

Live at the Table Audio - Dialect Pt. 1

Transcribed by Ril (@kaorukeihi)

(T/N: Most quotes from the *Dialect* rulebook were copied and pasted directly from my copy of it.)

[Some unintelligible crosstalk, laughter.]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Live at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterisation, and fun interactions between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker, and joining me today—I've just interrupted them in the middle of a conversation [laughs] —Janine Hawkins.

JANINE: [laughs] Hi, you can find me @bleatingheart on Twitter.

AUSTIN: And Andrew Lee Swan.

DRE: Hey! You can find me on Twitter @swandre3000.

AUSTIN: We are kicking off something I am super excited about. You can see on the screen right now it says The Road to Season 6 at the top of the screen and that is because I could not, I could not leave one year of Friends at the Table without fucking prepping for a thing that probably won't happen for another 10 months [laughs]. Um, that's actually a little more complicated than that. So. When we... I guess probably back six months ago on a Tips episode, one of the things that came up in conversation was that we—I think Keith or Janine or Ali suggested playing a game for a future season ahead of time as a Live game as a way of, like, test it out, and get, like, some of the kinks out, and get people familiar with the system. Um, at the time I was like "Uhh, that feels like a waste of, like, a play session." because I'm Austin, and I'm an asshole... [Janine laughs] And, what I ended up needing to do instead was: okay, how can I make those things important? How can I make things NOT feel like a waste, and NOT get attached to characters that we won't blah-blah-blah-blah-blah etc. So the thing that I ended up thinking about was—Oh, we could do like a little preamble to whenever we eventually get to the next season of what we are gonna call I guess The Divine Universe, or the, the Rapid Eve -- I don't fucking know what the name of this sci-fi bullshit is --

JANINE: Rapid Verse

AUSTIN: The Rapid Verse, there it is. [Dre laughs.] Um, and so. And so, and so my plan went like—Oh, we'll play some games that are like in contention for the next season. We'll play the *Beam Saber* by Austin Ramsay, um, we'll play *Night Witches*, we'll play *Lancer*, we'll play *All Systems Nominal*—these are all games about war, and most of them are about mechs, one of them is about planes... Planes are a sort of mech, I think. I think World War II, I think mecha anime has so much, uuh, in debt to World War II fighter pilots, SO. Uh, so

yeah, I think *Night Witches* probably fits that too. And then I realised—oh, that's kind of being limited a little bit in what I wanna really do, which is I wanna draw a line between something that happened at the end of *Twilight Mirage*, which is the rise of a new galactic power, um, quietly, not the focus of the end of *Twilight Mirage*, so like, if you haven't listened to *Twilight Mirage* -- don't worry I'm not at this moment being specific though I will be in the future. Um, uh, to where it ends up being, right, because, because there is a question at the end of this kind of like -- how did they go from A to B? And so I'm filling some of those gaps. And so I thought about using games like *Microscope* or *Kingdom* to do that, but also one of the things that I was not entirely happy with in *Twilight Mirage* was that though we began focused on kind of beleaguered refugees, we also, the camera also inevitably landed on a group of indigenous people who had been wounded seriously but whom were never at the focal point of the camera. Um, and I don't know what the situation with season 6 is gonna end up being to some degree -- I have a pretty good idea of where it's gonna take place, and I have a good idea of like what the big arc is, but I want it to START with the camera focused on those wounded by empire and colonialism instead of ENDING there, instead of having like to arrive at that place secondarily -- um, someone's not getting ANY audio, are people not getting any audio? Am I talking to nothing? That would be bad. Uh-oh. No, it looks like there's audio going. Umm, I'm just gonna wait before I continue.

JANINE: [laughs]

[Pause]

AUSTIN: People seem like they're... I'm seeing people responding to something—okay. We're good. Whew. Okay. [Dre chuckles.] Um, there's no music playing. There you go. So. The, to do that, to focus in on the people who, who empire hurts, what we're gonna play, what we're gonna kick off this Road to Season 6 with, is *Dialect*, a game by Kathryn Hymes and Hakan, uh, Seyal— hm, I'm not gonna be able to pronounce his name, and that's fucking terrible because I watched a video with Hakan in it last night, and also because this is a game about dying, the death of languages, and EXPLICITLY includes as one of its rules, in the back that like one of the ways that you can help languages from dying is by learning how to pronounce peoples' names correctly. Uhh, and I'm not gonna pronounce this right. Janine, do you have any language help here? Say, uh, hmmm—

JANINE: [crosstalk] What?! I—

AUSTIN: One of the persons who wrote this game, one of the two authors.

JANINE: Hmm, hang on, where—

AUSTIN: It's on the second page of, the third page of this book. Hakan, I wanna say Seya... liog... lu?

JANINE: Oh no, I don't know any, I don't know—

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] You don't know what that shit is?

JANINE: That's, no. I'm good at the languages where there are accents over vowels but consonants...

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Okay, but not over consonants.

JANINE: VERY little experience, very, very poor, um, a deep regret of mine.

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Okay, same. Apologies to Hakan, I will look this up once we're done recording so that I could get this right in the future—

JANINE: [crosstalking] Honestly, not even sure I've been pronouncing Kathryn Hymes right.

AUSTIN: Yeah, fair. You know what? Fair. [laughs] Totally fair. Um. *Dialect* is a game about language and how it dies, and this way it is in some ways similar another game -- Janine, you and I've played before, um, *Downfall*, a game we played with Keith, I think it was our first Live at the Table. Um, this is going to be a, a, a tragedy of sorts, probably. You know, I think there's ways to frame it otherwise but I'm not particularly interested in framing the death of a language as anything except tragic even if it's not all the way to like, to deep melancholy, or deep, violent, brutal tragedy, like, losing culture is, is NOT a great thing for the world. Um, I will set the game up a little bit, but before I do what I DO wanna say is—if you are like—this game is taking place in the future of the COUNTER/Weight and Twilight Mirage universe, um, there may be references to stuff in the past there, we're NOT focused on factions, or cultures, or charc— especially not characters from those seasons, so there's a low chance of like us being—You know what happened to Aria, you know what happened to Signet, BUT there is a high chance that I will say like—uh, the Divine Fleet, like, and if you don't know what the Divine Fleet is and you really, REALLY, REALLY wanna go into each of those seasons fresh, I'm giving you that heads up right now, um, but I don't think you should worry too much about it, because, again, with the exception of the rise of one specific power at the end of Twilight Mirage, we're not gonna get into any specifics about the whos and whats of that season or of the COUNTER/Weight season. Um. [pause] Any questions so far from Dre and Janine? [pause]

DRE: Not that I can think of.

JANINE: No?

AUSTIN: Okay, I have one, which is we should do a clap.

DRE: Oh yeah.

JANINE: [crosstalking] Oh yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: We had like a big real intro first, but now that I've done that set up, we should do a clap. And I'm also going to switch over—

JANINE: [crosstaliking] Is it a special day? What's the... "Your time is limited so don't waste it living someone else's life." That's not a thing I wanna read before I play a roleplaying game.

DRE: [sighs] Yeah, jeez.

AUSTIN: [sighs] Thanks, Steve. Uh.

JANINE: Maybe I make money living someone else's lives. [Austin laughs] What about that?
[Janine laughs]

AUSTIN: Let's do, uh, 5 seconds after?

DRE: Sure.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

[Long pause, clap.]

AUSTIN: Okay, good clap.

JANINE: Did something break?

DRE: No, it scared my dog.

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] No, it was a dog.

JANINE: Aww.

DRE: She's okay.

AUSTIN: So. Let me talk about *Dialect* really quick. *Dialect* is a game about language and how it dies. "*Dialect* is a story game about an isolated community, their language, and what it means for that language to be lost. It's for three to five people and runs in three to four hours. Let's tease that apart." Um, "Story games are a structured way for people to tell stories together." If you've heard this show you pretty much know what a story game is. Um, but I DO want to zoom in instead on the Isolation and language. "In *Dialect*, you'll define and explore an isolated community through it beginning, rise, and end. You may be pilgrims to Mars, a cyberpunk gang fighting a megacorp, or students at an English boarding school. Some Isolations will be voluntary, others not. Some will choose to barricade themselves against an unforgiving world while others lie stranded and adrift from home. On their own, one thing is certain—these people will be left to simmer in what makes them special. They will change because of it. You will decide what they become."

"Language building. You'll tell the story of the Isolation by building their language. Over the

course of the game, you will create new words off the fundamental traits of the community, the pivotal events that have defined their lives, and how they respond to a changing world. You will use the language you create to explore your character and advance the story of the Isolation. Each time a new word is made, the language grows, and the community is tightened.”

“*Dialect*’s spark comes from gradually building up elements of language among players, who gain fluency in their own dialect over the course of play. From age to age, the Isolation will change and you’ll see those changes reflected in their language. In the end, you’ll define what happens to that language and community. Players take away both the story they’ve told and the dialect they’ve built together.”

Um, and the both of you have read the intro of this already, so I don’t have to go over things like what the Facilitator is, or some key rules, though I will say that like some of the principles here are be obvious, listen, and be kind, and I will briefly go over the very broad flow of play. So we’re gonna start by creating an Isolation which involves us picking a Backdrop. A Backdrop is kind of a playbook that gives us a starting point for our Isolation. Then we will create characters—each of us will be playing a character that is grounded in one of the, um, 15 different archetypes, archetypes, we’ll have a little bit of choice around that. Then we will each go around the table and play a card from our hands that kind of helps us make a word and frame a scene. We’ll do it one each until we’ve all done it, and then we’ll advance into a new Age, and when we advance into a new Age some things change in the Isolation. When the change comes one of the key things, one of the Aspects that makes the Isolation what it is will also change. And we’ll do this again—we’ll go around the table, we’ll each frame the scene, we’ll create a word, all that, one more time, and then we’ll go into the Final Age. So it’s three Ages, so there’s gonna be a total of nine scenes. We might end up with more words than that because one of the things you can do in this game is kind of voluntarily create a new variation, a new variant of an old word, um, and then in the very end, after three Ages, which is after like nine kind of base new word units, base scenes are done, we’ll have kind of an epilogue called the Legacy, that is largely pretty straightforward, all said, um. It is a really great joy to read, and there’s some fucking great art in this book, uh, it is really, I have a hard copy—they’ve send us a hard copy, I should say—and it is beautiful to look at. Um, any questions at this point before we dig into building the Isolation? [pause]

JANINE: No, not really.

DRE: I’m ready to go.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um, I will now say, one more time that if you REALLY don’t want to know ANYTHING about Twilight Mirage’s ending now is a good time to jump out, because I wanna set the stage a little more particularly. Um, so, that is my final little warning here. People in the Internet last night may have seen me going through some bullshit [laughs]. Uh, I— real— hm, so. In prepping for this I realized that the— it’s not even in realizing it, I think even before that I’d realized that, but in prepping for this I realized I’ll need to address what the fuck the map is of this universe we’ve built [laughs], and um, the problem is, I had what was basically a pretty good idea of what the old map was, I thought it looked—and I’m gonna put it here for y’all—I thought it looked like THIS, and I’ll bring it up on the screen too. I though—huh, wrong way, there you go—I thought that is was these two big arms, the Automated Diaspora

arm, which was the Sagittarius arm, and then, there's the Perseus arm, the Orion Conglomerate arm, the Sagittarius one, that one of the Golden Branch which hit Apostolos and there's big Principality of Kesh that eventually reaches the Twilight Mirage, and then there's like a bunch of New Earth Hegemony controlling the center of the galax, right? But like we don't really see that stuff, it's off-screen, and like even though it's close it's kind of far away because stars are far, right. So like, the distance between this part of New Earth Hegemony and this part of Principality of Kesh is actually super big. BUT. Then I realized that there was like a new map that I was supposed to care about, um, let me see if I can find the right one here, is it this one? This one. Uh, which JUST doesn't have the same shit in the same places! Like, these Sagittarius and Perseus arms don't ever meet until they get down to like HERE, and that's where COUNTER/Weight is supposed to happen, right? Like, that's how COUNTER/Weight begins, the COUNTER/Weight system hangs in the middle of the Perseus and whatever, where the Perseus and the Sagittarius arms meet, and so, previously that was up here, and now it's not there anymore, and that fucked me up for a while. But I figured out what I wanted to do with the map, and that's important, because it helps us know where the fuck this is actually gonna take place. Um, so. For people watching—oops, watching me scroll through other maps, here is what I'm now calling a map of this place, and it's gonna help us know where we are gonna be setting the stage here. Um, by the way, the reason this happened is because two of the arms—people used to think that our galaxy had four major arms and now it's only two with two minor arms which to me seems like a big deal in a way that's... weird, it's weird, I don't like it. Uh, anyway. Now we know the Golden Branch is up here, and that the Twilight Mirage is down here, and THIS area right here is like in between where the OriCon red and the kind of New Earth Hegemony blue and the Twilight Mirage is like, this area is like the little bundle of bright lights is where we're going to begin the game today. Um. We are— So, people are like oh, OriCon and the Automated Diaspora are next to each other—Yeah, they are next to each other but they're separated, right. The thing to remember is like, space has big, big gaps of nothing in it, so you like can't just hop across it, it's really far, it's really, really far.

Anyway. We're gonna be here today. This place we've never seen before. Um, I think we've seen some other alien species over the course of this, this franchise's history. over the course of this show's history, we've seen the Apostolisians, we know that Talonites exist, we know there are slime people and cat boys now for sure, those all exist. We know that those are species. I think that those exist on this arm here. Um, and we don't need to talk about how they get places, they're not the focus today. Today is gonna be something ENTIRELY new that we're gonna figure out, and it's going to be one of the cultures if not the original culture that lived in the area that season 6 is gonna take place, which is gonna be right here in this little nubbin of space. Um.

To decide what that looks like we have to pick a Backdrop. That is the kind of, one of the first things to do with the way *Dialect* works. Um, and I guess at this moment is when I'll say the big final thing that is the Twilight Mirage spoiler which is—at the end of Twilight Mirage there is a group called the Divine Free States that merged with the Principality of Kesh to create a new thing called the Divine Principality. One day the Divine Principality is going to come and, whether through assimilation or through destruction, wipe out this little linguistic Isolation. Um, and I thought it was important to start there, and also am terrified of the Divine Principality already, so [laughs]. Starting with them destroying a language is maybe already the best way to communicate that they are fucking terrible. Um, alright. So.

“To start your game, choose a playset that defines the bones of the setting and the source of the Isolation. These playsets are called Backdrops. Follow the steps below to begin.” A list of Backdrops is on page 68. The one that they suggest using is the Outpost which is a stranded Martian expedition but I feel like that’s not really in line with what we want to go with because. like we... Okay, I don’t wanna be like—this is a group of colonists [laughs] who then gets colonized, that’s really like... stepping into it right away, you know?

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Did either of you had a chance to peek through any of these?

DRE: I’ve peeked through them, ummm...

JANINE: Page 68 doesn’t have... oh, wait, sorry, I didn’t actually open page 68, nevermind.

AUSTIN: If you open up the bookmarks thing it has nice bookmarks for almost everything which is nice.

DRE: Ooh.

JANINE: It is nice.

AUSTIN: Their default ones are the Outpost which is like a Martian outpost, a Compound which is— I should say this right now: this game is willing to go some really interesting places, and some really loaded places in terms of the content being tricky. So the second one is a compound in 1982, a group that has separated from society to create a new utopian commune, and I think like, once you start thinking about groups in 1980s that separated themselves from mass culture and were then destroyed by mass culture, you can immediately see the breadth of what this game is trying to tackle, right? There’s one called Sing the Earth Electric which is really fascinating, it’s about a group of machines left behind to like fix up Earth, um, and the language they develop. Uh, there’s Thieves’ Cant which is a group of thieves... I saw Sean Nittner who is one of the co-authors on *Scum and Villainy* do a thing—I think it was *Scum and Villainy*, I don’t think I’m confusing him with somebody else—anyway, he did an actual play of *Dialect* set in *Blades in the Dark* where they created a thieves’ languages using this, and then turned it, and then went into a *Blades in the Dark* campaign out of it, having built this like really elaborate dialect which is really fun. Um, then there are a bunch of guest ones. So those are the four that the book like suggests, the four that come with the books that were written by the book’s authors. Then there are like straight up a dozen other ones, and those include Sanctuary Island which is about an island in Boston, like a lighthouse in Boston that is like the last refuge away from some disease. The Czaten Dacha which is one I’m leaning towards, which says “Always on the move—

JANINE: [crosstalking] I actually... Sorry, that fits into a thing I was gonna suggest VERY strongly [laughs]. [unintelligible]

AUSTIN: The Czaten Dacha?

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay, I'm super into it. Alright. "Always on the move, they make their homes in their carts and caravans. Distrusted by outsiders, locals refer to them as the Czaten Dacha, or horse people."

The Worcester School which is about an English boarding school. Uh, Wolf Pack which is about the MWO Red and Black, no, sorry, it's about [Dre and Janine laugh] a wolf pack, an actual pack of wolves. 2081, Solar Slums is like a cyberpunk futuristic resistance group aka a *Shadowrunner* thing, it's really cool. Also The Protecting Ones which is about a kind of, a group that is trying to protect the environment, protect "The Swimming Ones, the Flying Ones, and the Crawling Ones». There's one that's about a slave uprising, [siren noises] um, there's a siren outside my house, apologies, um. There is one for, for, called Forbidden Children which is really flexible but is about, you know, I think that they're doing a good job of being like—Hey, do you want this to be about fantasy ragamuffins? Awesome! So you want this to be like about ACTUAL poor children in the Industrial Revolution? Awesome, you can do that! Do you want this to be a sci-fi thing? Cool, you can do that. Do you want it to be, like—whatever you want it to be, do it. Um, there is one about a rural community in India, there's one about queer artists, and laborers, and hustles in a post-apocalyptic city. There is one called The Self-Actualization Project which also has feelings of a kind of a utopian group but also has some question of gender non-conformity and trans selfhood. And there's Toybox Tales which is Toy Story, one of these is just Toy Story [laughs. Dre laughs.] It's really funny that it's like—rural India, like, queer artists, trans actualization, Toy Story. Yeah, okay, you can do anything, this game is really broad. Yeah. So, Janine, why does the Czaten Dacha jump out for you?

JANINE: Umm, becau— Well, [laughs]...

AUSTIN: Uh-hun.

JANINE: Reading through some of this I don't know if it's actually work, but I just had an idea for like the KIND of people...

AUSTIN: Okay. What's the, what is your thought?

JANINE: I mean, what do they look like, physical.

AUSTIN: Oh, let's start there! What are you thinking?

JANINE: Um, so I had... You know The Ancient Magus' Bride?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: You know that manga? There's like, I think his name is Elias, he's like a big skull face? Um, I was thinking, what that would look like [laughs] sorry, what that would look like if it had skin? Because I don't think it would just be like a deer face.

AUSTIN: ...Right.

JANINE: It made me think it would be a lot like... you know, sometimes you see very twee artists like “oh it’s a little deer lady but she’s all pink”, but it’s fantasy so we don’t worry about it?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: What if it’s just like a very smooth deer face but it’s just like SKIN?

AUSTIN: But like, when you say ‘skin’?..

JANINE: [crosstalking] But they look very elegant and not grotesque, but, um,

AUSTIN: So like deer people?

JANINE: ...like skin. Yes. Like deer people, like they have instead of skull faces, their faces are like what we would recognize as faces but very long, and like they have this little nose...

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Wait, wait, but when you say ‘skin’, I have a question, wait, do you mean human, humanoid skin or do you mean deer skin?

JANINE: Yeah, like skin, like not fur, ‘cause I know there’s skin under fur, obviously.

AUSTIN: That’s what I was confused by. Yeah, okay.

JANINE: Makes sense.

AUSTIN: I’m actually totally here with this. I actually really wanted there to be something that was another humanoid species. I, you know, one of the first rules we had with COUNTER/Weight was like “No Star Trek aliens”, but that was COUNTER/Weight, and then with Twilight Mirage we were like—Fuck it man, there’s slime people, let’s go, let’s get it! Um, [Dre chuckles.] And I wanted to start here.

JANINE: Yeah. I definitely... I definitely always have kind of, uh, [laughs] I guess I like, came back to feeling a little frustrated that I ended up picking, that I ended up playing like a very straightforward human character, because we had a lot of like, there was a lot of room to invent stuff—

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: But a lot of our characters ended up being like mostly, you know, recognizable, but like maybe they were blue or had like fish scales...

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean, we talked at the Post Mortem that you wished you could have been given a way, like your finger bones more on screen.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So.

JANINE: Yeah. [laughs. Dre laughs.] We all have regrets.

AUSTIN: Um. Let me read the actual Czaten Dacha write up so that people listening could know what the fuck we are talking about. So. This is written by a great game designer in his own right, Jason Morningstar, um, which, we've played games by Jason A LOT actually, we have played *Fiasco*, we've played *Skeletons*, did we just play another, didn't we just played another Morningstar thing? I think we just played *Fiasco* AGAIN recently, that's, that was the other one. Um, I think... I thought there was another one, I guess I just MENTIONED *Night Witches* which is also I believe, Jason Morningstar. Great, great designer. Anyway.

Jason writes: "In their language they call us "Czaten Dacha," horse people, but we know who we are. The carts our horses pull are our homes, our workshops, our market stalls. We travel from place to place, from the shores of the great ocean to the highest mountain passes and back, always among them but never of them. We are redsmiths, merchants, and entertainers—sometimes scorned, usually grudgingly welcomed, never really trusted.

We ignore the hard looks and ignorant taunts and endure the spiteful laws of the petty warlords, because when things go well there is prosperity and joy all around. But when things do not go well, when fear and distrust turn to hate and murder, that we cannot ignore. We have our carts, and our horses, and the Czaten Dacha look again to the road. There is always another village, and we see to our own."

Obviously I think Jason is pulling—and I think he has written about this somewhere—pulling from steppe people, from the travellers of which there're many different ethnicities, this is, there are LOTS of cultures who are nomadic both in medieval, ancient, and modern times, this is not necessarily a stand-in for any one people, and I think it's important that we as players both recognize that there ARE real people who even today, in, who, not just 'even' today, but like have had an unbroken history of travelling and kind of, nomad life that has gone on for thousand of years. And so I want to make sure we're like drawing from that but not necessarily doing a very redactive one-to-one thing here. The thing that I want to, one note that I wanna say here—I think the thing that I really wanna do with them, to kind of help underscore that is—I don't think that they are just travelling roads, I think their carts and their horses are ships, right? I kind of like the idea of deer people that are not just like—oh yeah, they are deer people of the hills on this one planet.

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: I kind of like the idea of like they are deer people who are... so we've seen, in our setting we've seen the Divine Fleet which is this group of refugees that's fleeing and who are like living in the Twilight Mirage because of danger, and I like the idea of just—no, these are people who are just like, this is what their lives are, and it hasn't prevented them from developing advanced technology, this hasn't stopped them from having, you know, a culture

in a very robust way. They're not "primitive people", quote-unquote, they have a lush life. They also happen to not have the interest in settling down in one place and performing that style of life. Or at least maybe for a long, long time, right? They're not empire builders, they're not looking to like—Here's our biggest city. [pause] Any other thought on the big picture around this group before we walk down the path here? [pause]

People want to know if they have skele— ANTLERS, do they have antlers? They definitely have antlers, right?

JANINE: Yeah. I think probably they have like different kinds of things, I don't wanna say that they can only have antlers.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Maybe they have like cool spirally ones...

AUSTIN: Totally. Or horns, or whatever. Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And yes, Dre, the guy you just linked in chat is absolutely right. That is the Ancient Mages... Magus? I always get that wrong.

JANINE: Maggie.

AUSTIN: Maggie. That's his name, Maggie. Alright, so we picked the Backdrop. Now we have to do something VERY important, we have to be like very keyed in on this. We have to define the Backdrop's Aspects. Each Backdrop provides guidelines for generating three pillars of the community called Aspects. These are the major traits of the Isolation that would be the focus for language creation. These are like, THIS is the most important thing in the game to some degree, because this is like what the beating heart of the community is, and these are the things that will be put under threat by the outside over time. And the way the game works is, two of them they give us kind of prompts, and one of them is completely free for us to come up with. Let's go over the first one, and then we can start there and work out how this feels.

So, the first one is Wheels Always Turn. "No matter how much we move and all that we leave behind, what do we never forget?" So we've got these deer people, they're moving around space, you know there's like, again there's maybe this collection of planets that they, that they're you know, this big bright collection of planets right at the edge of what I think is the habitability zone in space. What do they never leave behind when they leave behind a planet? Also, are they moving in groups, do you think? Or are they moving in like individual smaller units? Any ideas?

DRE: Hmm...

[pause]

AUSTIN: I'm happy with, truly, whatever, right? There is no continuity here to play with, there's one of the things that's so nice about this is. We are making this bullshit up as we go along. [laughs]

DRE: Hm. I don't know why but I like the idea more of just this one giant group as opposed to like kind of small splinters. I don't know.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Like, you know, thousands of ships lifting off at once from one planet, and then moving on...

JANINE: It's like a nomadic city almost.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Uh-huh.

JANINE: It's like they DO have a foundation, but the foundation is each other, and they all move in this like big, um... Is agglomeration the word I want? I don't know. I don't know words.

AUSTIN: That sounds like a thing. [typing] An agglomeration is "a mass or collection of things, an assemblage". Yeah, that sounds good to me.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Perfect. Nice work. "A heap or cluster of usually disparate elements; a large, densely and contiguously populated area consisting of a city and its suburbs", so yeah, you got it. Instead there are these GIANT ships but also a bunch of little ones nearby, you know? What are... so, that's a good, we needed that, that helps. But let's go back to the question at hand. What do they never leave behind, what do they never forget? Because presumably they're leaving some stuff behind, right? Like, you don't necessarily get to bring everything with you. But what is the thing that they MAKE SURE they always keep? [pause] Is it animals? When I think about it, is it like, some sort of livestock? Is it something ritualistic or religious? Is it, um, something to do with making sure the engines work, the ships work? [pause] Who are these people? [pause, sigh]

JANINE: I had kind of been thinking about this less as like a physical object...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Um, the thing that came to mind for me was kind of like when you use a piece of string to draw a circle or arch...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: ...by like pinning it to a center point, and then putting your writing thing at the end, like a compass kind of thing, but it's more flexible. I had been kind of thinking like there the thing they never forgot was like a point that they used to... not calculate navigation by, but more like decide navigation? Um...

AUSTIN: Like something that helps them decide where to go next?

JANINE: [crosstalking] Kind of like if the North Star was behind you, and there's like an invisible tether between you and that star, kind of. There's like—you don't wanna get within, you don't want to get too many degrees outside of its like, um... [pause] I don't, now I definitely don't know the right word.

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] It's like if you, it's like a leash in some way,

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's like, you don't leave the...

JANINE: Or like they can still get far away but like in a cone shape or something like that, there's a range of degrees, and they don't go outside of that degree range when they're sort of zig-zagging around.

AUSTIN: I wanna get really specific on this, because getting these Aspects to— We have to be really like, avoid being wishy-washy on is so we can really leverage this stuff, and name it, and like. I really like this concept, and I'm wondering if it might be a better free Aspect, or a third Aspect, but I... Because having a specific physical thing, or a specific conceptual thing, I think, works a little bit better on THIS question which is like what is... But I actually like this A LOT as the third one which is is there some sort of— come up with the name for that third thing that you just came up with, 'cause I like that a lot. As like, um... Is it TELLING them the direction that they're going in? Is it like a collection of like, texts, and/or calculations, or a mix thereof? Like a mix of religion and science that gives them a general direction that they're supposed to be going in? Is...

JANINE: Um, there's actually, [laughs] there's like a DIY trend that I think would actually illustrate the way that I'm seeing this in my mind if I can... [typing]

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Please.

[DRE chucking]

JANINE: If I can find the right string of words to actually search here [typing]...

AUSTIN: [laughing] Okay.

JANINE: I'm gonna try "string pull art"... Yes, that's exactly what it is! If you look up "string pull art". Um. It's this thing where you soak a piece of string in paint and then you like—

AUSTIN: [crostalking] Oh wow, that's really pretty!

JANINE: —drape it kind of curled up in a book. and close it, and press and pull, and there's usually always this one point at the bottom where it all sort of comes together because that's where you're pulling the string, but then it—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: —branches out into these spirals and things like that.

AUSTIN: Right, I see.

JANINE: So there's like this point of origin but there's this sort of like weird, there is a sort of like logic to the random patterns that go in front of it.

AUSTIN: Yeah! And they understand it in the way that outsiders don't.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right? So they understand like—Okay, I lift off here, HERE are the next seven planets that we're gonna go to, or whatever.

JANINE: Yeah. They understand why they turned and swerved back the way they came to this position but no one else would.

AUSTIN: This also gives me a feeling of like, maybe there's one big fleet, but they're actually going to a broader grouping of planets at a time than just one. Like, they roll into a solar system, and there'd be another nearby solar system, they're still close enough to like travel between the two fairly quickly, but there's like, it branches, it like literally branches out or—the one that I'm looking at almost looks like flower petals, right? Or like, okay, maybe there's like a big central thing but you are still gonna get the occasional grouping of these other ships here or there, as long as it's within this zone that is like—this is where you're allowed to go to in the next little batch. You are still very close together but there's some degree of—it isn't just... A thousand ships landed on your home planet, [laughs] you know what I mean? [pause] What's a good name for this? I actually like this A LOT, this thing that delimits and directs where we go next.

JANINE: It's also interesting 'cause when you looks at these there's this sort of like big overwhelming shape that is like the first thing you see, but then when you look closer there are all these like individual strands—

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

JANINE: —some of which go all the way, some of which join up with the others, like there is sort of a lot of detail that is easy to zoom in or zoom out on.

AUSTIN: Totally, I like it a lot. Um, do we... I want like a name, is this like, again, I don't wanna use "string" in it for now too, is there just like? "Stay within the string", or like, "string"... "String Theory"... that's not true, [Dre and Janine laugh] it's not that one. Um...[pause]

JANINE: Have we used "strand" for anything before? "Strand" is a good word.

AUSTIN: I don't think so, um. Yeah, I'll write down—

JANINE: [crosstalking] I feel like "strand" is already a thing I've heard about, though.

AUSTIN: There's a bookstore in Manhattan but, you know.

JANINE: Oh right, that's true.

DRE: Yeah. I also think The Strand is like a Syfy series, isn't?

AUSTIN: That seems like it—

DRE: Like a TV station Syfy.

AUSTIN: Isn't that like about a disease? No?

JANINE: Would that be The Strain?

AUSTIN: That would be The Strain.

JANINE: [typing] There's a lot of words that start with these letters...

AUSTIN: It's not The Strain, The Strain is the thing I was thinking of, the CDC show, yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is good.

DRE: Yeah, I like "the Strand".

JANINE: That's a newspaper.

AUSTIN: Which is like, um, I'm just gonna write "delimits and directs the fleet in future travel" for now. So. That's one. That's good. Um, where did it go? Okay, there we go. So, that is the first of our Aspects. It's actually the third of our Aspects but that's okay, um. I'm gonna put it

on this page up here, pchoo. [clicking] I mistyped “and”. Love it, love to do that. Boop. No, not Patrick Hand Light, THERE we go. Uh, cool. So we still need two more here, we still need, uh... What do they never forget, and then the other one, I’ll just read it now, is Protecting the Mysteries. “The Czaten Dacha are always outsiders, but to some our secrets are tempting. What secret do we keep to ourselves no matter what?” Um. So, those are the two that we still need. [pause] I would like maybe one of these to have to do with something that we’ve never filled in the gaps on, which is something to do with Strati. Stratuses? [Janine hums] Maybe that’s two?

Like, we’ve historically had this idea in this world of Stratuses which are like, you know, our Newtypes, I guess, right? People who are attuned to some sort of connective extrasensory perceptive field of connection or whatever, right? There is some degree of like [pause] sometimes this shows as like, technical aptitude, sometimes that shows as a great deal of empathy, and sometimes it shows as the ability to see future events, it’s pretty broad. But the Strati have been, historically, that we’ve seen, a mix of people who are like, induced to be Strati, and that is like, Tender Sky had had like a cyber brain for a bit, and then afterwards was a Strati, and we don’t what the fuck was going on there. And there’s also been this notion of like—oh there are like naturally-born ones like Jace Rethal, ‘cause that’s what we’ve said about Jace.

I love the idea of like—they can, they have a way of producing Strati? Or teaching people to connect to that second layer, though I don’t know if that’s too simple. [pause] It would be something similar with want, right? It would be something that they would not want taught for sure. [pause] Any thoughts on this?

DRE: Hm. [pause] In your mind, is it something that they like teach? Is it something that’s innate within them?

AUSTIN: Not innate. Not innate.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Um, I think it’s something that they teach, something that they, like, DO, in the sense of, um, training, in the sense of, you know, technology. Like, it doesn’t have to be, it is not like mystics on the hill even necessarily, you know what I mean. [laughs]

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It could very much be like—oh, my guy came out and he now has like silver antlers that have attuned them to knowing when it’s time to leave this planet because staying longer will, you know, wound the environment in such a way that this is not a good place to live in anymore, you know, or whatever.

DRE: Yeah. Do you think it’s something that like, everyone in this group like, learns to do?

AUSTIN: [crosstalkin] No. I don’t think so. ‘cause otherwise—

DRE: [crosstalking] Or like everybody could but not everybody does.

AUSTIN: Yeah, otherwise it's too easy to imagine this having slipped out already. Do you know what I mean? If everybody has this ability. I think it's a protected mystery, it's something that they need. It's also probably something that's kept them safe, do you know what I mean?

DRE: Uh-huh.

JANINE: I was gonna make a joke, and then I realized there might be something useful in the joke I was gonna make.

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Always.

JANINE: When you were giving that example, I was like waiting for you to stop talking [laughs], I was waiting for it to be a little shorter, so the rhythm would be right to jump in with "And they could pick up AM/FM things." [Dre laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, that's actually super interesting!

JANINE: But... See?

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JANINE: THAT lead me to thinking like—Okay, well they DO have antlers.

AUSTIN: They do.

JANINE: And I imagine that, you know, you could ornament the antlers, or something, what if there's like a way that's like... It should be reasonably uncommon, like it should probably be like a really time-consuming procedure, or something like that—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: —where it's like maybe you have to cut into the core of the antler and like do like basically some kind of inlaid metal or something. Um.

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] And that—

JANINE: [crosstalking] Something like that, that is like the thing that they know how to do, a thing that is restricted to them to a degree. A thing that like also kind of hints at maybe, you know, the stuff with Tender, and like why it would progress for her, but...

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Yeah. No, totally. Like, I... A big part of me... Stuff that I haven't like set on screen so to speak, but have thought about, and maybe even spoke about a little bit here and there, which is that I am fairly resistant to the idea... So like, Newtypes in the Gundam universe are, the presumption that like, or the premise of it is—Ah, this is what the

next step of human evolution is. People left in space long enough will, you know, escape from the gravity of Earth, and from the conflict of Earth, and emerge as people who can connect, and who know that we are each just swan souls, you know, flying away into stardust. And Gundam does a good job of being like—No, they're not gonna stop fighting, no one ever stops fighting, you can't fucking escape this stuff. BUT, one of the things that I always thought about with Strati is like—I don't know that you just get to evolve into being one. [Dre hums] I think there's something that in our mythologizing of Jace Rethal, it's like—Oh wow, Jace is someone who was just a natural, naturally talented. But like, I don't know that that's true about Jace, right? Like I don't know that Jace like, woke up with superpowers one day. And I DO know that I kind of like always chafe against stories where some are born with like innate superpowers, and that is something to be prized. And I'm MUCH more interested in something like what you're pitching, Janine, which is like, you know, you go, you dial in, you like, they do surgery on these, on these antlers, which connects, which makes them, [pause] One, it could just straight up make them Stratuses, but I actually love the AM/FM relationship also. [Janine laughs] I kind of like the idea of like...

JANINE: Maybe that's why they originally started doing this, as like a way to—

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Communicate.

JANINE: —for the fleets or whatever we wanna call them to attune to each other, to communicate, and to have like, you know, designated communicators on board. And then when they end up landing on planets and stuff, they can also pick that up.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. I like—

JANINE: [crosstalking] I also, I like the idea of it. For me I think it's important that it feel technical and deliberate—

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Me too.

JANINE: —because of the kind of story that we're telling. Because there are so many traveller cultures that are... They have this like really exoticized reputation about—Oh, they have these innate mystical proclivities—

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Right.

JANINE: —and, so it's... I don't want it falling into doing that necessarily. [laughs]

AUSTIN: I think one of the big mistakes about the way that those cultures and their religious beliefs or their mystic, their mysticism, whatever it is, is PRESENTED is actually this thing that's like wishy-washy and phony—

JANINE: [crosstalking] Yeah.

AUSTIN: —whereas, like, you know, if you speak to people who move in those groups, what you're gonna find is—Oh wait, there's lots of like, technical knowledge here, there's lots of SPECIFIC cultural knowledge, it's not people waving their fucking hands around, right? There's like a particular—

JANINE: [crosstalking] Like that article about how incredibly difficult astrology is, a while back.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah-yeah-yeah, EXACTLY that, totally. Totally, totally. And so like, this should blend. And in the world where there's spaceships instead of carts, like—yeah, there should be something that feels special and religious about this surgery, or about this operation, about the creation of these new antlers, but like, or whatever the process is, but like it should not feel like simple, or pre-technological, or something, you know?

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Those two things should blend because that binary is bullshit.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, let's see. Do you want to call this like, um... Tch-tch-tchh... [pause] Let's see... Do you have a good name for these antlers? [typing] I'm writing down "Stratus antlers", and that's not great. [Dre laughs]

JANINE: I kind... I'm drawn to the word like... It's kind of cheap. I find myself drawn to like "tuning" or something like that because of the idea of tuning forks, or something with sort of... more reverberation?

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Yeah... I think too much of like.. What's the Stephen King with that, though? [typing]

JANINE: I don't know.

AUSTIN: Isn't that the thing, isn't what it's called in?.. No, it's not that, [laughs] I'm thinking of *Dark City*, in *Dark City* it's called "tuning". [Dre laughs]

JANINE: Oh.

AUSTIN: What's it called in, in?.. [sighs] What is the name of the movie with the fucking... in the book, with the?..

JANINE: *IT*.

AUSTIN: No, the other one. The one with the hotel?

JANINE: *Christine*.

[typing]

JANINE: *The Shining*.

AUSTIN: Oh, *The Shining*. Oh, [laughs] it's called the Shining in *The Shining*!

JANINE: Yeah, weird. [laughs. Austin laughs.] It's weird how he did that.

AUSTIN: It's weird how he did that.

JANINE: He's a master.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Is there another word for "tune"?

JANINE: And in *Christine* the car is named Carol, so I don't get it.

AUSTIN: Wait, is that real? Are you bullshitting me?

JANINE: No, it's not, Austin.

AUSTIN: Goddammit. I thought it might have been. [Dre laughs] Why not? [typing] Is there a good word for like something that, um... We're not, we're not calling it "Strantlers", we're NOT, chat. [typing]

JANINE: [laughs] I want like, I'm looking at—oh wait that's not how you spell "thesaurus". I want like a word for like [typing]... I want like other words for "hum" or like... "harmony"...

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Is there like... What's lightning do inside of clouds? Is there like a good word for that? For like cloud-to-cloud lightning? And the sound, like thunder, [Dre hums] that it makes? [typing] Like, a better word? You know what I mean? Is that what we can like connect back to Stratus too?

JANINE: Yeah. [pause] though.

AUSTIN: Sorry, you lost connection for a half second there. [typing]

JANINE: I was saying all the words that I've found as the synonyms of "hum" or "harmony".

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, that makes sense.

JANINE: So, it doesn't work

DRE: For some reason when I'm thinking of like... You're talking about the lightning as it kind of like is building up within the storm cloud itself.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: For some reason that's... "simmering"? [Austin hums] I don't know.

JANINE: "Sybillate"? That's not a word for that but that's a cool word.

AUSTIN: It's a cool word. [pause] What about "fulminate"? What about... Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast. [Pause. He hums. Dre hums.] Oh, are y'all recording locally, by the way?

JANINE: Any way to just Google what this cloud-to-cloud lightning, what's that called?..

AUSTIN: Janine and Dre, are you guys recording locally?

DRE: Yes.

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay, good. Just making sure. I guess we clapped, so that makes sense, so.

[Pause. Car horn honks.]

JANINE: [with disappointment] Oh, it's just called "intracloud lightning".

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's not fun. [Dre laughs]

JANINE: "Sheet lightning"...

AUSTIN: "Ball lightning"... Does "ball lightning" have a cooler name? Does "heat lightning" have a cooler name? [typing]

JANINE: [typing] "lightning... vocabulary"...

AUSTIN: "cool words lightning"... [laughing] "cool lightning words".

JANINE: "lightning terms glossary"

DRE: Oh, there's a thing called "silent lightning"!

AUSTIN: [laughing] "associations to the word 'lightning'", here we go, I got you.

JANINE: Arc?

AUSTIN: Flash. Thunder. McQueen. [He laughs. Dre laughs]

JANINE: Yours is bad. Your list is bad. [Austin laughs]

AUSTIN: "Arc" isn't bad, I kind of like "arc".

JANINE: Mine's... my list is so much better! "Coulomb"...

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Uhh, "discharge" [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, I love it.

JANINE: "Path web"... "Capacitance"...

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] "Sonic". Mine has Sonic on it. "Surge".

JANINE: Umm...

DRE: Ooh.

JANINE: Uh...

AUSTIN: You like "Sonic", Dre, you wanna go back to "Sonic"?

DRE: No, I like "surge". I like Surge.

AUSTIN: Oh, Surge, yeah. Yeah, your friend Surge, yeah, uh-huh. [laughs]

JANINE: "Isokeraunic"... [typing]

AUSTIN: "lightning terminology". "Arrester"...

DRE: I looking up "lightning types"...

AUSTIN: "Bond", "bonding". "Bonding" isn't bad.

DRE: No, it's not bad.

AUSTIN: 'cause it's like this double bond—

JANINE: [crosstalking] ..."ring earth electrode"...

AUSTIN: —or this double meaning of "bonding", like electrical bonds [Janine hums] and also like you're bonding with people. "Joules"...

DRE: There's type of lightning called "Anvil Crawler" lightning.

AUSTIN: Ooh. ...”Spark”... Uh...

JANINE: “Zone of protection”! That’s fun.

AUSTIN: No, that’s, that’s the thing—

JANINE: [crosstalking] It’s not for us, it’s just an interesting...

DRE: [crosstalking] That’s just [unintelligible]

AUSTIN: —that Clint McElroys casts all the time.

[DRE laughs]

JANINE: Uh-oh. Oh. That’s also... The presumed volume of space adjacent to a lightning protection system that is substantially immune to lightning strikes.

DRE: Hm. Okay, here’s this... Sympathetic lightning—

AUSTIN: Ah.

DRE: —is the tendency of lightning to be loosely coordinated across long distances. Discharges can appear in clusters when viewed from space.

AUSTIN: Sympathetic lightning...

JANINE: Sympathetic bonding?

AUSTIN: “Sympathetic bonding” isn’t bad, yeah. Wait, read me what sympathetic lightning is again!

DRE: Sympathetic lightning is the tendency of —

AUSTIN: Oh wow.

DRE: —lightning to be loosely coordinated across long distances.

AUSTIN: You know, what I love about this too is that the strands also have a sort of lightning look. The, like, string art? They’re like flowers, [Janine hums in assent] but they could also totally... be the branching...

JANINE: I mean, so do antlers.

AUSTIN: Totally, totally

JANINE: Antlers do the branching thing.

AUSTIN: "Sympathetic bond" is kind of nice, I kind of like that. But it's a little too, it's a little too literally on the nose, do you know what I mean? Like, uh...

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: I mostly wish sympathetic lightning had a slightly different name.

DRE: Yeah.

JANINE: Back to thesaurus! "Sympathetic"... [typing]

[Pause]

JANINE: "Responsive"? Um...

DRE: Hold on, I just found a video about UFOs flying through lightning strikes.

AUSTIN: Hell yeah. That's how they get where they're going...

JANINE: This is... this is not in the spirit of thesaurus.com! Synonyms for "sympathetic": [derisively] "having heart in right place"!

[AUSTIN laughs]

JANINE: [scoffs] Get out of here! Get lost!

AUSTIN: I just want a ... What is, what is a "sprite"?

JANINE: It's like a lemon-lime kinda... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, right-right. What about the kind that's like, lightning? [Dre laughs] A large-scale electrical discharges that occurs high above thunderstorm clouds.

JANINE: We can't call it "sprite".

AUSTIN: What about "Coke"?

JANINE: [laughing] Anything... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, what about?.. What the fuck is a "chorus"?

JANINE: It's like a lemon-lime...

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah. [Dre laughs] "The electromagnetic dawn chorus is a phenomenon that occurs most often at or shortly after dawn local time. With the proper radio equipment, dawn

chorus can be converted to sounds that resemble” bond... uh, “birds' dawn chorus (by coincidence).” Is this the thing? [typing] Is this THE thing?

JANINE: Maybe?

AUSTIN: No. no, do you know what I mean? Uh, is this?.. I need to find a recording. ‘Cause if it is then I6 then it HAS to be called the “Chorus Bond” or something, because...

JANINE: Yeah, I was thinking like if were replaced one of those words with “bond”...

[[Electromagnetic sounds](#) that can be heard in the end of The Long Way Around play.]

AUSTIN: Yeah, HOLY SHIT! Yo, it's LITERALLY the thing!

JANINE: You have to link us, ‘cause...

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'll link you and you'll know it immediately. ...Oh, I'm gonna LOSE MY SHIT!

JANINE: I'm just getting excited while you link this looking at the Magus guy. It's like, a cool picture.

DRE: Oh hey! Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah, that's the thing.

JANINE: Yo! Huh. Well, it's a full circle.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

[The sounds stop.]

JANINE: That's what it is.

AUSTIN: It was always there already, you know? Alright! Well.

JANINE: Yeah, alright.

AUSTIN: I also love that this is actually called The Dawn Chorus, so we already have all sorts of Rapid Evening terminology here. Yeah. [Dre hums] So, I like the “Chorus Bond”, it's really good. And again, this is a phenomena that occurs after dawn, it's electromagnetic thing, it's neat. [pause] [typing] Operation that... connects... Special antler operation... [Dre laughs, Janine sighs] What's it do? Lie, not bespoke, does it, does it like look cool? It looks cool, right?

JANINE: Well, yeah. I imagine that it looks a lot... Again, it must be complicated so it can't just be inlay, but I imagine from the surface it looks like an inlay but the truth is like—oh, it's hollowed out and it's filled with this metal. The horn, the natural horn, or the natural antler material—I used to know what it was called, but don't right now—uh, the natural antler

material is kind of a veneer left on the surface by the end of things, and the interior would be some other material that kind of pokes through as of it is just inlaid.

AUSTIN: Awesome. Cool. Um, I don't like my own language here like "turns a person into a Stratus". A person is a Stratus, and a Stratus is a person already, but like, I have to write this down real quick, so. I'm gonna just do the thing that I did. Tshh.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, there's our second one! We still need one more. What do they not leave behind?

[pause]

DRE: I mean. Do they leave behind like, things that let them like, basically like, number station or like tuning stations for... the antlers?

AUSTIN: Oh, maybe...

JANINE: This is something you don't leave behind.

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Oh! This is something you DON'T leave behind. This is something you don't leave behind.

DRE: Oh! Yeah-yeah-yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: Sorry.

JANINE Remains? Like it, that seems like a low-hanging fruit but if you're like a nomadic people—

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Yeah, but hey. Yeah.

JANINE: —I imagine it could be a big deal to like bring your dead with you.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think that's... What do they do with their dead? And it's something we'll figure out in play I'm sure, but like, um...

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But— Whoop, didn't mean to move the whole, all of SPACE

DRE: I don't know. Do they make spaceships out of them?

JANINE: [low voice] Is that, is that what they make the metal for the horns out off?

DRE: Oh shit.

AUSTIN: The dead people?

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Maybe! Yeah. Is it like a process?

JANINE: Now it's like the real chorus.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um.

JANINE: Also it's like a little bit unsettling and that's always my thing.

AUSTIN: That is always good, agreed. Alright, let's do that. Let's do "Never leave behind the bodies of the dead... which are often turned into the material needed for Chorus Bonds." [typing] Shout outs to Wikipedia, by the way. Wikipedia is a real one. For hooking me up with chorus, with dawn chorus.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [pause] Zoom in, it'll help me do the thing I'm trying to do... Alright. I'm already way into these people. Tch-tch-tchh. And then let's create more text, please. Um. [typing] I appreciate how like straight-up this one is—Like, yeah, don't leave dead people behind, duh.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's good. [pause] Okay. That's our Aspects. Now we have to add definition and depth to the Isolation by answering questions provided in the Backdrop. Um, there are more than, there are five of these, but we're gonna do the first three, the other ones can come up in play and that's fine. So, we each, I believe we each answer one of these, let me see. We've defined our Aspects, we've made them big, we've made them clear, we've made they bite. They all do all of those things. Um. So, community questions. "Ask each player one of the questions in order." Uh, so. Let's start with, um, let's start with Dre. "How do people..." Hmm, I'm trying to decide. I'm looking at these three questions and like, who do I wanna—

DRE: Right.

[JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: Who do I wanna answer what here? Um. Oh man. We should— Does anyone have— These first three questions, do you see them here in the list?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Just does anyone like have one they really wanna answer? [pause]

DRE: Hmmm. [pause] Man, I'm really nervous about answering any of them.

AUSTIN: Me too! [Dre laughs] The three, so, the three that we're answering are:

"How do people display their fear and distrust of us? Does an Aspect play a prominent role in this?"

"What services do we offer that usually overcome people's wariness?"

"How are our carts and horses decorated? What distinctive garment marks us as Czaten Dacha?"

We also are gonna change "Czaten Dacha", though I think like "horse people" is like a fun and terrible thing that I suspect non-members of the Isolation certainly call us but I, you know. We need to be able to— It has to be our thing. [laughs]

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: So yeah, of these three, does anyone have any, does anyone like—Ah, I really wanna answer this one? [pause]

JANINE: Uhhh, you know me, I'm with the aesthetics, I think that third one...

AUSTIN: Okay [laughs a bit]

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Dre, how about you? And also, Janine, you can answer that one now if you have an answer.

JANINE: Uh, I'm thinking a little bit more.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: I think I might wanna go with the services one but I'm still trying to get to what that might be.

AUSTIN: Um. Okay. I'll say that then "How do people display their fear and distrust of us? Does an Aspect play a prominent role in this?" Um. They do. And it is— I know how, I know HOW they display it. Which is they hunt other horned and antlered animals and they display the antlers prominently when you are not wanted. Alright, so we are a nomadic people and we are landing on planets, or orbiting planets, we're not like barging into cities and like kicking people out, we're not colonizers here, right? But like there are times when— Or I think this is especially true when the new colonists arrive, when the colonists from the Divine Principality arrive, the thing that they do is put antlers that they've hunted from animals out as a way of being like—'Fuck off. We don't see you as real people.' I think that THAT is the thing that they do. And I suspect that when it's REALLY bad they, they TAKE our dead, and use their own, the antlers from the real dead. They don't necessarily kill them—or maybe they will eventually, who the fuck knows like this game goes! But I can imagine settles

basically taking the bodies of the dead and using the adorned, bonded antlers in that same way.

I wanna be very clear—The Divine Principality SUCKS. like, if Twilight Mirage's whole thing was me being like—Uh, how do I make a show where like a centrist still has some degree of like, sympathy that I'm just exhausted by? How do I make sure that like everyone involved here has a complicated position and like it's all competing utopias—this is NOT what season 6 is. [laughs] Season 6 is like— I've already, for Dre and Janine, I've already hit touchstones of like the Holy Roman Empire as the Divine Principality, um, you know, immediately pre-World War I Europe... It is an empire, it is like an empire at its— I don't know, we'll see where it's AT when we get there, but it is not a good place. Um, you'll know from day one that the place that this game takes place in is shitty, and that like the status quo is garbage, and in a different way than COUNTER/Weight was garbage. Um, the HRE is really what I keep coming back to, and these people fucking suck. [pause] Not that everyone in the HRE sucked, most of them were like peasants, you know. [long pause]

DRE: Oh, thought I'd lost you.

JANINE: Um.

AUSTIN: Oh, did you lose me?

DRE: No, I think we're good.

JANINE: No, we're all just thinking.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay.

JANINE: Quietly. Thoughtfully.

DRE: I wonder if this answer is like maybe too obvious, but... I mean if our group is just constantly like on the move, I wonder if they just offer either like, people can travel with them, or like send like packages or whatever with them, for like, very cheap.

AUSTIN: Hmm, that's good.

DRE: It's like—we're already going this way, so like, just like, yeah, we'll take some of your letters or whatever, or you could like hitch a ride and sit in the back.

AUSTIN: Um, so like, transport, and then— And the I also, what about?.. I think we're building there— A suggestion I have I guess is: what about communication also? Right? Like, [Dre hums] I mean, I guess we didn't, we weren't hyper-specific on this but—Can the Bonded actually communicate over far distances? Using their bonds? And is that a thing they would be willing to com— to do?

JANINE: We basically— I think that we suggested that this was sort of the initial purpose of it, and then they discovered that it did let them do more. Yeah.

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Yeah, yeah. Cool. So then it's like a transportation, communication, uh...

JANINE: Like messengers.

DRE: So we were talking about the Strand...

AUSTIN: Yeah

DRE: Do we think that they're always moving to new places, or do you think that there's like a specific almost like migratory pattern? Because if we're talking about them as being like being able to offer to like communication, if they travel a pattern I could almost see like certain communities having like a specific time of the year when like these people come, and that's like the only time that you can like call your family members—

AUSTIN: Yeah. Right, yes.

DRE: —or like people that you care about like in another part of the galaxy or something.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so I do wanna say what I think here is that like—I think what we're going into with season 6 is a place where lots of people born in—born, hm, born—are born, live, and die on one world, or maybe they get to visit one other one, or they have families spread apart, and they are not the ones like... You know, there's a serf class, a burgeoning merchant class, like we're doing that whole fucking thing. And so, the thing that you're talking about is... 100% makes sense for me. It's like the citizens of the Divine Principality and the non-citizens also would not have the ability for themselves to always like—they're not gonna go get a fucking ship, you know. Let me tell you how much tarps cost in the future—way more [Dre laughs]. You better be a prince if you want a fucking tarp. Um, and so, yeah, I think that makes sense. Maybe what it is, I can imagine it almost being like a spirograph in terms of what the migratory pattern of the Strand is, right? Where it isn't just a circle, you know. It is, it is like—imagine that string art but like done in a spirograph format, where like yeah—there are sort of cycles to it but that cycle does change so like. Yeah. Who was it that was just telling us—Janine, was it K.B. during our Vancouver trip? Or Jack? They were telling us about the like the sheep, the sheep situation?

JANINE: [laughing] What are you talking about?

AUSTIN: The sheep situation! I wanna say Russian sheep people—they're Italian. They were Italian! They were Italian! They were Italian and they sold sheep. They came into town every year and they sold sheep? Or cows? I think it was sheep... I'm gonna message them.

JANINE: [laughing] I wish I could help you, I really do.

[typing]

AUSTIN: [sighs in frustration] I'm mad I can't remember this Italian sheep situation. Anyway. If they get back to me I'll let you know. So yeah, so then, three, Janine, fashion.

JANINE: Okay. So. Um. There is this artist named... at least I think this is the artist named Lilit Beglarian, but I don't know what their pronouns are.

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Can you spell.. oh, I see, Beglarian.

JANINE: And they do these—They did this like series of illustrations of like stone masks that had figures of people sort of built into them, and the figures are holding these like veils and drapes and thing likes that. And I like the idea of these people, not masks, I very much like their faces and want them to be on full display—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: —and their heads are already very complicated. [Dre chuckles] But I'm thinking of like basically kind of the shapes you'd expect of plate mail. Like here's an arm piece, here is a forearm piece—

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Here are leg pieces, but they are made out of a sort of a stone-looking material that is like highly sculpted?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like it looks a lot like what you'd expect to see over Neo-Classical doorways and stuff like that.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: But it is on them.

AUSTIN: I pulled up some of their designs.

JANINE: Probably like deer and stuff.

AUSTIN: The one I'm talking about, what you think you're talking about is called The Silent Ones, it's the name of this project, and it's REALLY fucking good.

JANINE: Yeah, it's so good.

AUSTIN: Is this also extended to their ships? Like, do their ships just have like asymmetrical statues on their sides or their tops or whatever?

JANINE: I was thinking a lot of that but maybe instead of being stone it would be more enameled.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Again, they would look like, uh... I've seen some sculptures that were like this, they were like—here is a whole fucking shape... vessel kind of thing and I can't really—I don't remember what they were called, um. But like, just like a very solid giant complicated sort of sculpted piece. I don't think enamel has a lot of detail, they're probably all one color.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JANINE: 'Cause it's like a coating, um, not like a fucking Easter egg, but—

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JANINE: But it's like there's a protective quality to it still 'cause it's a fucking spaceship, like, it's gotta hang around in space and stuff. But like to, probably to keep all the little components of the statues from too much wear and tear. The details.

AUSTIN: I love it. So. Um. So [typing] "Clothing/armor is affixed with stone statuettes and ships have decorative enamel"... Spelled "enamel" wrong. There we go. Cool.

Pig butchers, by the way. It was pig butchers, that's what I was thinking of. The Italian pig butchers.

JANINE: Oh, yeah! Yes, I remember this, they would go from town to town and butcher people's pigs. You should've said pigs, I've known exactly what you were talking about.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I was thinking sheep, apparently it was pigs...

JANINE: [crosstalking] You don't wanna butcher.. oh it's fucking...

AUSTIN: They were called the "norcini"... I can't tell what type of "c" this sound is making 'cause I don't know Italian... They would go around in pairs from town to town and would butcher the pigs, and so like if you had pigs you had to be like—Alright, butcher all my pigs this year, it's gonna be a long winter, and we're gonna need that meat, or like they're probably gonna freeze to death. Or you had to be like—No, I think we'd be fine, I think we'll make it through. Eventually the group got like people approval to become a trade guild, and ALSO the approval to like do dental work and surgery, because this is the same basic thing. And they are also the ones who could like, they knew how—

JANINE: [laughing] It is the same basic thing!

AUSTIN: Yeah, you know. And in 1400s, you know, whatever, 1600s, 1500s, the fucking, may as well be. They're also the ones who knew like how to make prosciutto and salami and stuff, and so they were like... You know. If you want—anybody can kill a pig and eat it, but if

you want GOOD like spiced Italian meat you had to wait for some of these butchers to show up. Anyway, that's not what we're—

JANINE: If you need salami and a pulled tooth, you had to wait.

AUSTIN: God, do I ever. [Dre laughs] Thank you. Thank you to K.B. for responding VERY quickly to my IM which was “Was it y'all that told us about the Italian sheep sellers?”, and they said “I talked about butchers.” And I said “Butchers!”, and they said “Butchers! Of pigs!”, [laughs] and I said “Pig butchers!”, so. That's good. That's good. Um.

Alright, so that's our three questions. Nice work for that. Uh, so we've one more thing to do before we, I mean, before we look at our characters, which is name our Isolation. “Names are deeply meaningful. The act of naming says something about what is named and who does the naming. The same holds true in the Isolation. Together, you will finish assembling your community by coming up with a name for it.”

“As a group, decide on how members of the community refer to the Isolation. Write the name on an index card. Place it outside of your Language Tableau for all players to see.”

“This name should reflect something about how members of the Isolation view themselves. The community may have other names like an official title or what outsiders call them. Those don't matter right now. The name you are defining is the one used by the Isolation itself. Take stock of the Aspects and your answers to the Community Questions while making your choice.”

So. What the fuck are we called?

DRE: Hmm.

[Long pause]

DRE: 'm trying to remember like my different “bond” words. The only one I can think of is like “covalence” which is a cool-sounding word.

AUSTIN: That is a cool word. [typing]

DRE: Do we want to either—

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] What about playing with that and going to like... “Covalence” is a word, “covalent” is word, but what about like The Cóvalent? Or something like that where we're taking a word like that and just changing where, shifting where the pronunciation is, or where the emphasis is, rather?

DRE: The emphásis is on a different sylláble?

AUSTIN: EXACTLY.

DRE: Do we want to do anything as far as like musical terms riffing on the “chorus” part, or?..

AUSTIN: Oh, maybe. That's an interesting thing too. Um. Or ideally it's like a word that hits all of those, right?

DRE: Uh-huh. Yeah.

[Pause]

AUSTIN: Lots of Googling happening here.

DRE: Uh-huh.

[Typing]

AUSTIN: Sadly, we cannot use "Resonant", yeah, [laughing]

DRE: [crosstalking] Oh that's...

AUSTIN: What were you saying?

DRE: I tried to Google "music in chemistry", and now there's just this article about lemons singing which I can't read 'cause that's just what I'll do for the next four hours.

AUSTIN: That would be it, that would be that.

Or like The Valent, the... I'm... If I can't say it right away that's not it. I was gonna say like The Val... See, I can't say twice! Valent. I can say "covalent" but I can't say "valent". It's hard.

JANINE: Vespertine is a Björk album so it's kind of a music thing.

AUSTIN: That is true. [Dre laughing] That is true.

DRE: Uhhh... gonna look for "deer words"...

[Pause]

JANINE: [typing] "Deer vocabulary."

DRE: Uh, let's see. There are two main groups of deer which are the Cervinae and the Capreolinae—can't decide if this is Greek or like Latin...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Google's doing a really fucking bad job. In general, but also [Dre laughs] when I searched "deer vocabulary" it brought up like "What do you call an old deer?" and it's just like "A male-deer is called a stag or a buck, a female deer is...", okay, and then I click "What is deer running called?"—"Deer can be found around the world. Male deer are called bucks,

bulls, stags, or harts, female deer are called does, cows, or hinds.” Um, I always really like the word “hind”.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I think because of *Zena*, there’s like a Golden Hind character on *Zena*, and she was very cool and pretty.

AUSTIN: Hmm.

JANINE: And by “pretty” I guess I mean she was an actress covered in gold body paint, so.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah, I got you. Uh-huh.

JANINE: Like 90s pretty?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: Cervine...

JANINE: [crosstalking] Can you eat deer antlers? [laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] You shouldn’t! Uh, apparently, yeah, the answer is yes.

JANINE: [crosstalking] Apparently I guess you can. Incredible.

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] There’s a soup. Yeah.

DRE: Alright, if we’ve got “covalent”—

JANINE: [crosstalking] Well, it’s bone.

DRE: —and then “cervine” is an adjective for “deer-like”, what about “Cervalent”?

AUSTIN: For deer light? What?

DRE: Yeah, Deer-LIKE. C-e-r-v-i-n-e, cervine, it’s like canine, but...

AUSTIN: Oh, I see, cervine. What was that, “cervalent”?

DRE: Yeah. Or “[k]ervalent”, I don’t know.

AUSTIN: I like cervalent, I like the Cérvalent.

DRE: Oh, cérvalent sounds better.

AUSTIN: Cérvalent sounds kind of good.

DRE: “Cervalent” sounds too much like “surveillance”.

AUSTIN: It does.

JANINE: They both kind of sound like either “surveillant” or “servant”

AUSTIN: They do, it’s true.

DRE: Uh-huh.

[Google Translate voice pronounces “cervine”]

AUSTIN: Also, what’s the name of that... The problem with “cervine” is I’m gonna think about this Pokemon. [typing]

DRE: What, is that a Pokemon?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it’s this Pokemon right here, it’s this grass Pokemon, it’s the one that’s like a snake. It’s like a serpent, it’s like a vine serpent, serpent vine.

DRE: Oh wait, wait, where is it?

AUSTIN: Oh, I put in on the screen, I’ll put it in here too.

DRE: Oh, I see it. Oh, yeah-yeah-yeah, Servine. Isn’t this?.. Oh, Smugleaf, you mean Smugleaf.

AUSTIN: Excuse me?

DRE: Wasn’t this the one they called Smugleaf? ‘Cause it has, it looks all smug?

AUSTIN: [typing] No?

DRE: This is it.

AUSTIN: ...Oh. That’s a Snivy.

DRE: Ohh, okay.

AUSTIN: Snivy. That’s the... lesser evelved...

DRE: The lesser form [laughs]

AUSTIN: The lesser form of Servine. [Dre laughs. Pause.] What about... oh, "harts" is not a bad direction, Scree in the chat says "Deer are also known as Harts", h-a-r-t, you can do something with that. [Long pause]

JANINE: This is just reminding me of that—I'm currently reading a book about fashion that contains a section on old names for various colors of dye. And you would think—Oh that's gonna be like scarlet and stuff—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: I highlighted like a whole page and a half section of just like—I need to talk to Austin about this [laughs, Austin laughs], and I haven't done that yet and I'm regretting it right now.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: Oh man, this is a big deer.

AUSTIN: Deers get big.

JANINE: Is it standing next to a bikini lady?

DRE: ...No.

[AUSTIN laughs]

JANINE: Oh.

AUSTIN: [laughing] I don't think that episode's out yet.

JANINE: We've talked about it before, that was a callback anyways.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's true.

DRE: Yeah, this is uhh..

AUSTIN: Tshhhhhss. Making sounds. "Antler"... "the antler"... huh. "Horny"...

DRE: {pointedly} Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: [typing] "The horny"... No.

[DRE laughs]

JANINE: I've told that story, right?

AUSTIN: Which?

JANINE: About when I was a Brownie, and all the like troop leaders were like called a different kind of owl, like there is Barn Owl, and Tawny Owl. And we had a new troop leader and they were like—So what are some kinds of owls that we could name the guy? And I said “HORNY OWL”.

DRE: Oh great.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh, great, good. Good job. [pause] What about “The Chital”? There’s no previous association with “Chital”, it’s just a type of deer.

DRE: Uh-huh.

[Typing]

JANINE: That’s also in line with the language convention suggested for this background.

AUSTIN: Oh, it is, it is. But we c— we shouldn’t call them The Chital, Chital was the... that’s a COUNTER/Weight reference.

JANINE: Oh.

DRE: There’s just a deer called The Père David’s deer. So there’s just a deer that’s called like This Guy David’s deer.

JANINE: Those are like super— those only live in the park or something, they’re very endangered, aren’t they? [Dre hums. Typing]

JANINE: [unintelligible crosstalk]

AUSTIN: Okay, here’s a thing. Is it something to do with branches? Because branches like hit us on three different ways. [pause] Because of like antlers plus also the Strand...

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, something about branching, or branched, or...

DRE: Oh God!

AUSTIN: What’s up?

DRE: I’ve just opened a website and it gave me a VERY big ad.

AUSTIN: Um... Or a bough [b-oh]--, bough [ba-ow]? How do you pronounce that?

JANINE: Depends on which one you mean.

AUSTIN: Oh Lord.

DRE: Oh this is interesting.

AUSTIN: Blough [blue]?

DRE: Okay. Ossicones are a cartilage growths that harden over time and become fused to the skull, and they can be covered in skin and fur.

AUSTIN: Ooh, what's it called? Spell that again? Say that again?

DRE: Ossicones, o-s-s-i-c-o-n-e-s. It's what giraffes have on the top of the head.

AUSTIN: Oh, it's what giraffes have! Yeah.

DRE: But. I mean. Bone antler things that become fused and also covered in skin...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. [crosstalking] I didn't know this was what they had!.. [typing]

DRE: I didn't know they had like...

AUSTIN: I knew they had things up there but I didn't know what the things were.

DRE: Yeah, it's just, I guess I just thought it was part of their— I never thought of these like an antler, I always thought—Oh this is what their head looks like. I wish I watched more Animal Planet, guys.

[AUSTIN laughs]

JANINE: The other thing is that deer are—I went through a thing, I was watching all those videos of prehistoric animals recently—deer are ruminants, and there're a lot of prehistoric ruminants that were very big and scary. I'm sure there's stuff there that we could tap into if needed.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Although this is just giving me info about the Pokemon Xerneas.

AUSTIN: Come at me with that Pokemon.

JANINE: 'Cause it look like a... They say it looks like an Irish elk, or they say it looks like some other shit. Scientific American, did you really need to put this up? "A couple of weeks

ago, new Pokémon games X and Y were released.” Okay. [Dre and Austin laugh] Okay... [typing] Look at these old antlers! They’re like a Pokemon. [Dre laughs] That’s what this is.

DRE: Hey kid, you like the Pokemons, right?

JANINE: That’s just pictures of old deer being like “Oh, this is like a Pokemon, isn’t it?”

AUSTIN: Oh... Is it? Okay, wait, one second. Is it something with -tine? Because this gets us to tuning and also to...

JANINE: We’re not using “tuning” though, are we?

AUSTIN: Oh, we’re not using “tuning”, I forgot. Fuck. [Janine laughs. Dre laughs.] Dammit. Listen. Thought I had one. Uh.

[Pause]

JANINE: I was about to really proudly be like—Oh, THIS scientific word—and then I realized the scientific word I was about to say just means it has a spine, so that’s not...

DRE: Hmm.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Not super helpful. [Austin laughs]

DRE: Wait, which word is that though?

JANINE: I think it’s cordata, doesn’t that just mean it has a backbone?

DRE: Isn’t that cordata a specifically the spinal cord thing though?

JANINE: Yeah, yeah. But that’s what I mean, it’s not an invertebrate, it’s like a...

DRE: Yeah.

[Pause]

AUSTIN: [laughs] I don’t know why it made me laugh but—

JANINE: [crosstalking] This is [laughs]

AUSTIN: —I’ve got a really bad one. 79 antler synonyms and these are not—like immediately they’re NOT—and when you scroll down you just get to things that are just like “hawk”, “instrument”, “half a rack”... And when I got to “half a rack” I laughed. [Dre laughs] That’s all. I think we’re... not overthinking this, but I think “branch” or something with

branching is the way... branches, is the way we should go. That's the way I'm leaning. At least for now. Like...

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: We have months and months and months until it's like...

JANINE: Hawk deer, that's a fun one.

AUSTIN: That's what they're called, Hawk Deer.

DRE: Hmmm.

AUSTIN: I think we had one early on that I likes and now I've lost it. [pause] Oh no, it was "Cervine" but that just ends in Pokemon and then surveillance which doesn't work.

DRE: Well, okay. So, I'm looking for synonyms of branching out.

AUSTIN: Yes.

DRE: Proliferate, diverge...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. That's interesting.

DRE: Cervine Divergence? I don't know. I'm just throwing words together.

JANINE: Wait, I made a joke with Vespertine but it has -tine right in there.

AUSTIN: It does have -tine right in there, we're not doing "tuning" though. If this was a species of Björks this would be perfect.

JANINE: No, but -tine is like, fork tine.

AUSTIN: I KNOW, that's where I was going before when you shot me down [laughs. Dre and Janine laugh]

DRE: Also, do we need to reconsider being a species of Björks?

AUSTIN: Yeah, [Janine laughs] let's think about it real quick. What if the Ancient Magus except giant Björk. [They all laugh] I'd like that show more, prob. What else is— I like the word "Vespertine" a lot and it would be easy for me to be like—Yep, that's it, the end, that's a good word, I like it. Um. I like that album too, that album has one of my favorite Björk songs on it, so. [typing]

JANINE: Is "hesper" a thing?

AUSTIN: What was that?

DRE: Vesper?

JANINE: Is there like other -esper- words? Hesperus, the evening star.

AUSTIN: Oh, it's the V I like, it's the V I like.

JANINE: Ohhh. Okay, you like V-things.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's all of it, but I LOVE the V-thing. Yeah, I don't know if you saw this the other day but I made— [typing] I— My first Battletech pilot was named Vesper, and their mercenary group was called the Evening Prayer, because that's what a vesper is. And then I made a second pilot, and after losing a bunch of people, I renamed them Vigil, like without thinking like—Oh no, that's JUST the same fucking name [laughs. Dre laughs], basically, Vigil and Vesper... Anyway they're rivals now, and they're secretly in love, it's really good, it's going great. [Dre snors]

JANINE: But what if we stick something on the other end of Ves-?

AUSTIN: The end of what?

JANINE: Ves-. As a way to like... crunch things up.

AUSTIN: Ves-... ves- ... -per- -tine. [Austin and Janine laugh] How's that?

JANINE: No, see, the crunched version would be like Vestine or something like that.

AUSTIN: Oh I see what you're saying. Yeah.

JANINE: Vestae, Ves- Vestcer...

AUSTIN: Vests are good. Love wearing them [Dre laughs].

JANINE: We're really hung up on this. This is a hard one.

AUSTIN: We're in the fucking... We gotta get off this boat. We gotta get off this boat, [Dre chuckles] we have to PLAY this game still.

JANINE: "The big deer words"...

AUSTIN: Also Vespertine just doesn't, it REALLY doesn't matter because like...Or Vespertine doesn't, it doesn't fit, because it's all about night-time shit, and this aren't night-time people, you know?

JANINE: Were they...

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Or they are? Maybe they are. They're like from space, right? But that's not what we'd call our— or maybe it IS what we'd call ourselves.

JANINE: What's the morning one then?

AUSTIN: But we're not from the morning either.

JANINE: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Though also, doesn't the Rapid Evening already kind of have monopoly on that shit?

JANINE: Um... yeah.

AUSTIN: [typing] "vespertine but morning". But.. [laughs] morning...

JANINE: I also just watched a documentary—

AUSTIN: It's called matutine, it's what that's called.

JANINE: —on the fucking origins of evensong. [Austin hums] 'Cause that's a thing to watch a documentary about on a Saturday night.

AUSTIN: Love it. Matutine, matutine... I can't pronounce this. It's archaic. Matutine? Um, there's something nice about that, but that is like 'cause it's before the dawn, and like them being before the Divine Principality and the Rapid Evening arrive or something, but like... That's not what they would call themselves.

DRE: Hm.

JANINE: Also it implies they're very fast.

AUSTIN: Very fast. There's the whole "travelling" we're missing... Can't wait till we get to the part of the game where we're naming things.

DRE: Yeah, [laughing] we're so good at it right now.

JANINE: It's a game about words, what do you want? [laughing]

AUSTIN: What do they fucking want from us, yeah. Splinter? Something with splinter, something with forks? [typing]

JANINE: I'm going back to basics with deer vocabulary.

AUSTIN: What was the— you had a good thing, something with divergence isn't bad, it's like a good end of a name of a thing.

DRE: Uhh, let's see, cavalcade...

AUSTIN: Horn... Uh.. [typing, long pause] Catching up on chat... Hm, lots of people suggesting stuff that...

DRE: Are there any synonyms for like fleets that are good?..

AUSTIN: Oh, maybe.

DRE: Um, I don't know "argosy" was a synonym fleet.

AUSTIN: Yeah. There's something named that in one of our things, I think. The — Argosy, yeah, or The Argosy —.

DRE: Did we have a flotilla?

AUSTIN: Only in a doc—Oh no, no, I was — Only in the game I ran for the Beastcast the other day, and I ended up making that an armada instead of a flotilla also, so.

JANINE: You know there's a website called whatdodeereat.info? And if you go there there's a sidebar that's just like—What Do Bears Eat, What Do Mice Eat, What Do Elephants Eat, What Do Raccoons Eat...

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Those are on the same website or nah?

JANINE: No, these are all their own .infos. whatdorabbitseat.info, whatdopigseat.info.

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] Oh, the Spliced!

DRE: Weird. whatdozebraseat.info.

AUSTIN: Last season there was an Argosy, Dre. The Argosy, Spliced.

DRE: Oh.

JANINE: I wanna share the train of thought I'm currently on, in case we like it or don't. Um, I was thinking of some kind of moss-like plant that spreads that [Austin hums] deer graze on, because it is spread and scattered but also there's lots of kinds of like moss and shit that... and grass, like that might be...

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's useful.

JANINE: But I don't know where to find that. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Like moss words?

JANINE: It's hard to find how to search that, it's hard. [typing]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I need to first start with—do deer eat moss or just grass? I think they mostly eat leaves and grass... Oh no, they DO eat moss, okay. "Mushrooms are a gourmet treat to deer"...

AUSTIN: [crosstalking] "nomadic plants"...

DRE: Ooh!

AUSTIN: I'm looking at nomadic plants.

JANINE: That doesn't... make sense.

AUSTIN: Why? All plants are nomadic a little bit. If you think about it.

JANINE: Well, shit.

AUSTIN: See? That's like the whole thing!

JANINE: I found the list of the mosses of Britain and Ireland and it's mostly— and it's on Wikipedia but only like five of these are real links and the rest are red [laughs].

AUSTIN: Hm.

JANINE: Oh, there's way too many...

DRE: What's it called when a plant... like so, flowers need bees to like spread their pollen, is there like a name for that type of plant?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. There is. [typing] "Plants what need bees". [laughing] That's what we call them. Uh.

JANINE: I feel like the other ones are auto-something.

AUSTIN: Anemophily? Is it anemophily? Pollination is blah-blah-blah-blah-blah, self-pollination blah-blah-blah... angiosperms... stigma... [sighs] Is it... the reason I'm thinking about plants and moss and stuff though is like— There is a world in which it's like—Oh, there is some weird solar... You know how in Mass Effect the—what are they called, thrasher maws?—are spores? Are they like basically following the patterns of like weird spore, like?..

JANINE: Maybe. And then like that point that's relevant to that would be the actual origin of the spores?

AUSTIN: Yeah. And then like that's what they live on. Or that's like a key component of their diet.

JANINE: Yeah. [pause] It has like a vitamin that they need that doesn't really occur easily in other things.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh. [typing] "moss words".

JANINE: I have a list, I got a fucking sheet, and I'm looking at SO many mosses. Polytrichum, Pottia, Pottiopsis, Protobryum... Pylaisia...

AUSTIN: I'm looking at spore words then.

JANINE: Will Wright.

AUSTIN: No. [Dre and Janine laugh] Uh, these aren't good. My chat is SO slow by the way 'cause I keep going to a different page and so I have to like come back over and then like a million things catch up. [pause] A rhizome...

JANINE: [crosstalking] A lurid cupola-moss is a really funny thing. Why is it lurid? [laughing]

AUSTIN: Good question.

JANINE: I can't tell 'cause it's a red link so I don't get to know.

AUSTIN: The thing we should stay away from is anything that has to do with like rooting though, Like, I was looking at rhizome, 'cause like a rhizome is like branches which [unintelligible]...

JANINE: [crosstalking] And that's the thing with mosses, mosses got roots.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that is why moss is great... why moss is great.

JANINE: [laughs] Schreber's forklet-moss...

AUSTIN: Fungus [all laugh].

JANINE: They did say it was a delicacy for deer.

AUSTIN: See?

DRE: The Fungus Among Us, that's what we're called.

AUSTIN: Green...

JANINE: Bendy fork-moss...

AUSTIN: Fern...

JANINE: I can pull up that book and look up weird names for greens.

AUSTIN: Swamp... Yeah, look up weird, yeah, look up some weird green names.

JANINE: Let me get my fucking Kindle.

AUSTIN: Hell yeah.

JANINE: We're already in it, let me just do it.

DRE: Hell yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: I can sit there and let this chat catch up bit by bit.

DRE: Alright, I'm gonna get up, gonna go to the bathroom, breath, and...

AUSTIN: You get up and go to the bathroom. Yeah. Let's take a five minute break, when Janine gets back, she's gonna be alone. Janine, we're taking a break.

JANINE: You monsters!

AUSTIN: [laughs] BRB, I'm gonna play that song again, and it's a good song, bye! I'm leaving the call also so then no one can hear anybody, bye!

[pause]

AUSTIN: Alright, I am back, and I'm gonna rejoin this call... Hey everybody, I'm back.

JANINE: Hey.

AUSTIN: I had some chips.

JANINE: I have a burger sitting here, I'm very excited about it.

AUSTIN: Mute yourself and eat that burger, you're on.

JANINE: I'm looking at these color names. [rustling]

AUSTIN: Got any good ones?

JANINE: They mention “puke” twice.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Okay, I don’t know that I love this list of yours.

JANINE: They just called it “puke”. “Sheep’s color” is also one of them which is not helpful. “Watchet” is blue... “Sad new color” is one of these... which I don’t know what that could... Some of these they don’t know what the color was, because they just like have a mention of it in a dyer’s notes or whatever.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Or like on a receipt, but they don’t actually have the color or the recipe. Uh. [long pause]

[Computer voice pronounces “verdigris”.]

AUSTIN: “Verdigris” is a good word.

JANINE: That is a good word.

AUSTIN: I kinda like it. It’s this like greenish copper from—

JANINE: Yeah, it’s usually the name of the tarnish, right?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Or a patina, yeah.

JANINE: It’s on copper?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Verdigris. I like that.

JANINE: Mary Tudor’s favorite shades were ruby, crane and old medley.

AUSTIN: Those are weird.

JANINE: Ruby is red, crane is grayish white, and little is presently known of old medley. [laughs] Which, fair.

[Pause]

JANINE: “Plunket” is another one, what that could possibly...

AUSTIN: People like that guy’s reviews, I don’t know. [Janine laughs]

JANINE: Long fine blue...

[Computer voice pronounces “hypha”.]

AUSTIN: Hm.

DRE: Alright, where are we at?

AUSTIN: I like “hypha”.

JANINE: “Dead Spaniard.”

AUSTIN: That’s where we’re at, Dre. Welcome back.

DRE: Okay, good. [laughs]

JANINE: Can I just?.. I just wanna read this last paragraph,

AUSTIN: Yeah, you know what? Go for it.

JANINE: I don’t want read the whole thing but this last paragraph is good. And I think it’s is just a nice palate cleanser for the moment.

“Despite the fanciful names littering the dye books of this era, scholars today still have to research them fully. ‘Dead Spaniard’, ‘The Devil in the Head’, ‘Ape’s Laugh’, ‘Mortal Sin’ and ‘pease-Porridge Tawny’ conjure up a myriad of suggestions with ‘Love Longing’, ‘Kiss Me Darling’ and ‘dawn’ promising to be colours of a more pleasing hue. As for other of this period, namely, ‘scratch face’, ‘smoked Ox’, ‘merry widow’, ‘resurrection’, ‘brown bread’ and ‘dying Monkey’, one can only imagine!”

AUSTIN: Love it. Fantastic. I kind of like “hypha”.

JANINE: Oh, hypha’s nice.

AUSTIN: It’s a fungus, it’s a branching fungus.

JANINE: Uh-huh.

DRE: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Um, and it’s just nice. Hypha!

DRE: Alright, I’m into Hypha.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, Hypha. Some of them might get modified into parasites or whatever, who cares, they’re Hypha.

DRE: Uh-huh.

[JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: Um, just trying to make sure there's nothing weird about— [laughs] This article is about fungal subcultures! "For the identically pronounced slang term..." Wait, is it actually pronounced "hyphy"? Oh-oh-oh, the PLURAL would be "hyphae", yeah, okay, that makes sense.

DRE: [crosstalking] Oh, yeah. We're totally work the hyphy, we're Hyphy.

AUSTIN: The slang term for the Oakland hip-hop subculture "hyphy". [Janine laughs] Yeah. Damn. You know, Oakland need more love, so. Yeah, I like Hypha.

DRE: Shout outs to E-40.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm just saying. [Dre laughs] Hypha.

DRE: He's got that good wine.

AUSTIN: Is it just?.. Do we just call ourselves The Hypha? Or Hypha? That seems fine. I like that.

JANINE: I like that. Yeah.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Wow! It took no work at all to get that done!

DRE: Yeah, no, great.

AUSTIN: Sometimes you just gotta go eat some dill pickle chips and that's all you need, you know? Alright.

JANINE: Oh, sorry, for people were wondering what I was reading from, it's called "Corsets and Codpieces".

AUSTIN: Great name.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, okay. So yeah, the Hypha—which is h-y-p-h-a—is this, I'll pull up a picture of it. This. They are the threadlike, vegetative parts of fungi collectively called the mycelium, unseen beneath our feet. They branch and connect, forming relationships as they seek and exchange nourishment and information. I've already lost this page, fuck. Looking at some seeds, there we go. Boom. It means web, it's Greek for web. Alright. Nice work!

So. Ready for the next stage? In history?

DRE: Boy, howdy.

JANINE: You mean we're not done?

AUSTIN: Nah, that was not it, unfortunately. [Dre laughs]

JANINE: The whole game? That wasn't it, we didn't win?

AUSTIN: 'cause we didn't make characters yet. So.

JANINE: Hmm.

AUSTIN: "Language is the dominion of people; we say it, wield it, bend it, make it. As an individual, how you use language is a window to who you are. In *Dialect*, it will be at the core of who you are in the Isolation. To this end, each player will create an archetype to be their voice. You'll do this in two phases."

First we'll pick an Archetype. They are "baselines from which you build your character. Each Archetype has a connection to the Aspects that ties your character to the language and community in a unique way."

Then you'll give an Introduction. You'll "ground your character in the setting based on their Archetype and introduce them to the group. While doing so, you will explicitly define how they relate to the three Aspects of the Isolation as prompted by the Archetype Card."

"Like any community, the Isolation is colorful and complicated. Characters aren't carbon copies, and not everyone will identify with all of the Isolation's Aspects equally.

Humans in groups feed a natural friction and you will see this played out in the story and language. A word that one character uses casually may be deeply meaningful to another. How you speak to those you trust, to those with power, in moments of strength and weakness will draw a line between you and others. In this way, language gains meaning both at the level of the world and the individual."

So. "The Facilitator starts this phase by dealing three Archetype Cards, pictured below, to each player."

"After this, each player should select one of those card as their Archetype, set aside the rest, read the card aloud and give a brief outline of a concept for your character. In this outline, mention which Aspects you'll focus on with your character."

So. I should go back to this page here... Boom. Okay. Uh, I... So, shout outs briefly to Riley Rethal in the chat who sent me great links where they already compiled some good like lists of these things so I wouldn't have to go through the process of building out all these decks in roll20, which I then built out anyway, because I am THAT person. [Dre laughs]

Um, alright. Who wants their Archetype drawn first?

DRE: Hit me, Austin.

AUSTIN: You're ready? Alright. One. Two. Three. So. I'll just make sure of something real quick, I wanna make sure that those were not... um, Healer, Protector... okay, no, they're

not... I just want to make sure that those were not in like alphabetical order, that this hasn't been shuffled, but. You look good to me. So, your choices, Dre, are:

Healer. Um, zoom in more... "HEALER. When we hurt, we come to you. You make sure we're ready to serve the Isolation for another day. People talk to you about their pain. You identify with two of the Aspects. One of our Aspects is the cause of our pain."

"PROTECTOR. Steadfast and secure, you are the shield that guards the Isolation—either from outside or within. People talk to you about safety. You identify with all but one Aspect. You fear the remaining one."

Or "SCROUNGER. Something's in short supply here. We rely on you to provide whatever scraps of it we can get. People talk to you about getting what they need. You identify with two of the Aspects. One is causing the scarcity."

Do. Do any of these appeal to you?

DRE: Yeah, I'm gonna go with Healer.

AUSTIN: Okay. I'm gonna discard these other ones. Is there just a discard button? Why not just?... Oh my God, I swear to God... I'm gonna take these cards off the screen. That'll do it. Boom.

Alright, so I'm just gonna lift this up to you here, and... Let me read really quick 'cause I don't remember what the order is... Do you decide now what the relationship is or after? Um, I think you do that now, so.

Which of the Aspects do you identify with, and which one do you think is the cause of our pain?

DRE: So, the Aspects are the three that we have on these outside of the circle?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's the Chorus Bond, it's never forgetting our dead, and it's the Strand. It's the, the, yeah.

DRE: I think.... The one that I think is the most interesting as the cause of the pain is "Never forget your dead".

AUSTIN: Really. Interesting. So you think that we should leave our bodies behind?

DRE: No, not necessarily. I'm just thinking like, in terms of like—what does the grief cycle look like if like you never... The idea of like burying someone or going to a funeral or something is like a very... closing part of the grief cycle, or a big part of the grief cycle, and if you like, if there's never that closure, like, you know, if body parts are kind of just like parcelled out and there's never like a singular moment where you say goodbye to the physical part of, you know, of that person?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I like that. I think that's a good direction here, you know, and in general there's an idea here of like—We need to be able to grieve. And that's like a, like grief, and finality, and moving on is an interesting way to frame a Healer for sure. Cool.

Janine, would you like to go next or should I?

JANINE: Hit me.

AUSTIN: Okay. [Dre chuckles]

Magician, Zealot, and Leader. I'll read through these, that's Healer still, here we go.

MAGICIAN says: "No one understands how you accomplish what you do. You have your secrets. People talk to you when they've exhausted all rational options. You identify with only one of the Aspects. Your secret lies within it."

ZEALOT says: "There's a right way for the Isolation to live. You know what way that is. You will convince the others. People talk to you about your followers. You identify with one of the Aspects. You take it much too far."

And "LEADER. A paragon of what it means to be in the Isolation, we come to you when we need decision or action. People talk to you about what to do next. You identify with all of the Aspects. You draw your power from one."

JANINE: Hmm. Let's see here. I'm rereading the Aspects just so I know if—

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: —I can do anything real wild.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. So, they are, again: Never forget your dead—never leave behind the bodies of the dead which are often turned into the material needed for the Chorus Bonds; The Chorus Bond itself which is the special antler operation to turn a person into a Stratus, inlaid metals, circuitry, etc.; and then the Strand which delimits and directs the fleet in future travel. [pause] I'm gonna write like "flowering arcs through space which delimit and direct..."

JANINE: Ummm, okay.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Zealot is so tempting, but I truly don't want this game to go too dark, and I feel like if I pick Zealot I would do that.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Instinctively. [Austin laughs quietly] So I'm going to tie my own hands here.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: To be honest I kind of feel the same way about Leader.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: I don't think I'm good at thinking ahead enough to not be a disaster in that, so I'm gonna be a Magician.

AUSTIN: I wanna be clear, it IS gonna be a disaster of some sort no matter what.

JANINE: I know, I know, but there are certain kinds of disasters...

AUSTIN: Fair.

JANINE: And yeah.

AUSTIN: So. So here's my question I guess. Which is the Aspect you identify with?

JANINE: Um. It's the first one. Because like the basic idea is that...

AUSTIN: Wait, which is the first one?

JANINE: Sorry, the one about the dead.

AUSTIN: Oh, so it's "Never forget your dead".

JANINE: Claiming and never leaving the dead, but, you know, part of it being the use of the dead.

AUSTIN: Gotcha, gotcha. That makes sense.

JANINE: Yeah, that makes sense as a secret to me.

AUSTIN: So yeah, is that not widely known? That we use the bones or the antlers of the dead in, or the bodies of the dead in the Chorus Bonding? Because that's part of the secret.

JANINE: I think... I don't think that's a... As a secret that kind of bothers me.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I feel that's the kind of thing that should be open...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: It should be known because otherwise it's just like—Okay, we just gave our dead to this person, and then they disappeared so I guess we're fine with that.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So is it more just the secret as in you know how to use it?

JANINE: I don't know if this secret should be that the Magician is one of the roles that like does this process? Or I don't know if that's reasonable to say that it's that closed off? Even within the culture?

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Or it's more interesting or more reasonable to say that like they have something in particular that they do with their own abilities.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JANINE: You know what I mean?

AUSTIN: We'll figure it out in play, you know? We'll think about it.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. Time for me to draw three of these cards.

Celebrity. Artist. And Explorer. Alright, let's read these. Zoom in, here we go. Alright.

CELEBRITY says: "We all recognize you. Silence descends on any room you enter. Heads turn. People talk to you about the latest gossip. You identify with one of the Aspects. It made you famous."

"ARTIST. The Isolation has a certain charm to it—thanks to you. You keep us going when things look their darkest. People talk to you about your masterpiece. You identify with two of the Aspects. And one of them is your muse."

"EXPLORER. We rely on you to venture beyond where the rest of us do— to push the boundaries and uncover new potential. People talk to you about the unknown. You identify with all three of the Aspects. You know there's undiscovered potential in one."

This is interesting. These are ALL super interesting. Um. [pause] God, hm. [pause, sigh]

Part of me likes Explorer a lot here, especially with the notion of the Strand, like, is there someone who runs thread forward through space and the Strand blossoms around it? There's something really interesting about that. Part of me also likes Artist as being— Artist and Celebrity as both being people who are tied to— Either Celebrity as being someone who has the Chorus Bond or who works with it and creates some similarly with Artist— the idea of like Artist being one of the people who can do that surgery... though if you are going that direction, Janine, I think I'd rather go Explorer?

JANINE: I mean that's a thing. I think it's more interesting— I think it doesn't make sense for a group of this size plus the way the Magician card is phrased, for the Magician to be like THE one person who knows the whatever... So it makes s— it's more interesting to me if you pick like Artist or Celebrity as like—oh this is like, you know, one of several people.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Instead of being the only one. So the Magician would then be someone who—

AUSTIN: Has something special there or knows how to—

JANINE: —does something extra, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think I might just be more interested in the Explorer. Because I wanna see us at... I think that's what I wanna do, because I wanna see the Strand on... in a character here, and right now it's not. Right? Like we have this great connection between the Chorus Bond and the dead, and I want to make sure that the Strand as an Aspect doesn't get left behind, so I'm actually gonna go Explorer I think, if that makes sense.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um, I have to figure out what the undiscovered potential is that I, you know... So. "Later, when giving an introduction, you will determine their relationship to the Aspects", which we kind of already did that. "Make characters that will be important to one another and relate in interesting ways. If an Archetype Card says the character fears one of the Aspects, during introductions you will name the Aspect that incites this fear." Okay, we did that, or we're about to, I guess. These are not absolute, all of the stuff can change over time.

"It's not required that each Aspect be the focus of at least one character, but it's good practice to ensure many perspectives in the community are represented in play." So, that's useful.

Alright, so now an Introduction. "Take a few minutes to decide on a concept for your character based on the Archetype you picked. A concept is a character's name, their role in the Isolation, and their relationship to the Aspects. After all players have their characters set, go around the table and let each player introduce their character."

So again, it's name, and so there's something special here which is: there's a common name and a limited name. Limited name is just my quick way of writing "what only some call them". A common name is "how they're most commonly known. This may be their given name, a name they chose, or a ubiquitous nickname. Each Backdrop comes with a list of examples." Then, what only some people call them is "a word or phrase that some call your character within the Isolation that's different from

their common name. Some examples are a special nickname, an honorific, an official title, a name they'd rather forget." That one's actually like super easy for me, uh, so. This one I got. The other one I don't fucking know yet.

Then the other stuff is role in the Isolation, summary for the role of your character "based on their archetype. Tell us why they are important in the community. Make it big and make it count." So, it's to convince yourself that you're just like—Oh, I just wanna be an average Joe, or Jane, or whatever, right? I just wanna be like—Here is just a regular perspective in society. That's fine, but like we are archetypical characters that are the lense for the death of this language, so. While that impulse makes sense, be willing to be, you know, the average person who happens to be the one who for whatever reason is positioned in such a way that they're more important, you know, at least. And don't feel like you need to go quiet or small here is the other thing. ...That's not what I want, I want... Here. [Long pause, typing]

Theresa, sorry, not Theresa, Tressa in the chat says: "Important question: do these deer people have dog teeth like that bone man from the anime?" [laughs]

JANINE: Do they have dog teeth? Does HE have dog teeth?

AUSTIN: I don't know.

JANINE: I can't— the thing is, I can't do a horse-like creature with a dog mouth 'cause I've already done that before. I did that in Golden Sky Stories.

[Austin and Dre go "Hmm."]

JANINE: That crab-walking horse with a dog mouth.

AUSTIN: Right. I'm gonna say deer teeth look creepy to me already. I guess they don't have canines.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I guess the Ancient Magus has like a canine or like a curvy fang actually, not a canine. Or is that a canine? What are those called? Those are canines, right? Those are like, arrrr, pointies, right?

JANINE: People call them eye teeth, but they usually called canines, yeah.

AUSTIN: He does have like a canine-y front thing for sure. And they're like a little spiky. But deer teeth aren't... deer teeth are creepy too.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, wait. Do whitetail deers HAVE canines?

JANINE: Some certain deer in the past had sharper teeth for various, you know, for some plants it's still helpful.

AUSTIN: Yeah, apparently, some straight up do.

JANINE: Names are hard.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: Yeah, they are.

AUSTIN: They ARE.

[Typing]

JANINE: What's our big font, is the Patrick Hand?

AUSTIN: That's uh, no, it's Light.

JANINE: Oh, okay. [Dre chuckles] Oh, too big.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Still kinda too big. [typing] Ummm.

[Long pause]

JANINE: Wait, I can't do this 'cause we've already DONE a Marrow-Eater on this show! Goddammit!

AUSTIN: [laughing] You can do a marrow-eater again.

JANINE: It's gonna be the nickname though.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's probably a little...

JANINE: So this feels like it's already, it's trod ground. [Austin laughs] We've been there, we've done that.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: Stealing all my bits... from the past.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Oh yeah, that's what happened. Three years ago.

JANINE: Shameless! Shameless!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

[Pause]

AUSTIN: You could be like Marrow-Worker, you could be a.. but you wanna eat that marrow, I got ya.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Let me tell you—it's still creepy. Marrow eating is good though, I don't know.

JANINE: Is it?

AUSTIN: Yeah. [pause] It's like, I've had it used as like a soup, like a—

JANINE: Well, yeah.

AUSTIN: You know.

JANINE: Marrow definitely makes a more robust soup.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

[Long pause]

JANINE: Oh that... that's weird. [pause] There you go. [pause]

DRE: Help remind me what exactly like delineates, what is special about being a Stratus?

AUSTIN: So, it's like, again for you it's like being a Newtype, like it's a connection to some sort of psychic collection of— What I'll say is from what we've described here it seems like the Hypha are actually a little more attuned to it than past cultures have been, right? Like, there's this sequence in *Twilight Mirage* towards the middle where all of the different Strati are able to like connect for a brief moment and see the future, and that was like—Oh no, it's like a rare thing, it seems like maybe the Hypha can do that like, if you're Choral Bound or Chorus Bound, then you've, then you can do that at will, um.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's like space psychics. Um, it's various sort of supernatural abilities that lean towards empathy and towards self-actualization. In the past we've had characters who were like really good at combat because they're Strati, and people who can— But also people who can straight up like emanate psychic will into physical space like *Tender Sky* eventually does. And we've had people who can get flashes of the future or insight into someone else's emotional state. You know, it's a really broad category, as it is in *Gundam*, right? You definitely have to be a Stratus to use bits or funnels though, 100%.

[Pause, typing]

AUSTIN: Oh, that's good Janine, you did it.

JANINE: Yeah. Had to make it a secret and I didn't what the secret to be the thing they were about, that doesn't make any sense.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! [laughs]

DRE: Love how text just randomly changes size.

AUSTIN: It's great. So, what it does, I can tell you this even though it still happens to me all the time... If you click another piece of text it will take that text's size.

DRE: Oh cool.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: That makes sense.

AUSTIN: Yep. It's been very funny lately listening to y'all play stuff without me in roll20 where I'm like—Oh yeah, roll20 does this stupid thing that you don't know the solution to because why would you EVER know the solution to it. [Dre chuckles] It is just like, I only know it because I've done so much setup through it. It's such a mess sometimes.

JANINE: I do a lot of setup, I do, you know, setup for my other game that I run through roll20, and it IS frustrating but also those games are so much more static.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

JANINE: Because the board is mostly just like— In a lot of ways I use the board more like a slideshow, of just like I put some pictures in and move some pictures around, there's not a lot of typing or adding text there, so it ends up not being a thing I have to deal with as much, or learn to deal with as much. Until we do all our weird shit.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

[Very long pause, typing]

DRE: Hmm.

AUSTIN: How're you doing?

DRE: [crosstalking] Janine, do you have an idea for my thing? Just trying to think of a limited name here.

AUSTIN: Oh sure, what are your, what do people who work with you call you? Or people who you heal? Or who— Like is there a special name for people who you are counselling? A title? Or even just—

DRE: Yes, I think I am—

AUSTIN: Yeah, go ahead.

DRE: I think I am trying to go for some sort of like title, and not even like a title of I am the Special One of These, [Austin laughs] but like this is what people who do this are called.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: Um. 'cause I don't— I think of it less as like traditional like counselling and more of like a— like this is something everyone goes to? You don't need to be told how to do it, you know how to do it, you just need someone to like help make sure you keep walking like, 'cause as long as you keep walking you'll go through this.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. [Pause] Hm. So something along the likes of a guide or a—

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It almost sounds like you're almost talking about walking with someone more than guiding them, though, right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or do you think it's more like guiding?

DRE: I think it is, there is guiding to a point where it's like— I think it is walking as long as the person is like—

AUSTIN: Walking with you.

DRE: Yeah, yeah. And there's also guiding in the sense of like, you know, if you're walking in the woods and someone is about to step into like a patch of poison ivy, you'd be like "No-no-no-no!". But they also wouldn't say like at the beginning—"Okay, we walk 500, you know, feet to the east, and then we go this way, and then we go this way."

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: If these people have like dogs, would they call you like some kind of like smart dog's name?

AUSTIN: SmartDog.

SRE: SmartDog, it me.

AUSTIN: Asper Mykell—

JANINE: This sounds like, it's like a guide dog thing, it sounds kind of like a— [Dre laughs] metafore. No, you know what I mean! [laughs] Just like...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Not like really forcing the issue unless there is an actual threat or a need there, but mostly just being there to help you. I mean, my other idea was Nudge Buddy, and that's not good either, so.

DRE: [laughing] Nudge Buddy...

AUSTIN: Janine...

JANINE: [also laughing] Look...

AUSTIN: It's not Nudge Buddy... [some ad starts playing, ends abruptly] Oh, there we go!

DRE: Thank you for coming today...

JANINE: [crosstalking] I can't, I can't just—

DRE: I'm debuting my new app, Nudge Buddy...

JANINE: [laughing] I can't just Google "people who help you vocabulary", like that's not a thing.

AUSTIN: Are you sure?

JANINE: I can do a "guide dog vocabulary"... [typing]

AUSTIN: I searched... what did I search? I searched the exact thing you just said, like people who help you vocabulary, positive adjectives to describe people. Adaptable, adventurous, affectionate, ambitious, amiable, compassionate, considerate, courageous, curious, diligent, [Dre chuckles], empathetic, exuberant, frank, generous, gregarious, impartial... Gregarious can get me some ideas, or like shepherding someone, are you some sort of a shepherd?

DRE: Yeah, shepherd is good, it's...

AUSTIN: We can build in that direction, that's where gregarious comes from. Intuitive, inventive, passionate, persistent, philosophical, practical, rational, reliable, resourceful, sensible, sincere, sympathetic, unassuming, witty... Those are all the words.

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: A fun thing we DIDN'T do but that is useful and we should all look at before we jump all the way in, is this Building Words docs which give you some good tips to how to make words during the Build a Word segment of each of the turns that's coming up. Their suggestions on this stuff are like: repurpose a word, so, their example is you take a word like "descendant" and turn it from what it means into something like an honorific or a job title, where like—Oh, this is a culture where, you know, family lineage matters a lot, so Descendant becomes an honorific. Greetings, Descendant! Or something like that, right? Combine words by doing compounds, like "firefly" or "grasshopper", or by blending them together like "cyborg". They have suggestions like acronym, acronyms, so that's initialism or

a—what's the other one? Initialism versus a... isn't there another one? Not an initialism but...

JANINE: Acronym?

AUSTIN: Oh, are those just called acronyms, is that it?

JANINE: I don't know, I know the comparison for it I just don't know the word.

AUSTIN: I think I was thinking of abbreviation and then... Acronym is one of them and initialization is the other. So. Yeah. So something like NATO or Benelux or, you know, we've... DFS, etc. Clip the word or phrase is a good one that we don't use a lot, like we don't actively use a lot on the show, where it's like—gas is short for gasoline, flu is short for influenza, and you can do that with a LOT of words that way. Incorporate a sound, you know, drips and drops, and various onomatopoeias. Screw words up. Take a words and say it in weird ways because you're rushed, or because you don't care about pronunciation, or you care about pronunciation in a different way... Or convert them. Take a word evoked by the connection and adapt it to a different part of speech. So, take a noun and turn it into a verb, take a verb and turn it into a noun, you know. Those are all good ways to think about word-making.

Are we...

JANINE: [crosstalking] You good with that one, Dre? [coughs] Sorry.

DRE: Yeah, I'm good.

JANINE: Yeah? Great.

AUSTIN: Ooh, I with it. Are we all good? [Pause] Janine, how are you doing?

JANINE: Yeah, I'm fine. Am I... I only identify with one Aspect, so.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's fine, cool.

DRE: Oh yeah, sure.

AUSTIN: Alright. So, walking down the like. I am Timea Asche, I use she/her. I am known to people who like are in—I guess I'm probably known— This is like what my title is, but the times I hear it is probably like over Chorus Bond when I'm doing it, it's Thread-Runner, so like, you know, operations back home, Control back home will say like—Alright, Thread-Runner, like, you're running on this one, or whatever. My role is that I fly a ship into space to guide/release the Strand. I think if you asked her like "Wait a second, doesn't the Strand go where it goes?", she would say like "yeah-yeah-yeah, of course, but sometimes it needs a little nudging." Like, or she would say like "of course, well, it's like that, but at the same time I'm travelling ahead of it but it's guiding me even though it's behind me..." It's very weird. The Stand is my lifeblood. I understand the Strand in a way that— I underStrand

[laughs]— I understand it in a way that no one else does. It could guide us anywhere. And that is my, that is the thing about potential I have with it. So this is the one that I think has potential that is untapped, undiscovered.

My relationship with never leaving the dead behind is that I, my first job with it was to recover the last Thread-Runner, and I'll never forget that. Like that was, I had to go out and get the body of someone who had died in space.

And then finally I couldn't do my job (or feel connected to home) without my Chorus Bond. So I am also Bonded.

And those are my feelings on this stuff. I think that they are young, they're maybe young for someone with this job, like very talented, has been fairly... I wanna say like in a weird way, fairly sheltered, has not had much contact with outside cultures, had been very focused on ships most of her life. And has been very like interested in space, right. You don't have to convince her that like you should, that she should leave a place, you know. [laughs] She's eager, as soon as she touches down, to lift off again. And I think that that shows. I think she's young, I think she's like—do this people have like the white spots that deers can have sometimes, almost like freckles, do you know what I'm talking about? What are those called?

JANINE: I wanna say that's, well, I think that's one that's like usually a juvenile thing, although some deer... you right it's not. I think that might be fur though, I don't know if it's on the skin.

AUSTIN: Oh, right-right-right. Well, maybe I have those but brown on skin, you know what I mean, actually like birthmarks or freckles...

JANINE: I think you mean freckles, yeah. I mean, it's skin.

AUSTIN: Yeah, but I think that they're bigger, I think that they're bigger like those white spots are. Um, then just like—

JANINE: Skin.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JANINE: Sorry, you cut out for a bit, I thought there was dead air.

AUSTIN: No, there was not dead air. Yeah, there's like those brown, like birthmarks or freckles but bigger, the way those spots are. Along her cheeks and neck, and probably like arms and stuff too. Um. I think that is Timea. Dre?

DRE: I'm playing Asper Mykell, they/them. They are a Concomitant which is a person who helps family and loved ones process the death of someone, and then also guide them through the process of how the remains are gonna be used.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: So, Aspect 1 which is the... Seeing death each day I value that Strand keeps us within proximity of those we love. Like obviously within this like, the way that the Strand is kind of like ways out where we can— there are limits within that and I think that for Asper, they see it as important, as like, you know, we don't stray outside of this because we need to be able to see each other and be in touch with one another.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: Aspect 2 which is the Never Forget Your Dead, this is the one that I set as the cause of our pain.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: It is easy to understand we use the bodies of our dead until you your parent or child is lain before you.

AUSTIN: Hmm.

DRE: Like I think it's like—it is easy to understand that like—even within our society we are taught that there are things that happen to everyone—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: —but then when it happens to you or somebody you care about, it's hard not to feel like it is special, or worse, or something specific to you.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: And then Aspect 3. To truly connect to one another requires the courage to be vulnerable, a trait we should all seek. I think that for Asper, like they do¹ see that the Chorus Bond is like a really important thing, but I think they also think that we should all like try to form that level of empathy and connection with one another

AUSTIN: Regardless of whether we need it for our work or we need it to get a Chorus Bond, that's just traits we need. Got it.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. Janine?

JANINE: I'm going to be playing as Sabil Nodra who is called Dust-Eater by— I imagine this is something that is like a thing that you hear from people who are a little bit bitter or find what you do a bit distasteful.

¹ Misspoken as "she".

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: But also a term that like people in that position would maybe use against each other as like “You old Dust-Eater”

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: That kind of has a double intention. [laughs a bit]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: What were you gonna say?

AUSTIN: So, this is not just a thing Sabil— Sabeel or Sábil?

JANINE: Sábil.

AUSTIN: Sabil, that Sabil does, this is a thing that there’s like a couple of you, or like a handful or you, or hundreds, or?

JANINE: Yeah, I imagine each— I feel like each chunk of like each—

AUSTIN: Yeah, I gotcha.

JANINE: We’ve said that their ships are different sizes but I think that each ship should have at least one, and then the larger ships should have like one and and apprentice kind of thing, or a couple, things like that. But the thing that makes her unique is not that alone.

AUSTIN: Okay, good. And then you Aspect relation?

JANINE: Yeah. I use the remains of our dead in the Chorus Binding process, but I also use them to enhance my own abilities. THAT is the thing that makes her unique, that’s her secret in relation to that Aspect.

AUSTIN: Right. She—

JANINE: Every time she is Binding someone to the Chorus she is also... topping herself up a bit? Like—

AUSTIN: Yeah, skimming a little bit for your own antlers?

JANINE: I imagine that most people’s antlers, the inlaid part would feel a little bit recessed, but hers feel a little bit raised. She’s like tracing over those lines and building onto it with this sort of excess material, instead of disposing of it later or giving it back or—

AUSTIN: We'll see the specifics but does that— Is that just like you can connect a little bit further, a little faster, a little better, you're a little quicker—like what is the, what does enhancing your own abilities look like? Or do you not want to talk about it 'till we're in play?

JANINE: I'm not really sure, I think it is more interesting to see how it comes into play? Like how it sort of would work rather than just defining it right now.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Alright, sounds good. And then the other two, you don't have like a direct relationship to you in terms of your card, but are you... So, you don't identify with them but are you... What do you think about those other things?

JANINE: I mean, it's... I don't identify with them but I also don't refute them so I don't know what to say about any of them other than like this is just a fact of—

AUSTIN: Of life.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. You're like—you're not here to like... You have no feelings about the Strand, the Strand is the Strand, at the start of the game, and then... I guess like the thing here is like, the Never Forget Your Dead plus the Chorus Bindings are blending for you a little bit, right? So, it is...

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is fine.

JANINE: That's... I mean, they are sort of blended in the thing, that's what they are.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Totally. Okay. Cool. So. We have our characters. We have our Aspects, we have our Backdrop, and everything we need. Now we need to do a thing. So.