN: So I just need to know how many there are so I know how many sided die. One, two—

KEITH: I think "steal Gumption" is eight.

2:35:09

AUSTIN: — three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Yes, correct. So I'm going to roll 1d8. And the Rapid Evening is going to stop one of these things. Three!

KEITH: Oh no! [general sounds of dismay from the group]

JACK: That's the food project.

ALI: That could have been the shield.

AUSTIN: I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. It could have been the shield. It could have been the shield.

JACK: Such a fucking Rapid Evening thing to do. "All right, welcome. If you don't destroy this thing, we're gonna bomb your whole system. Now for our first move—"

AUSTIN: "For our first project—"

JACK: — "we will destroy your food project!"

AUSTIN: But they just— they don't know! They just see— okay, they do know. [ALI groans]
What they do is— what they actually do? Here's what they do. I'm going to GM fiat this. They're taking over this food project.

ART: [outraged] They stole Calci-Yum?!

ALI: They stole Calci-Yum. As evidence that they will—

KEITH: But there was a marketing agreement!

ALI: They are going to offer food to anyone who leaves the system ahead of the stellar combustor with them. They're offering you citizenship, or at least temporary citizenship or some sort of visa situation, to the principality of Kesh. And as a good-faith effort, they're taking over the food project.

ART: I need Morning's Observation to know that I didn't do that!

ALI: You got it, buddy! I think he's pissed at first. He calls, he's like,

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): Yo, what the fuck!

ART (as Grand Magnificent): I am also like, "What the fuck!"

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): That Keen Forrester Gloaming dumbass is onstage talking about how he is gonna pay for everybody to eat Calci-Yum. He said Calci-Yum! He said Calci-Yum, Grand. He put the Y in there!

ART (as Grand Magnificent): Yeah. I guess it's fine? Like, it's bad. But we're — it's— the effect is still happening. We're draining bad shit to fund good shit.

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): [disconsolately] Yeah.

KEITH: Only if you go live with the Rapid Evening.

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): [still hurt] Yeah.

AUSTIN: All right. What is the rest of your turn? What do you do with your action?

KEITH: Yeah, now what? [ALI chuckles]

ART: My first impulse is to do a big— oh, I guess I can't.

AUSTIN: What? What can you not do?

ART: I can't do anything about that eight-piece Rapid Evening clock.

AUSTIN: No. The Rapid Evening one is safe. It's gone, it's going to fire next turn no matter what. You gotta get ahead of those eight ones.

ART: This is my first turn.

AUSTIN: I know. I'm saying y'all as a collective. [ART laughs] You could destroy the Volition shield.

ART: Yeah, and that might be— do we think we have “raid the Qui Err” under control? It's less suspicious if I don't blow up my own shit the first time.

AUSTIN: I think it is less suspicious. So I have a rule in here that I didn't say out loud because I decided I wanted to wing it instead, which is like, “Hey, if you spend all your faction's shit in a single turn, that's bad. And they'll know that and kick you out.” And I think that we're going to have to talk about that when it happens. But if you were like, “All right, I'm going to spend two Advent resources to go after Volition,” I don't think that that's— there's no eyelash batting there, right? But if you spent two Advent resources to go after Advent, then you know what? I don't think they let you near that shit anymore.

ART: All right. So you're saying I should save that. I should save that for a big thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's a big one.

ART (as Grand Magnificent): Okay. So I'm going to trust the rest of you to deal with this situation over here.

AUSTIN: Oh, are you? You're gonna trust the other— oh wow, Grand Magnificent. [JACK laughs]

ART: And I will do a heavy attack on Volition.

AUSTIN: On the Iconoclast shield project. (ART: Yes.) Not on a resource that Volition has or something?

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: So heavy attack is fun because you have to frame a risky scene but also you have to spend a lot. So you have three things you need to spend. What are you spending to do it?

ART: [indistinct]

AUSTIN: Are you eating?!

ART: Yeah, I thought you were going to talk longer. [KEITH and JANINE laugh]

AUSTIN: Unbelievable.

DRE: It's gonna be a big fight, you gotta fuel up!

AUSTIN: It is gonna be a big fight.

ART: I'm going to spend my contempt token. I'm gonna move that back. I'm going to spend access and intimidation.

AUSTIN: Okay, so those just go to middle instead of being— they're not all the way down to bad. So they have as much access as anybody else, they have as much information as anybody else. They're still important to them to have those. But they don't have a lot. They don't have an abundance of it. So what's that look like in terms of use?

ART: I mean, I think part of it is a lot of— because I don't want to do— I know it's supposed to be a risky scene, but I don't want it to be a combat-y scene. I'm trying to figure that out right now. I'm trying to pick a game. So I think it looks like— the access one is just using a lot of favors to get there.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Access is almost necessarily a limited resource, especially political access. Intimidation is I think it— I think that's a little bit like, "Did ... did Big Bad and Advent just send Grand Magnificent to take down the Iconoclast shield?"

AUSTIN: Is that intimidation?

ART: That's something that's *not* intimidating, so it makes them less intimidating.

AUSTIN: Ohh, I see. Gotcha. Great.

ART: Like, they could have sent an army. They sent—

AUSTIN: They have that!

ART: Yeah, we've established that they have that.

AUSTIN: It has guns. You added +guns.

ART: I didn't use guns.

AUSTIN: You didn't! And you didn't use the anti-Volition strikeforce! So I'm not removing you from Advent, but there's definitely some like, "Hey, did Grand Mag— okay. Okay."

ART: I just think we also need that later.

AUSTIN: I gotcha. Yeah. Totally.

ART: This feels like—

KEITH: There's another clock.

AUSTIN: There is another clock.

ART: Yeah, I bet Volition has more stuff going on.

AUSTIN: Oh, definitely. So what do you do? What's the scene, what's the risky scene?

ART: I don't know.

AUSTIN: Are you sure it's not a fighty thing?

ART: It really feels out of character to just go into a big fight.

AUSTIN: It does. Is it a— it could be An Animated Disagreement in which you're trying to convince someone to do these things.

ART: Sure. And I guess we could just -intimidation because it can just kinda go badly.

AUSTIN: Right. Well, it'll go well if you win, no matter what. But the intimidation there will be— I feel like the intimidation there will be— oh, you know what it is? "Oh cool, they went after Volition. Maybe they're not so bad."

ART: All right. That's not really where I want this to end up, but.

AUSTIN: It's not.

ART: It's a fine middle ground.

AUSTIN: It's not intimidating as much.

ART: Yeah. We'll get there.

AUSTIN: Or— who knows.

ART: What page is this— what page are we on? What, where is—?

AUSTIN: So An Animated Disagreement is 12 and 13. Set up: everyone plays. Well, in this case it's not everyone, it's just— well, I guess actually it is. [reading] Everyone plays, and it'll explain why it's everyone in a second. Decide with your chosen partner what is the matter of your disagreement, where you're holding your discussion, who else is present. So I think this is probably you and Ballard maybe, Ballard Reverie? And Ballard's argument is, we should be going after the Rapid Evening. Your position is we should be going after Volition. In this moment, not forever. Does that sound right? Those are the stakes?

ART: That does sound right.

AUSTIN: All right. Everybody else in this call takes the part of the audience. In this moment you're stepping out of your role as Fourteen Fifteen and Signet and Tender and Even and Echo and stepping into the roles— and Gig. Sorry Gig, I didn't mean to leave you out, I was just looking at the screen. I left you out, I didn't mean to.

ART: Keith, you have to be Gig.

AUSTIN: You have to be Gig.

KEITH: Okay, I'll be Gig. Everybody else be whoever they gotta be.

AUSTIN: YI are basically playing as real or imagined audience members from Advent. You're basically playing as the inner voices of Kitcha Kanna.

KEITH: Okay. I'm gonna do a voice for this.

AUSTIN: You don't have to say anything. [reading] Everyone else takes the part of the audience, real or imagined. During the discussion - oh, I guess that's true - anyone can ask for detail about the setting, occasion, circumstance. So we as the audience conduct the discussion. Er, not we I guess. I'm playing Ballard. Audience members, so the rest of you, take turns posing challenges to the position holders. [reading] Both position holders must answer each challenge. You decide you goes first or let both of them volunteer. Once both have answered, award one coin to the one you think gave the best answer. You have to choose. If either position holder goes on too long, you can cut them off, hoots and boos optional, and award one coin to their counterpart. So if someone goes too long, you can be like, "Boo! Give the other person a coin!" Or else just ask them to kindly wrap it up. They are absolutely not allowed to interrupt or rebut

one another. If either position holder interrupts the other or tries to get in a rebuttal when it's not their turn to answer, cut them off at once and award one coin to their counterpart.

Ending the discussion: after three challenges, they compare coins. Whatever proportion of coins they each hold, they can be confident that if they were forced to commit, the same proportion of the audience, real or imaginary, would side with them. So three challenges here.

Ballad and Grand, you've been called in front of Kitcha Kanna to make the case. Audience, who goes first and what's the first challenge?

ALI: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: Anyone who has strong feelings here should just go here, should just ask.

DRE: Please express your position in the form of a slogan that people can rally behind. [JANINE chuckles]

AUSTIN: Who are you asking first?

DRE: Let's go with Ballad.

AUSTIN: All right.

AUSTIN (as Ballad): It's time for the sun to set on the Rapid Evening.

ART: [off mic] Oh fuck.

ART as: It's an unassailable position that we have to take out Volition. [AUSTIN and JACK laugh as JANINE groans]

JACK: You know I love these slogans to have the world "unassailable" in them. [DRE and KEITH laugh]

ART (as Grand Magnificent): I needed more syllables!

AUSTIN: Uh huh! [JACK groans]

KEITH: It's a position that we have to take out Volition.

ART (as Grand Magnificent): That sounds worse.

AUSTIN: [laughing] "It's a position" is no argument!

KEITH: [laughing] It's very ambivalent. [ALI giggles]

JACK: "Well, we're gonna get rid of Volition."

AUSTIN: Dre, where do you put your coin?

DRE: [laughing] I guess Ballad.

AUSTIN: Okay. Give me another question here, another challenge. Two more challenges.

KEITH: [in Flanger's voice] What makes either of these things more worthwhile than just amassing massive amounts of wealth and weapons?

AUSTIN: There's a list of challenges you have to choose from.

KEITH: Oh, there is? Is there really?

AUSTIN: Yeah. [group laughter]

KEITH: Oh, I didn't see that.

KEITH: [in Flanger's voice] Please explain how your position best serves the neglected interests of the underprivileged? [DR giggles]

ALI: Wow.

JACK: Someone in Advent—?

KEITH: [natural voice] But they're all rich, it's this guy's version of underprivileged.

DRE: What the fuck is this voice?

AUSTIN: I don't know what this voice is. I don't like it.

KEITH: It's an Advent guy. He's a blob.

ART: It's a muppet being punched, I think. [AUSTIN and DR laugh]

KEITH: This is a rich Advent blob.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. It's one of the green blobs, I gotcha. (KEITH: Yeah.) Who's going first? Who are you asking this to, Ballad or Grand first?

2:46:20

KEITH: [in Flanger's voice] Grand Magnificent, you have the floor.

JACK: [sighing] Oh my god.

ART (as Grand Magnificent): Thank you. Thank you for that. I'm not saying the Rapid Evening isn't a problem. Of course the Rapid Evening is a problem. But they're a long-term problem. They're a destabilization, and they don't— who the fuck are the underprivileged in Advent? You know, the Rapid Evening is a high-level problem. They're here to encourage people out. They're not going to destroy everything the way Volition will. That's what's really— everyone is equally hurt by the destruction of everything.

AUSTIN (as Ballad): All right. Everyone is equally hurt by the destruction of everything (KEITH in Flanger voice: Mmm.) That's true. Let me think. Volition is bad, certainly. But the Rapid Evening is worse.

ALI (as Audience): Boo!

AUSTIN (as Ballad): This is a hard question! I don't have an answer. [ALI laughs]

ART: No one has an answer to this question.

AUSTIN: No. No. Who wins, blob?

KEITH: [in Flanger's voice] I believe that Grand Magnificent has successfully persuaded me that Volition is indeed the more dire threat at this present time.

ART: Oh my god, can I exhaust a resource on that person?

JANINE: Boo!

AUSTIN: You can take a contempt token whenever you want. [ALI and KEITH laugh]

ART: I'm not sure I can in the middle of [laughing] spending a contempt token.

JANINE: Do we still need one more?

AUSTIN: Yeah. We do, we do.

DRE: And you have to do it in that voice.

JANINE: Nnno. I was going to say, please explain how your position is the most urgent and expedient?

AUSTIN: To who first?

JANINE: To, I think, Ballad first.

AUSTIN (as Ballad): They just stole our cool food project. They just stole it from us and announced it to everybody. Every day that passes is a day that we walk around with a bloody nose. We have to show them that we don't take shit like that. And the longer we wait, the more of our stuff they're going to take and the more of our advances they're going to claim as their own. Gotta move fast.

ART (as Grand Magnificent): [grumbling under his breath] Hit me in the food project. [someone snorts]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Right in the food project! [ART laughs]

ART (as Grand Magnificent): No one was more harmed by the stealing of Calci-Yum than I. I've been working on that for months on all sorts of different planets and objectives. It hurt me to my core. But we are not children in a playground. We cannot think of who kicked down our sand castle or stole our lunch money. We have to act in the interest of the system and to maintain our power, and we do that showing it, by taking out the biggest threat. It is not some Johnny-come-lately milk grubbers. [AUSTIN laughs, ALI squeaks] Milk grubber, a thing everyone's heard before.

AUSTIN: A milk grubber is the Twilight Mirage's version of a fishmonger. Janine?

JANINE: I think Grand Mag takes that one.

AUSTIN: Okay! So Grand Mag wins the challenge, spends the resources.

KEITH: [in Flanger's voice] Yay! Go Grand Magnificent!

AUSTIN: Who invited Jordan Peterson again?

ART: The chat has established that's Flan-grr Johannes. [group laughter]

KEITH: It's a soft G!

AUSTIN: Flan-jer.

ART: Flanger? That's worse!

AUSTIN: It's not a hard J? It's not Flanger Gohannes? [KEITH laughs]

KEITH: It's Flanger Gohan.

[overlapping]

ALI: God!

JANINE: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Newest Dragon Ball Fighter Z DLC. All right.

ART: If we ever have a ticketed event, I'll make sure that free admission to anyone who shows up dressed as Flanger Gohans. [AUSTIN giggles]

KEITH: Flanger Johannes.

AUSTIN: All right. So you've successfully done— what's that, a heavy attack?

ART: Yeah. Uh huh.

AUSTIN: All right. So what's it look like? What does this actually end up looking like as the attack goes off?

ART: Well, I used access and intimidation, but I think it's largely a military operation. I think it's— I think it might just be a ton of Independences? (AUSTIN: Mmm.) How many Independences is an impressive number? Oh, that's a hard thing to say.

AUSTIN: How many Independences is a— mmm, wow! [ALI giggles] How many Independences is an impressive number? There we go. I think anything over a dozen is a lot of Independences.

ART: So like 15 Independences?

AUSTIN: Yeah. 15 Independences, Independenci, arrive.

ART: Independents? Naw.

AUSTIN: Independents. 15 Independents Street. Yes.

JACK: What did Grand spend to do that?

AUSTIN: Grand spent access—

ART: Access, intimidation, and a contempt token.

JACK: Access, intimidation, and a contempt token.

AUSTIN: Right, which was represented through— I imagine access was they called in favors with the Moonlock government and are like, “Yeah, you have to give us access to this, give us the contract to take this thing out.”

JACK: Oof. And Moonlock were like, “Ahhh, okay?”

AUSTIN: And then they did, right? And the thing with intimidation is, you can spend it by using it. Right? You lower it— I guess the thing we just said was— the thing I like is kind of like, “Hey, they took out a Volition thing. That’s not what villains do.” But there is a degree of just they’ve shown their tricks a little bit. Right? Everyone’s seen what the Independence units look like now? They’re not a surprising thing in the same way now.

And I think in so far as what it looks like, there’s almost something ironic. Because it’s an Independence unit, but there’s ranks of them. Dozens of them moving as one unit, as a singular thing because Advent doesn’t care that they’re Independence units. They just line up and fire. And I think we get a really good effect of the video Iconoclasts, one, recoiling at the sight of the Independences because they like, “ Wait a second, I thought Independence was dead!” And two, refracting in the crystal, in the glass as this huge tower of these twisting entangled beings finally falls apart.

[MUSIC - “Twilight” begins]

[MUSIC - “Twilight” ends]

