

Twilight Mirage 26: The Miracle of the Mirage: The Heist

Transcriber: Madi [0:00:00-2:14:52]
GK #1769 [02:14:52-end]

Austin: The Twilight Mirage holds yet.

[MUSIC - "The Twilight Mirage" starts]

Austin: [continued] In the absence of Empyrean, the false nebula that once hid the Divine Fleet should shudder and fail, but Quire's own faith and uncanny power pins it in place, gathers together the blushing wisps of dust and data and begins to spin them into tomorrow. It has a plan, it only needs time, but it is not alone.

Austin: Even with Independence shattered, Volition and the Iconoclasts move, Axioms spilling from the crackling black glass and bubbling oil shores of the false moon, animated concepts lumbering across surface and through space, until these, too, are brought to life.

Austin: Elsewhere, in the margins of the Mirage, where time and space twist and turn, where tomorrow is yesterday and here is there, the Rapid Evening arrives en masse, only to find itself split in loyalty and cause.

Austin: Meanwhile, in the heart of the By-and-By, Sui Juris, supported by the New Earth Hegemony and the Castlerose Agency, simply sit and wait, the Cadent a quiet hostage. Their demands are clear. It is only a matter of time, and they will be answered.

Austin: Fourteen Fifteen, Tender Sky, and the other members of the Beloved move to intercede. The Twilight Mirage holds yet. The only question is: for how long?

[music ends]

Austin: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization and fun interaction between good friends. I'm your host and GM Austin Walker, find me on Twitter @austin_walker. Joining me today for today's second recording, or for - I don't know how this is gonna cut up, so who the fuck knows, but - Aaaaaaaaaaaaaalicia Acampora!

Ali: Hi, my name is Alicia Acampora, and you can find me at @ali_west on Twitter, and you can find our show, Friends at the Table, over @Friends_Table.

Austin: Awesome. And, Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hi! I'm Jack de Quidt, you can find me on Twitter @notquitereal, and buy any of the music on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

Austin: So, we are continuing our game of Follow, by Ben Robbins. It is a rad game, we already recorded one of these sessions, we have two left. This one is the one in which Fourteen Fifteen and Tender Sky, along with another, another few characters, are going to go try to rescue The Cadent Under Mirage, who has been kidnapped at this point, by a group led by Tender's ex, because this is the world that we live in.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: The name of that group is Sui Juris, which is, which is a group of like, secessionists, basically. That's S-U-I space J-U-R-I-S, I think that's how you pronounce that, that's how I - Maybe it's Swy, I don't know...

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Soo-ee...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] It could- Swy, Swee, okay. They are, they kind of see themselves as wanting the By-and-By to at least be the capital of the, of the Divine Fleet or whatever comes next, and at most they want it to be, they would secede from, from whatever the Divine Fleet ends up looking like during all this evacuation stuff.

Austin: We are playing the game Follow, like I said, and Follow is a game about working together to achieve a common goal. Slay the dragon, cure a disease, overthrow a tyrant, get your candidate elected. We'll pick a quest together and decide what kind of game we want to play. Can we stay united and succeed, or will our differences tear us apart? We'll play and find out.

Austin: Follow isn't about coming up with the best plan or a clever solution. It's about seeing what these characters do for better or worse. We may even intentionally make bad choices because they seem like decisions our characters would make. But even if we do everything perfectly, our quest may fail. As players we can push for the outcome we want to see, but we cannot guarantee it. Our story may surprise us, and that is part of the fun.

Austin: So the first thing we do is we pick our quest. There is not a "rescue the religious leader [Jack laughs] of this 30,000-year-old science fiction faith" thing, but what there *is* is a heist, which has the goal of getting the loot and not getting caught. There are some others here that we could, if we really wanted to pivot and do a different one, there might be something else here that totally works. I'd be open to suggestions if y'all looked through here and were like "oh actually this feels more like The Raid or more like..." y'know, something else.

Austin: I don't know, I've looked at these and mostly it looks like - I guess The Posse is kind of, kind of close? But that's more about going after a target who doesn't wanna get seen, who doesn't wanna get caught? I feel like The Heist is the most interesting one here, like I have such a good feeling about what the By-and-By looks like, and like, want to see these characters do a fuckin' heist, basically?

[Ali laughs]

Jack: Yeah, s'alright, Casteel is here...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack]: Hey!

[Ali laughs]

Ali: Yeah, I like super didn't look at these 'cause once you suggested The Heist I was like "That's hilarious,"

Jack: [overlapping with Ali] Yeah me too.

Ali: [overlapping with Jack] "Of course," what? [laughs]

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Yeah, yeah. Of course, okay. Good. [Ali laughs] Good good good. So...

Jack: So, reverse kidnapping!

Austin: Exactly! [Ali laughs] Exactly... So one quick thing that everyone should know by now is that Signet did use her hold, or her component on The Cadent to be like, "Hey!"

[spliced-in conversation between Janine and Austin]

JANINE: I want to speak to The Cadent...

Austin: [overlapping with Janine]: Okay...

JANINE: [continued] Because it will probably feel weird when she hears that I'm not part of the team coming for her.

Austin: Fair! I mean, are you telling her that right now? Are you the person saying "I'm not part of the team coming for you"?

JANINE: Yeah, I think I think... [sighs] I've been holding on to that component for The Cadent literally for [Austin laughs] this entire first half of the season.

Austin: Yeah.

JANINE: It was given to me in the very first episode and I never used it because it felt too important,

Austin: [overlapping with Janine] Mmm-hmm, yeah.

JANINE: [continued] And too special? So I just sat on it. So I think this is the moment that Signet uses it, and very specifically, so that the Cadent doesn't hear this second-hand. Or doesn't like... [sighs] I guess more so she knows what to expect. I think that's the real heart of it. So she has to speak her true name, and I think in the Cadent's case, because the cadent is so young, it's... is it just her real name? Like is it just...

Austin: Ohhhhhh, maybe.

JANINE: The name when she was a little girl...

Austin: [overlapping with Janine] Yeahhhh...

JANINE: Who was taken in to be trained as the Cadent.

Austin: [overlapping with Janine] Yeahhh...

JANINE: Is it just the very first name that Signet attached to her face, basically?

Austin: I'm cautious 'cause I don't want to put a primacy on birth name.

JANINE: That's true. Yeah, I haven't - I had a -

Austin: [overlapping with Janine] Maybe she had a different name from -

JANINE: I had a plan B there also.

AustinG: Okay.

JANINE: Because I didn't know if that would be -

Austin: Yeah

JANINE: If that'd be, you know, real names aren't you know, whatever, I -

Austin: We've, we've gone, gone down that road for sure, what's your plan B?

JANINE: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah... my second thought was that it would be the very first line in...

Austin: [overlapping with Janine] Ohh, that's good.

JANINE: If you've got anthology of all of the the works, all of the writing of the Divines, the scriptures...

Austin: [overlapping with Janine] Mmm hmm. It is called the Assemblage, is what it's called. I had-

JANINE: The very first line of the Assemblage.

Austin: [overlapping with Janine] Mmhmm, that's good.

JANINE: I imagine that's not something that a Candidate would ever be called, or that an Excerpt would be called.

Austin: [overlapping with Janine] An Excerpt, yeah...Yeah, agreed. I like that a lot. Do you know what that line is like? Is it just very like...like...

JANINE: Hmhmhmhm, I had a, you know, I always had a list of like, if I ever need Excerpt names to whip out, you know there you go, but they're all very like middle of a sentence, none of them feel like a really, none of them feel like a beginning, you know, none of them feel like the start of a thought.

Austin: [overlapping with Janine] Mmhmm, yeah... I'm looking at like, real religious texts now, this is what I'm doing, this is where I'm at. There are not enough, this this, opening line, this Wikiquote opening lines thing does not have enough religious texts in it.

{Janine short laugh-sigh}

Austin: [short laugh] I can tell you the beginning of Anne of Green Gables if that's what you're looking for, but I don't think that -

JANINE: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah, tha-that's what we based a religion on, Anne of Green Gables.

Austin: [continued] that's quite right. *Uh huh?* [big sigh] I guess yeah my question is like, is it, is it like the opening of a prayer? Because like the opening of the Koran is is "In the name of Allah

most gracious, most merc- most merciful,” but like the opening of the Book of Genesis is “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” Like there’s like a pretty big, I don’t know we don’t wanna just do just Judeo-Christianity here, so. Obviously I don’t think that those are the only directions we could go, but,,.

JANINE: Yeah. When I first picked Signet’s name I imagined those texts as being very much like a story and not a prayer.

Austin: Right, right, right.

JANINE: So, that’s my leaning, is that it sounds more like the, the beginning of a very very long tale.

Austin: Mmmhmm.

JANINE: And not a plea, or the opening of a conversation or something like that.

Austin: Right, yeah like the opening of the, the Hindu Vedas is like, names a person, right, and like is talking about someone being worthy of being praised, like it is like immediately jumps into the story of this, of this, of what’s happening here, which is interesting. Alright, yeah, that’s good. What, what do you say when you, when you reach out?

JANINE: So to be clear, the thing I’m doing is the communication pull, I’m not trying to like -

Austin: Yeah, yeah. You’re like giving her a plus one forward?

JANINE: [laughs] It’d be nice but I don’t know how much that will help.

Austin: Let’s get one extra white stone on the final challenge?

JANINE: Plus one white stone forward!

[Austin laughs]

JANINE: I think the very first thing is, is just the, the “Are you okay?” before anything else. The like, sounding out of her emotions.

Austin: She is... do you hear this in language or do you hear this in feeling? Like what does, what does this feel like?

JANINE: I kind of imagine it as a blend of both, like you know?

Austin: [overlapping with Janine] Okay. Yeah!

JANINE: Like the way people think is like, you think in words but then there's also the, sometimes there's the image and sometimes there's just the emotion and it's...

Austin: Yeah... I see I think she says like,

Austin: (as the Cadent) I am doing fine. They mean well.

Austin: And like you can tell that she sincerely believes that these people mean well!

JANINE: [sighs] Oh boy... I think Signet doesn't necessarily agree that that is, like you know, okay. That's an answer, and it's good that she has peace of mind, in, in a sense.

JANINE: [as Signet] We... [sighs] people are going to come help you. And if the people who have you mean well then I imagine that will go... better than I perhaps expect. I know the people who are coming for you and I obviously I trust them or else, or else I would be with them. I trust them to do everything in their power to make this situation right, and I think my presence there would be more of a danger, perhaps, than anything else. Blooming and I... they're - [sighs] Blooming and I have, have a business of our own to attend, and a threat of our own that I don't know the others on the mission would be capable of handling without us.

Austin: She says...

Austin: (as the Cadent) Please, Signet, don't worry for me. I am...

JANINE: [as Signet, overlapping with Austin] I -

Austin: (as the Cadent) ...one in a long line of Cadents. We have all faced adversity, even those who lived through peace. You have a task to attend to. Have faith in yourself, in Blooming, in your companions. I worry for *you*; you do not smile enough.

JANINE: [as Signet] I... [sighs] I can't just not worry about you in this situation. And it's even, even beyond this. A very long time ago, I... didn't [sound of exasperation] I didn't say the things that I wanted to say while I could, and I was fortunate enough that I had the opportunity to make up for it. But, should something... go wrong, with the mission that I'm on, or anything else, I don't want to leave those things unsaid. You have been... [sighs] you've been sunlight on a, on a field that's been reaped, and I just want you to know that's not your fault. And that when things regrow, your light would still be needed.

Austin: (as the Cadent) I appreciate it. Now go. Attend to others as you would to me.

[end of conversation between Janine and Austin]

Austin: So that's where *she* is at. And you would know that. Or if you wouldn't know that in character, you at least would know it out of character at this point, and could play on that, you know? I don't know that Signet was like "okay, and then I wanna call my friends and let them know what I heard!" you know? What I guess is that actually we'll just drop that sequence in right here, so.

Austin: So, we've picked The Heist as our stand-in for rescue, for the rescue. And that means that we now have to choose two other things, which are completely things that we just brainstorm, they're not - I mean, there is a, there is a list that we could choose from, of what makes our quest difficult, but we can also just come up with them. Their suggestions are: it's well-guarded; we're already suspects; we're inexperienced and don't know what we're doing; we're stealing something big or very hard to move; it's hard to fence, it's easy to identify or difficult to find a buyer; and we're stealing from vengeful people, they will come after us.

Austin: I like, like it's well-guarded is a totally fine one here, but I would also just love to just hear if anybody else has ideas about what these could be, like what the reason this quest is difficult is. These are not things that will - you don't have to overcome these challenges, like you don't - these are not like, goals to beat, these are things to kind of, *flavour* what the other challenges that are the specific obstacles that we're going to try to overcome look like.

Austin: So for instance, in the, in the first recording that we did, one of the things was that the surface of Volition is like hostile and volatile, like it's, it's constantly changing, and is hard to predict and it's not - you don't ever feel like you have the, the surface like the, something solid under your feet. And so that came up again and again throughout the, the story, but it wasn't ever a thing that's like "and that's it, we now solidified the ground once and forever! [Ali laughs] It's just like this is part of the things, part of the palette that you can draw from. So, any ideas here?

Jack: I wonder whether or not something about the kind of like, if we're thinking of these as flavour, or as establishing shots, I wonder if something about the like, current state of the By-and-By would be interesting?

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right. Like -

Jack: Like if we begin with the camera moving through the hallways of the By-and-By and they reveal something about it?

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right, right. Like, is it, what could that be? It could be that the By-and-By is on lockdown, it could be that it's filled with people who are trying to evacuate and like part of the difficulty of this is like, getting through the throngs of people on the middle floors?

Jack: Yeah! What feels most, kind of like, appropriate to your picture of the By-and-By, Ali?

Ali: I don't know, it's tough, because we ended off that last session by saying that like, most of the... not most of them, but there were common areas that were like, completely empty? So I don't know if it's more just like, having to juggle the logis- logistics of like, working around that, in a way that's not like, taking resources away from that effort? Or is that too...?

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Mmm. I feel like that's, that's one of those things that we're gonna, is gonna sound good on paper, and then we're not gonna know how to actualize it quickly, and so it'll -

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah...

Jack: What if it's... what if it's kind of a combination of those things? What if the the the the the bottom couple of floors are just completely... a, the, a bit of Andromeda that I really liked is when you arrive at the hub for the first time and all the lights are off?

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right, right.

Jack: And I don't know that all the lights are off here, but like, it's like, it's like empty. [Ali laughs]

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right.

Jack: And then kind of like, almost like pressing down from that, from above is like one or two floors of people who are waiting to get evacuated.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Riiiiight. In fact, maybe this is the whole thing. Like when we last left off, it was the case that the bottom floors were evacuated, and Cascara was like "Okay, we have control of the elevators and the bottom floors." What if you arrive and they don't anymore? And that is part of the problem, is the bottom floors are shut down. And like, the By-and-By works on elevators, that's the whole thing is, [Ali laughs] you take an elevator up from floor to floor. And so, how many floors did we say that this place has? Do you re- Oh, we checked, we have the...

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Eight. It was eight.

Austin: We have, it's eight? So we said like "Oh we have control of the bottom four floors." What if the bottom two floors, or bottom three floors, are totally like dead when you arrive. Like you go into the docking bay on the bottom floor, and it's just dark, and shut down, and the elevators are dead, and you don't know how to get around. And then on four - on floor four and floor five, there are people waiting for elevators to show up to evacuate them? And so that's a floor that you have, and it's floor that you don't have...

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Hmm.

Austin: This is like very complicated now, but like, I like that notion of like, that mix of, there are places where it's completely dead, and places where it's filled with people who are eager to leave.

Ali: Right.

Jack: What's like when, like I think about like, being stranded in coach depots and things,

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Mmhmm.

Jack: Like very late at night, and you go outside to like stretch your legs and the streets around you are just like completely empty.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Mmhmm.

[Ali chuckles]

Jack: And then you turn around and go back into the coach depot, and there's like 400 people there, trying to get vending machines to work? Umm...

[Ali laughs]

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah. Yes. Who are all miserable and stuck there, and their bus got changed, the, the time when it arrived got changed, and, in the time it took you to stretch your legs, three people took the seat that you had even though your, your luggage is *literally* on top of it.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Right, [laughs] okay. It wasn't even, it wasn't even someone who was near you when you stood up, like "Who are *you*!?"

[Ali giggles]

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right, right. And like, "I saw you in line, like you were at the back of a huge line! How did you get your tickets and come over here?" [Jack chuckles] Yes.

Jack: [chuckles] Oh, fucking coach depots are the worst.

Austin: Yeah, so one is like combination of... shut down and, and... waiting evacuees. So two: what's the second reason our quest is difficult? My gut is to go basic here, and do "it's well-guarded," because we've established that it's pretty well-guarded.

Jack: Yeah

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Some combination of the torch units plus the Sui Juris, which includes some New Earth Hegemony people, and, and also all of these secessionists. Which again, it's a small group, but they have these robots, and so that's like, you're gonna be a small group of *people*, so...[Jack laughs softly] and also who knows? Maybe they'll get more, maybe they'll find ways to, to increase how well she's guarded.

Jack: [apprehensively] Ohh lord.

Ali: [playfully] Perhaps... [soft laugh]

Austin: She's well guarded.

Jack: [whisper-shouting] No! Don't say stuff [Ali laughs] [unintelligible]!

Austin: Alright, so now we know what makes our quest difficult, it's a combination of shut-down and stranded evacuees, and the fact that The Cadent is well-guarded. We now have to determine who our main and minor characters are. What is your main character's role in the fellowship? Pick from the list on the quest sheet or make up one. In case, we can just - we know what our - we don't need one of these to be like, "the dirty cop" [Ali laughs] or "the loved one," or "older and wiser."

Austin: Like these are really good, I like this game because it has those things, it's like a very quick and easy way to pick who your character is. But we know that you are Tender Sky and Fourteen Fifteen. So we got that already. Here is the important stuff, and this is where we're going to have to talk about who's where in this like this triangle we've built.

Austin: We all want the quest to succeed, but what does your main character want from the quest? It could be something that you would get out of our success, or how you want to fulfil the quest. Or to put it another way: why are *you* on the quest? Pick from the examples on the quest sheet or make up your own.

Austin: So we are playing as, again, Ali is Tender Sky, Jack is Fourteen Fifteen, and I'm either playing as Sho Salon or Morning's Observation, and the opposite one will be my minor character. I'm leaning Sho, even though there is some good stuff with Morning that could be... really potent. I think Sho is the one who I have a better understanding for like, what she wants from the quest.

Austin: But - but I, I guess my question, I guess the thing for me ends up being like... The way that the next step of this goes is that we're going to decide what you want from another character, and maybe we should figure that out and then I'll reverse it and go to which character

I want, because... Morning would want something from Tender, and Sho will want something from Fourteen.

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Hmm.

Austin: For sure, like that's definitely the way that goes, which'll spin these around. But for now, just let me know what you think Fourteen Fifteen and Tender Sky want from the quest. On top of succeeding, on top of like, you want to, you want to save The Cadent. What else do you want?

Jack: Would it be too simple to say that I want to kill Mother's Story?

Austin: It's pretty simple but I think like revenge is one of these things, right? I think that that's totally a viable one. I think th- I think that it's a very... go ahead, what were you going to say?

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] It's interest- Fourteen is at a real crossroads at this point,

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yes.

Jack: Where they both have, they they essential- [laughs] they essentially have two big uncashed checks.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Mmhmm. [Ali laughs] Right. Yep.

Jack: And also they have major concerns about their role in the Mirage, and what they are doing. So, so when you said like oh, I was looking at the list and I was thinking like, what is a thing Fourteen wants from this, and I kept coming back to like, Fourteen wants things in some respect to be more stable, and if getting The Cadent will do that?

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Well like - That, that sounds to me like it's the actual want that you have, is like to find your place in the Mirage, right?

Jack: Yeah!

Austin: Like, don't - you shouldn't want a thing that might lead to the thing that you actually want. The want that you should write down should be open-ended in the sense that, like, it should be the final thing that you want. It should be the big picture thing. And if you get, if you figure out that one of the ways Fourteen gets that is, by finding some sort of se- sense of, you know, catharsis from them killing, you know, Mother's Story or, or something else, like you just leave it open. But like I think one of those being that you want a sense of stability is actually really good.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Alright: Tender, what do you want from the quest?

Ali: I, mine is tough 'cause I feel like it's also just as like, weirdly open ended? 'Cause I feel like when I think about this, what she really wants from this is like, to... be able to move on?

Austin: Okay.

Ali: Like I think there's like, like in her life [laughs] the like ambition of Open Metal has been kind of a thing that she has been hurt by, and like knows the risk of?

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Mmm. Right.

Ali: And like, being able to sort of like, finally stomp that out is... kind of like a, like oh, now I won't have to, this won't have to be a thorn in my side, anymore essentially, yeah.

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Yeah! I think that- I think like, to put your past behind you is a totally good want for one of these, for sure.

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah. Okay.

Austin: So then, let's talk about the second thing and then I'll wrap back around again. So the second thing is that your main character starts off with a difficult relationship with the character to your left. Pick something that you want from them that is important to you but that they are unwilling or unable to give you. So I guess this is for me is like the real thing is: which one of you wants to be the person who wants something from the other person and won't - who won't give it?

[Jack and Ali both laugh]

Austin: That is- that is what will actually determine everything for me, 'cause that's the relationship - the, the Tender/Fourteen one is the one that should have the spotlight for, for for me as like the showrunner, instead of like whatever shit I wanna do? So which of you two wants to be the person who wants something that they're not getting?

[Ali laughs]

Austin: I will read their examples just to keep killing time as you brainstorm. What I want from you but won't - you won't give me. Support: my plan, my authority, or my place in the crew. Forgiveness: for leaving you behind, cheating on you, ratting you out. Revenge: for leaving *me* behind, cheating on me or ratting *me* out. Trust: rely on me, tell me your plans. Teach me your tricks, or to be tough, or to be a criminal, or let me teach you. Obviously you're not criminals, but, you know. Protection -

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Well...

Austin: Well. Hmm. Watch my back or let me protect - you're not criminals, you're not - Well? Some stuff happened in the last recording that you don't know about, that maybe makes you criminals, that I haven't even thought about yet. So...

Ali: Whu-? [laughs nervously]

[Jack wheeze-laughes at length]

Austin: It's revealed in the Volition game that Emphyrean has been dead for this whole - the whole season...

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Oohhh!

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Uhhh!

Austin: That Chthonic, that, that when Gumption died, Emphyrean turned into Chthonic... and, and Chthonic has no room for an Excerpt, and is this other post-Divine thing, quite like Volition. And the Divine - the Beloved work according to the Divine authority of Emphyrean, which they don't have anymore because [Ali snorts] Emphyrean is dead.

Jack: Oh my god!

Ali: Well!

Jack: We're the - we're the spy unit who has not received the news that their country has fallen.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yes. Yes. [Ali sighs heavily twice] I think that's true, or maybe, it might be The Cadent who has to - I'mma double check. Maybe - you might be fine. Ahhh, Divine... I think it has to be a Divine though, I'm pretty sure. I'm pretty sure that's what I'd read the other day...

Jack: I think yeah, I think we work for Emphyrean.

Austin: Duh-duh-duhh... "In the event that The Cadent dies, the Beloved are placed on extended furlough until a new Cadent can approve the members. There is no explicit procedure to be following the event of Emphyrean's death, thus standard practice applies," which I think means that you lose Divine authority! [laughs].

Jack: Huh!

Austin: So... Right, because then I wrote, "See: Extension of Divine authority in case of death." I've not written that article yet in Memorious' Library, but you know! [laughs] It might be the case that you're criminals, it's hard to say! [laughs]

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Huh!

Ali: Hmmm...I don't think that that's on us...

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Not knowingly. Yeah but law sucks. Law sucks!

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah that's not on us... look, lots - look, lots of stuff *is* on us. [Ali and Austin laugh] We can all agree on that!

Austin: Right.

Jack: Ali, what's your, you have a bond about Fourteen, right?

Ali: I have like a weird bond with Fourteen where it's like I... like, recognize that you feel indebted to me and am willing to take advantage of it?

Jack: Mmm, yeah! I'm trying to think about like what I... want from Tender. And I wonder if it's like... an *out* of some kind? [Ali belly-laughs] Although, if I'm being honest, I don't really want that from Tender, I want that from Castlerose.

Ali: Yeah

Austin: Mmhmm

Jack: I think I have some idea of something I want from Sho...

Austin: That's the other thing, we could do it that way, we could totally do it that way. In which case Sho would end up wanting something from Tender, which could also be interesting.

Jack: And Tender would end up wanting something from me.

Austin: Yes.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: I mean let's talk, what's the thing that you have in mind?

Jack: Some sort of solace?

Austin: Of what type?

Jack: I think that like, Fourteen has looked to Sho in the past, for some sort of... some sort of affirmation, or some sort of confirmation that they're do - Sho is so convinced that what they're doing is right, and Fourteen has kind of gone like "That seems like a good way to be!"

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Mmmm... [Austin and Jack chuckle]

Jack: And every time Fourteen has done that Sho's just been like "I'm not willing to give you that!"

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Mhmm. Mhmm

Jack: Which feels fairly clear cut there? I don't know how you feel about that.

Austin: I'm of two minds with it, because I think... the thing that she would want from you is, is like the same thing in reverse? I don't know that - she would *totally* give you solace, like she wants to give you, she *wants* to give you solace. I don't know that she *wouldn't* give you solace. The thing that she wants is for you to *earn* solace, do you know what I mean? Like..

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So maybe that, maybe that *is* it, maybe that, that is actually... maybe that works in terms of like, the reason she won't give it to you is because you kill people without remorse, so like of course she's not going to give it to you until you pay - until you like... until you want it enough, you know? But maybe yeah, so maybe that works.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah.

Austin: But then I have to figure out, okay what does Sho want from Tender?

Jack: Yeahhhh

Austin: And that's the part that gets tough, because I think Sho and Tender have only spoken like once or twice, you know?

Jack: Right, which feels like a - and to an extent, that feels like ahhh... I don't like using the word "waste" in terms of stories, but it feels pretty close to a waste, in terms of like character relationships?

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah.. I think that I could make it work, because I think we do okay at this. I think there's a degree of like, "Don't treat me like a child," like I've done this enough now, like I shouldn't feel like a third wheel, I shouldn't feel like... I'm not a junior member

anymore, you know? Respect, respect that I can do this well? But... I don't know that we did the legwork for it either, you know?

Ali: Yeah I don't know that - that's not...

Austin: I mean, it doesn't have to be like... as a reminder, the way this game works is like, these characters don't exist! Now they do, and they want things from each other!

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Rrrright...

Austin: So like, I think we've done more legwork than most games of Follow do.

[Ali and Jack chuckle]

Austin: So maybe it's, so you know maybe... maybe it's not like respect. Maybe it's trust, like she wants... she wants Tender to know "Hey, we're peers and you can trust me." Like, you can give me duties that I will, you know, you can tell me please go do this thing and know that it will get done, that I'm not another Morning's Observation, or I'm not a [chuckle] like, that - you know? I'm not a Fourteen Fifteen, I don't have secrets, I'm not hiding anything from anybody. That might work, I could do that. But then what does Tender want from Fourteen Fifteen?

Ali: I don't know, it's tough, cause it's, it's like hard to know what Fourteen wouldn't be willing to give? But I think the last time...

[30:00]

Ali: [continued] ...Tender had to make a tough action for the good of like, for what *she* thought was the good of the fleet, like, she did not have the support of the person closest to her, like they did not act in concert in that, in a way that she had expected.

Austin: Hmm..

Ali: A person that she'd been working with for a while to do so? So I wonder if there's something there that's worth making a desire... But I don't - I don't know how much Fourteen would reject something like that.

Jack: Yeah...

Austin: The thing ends up being like, maybe it's not that they would reject it outright. Maybe it's that they don't have it in them right now to give that. Maybe it's, they're busy with their own shit right now, y'know, like?

Ali: [laughing, overlapping with Austin] It's fair!

Austin: Like, frankly that's totally, but it's important to figure out why it is that they won't give it, because that is what will lead Jack to play Fourteen that way. You know?

Ali: Right, yeah.

Jack: Yeah. This is almost like, like a - these are like very specific flags, right?

Austin: Yes, a hundred percent. But for yourself, almost, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah. But I wonder if there's something there, like if Fourteen Fifteen is here to... well - I guess they're not so much here to enact revenge as they were a second ago, but like they're, they're willing... they're able to be distracted by that, in some way...

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Mmhmm.

Jack: [overlapping with Ali] Yes. Yeah!

Ali: In a way that Tender probably does not have a tolerance for [chuckles].

Jack: That's interesting, yeah!

Austin: I'm cool with that. So then... [Ali laughs] Tender Sky wants from Fourteen, right?

Ali: Mmhmm.

Austin: What, wha - how did you phrase it again?

Ali: Ah, f - to... I guess to be able to like focus? And... to act like in synchrony... in, in service of the mission.

Austin: Right. To like be checked in, basically?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: To put the mission first?

Ali: Yeah, ah - basically [laughs].

Austin: Right, right. Like over any other shit that they have going on, any other contracts that they have, any like...

Ali: Right.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: There's a, you know? If it comes down to it, you will save The Cadent instead of going after Open metal, who has this contract that you want to not have - to not exist, right? Or something. You know like that's, that's what Tender wants from Fourteen. So then... So now I know where you two are, I can actually add your other main things, so... The - the irony of Tender wanting Fourteen to put the, [Ali laughs] to put the mission first...

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] This is why I like it!

[Ali laughs uproariously]

Austin: But Tender's personal want is to put the past behind her? [Ali laughs]

Jack: This is like - I really love this!

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Uh huh?

Jack: This immediately introduces this like, very real tension, with ah, [Ali laughs] to what we've got here?

Austin: Yep! So then Fourteen Fifteen wants stability of some sort, and... what do you then want from... I guess this is now gonna be, this is where it gets tricky, right, because nowwww, it's going to be... Morning's Observation. 'Cause you wanted something from Sho. I guess... I guess I could - I - right, I came up with something for Sho. So yeah, what do you want from Sho?

Jack: So... yeah.. I think I want - I think I want to find some sort of solace,

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah.

Jack: Or to be, to be granted some sort of solace. And in my mind this is pretty close to the like, the classic hitman or like assassin fiction of like, the assassin wants to lay down the gun. But I'm fine with that, cause, you know?

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Mmhmm. Yeah, totally. And then Sho...

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Those [unintelligible] exist.

Austin: Right. And then Sho basically wants like, trust from, from Tender... Trust and like, shared authority, I think. "Treat me like I'm part of the team," you know? That's what she wants, Sho wants that from Tender and then Sho's general want is, is... no one gets hurt. No one innocent gets hurt.

Ali: Aww. [giggles]

Jack: [fondly] Oh, Sho!

Austin: I mean that's her whole thing, right, that's, that like has always been her whole thing...

Ali: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Austin: It's simple, so... Alright! So that is major characters... Let's now pick our minor characters! Each player makes a minor character who is also part of the fellowship. Just pick a concept, a name and give a brief description. Don't create wants. Our minor characters are supporting cast, and some of them will almost certainly be lost if a quest takes difficult turns.

Austin: A good choice is to make a character who is connected to one of the main characters across the table from you, or who would mostly interact with them. Avoid making a minor character who would primarily interact with you own character so you don't wind up needing to talk to yourself. Write down the name and concept on both sides of the card: now we're ready to play, so... Mine's easy, mine is Morning's Observation [typing sounds] ... What about y'all?

Ali: I'm playing Marsalia...

Austin: Darjohnt, or Darjent?

Ali: Darjohnt... yeah! [character name is: Massalia d'Argent]

Austin: Who is the, the...

Ali: They are the Apposhlishian [Apostolosian] member of the Beloved Ivy who's like kind of a... jerk?

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Yeah. Kind of a big jerk. [Ali laughs] They have - they come from a place, right? Like I kind of mentioned this to you off-mic, but like, they... like, this is the point at which we need to have this conversation, so you know how to play them. They went to like school to become an Excerpt, they like went through all the training, and then didn't get it, and were like "Fuck it I'll build my own mech." So they built a mech named Melodica... and that mech, which I - which i've described a couple of times. Big, huge, like jet... propulsion things on its shoulders, it has its own consciousness, it is not a Divine, it is like a synthetic being.

Austin: But it's been pieced together from everything from, parts of Divines to ancient, like, mechs from 50,000 years ago... to mechs that we've never seen on screen before, ships that we haven't even seen on screen before, like all sorts of technology mashed together, stuff from the fleet, stuff from the Rapid Evening, stuff from all over the galaxy, has combined here, so.. So... kind of, you know, go wild... [typing sounds] I'm giving you Melodica here because Melodica is also a character. And then Fourteen, what about you?

Jack: I'm going to be playing Acre 7...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Nice!

Jack: The, the the... time ghost! [Ali laughs]

Austin: Uh huh, the time ghost. The ghost of a planet. [Ali chuckles]

Jack: The ghost of a, the ghost of a planet... she is...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Who steals time!

Jack: She is desperately trying to steal time ,so she can go back and ahhhhh... rescue her lover?

Austin: Mmhmm?

Jack: Ah... It's not exactly clear to the listener...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] No!

Jack: ...or me, how that works and I'm *fine* with that!

Austin: She uses time different than us, you know?

Jack: She uses time different than us. She can appear as anything that... existed on the planet Acre?

Austin: Uh huh?

[Ali chuckles]

Jack: Is - is pretty insistent on the fact that those aren't actually appearances, they're actually like, they are still actually her, right?

Austin: Yes, they are actually her and also she is actually them. Like I've said before, she uses she/her pronouns because she is this person who she calls Acre 7. But like, if she had decided to be a different person, she might use different pronouns. We ha- like she likes being this person, this is the person who... fell in love with The Potent, and so she remains this person. But you can, I think that they are very gender fluid, in terms of like, over the course of their huge long life as a planet?

Jack: [very amused] As a planet!

Austin: You know! Often use, you know... are completely different types of beings, right?

Jack: Yeah!

Austin: I think at her core, like, in her history, she has been just a planet for a lot of it, like... And I don't know that she's the same type of planet as Quire and Cygillia, but she might be! Like I, a thing I kind of like as a notion is like, that she is what Cygillia or Quire look like if they like grow up, and become like stable beings?

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] The like, the... the elderly sort of matriarch planet.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah. Yeah! Or not even matriarch just like you're an adult now, this is what an adult planet looks like. Versus...

Jack: 'Cause planets take sooo looong to grow!

Austin: Or it's the other way, maybe she's very young compared to Cygillia and Quire, right, like maybe she, the reason that she is still falling in love with people, is because she is still at a point in her personhood where like, that is what she, she still has this firm identity... that hasn't been dispersed across the entirety of her planet.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah.

Austin: I mean the planet's gone now, the planet is gone. The planet was destroyed, but - you know, time is so weird.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Maybe, maybe the Potent.

Austin: Yeah, yeah... Okay! So, we have made our characters. We have Roll 20 up, which means we have our stones. We now get to play! I'm also just gonna do this really quick, which is... Okay, our basic setup is, Tender Sky... so our basic setup is, that we are rescuing The Cadent, that we are using the Heist game from Follow. The characters in play are that Ali is playing Tender Sky, and Massalia D'Argent, Darjhenn? Darjenn. Tender wants to put the past behind her from the quest, and she wants Fourteen Fifteen to put the mission first.

Austin: From the quest, Fourteen Fifteen wants stability of some sort, and from Sho Salon, who I'm playing, wants to be granted solace. Jack is also playing Acre 7. I'm playing Sho Salon, who wants no innocent to get hurt, that's the want from the quest. And from Tender Sky, wants to be, wants to be given trust and shared authority. And the minor character I'm playing is Morning's Observation.

Austin: The thing that makes our quest difficult is that it's a combination of the ship being shut down and in parts, and also certain floors having stranded evacuees. I think we discussed it and said that the first two floors are completely shut down - the first... *four* floors are shut down. The first two floors are empty, the first three floors are empty and then floors *four*, which we control but... but... is shut down, and floor five, which we do *not* control and is *not* shut down, are filled with evacuees.

Austin: And the second thing that makes our quest difficult is that the object of our heist, The Cadent Under Mirage, is well-guarded by Sui Juris.. the, the N.E.H. - the, the New Earth Hegemony's Torch Units, and a couple of assassins sent in from Castlerose. So now we're gonna pick who picks our first challenge! Does anyone have a strong feeling about one of these challenges? Because they will be the one who sets it and, and goes.

Austin: Again our goal is to get the loot and not to get caught, and the challenges we can choose from are: Case the joint: get the layout or security plan. Get equipment we need: what is it? Acquire the keys: who has them, what are they? Actual keys, a security code, a combination? Defeat security: and which, which security is it?. Get someone on the inside. Break in, get away, lay low, cover our tracks. Find and eliminate the rat, which might be someone outside the fellowship. Get rid of evidence or fence the goods. [chuckles]

Austin: Some of those make less sense when it's, you're saving someone but, you know, I think there's enough here for us to work with. Someone have a strong feeling about what the first challenge should be?

Jack: I kind of like the idea of "acquire the keys"?

Austin: Yeah, me too.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: What are the keys?

Jack: [overlapping with Jack] 'Cause we have... is what we're talking about here maybe the elevators?

Austin: Yeah, I think so. Or just like the controls over the station, right? Like -

Jack: Oh, yes, station control...

Austin: Like, station control that will let us power things back up and also control the elevators. Yeah. Alright! Cool, I've written down "acquire the keys: station control access." So, that person selects a challenge from the quest sheet. Picking a challenge establishes that it is the next important step we need to take in our quest. You must pick a challenge from the quest sheet, but you can pick any challenge that you think is appropriate, blah blah blah... blah blah blah you copy it to the sheet, we did that. Alright.

Austin: So then... *you*, in this case, you say why it's difficult. The player who picked the challenge describes the problem that confronts the fellowship and fleshes out the situation, Tell us what make the challenge difficult and why we need to do it, but do not say anything about how we will solve the problem, leave *that* for the scenes.

Austin: So their example is, our quest is to get the candidate elected, and our new challenge is to handle the accusations of personal misconduct. The player picking the challenge says, it's difficult because there are stacks of pictures showing our candidate on romantic dinners with the husband of her campaign manager, and hotel receipts, and text messages. We've got our work cut out for us. So Jack, why is this difficult?

Jack: [laughs nervously] I think this is difficult because... okay, so why is the, getting station access difficult? Getting station access diffi- is difficult for a couple of reasons. One, th - nothing kind of works, [Austin laughs] in our way of getting there. The ways that we expect to open don't?

Austin: Mmhmm?

Jack: You know, lights that we expect to be on aren't on... I reckon that there's like... you know like on an airplane where it's like, colored lights will appear on the floor to guide you you? Those lights are -

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Mmhmm? None of - none of that? Oh, those *are* on.

Jack: I think those lights are on but like, intermittently.

Austin: Mmmm.

Jack: So like they are on just enough that we ge- that we fall into the trap of going like okay cool we can follow the lights and then we just realize that there's a whole room out there we can't see

Austin: Right.

Jack: ...'Cause the lights are off. I think also it's difficult because... it is... very dark and very very quiet

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Which means that we have- anything we do is going to be noticeable by anybody else that's here,

Austin: Okay.

Jack: ...Unless we take real precautions.

Austin: Okay. So, the next step is for you to decide who which main character you think - and it can't be you - would be the first to decide how to deal with this problem. You can not pick your own character. Just consider who in the fellowship would take the lead. That player will make the first scene.

Jack: This is like, *definitely* [Ali laughs] Tender.

Austin: Oh yeah, definitely.

Jack: Like, sorry Tender there is no way - in fact, I think Fourteen just kind of like as we arrived just kind of looks around and hangs back. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Right. Where - we'll decide this in a second, where we meet, so think about that. But, briefly, as you - as a group, we decide how long we envision this challenge taking: minutes, hours, days, weeks, months or years. This gets everyone on the same page about how much time [Ali laughs] we think the scenes will encompass. This is pretty like, real time in my mind, right? This is like...

Ali: [overlapping with Austin and Jack] Yeah...

Jack: [overlapping with Ali] I love this, we spend a month blundering around [Ali and Austin laugh]

Austin: Yeah, exactly. I think this is probably like, you know, minutes or hours, right?

Jack: Yeah, I think its like... yeah.

Austin: It's like TV show pacing.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] It's not like five minutes, but it's like.

Austin: But it's not like five hours either?

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah, I guess... Yeah.

Austin: What were you thinking?

Ali: I was like, I was picturing this as like an episode of 24.

Austin: The whole game? Or this whole - so an hour.

Ali: Yeah. Well, no, like, twenty- an episode of 24 is 24 hours, right?

Austin: No, an episode of 24 is *one* hour. That's the whole show.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin and Ali] No, it's one hour! That's why it's called 24.

Ali: [overlapping with Austin and Jack] Oh, and the whole season is... *what!*?

Austin: Yeah. There's 24 episodes in a season.

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Oh, woww! Ohhh!

Austin: Each- it's real time. Yeahyeahyeah, that's the whole thing with 24, is- an, a single episode is a single day, and it's like, alright, this is from hour, this is from 7 pm to 8 pm... in this city. Yeah.

Ali: Boy howdy, okay, that changes that show for me a lot.

Austin: Listen, you don't know anything about 24, we don't know anything about Frasier [Ali laughs big], let's, you know, call the whole thing off. [Jack laughs]

Ali: [laughing] Friends at the table dot cash.

Jack: Just like in the theme song for Frasier! [Austin laughs]

Ali: Okay, yeah, like-

Austin: If you want to know what we're talking about, subscribe on the patreon, friends at the table dot cash.

Ali: Yes, yes. Then like, maybe like 3 or 4 hours seems appropriate.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, totally.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah, I could see 3 or 4 hours.

Austin: I mean, we'll see, too!

Jack: Especially cause like... yeah.

Austin: Totally. Alright. So, Tender, what is the opening shot?

Ali: I mean, based on what the challenge is, I wonder if it's just the most practical thing of them like, trying to get into like a... a control room that the... the like enemy, so to speak, doesn't have access to?

Austin: Okay.

Ali: Like if there's, like if, if The By and By is essentially these like horizontal like, skyscrapers that each have a city inside of them...

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Yeah...

Ali: [continued] There has to be like, the basement where all of the like...

Austin: Oh that's good! So it's like, it's like we've landed on Floor 1, and then you're like, oh no! We actually have to go to Floor Zero [Ali giggles]. We have to go to the floor that's not a floor, [Jack laughs] we have to go to like - I, I always imagine The By and By like you said as horizontal skyscrapers, but connected by a sort of bendable spine?

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Mmhmm.

Austin: [continued] That like, and each, each - like a spine but like each, each joint is like, extends outward horizontally. So I imagine like, below the bottom joint, below the bottom ver - like horizontal skyscraper, is another little bit that is just underneath, and maybe that is, like, basement ground control or whatever, basement station control, you know?

Ali: Yeah, I was thinking that the like, like instead of it being at the bottom of all of them, but it's at the bottom of like, one of the layers, so if you only have access to like layer three...

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Oh, okay. Gotcha.

Ali: [continued] You still can go in there to try to like save the rest of the ship, so to speak?

Austin: Right, right. That's a good idea, yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin and Ali] Oh, yeah!

Austin: Cool! So what's that look like? And who's in this scene?

Ali: I think the... who's in this scene should definitely be me... I guess at this point... I was gonna say Fourteen Fifteen and... Morning?

Austin: Mmhmm!

Ali: And I, I don't know, like, I - it should be, like... 'Cause Jack set up that whole thing of like, us trying to like, move through this ship and being like, cut off by things. So it should just be the really practical thing of like [Austin laughs shortly] us trying to get into the weird like, hatch that's behind like, a- a furniture store, or whatever, like... [Ali laughs]

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Right, right. That's really good. Yeah.

Ali: [laughing] Like, get down the staircase or whatever yeah.

Austin: Right. Yeah, I just like imagine Morning's Observation looking in the, the... like, like you've come literally through the furniture store, like the only way to get back here is to break through the front door of the store, and like go through the back, and it's all fenced off in the back, and he's like still looking into the back, like, warehouse area, and is like:

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Look at all this furniture!

[Ali laughs]

Jack: So I think I'm standing at the top one of these ladders at the back of this room at the back of a furniture store. And I'm like:

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Have you come down here before?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) No, I just know that they're here.

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Are there like a lot of these? Is this like...

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Yeah, is this the whole ship?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Well there's one per floor and you know, like, people in the top know where everyone is, and then like if you have a certain level of clearance you know where like three of them are, it's like a whole system.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) And they're like all secret? Are they all behind shops?

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] I was gonna ask the same thing! [Ali laughing quietly] Is it all furniture stores, is that like a... 'cause that's predictable.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) So I know the furniture store... there's like one on level 6 that's like a - behind a butcher shop? But I think, like around the corner there's an antique store, so *maybe*...

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) It's like, it's like all... how deep does it *go*?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I... again... I haven't been all the way down there...

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] I'm just gonna stay up here. I'll watch it. I'll watch it. I know Sho is already watching the front of the the store, but like if someone sneaks in through a side door. I'm just gonna stay up here and watch the ladder. That way I'm letting you know, ~ Oh the ladder fell! You gotta find another way up or something.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Oh-

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] I don't - I don't like heights!

Ali: [as Tender Sky, laughing] I -

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) You didn't have to say that bit, that was -

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] That's, but that's the truth! I'm trying to be more truthful, I'm trying to live my truth.

Jack: [Hesitantly, as Fourteen Fifteen] Ah, yeah... That's -

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] That's what that means, right? Live my truth.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Yeah...

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Just tell the truth all the time.

[Ali laughs]

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I appreciate that I *might* need you downstairs, that's kind of like -

Austin: [as Morning's Observation, overlapping with Ali] Oh if there's stairs, I can take stairs! I just - I don't fuck with ladders. That's the thing. No ladders allowed.

[Ali laughs]

Ali: (as Tender Sky) There's gonna be ladders for a little bit.

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Okay...

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) And then it's elevators.

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Okay, elevators.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) And then it's elevators!

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Okay. Elevators I can do.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Okay.

Austin: So I think like, for Morning's Observation like, for the remainder of this sequence, is just like, checked the fuck out, [Ali laughs] because of being nervous.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Just like, white knuckles [Ali pity laughs] clinging to the... to the ladder.

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

Jack: What if we go down in -

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Okay, look. What if we go down - what if Tender goes down first, 'cause she knows what the deal is. And then *you* go down, and then I go down? So you know, you're like, protected.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Yeah! From both sides!

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Wait! I'd rather have both of you below so that it's like, softer.

[pause, followed by Ali gasp-laughing]

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] If I fall.

[Ali and Jack laughing]

Ali: [As Tender Sky? Nearly inaudible through wheezing laughter] I hate you.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Oh - Okay, this is less appealing now.

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] I don't need to be protected from the top! Like... I don't need to be... nothing's gonna fall - *oh, no!*

Ali: (as Tender Sky) What if someone pushes you down?

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] What if something *falls* on me?

[Ali laughs]

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Nothing's gonna fall on you.

Austin: He just like, looks at you. Nothing, no words.

[Ali laughs]

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Alright! I'm going down the ladder.

[Ali laughs shortly]

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Okay. Do- do you, do you want me to - I'll go, and then you go?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Okay, sounds good.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) No, I was talking to Morning.

Austin: He nods.

[Ali laughs]

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Alright...

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Okay sounds good!

[Ali continues laughing]

Jack: I call up the ladder.

Austin: [as Morning's Observation, nervous whisper] I hope no one hears us!

Ali: [As Tender Sky, sighs heavily]

Austin: That might be scene, right? Like I don't know that you need more than like, we're getting down to this place.

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah.

Austin: [continued] Like, what's it- what's it look like when we get down there, I guess, is what we need.

Ali: ...I don't know, I think it's like... You know when you're like... You know how malls have that like, fucking like, *hallway* that's behind all of the stores, and every time you're back there you're like, *what is this?*

Austin: Mmhmm.

Jack: Mmm! [Ali laughs] It's like...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Like the backstage of a mall, yeah.

Ali: [laughingly] Right, like you know that, you have the like deep, deep feeling, like, ~I'm not supposed to know that this is here!

Austin: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

Ali: But it's like that same exact thing, like it's obviously not decorated, it's all white shitty white 'cause no one's supposed to be back there.

Austin: Mmhmm.

Ali: There's like some boxes of stuff probably... I think that there's like, there's like, there's probably like signs, but with like different symbols leading to different places. But like, I don't know the - like Tender probably kind of remembers almost where they are, and like the other two don't at all...

Austin: Right.

Ali: And I think that they're like, they're trying to find, essentially like the, like a control room or whatever that they can, that they can get in to.

Austin: Okay. Cool. Alright! So, next scene: Fourteen Fifteen. Where are we, who's in it and... and what are we doing?

Jack: I think we're at - we're at some, some sort of - some sort of control station? I don't think we know if it's like a *useful* control station to us. But we've like found... the... a corridor has just kind of ended abruptly, and we've found this out because like the the the sound of the floor under our feet changed.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And we like, like, lit little torches to see, to see where we were. And it's as though its like... it's' as though, if the corridor was the stick of a mace, this room we're in is like the round head... It's just like a weird, round room...

Austin: Right.

Jack: [continued] That we've walked into. And it has screens on, that- The screens are... I'll be fair, and I'll say that the screens are *sort of* working. [Ali laughs darkly] So one of the screens is showing, just like - it's like a blue screen, with a bunch of text on it. One of the screens is showing what we assume to be security camera footage, but all we can see are like the coloured- coloured dots on the floor...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Mmhmm.

Jack: [continued] because like nothing else is picked up by the security camera? And another screen is showing like security camera footage from like a couple of days ago, so it's just seeing people like walking around like a shop...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right, right.

Jack: [continued] Like the antique shop that Tender mentioned, maybe? And all the other screens are just - just completely dead. And...

Austin: Can I complicate this sequence?

Jack: Yeah! No, go ahead.

Austin: Morning's Observation nods at the security camera, that from a couple of days ago... and he's like:

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Uh, uhhh... d-ah! What's she doing here?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Who?

Austin: And you look at the screen, and like three days ago, Mother's Story like walked through the back of the furniture store. Like it shows her coming out, going downstairs, like opening the hatch, and then like, disappearing into the dark down here.

Jack : [as Fourteen Fifteen] Oh my god it's her! [Ali sighs heavily] She's here!

Austin: Does she show up, or does she... did she plant something here? I wonder what the, what like... like is this a, is this a like... she set a bomb, she set a mine here, she has an EMP like is she - or is she in the dark?

Ali: I mean she's working *with them*, right? That's, that's obvious, yeahyeah.

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Oh yeah, yeahyeahyeah, one hundred per cent. Yes.

Ali: I wonder if it's something like, you know how you can like install a keylogger onto someone's computer to see what they've been...

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Totally.

Ali: Looking at? If it's something like that, to like try to... like a countermeasure to know that like if someone comes down here, they know what they're trying to do, what they're trying to get access to?

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Okay.

Jack: [overlapping with Ali] Yeah.

Austin: Totally. Is like - is it a sequence where like that happens and then, that sets something else into motion that we'll see in a moment? Like, do we get an alarm, do we get like...

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Ohhhhhh!

Austin: Does someone else call in? Like...

Jack: I - I think I know what it is. I think it's like, I think it's a combination of this keylogger - I think - it's the keylogger that Ali's talking about about, but rather than it being a program you install...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah.

Jack: It's kind of like a, it's kind of like a limpet mine that you put onto a computer.

Austin: Right.

Jack: And as soon as one of us starts interacting with it, it like gleams like a, like a mirror that's caught some light...

Austin: Mmmm.

Jack: And then, as though it's distributing a signal, which I guess it's doing, I guess it's distributing a very local signal.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: We see like, like a like a you know like when light is reflected onto a wall or something?

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: We see little gleams go up the wall...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Mmhmm.

Jack: As though they're following like a cable, and those gleams go up through the ceiling, and it's clear that some sort of signal is being transmitted.

Austin: Okay. Can I use, can I jump off that? Do you know the current footage where all you see is the coloured lighting strips that guides you through the city, like the emergency lighting?

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah.

Austin: Suddenly there are new lights. And like five Torch Units show up, and it's their big bright lights like, cutting like spotlights through the night, or the, the kind of the dark, and heading towards the furniture store. [Jack takes a deep breath in and out] And it's four, its four of the ones that you encountered yourselves on the ship, on Privine... Privign, rather? And then it's one of the big red ones.

Ali: [giggles] Wait like one of the *really* really big ones or just like.

Austin: No, like the big hulking ones that are like twelve feet tall or whatever.

Ali: Okay, I've heard that they get really big.

Austin: Yeah, they get very big, they get very big, it's true. It's true. But this is just... This is like, four people-sized ones, and then one that is like The Hulk or something, you know? Or like... you know, twelve feet tall. [With barely contained mirth] Which is big, to be clear! To be clear! Two people tall! [Ali giggles] And two people wide! And made of metal, so... And we just see them like, marching through the streets, maybe that's - I don't know, is that scene, Fourteen, or do you have more?

Jack: I think, I think what we - I think we get a cut to just like Sho, standing in the dark in this like furniture store...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Mmhmm. Yeah.

Jack: And like she doesn't see, she doesn't see the Torch Units, but she sees like... like a - a beam sweeping across like a mall fern or something, like a palm tree.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right, right. She calls in, probably, and says like:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) There's a group here! Something's coming. You'd better hurry.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Get inside.

Austin: She like, the shot, like shows her reaching for the blade, and then like, taking a deep breath [Austin takes a deep breath] and then stepping inside.

Jack: And think that's scene.

Austin: Okay. So I think my scene is gonna be what happens up top, like can Sho and company give you the time you need? So I think it's Sho, plus Acre 7 and Massalia. I don't know that Massalia's indoors yet. I think Massalia might be doing orbits outside. Like maybe what we open on is, like a very - a very wide shot of the furniture store, like looking in from space, like through the glass windows, and - and then we see like an object cross around it, and like, begin this, this very fast-paced orbit around the station, and we get a close up of Massalia, and they're in Melodica and they're kind of like running, like... you know, running - running a sort of micro-blockade to make sure no new hostiles get in, but then we zoom in past them, and into The By and By where Acre 7 is just like, sitting or lounging on like a, like a chaise lounge [laughing] and Sho has like stepped into the door, and says to Acre:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) We have company.

Jack: [as Acre 7] Fear not.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) I'm not afraid I'm just... There aren't that many of us.

Jack: [as Acre 7] The amount is of no issue. What will happen will happen, and we will be seen through to the other side.

Austin: [as Sho Salon, exhales loud and slow]

Austin: And I think at that note we hear the heavy steps of these machines. And they know where they're going, right? Like [Austin and Jack laugh together] Mother's Story, Mother's Story knows, like where this is, and they're sending these troops to like, this is the automated response, an activated five units.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin, full of panicky mirth] Right like, Mother Glory [omg] was like, down here, like there is no question about like where this is. [Ali laughs heartily]

Austin: Yes, so... How do they get in, do they just like, walk through the door? Are they just like goofy robots who use the door handle, or do they like jump through... Do they even *bother* going inside? I think maybe the four Torch Units just like do a fast jump like Specters in um.. in ah...

Jack: Titanfall?

Austin: Titanfall! Like up to the top floor, like up to the roof, and they're just like stomping across the roof of the place.

Jack: I think also there's this great image of like, of like everybody... like crouched behind furniture in the furniture store, and these lights coming through the glass windows at the front.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: 'Cause as - as frightening as Torch Units jumping onto the roof is... as equally frightening is them not even feeling that they need to go inside yet, just waiting outside the...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right. Right. They have to pass back through, right? Yeah.

Jack: Yeah!

Austin: Yeah, and maybe like the big one has its, its like - instead of it just doing the flashbang style, like quick shot of light, it's the one that has this heavy like, almost unbearable beam of light that it is like shooting into the - inside the store. And I think that's the point at which Sho, who is like hiding behind a cabinet - oh, she has on like a - I think her dress right now is like a bunch of stained glass windows. Like that's the look -

[1:00:00]

Austin: [continued] the gothic lolita dress that she has on, is this like dark, dark tan, like it's like, looks like the interior of a church. Like it has bricks and stuff, and then like along the - like from the waist down, or from like the, like the - it's a high waist, but like from the high waist down, are these like beautiful stained glass windows featuring various Excerpts and their Divines. And I think she calls Tender, and says:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Miss Sky! They're here and I need to engage. Please give me permission to engage.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Absolutely.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Thank you.

Austin: And then just like closes the comm, and then turns and walks past Acre. And like draws her blade.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Acre, we're moving first.

Austin: And just like, kicks the door open, and just like rolls out, and, and begins to fight these, these Torch Units. Does this go *well*, do you think?

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Ah... I think I'm going to...

Jack: [as Acre 7] Massalia, come in.

Ali: [as Massalia D'Argent] Hmm, Yes?

Jack: [as Acre 7] Are you seeing this? The trainee?

Ali: [as Massalia D'Argent] Yes.

Jack: [as Acre 7] I suppose we are trainees too, are we not? Are we not?

Ali: [as Massalia D'Argent] [laughs sharply] We're not.

[Austin laughs loudly]

Jack: [as Acre 7] We are not?

[Jack laughs sheepishly]

Ali: [as Massalia D'Argent] No.

Austin: No, I mean, they're not, they're not. They've been active for quite some time. Acre and, and Massalia have been, have been... yeah.

Jack: Oh yeah, that's true! I thought we were -

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] I thought you were being like, I thought you were being like, *existential*. [Jack laughs] Like aren't we *all* trainees in some way?

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Oh I see - Yeah, no, no.

Ali: Yeah I thought so too, and I was denying it. [laughs]

Austin: Mmhmm.

Jack: No.

Jack: [as Acre 7] So it is. Are you prepared to offer support?

Ali: [as Massalia D'Argent] Yes, do you need me to re-enter right now?

Jack: [as Acre 7] You can stay out there for as long as you want. [Ali laughs] Act appropriately. Take care not to harm the space station.

Austin: Melodica is like definitely already, like the, the mech is definitely already [Jack laughs] trying to figure out if it can just totally cut the entire station in two, [Jack and Ali laugh] separating the terrorists from everybody else, without any notion of like, [Austin laughs] would that hurt anybody in the bottom half of this ship? Just like, hmm, where would a cutting beam go?

Jack: [as Acre 7] Do not allow your mech to think too hard.

Ali: [as Massalia D'Argent] [chuckles] I've been able to control it up until now.

Jack: [as Acre 7] Excellent.

Jack: And I'm just gonna stand up from behind the, the thing. Do we know what Acre 7's weapons are?

Austin: Acre 7.

Jack: Okay fine. [Ali giggles] I'm gonna stand up from behind the thing, and I'm going to - what is Sho doing at this point?

Austin: Cutting the arms off of these units, right? Like, trying to block bullets with her rad katana. You know! Grappling.

Jack: Doing good Sho stuff.

Austin: She's doing good Sho stuff, like, you, you - I think you like, or like the door is open cause she kicked it open, like it probably came off its fuckin hinges. But she is like moving through them like a knife through butter. But also there's a bunch of them and one of them is big, and she's just pretending it's not there.

Jack: I think what I'm gonna try and do is like, telefrag the beam of one of the big Torches with my hand. I'm just going to sort of blink forward and try and sort of blink into one of these things.

Austin: Oooooohhhh. What's that look like?

Jack: IT looks like Acre 7 extends her arm and makes a fist, and then it's as though she has stepped forward to punch the thing, but instead of hitting it with her fist, her fist is inside of it.

Austin: Eughhhh! Is this the big one or is this one of the smaller ones?

Jack: I think it's the one that Sho is, is trying to pretend isn't there.

Austin: Okay that's the red one, that's the big red one, its name is Beef.

Jack: Sorry?

Austin: Its name is Beef?

Jack: Great!

Austin: Yeah. The, the Torch units are named for -

Jack: I've changed my mind. It must never die.

[All three laugh]

Austin: The, the Torch units all have names based on the food pyramid? [Jack laughs] The red ones are named for, for meats. Meats and poultries. So this one's name is Beef.

Jack: Alright, I'm gonna try and telefrag Beef.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Sho, Sho has already - Sho has already killed Apple, Broccoli and Carrot, which are the little ones. Three of the little ones.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Nice work Sho!

Austin: [laughs] Alright yeah! I think you, I think that just totally works, right like Acre is, Acre is good enough to put their, or put her hand all the way like into that thing. And does she just re-solidify and rip out some cords? Like what's the - what's she do?

Jack: I think - I think, it's not clear whether or not she re-solidifies and rips out cords or whether or n- It's not clear what happens. What happens is the bit where her hand was explodes.

Austin: Okayyy!

Jack: It's just twisted metal.

Austin: Right. And then like - brrrrruuw! It like crashes and makes that good noise of big robots crashing. And like, it's not -

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] A Beef robot!

Austin: Yeah. It's not dead but has like lost one fo its legs or something and it's like,

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah.

Austin: It loses one of its legs and then it immediately adapts to stand on one, one arm and the other leg. And like as if it's as if it's - in fact like maybe its head, like detaches from the top, slides to the back?

Jack: Yeah! [laughing]

Austin: And then repositions so that its side is up? You know what I mean, like a -

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah, like it's found its new head.

Austin: Yeah. Almost like a toy. Yes, exactly. Or its head is still its head, but its head moves like a transformer, like slides to its back and then up to its side. And it begins like crab-walking around on a leg and a hand. I mean at this point maybe it jumps - it jumps up to the top of the roof of this building, and it's like making a charge towards the back.

Jack: [as Acre 7] Massalia -

Ali: [as Massalia D'Argent] Yes?

[Austin laughs]

Austin: Big robot stomping around on roof! [Ali laughs]

Jack: [as Acre 7] Massalia I think the situation is clear.

Ali: [as Massalia D'Argent] Understood.

Ali: So I think that theyyyyyy... do you, do you have an idea of like, what weapons Melodica has?

Austin: Whatever we want, right?

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah.

Austin: Like a rail cannon is totally the sort of thing that this type of character, this archetype would have, right? [Ali laughs] I've said it before, but like their mech probably looks close - in my mind, their mech looks a lot like what Detachment looked like during COUNTER/Weight? Huge like jet-things. I don't think that's - that's not unintentional, like... you know, if this were an anime, fans would recognize that this is double-dipping on a certain style of mech.

Austin: That in some ways, Massalia is this echo of Jerboa, in that it is like, they are like, similarly... want to prove that they're the best... that they're *the best one*, as it were? But are also committed to doing good things, and that, that desire to be the best comes from, like specific - specifically being passed over, and specifically the effect of having built a homemade Divine, right? Like it's *not a Divine*, Melodica is *not a Divine*, but it's the closest a single person has ever come to building one.

Austin: Because even the first Divines were built by teams of people, you know, there was a lead engineer, but like... This is, Massalia spent *five years*, build - like going to junk yards, going to like huge, you know, where battles happened and picking through scraps to find little chunks of what a Mind might look like. And then trying to build a Divine, and then like, having that slowly burrow into them.

Austin: And so, it could be whatever we want, but like definitely that, that vibe of like, *just the precision*, but like, but like it would be so like - when something is designed to be very precise, that means that touching it just the wrong way means it's very, like *imprecise*, you know? [Ali hums in agreement] So, so, that's the sort of thing that I would like, yeah, yeah... a rail cannon, but maybe it shoots a *very big round*. You know?

Ali: Yeah, I like - I like the idea of... of them kind of looking at the screen and having it be like, the like, grid of the... the like honing unit, so to speak [laughs]. And it's like all of these other boxes that like, come in from the sides of the screen and kind of like, come together in the centre, and that takes like 14 seconds or whatever to line up, and then finally like: "Bwee bwee bwee bwee bwee bweeeeeeee!" you got it, like -

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Right, right-right-right.

Ali: Just like this big like, it's almost like a firework?

Austin: [overlapping with Ali and Jack] Oh, that's good!

Jack: [overlapping with Austin and Ali] Yeah!

Ali: Where it's just like one single shot that like "frwoooooohw!"

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: [laughing] And it just!

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] And then it like - does it pierce the glass? Does it like - how's it get like, does the whole area briefly depressurize, like the - a shield pops up or something?

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah, I think that it like, I think that it like shatters it [Jack chuckles]. And... the glass shatters and the shot goes through it and hits the thing, and then the like, camera goes back to where the glass is, and like suddenly there's like little drones or whatever going over to like, quickly cover it with like [Austin and Ali giggling] weird space tape or whatever?

Austin: Yes. Good. Perfect. There are just all these little drones that roll around The By-and-By's surface constantly, that are just attached to it, like almost magnetically or something. It's like on its gravity, and they just roll around, and can like dispense tape, or like weld things - they're just like, almost little BB8 units or something, you know? [Ali laughs] That's really good, I love that so much.

Austin: Cool! And then, and then yeah I think it explodes, the last Torch Unit like, Acre and Sho probably deal with it in some dope way... What do - how do we deal with it, Acre? [Jack hums] Like what's like the three-second cool ending of the fight scene combo that we do?

Jack: Oh, is it, is it - I think it's like Sho essentially like [giggling] decapitating one of them? [Austin hums] But I don't know what Acre is... oh no it's, it's like a light turning to look at Acre, and suddenly just being shut off as Sho just stabbed it through the...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Ohhhh! Yeah, yeah. Totally. Like through the back, like the katana just pierces through the back?

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah. The blade comes through.

Austin: Alright! Cool! So and then, I think Sho calls back to Tender and Fourteen and Morning's Observation and says like:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) All clear up here! Do you have it, do you have control?

Austin: And now we find out if we got control, [Ali chuckles] because we don't get to actually determine this, right?

Jack: Oh yeahh!

Austin: 'Cause this could all still blow up in some weird way. Soooo, now that we've completed this part of the challenge, we draw stones! So! Start with no stones in the pool. Add one white, one red. Then, each player takes two red stones. Read aloud. If your main character is unhappy about the path the fellowship has taken, hold one red stone. If your main character actually wants the quest to fail, hold two red stones. Otherwise, hold no stones. Maximum two stones, even if the answer is yes to both. Decide secretly, then reveal simultaneously.

Austin: So, what I'm going to ask everyone to do is to type, but not send, how many red stones they're holding. So again, that's one if you're unhappy about the path the fellowship has taken so far, and two if you actually want it to fail. Let me know when you've both typed.

Jack: I'm good.

Ali: Mmmhmm.

Austin: 3, 2, 1, send. Alright! Everyone's at zero. Then each player -

Jack: [laughing] But we all wrote it in different ways! [Ali chuckles]

Austin: [laughing] Yes we did! Then each player takes one white and one red. Read aloud. As a *player*, not as a character, do you think the fellowship did what was necessary to succeed at the challenge? Hold white if yes, red if no. And again, type what you want, let me know when you're ready.

Ali: Ready.

Jack: Ready.

Austin: Go! Alright, easy! White, white, white. So, at this point we put all the stones in the cup. So, this is three white, plus the extra fourth white from the start. Again it starts with one white and one red. Then we put the stones in the cup, and without looking we draw one stone and reveal it, then we draw and reveal a second. The way I'm doing this, the way I'm doing this for all of these games, is I'm just rolling dice and cutting up different dice numbers to be white versus red.

Austin: So in this case, there's one red die, which is... okay! *One* is going to be the red, and then after that, there are, one two three four white dice, 'cause again it starts with one white one red. So that means I'm going to roll a D-5, and one will be red, and everything else will be white. So without looking, draw, so one D-5, roll? Come on.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Oh-kay.

Austin: Alright, so that's a red. No I got it, I got the roll. I got the roll.

Ali: Oh, okay.

Austin: And that's a four, so the first one is white. And now you've removed that from the cup so I'm rolling one D-4, and if it's a one, it's red, and if it's a two three or four it's a white. It's a two, so we got white, white, nice! Okay, so that means, by looking the thing, if you roll white twice you win the challenge, and you don't have to lose any characters. And what I'm gonna do is I'm just gonna make a mark down here that says we did it. That we did the damn thing. Nice work. Here's a big check mark! [chuckles] We acquired the keys to the station.

Austin: So, we describe the challenge. As a group describe the outcome of your challenge to match the results of your draw. If this was the third challenge, describe the outcome of the entire quest... So I think like, do we just get - like, we get that scene of Sho stabbing the blade through the back of the Torch Unit's head and like, "We did it, it's clear up here!" And then the lights come back on?

Jack: Yeah, I think it's like, it's a, it's a really great shot of lights, right?

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah, right

Jack: Where you having the one arcing light on Acre's face. And the light suddenly goes out, and the *all* the lights come on.

Austin: [chuckling] Right! Right! And then like, also like, advertisements start playing [Ali chuckles] like background noise comes on.. You know, just like ambient sound starts happening in this like fake city or whatever, or not fake, but like this vertical, this horizontal city in space.

Jack: The drones patching the windows suddenly are able to patch it better [Ali laughs].

Austin: Right! Yes, totally. Totally. Okay! Cool! So that is the first challenge. We now need a second challenge and Jack, you will be the one to pick that, because...

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Didn't - didn't I pick the first one?

Austin: No, you picked... oh you *did* pick the first one, didn't you [Jack hums] Yes, yes, yes, 'cause Tender started, but you picked the first one. So I'll pick the second one. Umm, I think the second thing that we need to do is..... [big sigh!]To... is to break in. Like I think we have the elevator now, right? We theoretically can take this all the way up, but the reason that its difficult is that they have it... We have control over the first, the bottom four floors? Bottom four floors. And they have, and they have control over the top floor.

Austin: And the big thing is, we can now evacuate people from floor four and floor three, where people were waiting to be evacuated, but we can't - the elevator, if we take the elevator to floor five, like, we're gonna open that door and there's just gonna be people there who want to kill us. And who have basically, you know, tens of thousands of hostages, who are... or, or some amount of that right?

Austin: Like we've talked about The By-and-By as being the biggest ship on the Fleet, with hundreds of thousands of people. And so half of... you know, on floor four at this point, even if floors four through eight had gotten partially evacuated, my guess is floor four is the one that - or floor five rather, is filled with people, waiting to get down to the floors that we control, and are like, waiting to evacuate.

Austin: So we could take the elevator up, but the thing that's going to be difficult is that there's going to be lots of innocent people up there, that we have to - that I think Sho is more concerned with getting those people safe before going forward. So like she is adamant that we need to stop at floor five and help people, and then from there can go on to break in. I think that is what I'm saying the thing is. And you know, on one hand, it sounds like it should be Sho doing this, but on the other, I think she is like, she ... phrases all of this in a way that is like:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Right, Fourteen?

Austin: And like, this is her making this demand:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) If you want me to grant you any amount of solace for what you do, you need to be with me on this. We need to break in, and in the process get these people out.

Austin: [typing sounds] Break into the fifth floor...

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Okay...

Austin: [typing sounds continue] It [one unintelligible word] can be break into... ah... Sui Juris controlled area.

Jack: Okay so I, I frame the first of these three scenes.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Okay, ah...

Austin: And so again the danger is, the danger in this case is the stranded evacuees who are on the fifth floor, and then the fact that like, there are still guards throughout this place who put those people at risk, and who are also between us and the top floors where the Cadent is.

Jack: Yeah... Okay, so... Am I just framing it, or am I, is this -?

Austin: This is who, what and where. and what we're - who's in the scene, what are we doing, and where is it?

Jack: Okay. This is... Tender, Fourteen and Sho.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Are taking the elevator up to the last floor we can, we can control?

Austin: Mmhmm.

Jack: Floors where there are probably going to be guards, but now where they're going to be like with their guns pointed at the elevator?

Austin: Right, so floor - like through floor four, we have said that like it is safe. Floor five is the first one where there are enemy guards but also lots of people waiting to evacuate.

Jack: Alright, okay. I'm wondering whether or not we... okay. Could I, could I make a scene that is like, establishing a plan, and we can talk through what our options are?

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah, totally! Totally.

Jack: Yeah, okay so I think we're up as, we're up as safe as we can get -

Austin: Yes.

Jack: And you know, we have probably some degree of, of consternation has broken out, as the elevator doors open, and just like three heavily armed people get out?

Austin: Right!

Jack: So we've spent time being like, "We're here from the Beloved!"

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: And we -

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Like we've basically just set up like, not camp, but like, people...

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah, yeah yeah, it's like, it's close to a camp, right?

Austin: Right. People on the fourth floor are now going down to evacuate, like, and we've set up shop right near the giant elevator that takes them down in huge throngs, basically.

Jack: Yeah. We, we're near like a, like a vending machine or something, we've got like glass of - refilling bottles of water [Ali chuckles].

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right, right. And they're like local people, like local, like people who work in the - in... By-and-By like mercy officers and other, kind of bureaucrats, and police and security forces, who are like helping this evacuation happen, now that we have the bottom half powered back on.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

Austin: And they're like conferring with us, and we're talking them through like, what we're doing. But like, is this a scene where we're like, now what do we do?

Jack: Yeah, I think so.

Austin: Okay. I think Sho is like super adamant, right? She's like:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) I know we can go all the way up to floor eight and get the Cadent, but like, at any point, they could just pull the lever and... just completely vent floor five!

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) We're not going to do that. I don't want to do that.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I don't think that that's something they're interested in doing.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) I mean... it's a risk we have to -

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Maybe not -

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) It's a risk we have to take, right? I mean it's a, not a risk we have to take, it's a risk we have to take into account, right? I finished the sentence early.

[Austin and Ali laugh]

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Yeah. We need to go... How do you evacuate all those people?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) I have a plan. The last time I saw Mother's Story, there were, there - she only knew it was me for two reasons. One was that I started shooting at her. And the other was that I started shooting at her with *my gun*. I don't have my gun anymore. So what if you send me up? Not all the way. What if we find a reason to get me onto the floor?

Austin: (as Sho Salon) And then what?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Well then I could, I don't know, I could cause a distraction, and you could come up? If we all go up together, what's our plan when the doors open?

[Ali laughs]

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Whatever's waiting for us, we fire our way through. We, we sneak to wherever we have to go, we get -

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) There are thousands of - they'll just start killing people, Tender!

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Fourteen, I'm not sure I trust you to provide a good distraction.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Why not?

Austin: (as Sho Salon) You're gonna get up there and you're gonna see her, and she's gonna have your gun, and you're gonna forget that what you're supposed to be doing is providing an opportunity for Tender, Morning's Observation, Massalia and I, and Acre, to save people, and instead you're going to get into a fight with her... That's -

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Well, I'm going to get into a fight with her *eventually*. But I can recognize that there's stuff we need to do before that!

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Can you?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Yeah, can you?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) I think I can. I think - what would *you*, what, what would *you* do? What would *you* do here?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I don't think we should split up. I -

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] If you're gonna send anybody up, send me.

Austin: And, Morning's Observation like walks into the scene, like, and bites into an apple.

[Ali laughs]

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Okay wait, actually that's kind of a good point, because you're - I mean, you *were*, sorry...

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] I mean I'm still *from* Earth, like *technically*.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Right, but I mean what do we say? Do we - What's the, what's the cover here?

Jack: As like, people entering the big lift, and the lift going BING! and the lift descending down to the floor below as we're talking.

Austin: Right...

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Maybe it's not cover, maybe I go up and I say "Listen, we want to talk, and - but first you have to let the people on the fifth floor out," and like, then they get out. Maybe they'll just listen.

[Ali sighs heavily]

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Well then why don't we - wouldn't it be safer if we *all* went up and did that?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Exactly.

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] No, 'cause they know me. And I'll be able to say like -

Ali: (as Tender Sky) That means you're the most at risk!

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Or the least.

[Ali laughs]

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Right, but - Sho, how would you feel about Morning going up? Morning's.

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] Ummm, you can just call me Morning or Morn, or Observation, or... like I don't need the whole apostrophe-S thing at this point, I feel like it's, you know, it's - it's like a weird thing. It says something that I don't know that I wanna say anymore, so just like Morn, or M, or Morning, or uhhhh... that's kind of, like... I don't have a good abbreviation.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) No, all of those sound good. That sounds, that sounds good.

Austin: Sho is like:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) I don't like any of it. I... [sighs] I don't like giving the - I don't want to go up in an elevator and have all of us just open the door and get shot to death. And leave all those people behind. Whatever you do I'm going to the fifth floor and I'm going to deal with that problem first.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Sho, that's - *We're* going to the fifth floor too!

Austin: (as Sho Salon) But that's not where Mother's Story is, or where the rest of - it's not where the Cadent is being held!

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) We can get there! That's what I'm saying. We go up, we go up - We go up to the first floor that we need to evacuate, and we start trying to, I don't know, negotiate? Or we, or we kill one of the, one of the guards! And we just start moving people ourselves.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) What if we open the door and it's just 30 Torch Units and they don't negotiate?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Well then we've screwed it up, Sho! We have to *act*!

[Ali sighs]

Austin: (as Sho Salon) You're *so eager* to pull a trigger.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) I'm eager to not be sitting still

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Make up your minds. I'll do whatever. Where'd you find that apple?

Austin: And then like Morning's Observation just nods backwards and she walks away.

[Ali laughs sadly]

Austin: That might be scene.

Ali: Okay.

Jack: We went in to it being like, "let's come up with a plan," and instead we just had like, everybody bickering, which is great!

Austin: Yep! Totally! Tender - your scene!

Ali: Oh-kayyy. Sure! I don't know, I feel like the way that she feels after that last scene is that like, trying to help those people shouldn't be a priority 'cause... first of all, I don't think that she thinks that the organization that they're fighting against wants to hurt those people? If their like statement is like, "Hey we wanna run - we wanna be on the top of the top now," then you don't do that by like hurting the people who are supposed to be looking up to you?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And then also, all of those options they just discussed, like, the closer they get to those people, the more at risk they are? [Austin and Jack both hum in agreement].

Jack: Truuue.

Ali: Yeah, so I - I don't know...

Austin: I think you should just set a scene, like - For me, the movie of this, would then jump cut to something being happen - something *happening*, and like, not more planning, not more bickering, just like, being more in it.

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Yeahhhhhh. Yeah. Yeah So, but I - I mean I - I think the like, the scene we don't see, is her just putting her foot down, and being like this is, if we can't agree on this thing, then we're just gonna do the thing that we're here to do, 'cause there are people hired her to help evacuations, it's not our...

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Right. Right. Yeah, so what is that? So what's that - what *are* we doing? Where, who and what?

Ali: Ummm...do we want like the scene of just going up the elevator, or do we want the scene of like us?

Austin: We only get one more scene in this challenge, so that to me suggests maybe we should be there, or you know, not just doing what are we about to do, you know?

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Oh, true.

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Right...yeah.

Austin: We should be doing the thing, 'cause we only have one more scene to prove that we did this successfully.

Ali: Yeah. It should probably be us *leaving* the elevator then, and like, seeing whatever is there when we open the door?

Austin: Yeah. What is the top floor of The By-and-By?

Ali: I think that it's - I think that it's like, of the floors it's the one that's the least dense. And I don't think that there's any, like... there's probably not any housing there, 'cause I don't want it to be like, oh, you live on the top floor and you're really rich, like you don't have as many neighbours, or whatever.

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Right. Right. Is this like a temple? Is this like a, is this like a public service, is it a park? Is it...

Ali: Yeah, I think it's like a national park, like when you think of those like, *giant* national parks, where like...

Austin: Hmmm... God, you get get of an elevator and it's just like a forest up here?

Ali: [laughs] Right! Yeah, exactly.

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] That's awesome.

Ali: Like the central part is just like that park, and then you keep walking and there's like hills, and like a zoo somewhere there -

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Right, right.

Ali: And like a baseball field, and you just -

Jack: [overlapping with Ali] A turtle pond!

Ali: [laughing] And a turtle pond, and a castle that isn't a castle.

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Right, right. I love that. That's great. Like, I love the notion of just like: "Oh, we're here - oh, *what?*"

Ali: [laughing] Yeah!

Austin: So who is in this scene and what are we doing?

Ali: I think that Tender's definitely in this scene. I don't know... I think, you... well, you should probably decide if Sho is willing to come up here?

Austin: Hmm. I mean she said, she left the scene saying like, "I'll do whatever," so, she'll commit to that. She's not happy about it at all, but.

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah. Okay, yeah. Then she should probably come along [laughing]. I think Massalia's probably still outside. Morning should maybeeee... hang back. Like he should be on the level with us...

Austin: Right, right right right.

Ali: But like, should be by the elevator

Austin: Yeah. Like he immediately like, sets up shop, and connects into the network, and like, like gets into traditional, like operator duty?

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Right, yeah, like there's like a sh-

Austin: I think he's like in like a lemonade stand, is what I imagine him in [Ali chuckles]. Like some sort of concession stand towards the front of this park, where it's like you get your nametag, or your - you get like your, your visitor badges, and like a, like a, a bird feed that you can feed birds with, and popcorn and lemonade, and stuff like that. And he just like sits down on the ground, it's like made of plywood, and he just sits down on the ground inside of it, and basically like pulls out like... a little laptop, or like you know what it is, it's one of those Lenova Yoga Books [Ali laughs] that I love, or whatever that one was called, you know the one I'm talking about?

Ali: [laughing] Yes!

Austin: Not like a tradition - not the Yoga, not the Lenova Yoga that is like a big fold-over laptop, but like the little, tight, black, like it just looks like a, like a notebook. It literally looks like a notebook you would hold in one hand. I wanna buy one every time I look at it even though it's a bad computer. [Ali laughs] Anyway, that's what he does, and he sets up with one of those. And he's like yeah, and he throws up a peace sign, ou just see his hand pop up from behind the lemonade stand with a peace sign? [Ali laughs]

Ali: I'm trying to think of what the like, interesting consequence of like walking into a room and realizing that it's a, like a 20-mile long forest is?

Austin: Oh but maybe that's it, like maybe it's just like, everyone's walking through the fucking woods, and that's a good sequence? [Ali laughs]

Jack: Yeah, what if like we're through the woods and then like, in the distance we, we hear the sound of a vehicle, like it's big enough up here that there are - that like, Sui Generis are like moving... is it Sui Generis?

Austin: It's Sui Juris.

Jack: Sui Juris...

Austin: Yes, yes, yes.

Jack: ...are like moving on vehicles... through the forest, And like, they're far enough away and this place is big enough, that we can just hear them.

Austin: Right. I think we get - maybe this is the moment that the Castlerose agents arrive. It's like, we hear the sound of engines, and above there are two mechs that are like scanning the woods for targets, 'cause they know that, that like - they've seen the elevators arrive, they know that people are coming. I can tell you who they are, I'm curious Jack, if you have good mech designs. Jack and Ali both [Ali laughs] if you wanna help me design their mechs.

Jack: Yeah, do you wanna - should we do one each?

Austin: Yeah, yeah totally. One of them is named Mr. Fahrenheit, and the other one is the Thin White Duke. Mr. Fahrenheit is, is just Freddie Mercury.

[1:30:00]

Austin: And his mech is called Killer Queen. And then the Thin White Duke, who may or may not be one of the other... they may or may not both be members of the trio that we saw down on Quire, just as different musicians who have performed a duo together...[Ali laughs]

Jack: Oh, because they regenerate! They, or...

Austin: Yes! I think - I think their system is different that Fourteen Fifteen's? I mean I think they, they get bodies in the same way, but I think that they just do it from mission to mission. I don't think that they need - that they *die* and get a new body. I think that they go in for every mission

and get a completely new, like, they just completely regenerate into different forms so that they're always under cover, basically? And ah.... The Thin White Duke pilots Warszawa, which is a David Bowie Song from, from Station to Station - or no it might be from Low, but it's good, in any case.

Jack: How've we been *doing* this for like three and half years, [Ali laughs] David Bowie has only just appeared?

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Hasn't - that's not true at all!

Ali: MmmmmmmwhAT!?

Jack: Oh, what, no, true!

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Samol is just Black David Bowie, [Ali making various unintelligible but incredulous noises] he was originally conceived Black David Bowie, so... yes, yes, yes.

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] That is definitely true, what a massive - okay, David Bowie has appeared in Twilight Mirage.

Austin: My questions ends up being: do you think that, you know, the Thin White Duke was probably either, young master Roach or Charley, one of the two jazz musician assassins from the Quire game. Do you think that he became the Thin White Duke in honour of the Duke being killed by, by Echo Reverie? Just like, "I wanna be a Duke too, [Jack laughs] so I'm gonna be the Thin White Duke." The, the way that *they* look, I can tell you how *they* look, and then you can tell me what their *mechs* look like. Because that's the show that we do.

Austin: It is like, Freddie Mercury basically, without the mustache. It's not the Freddie Mercury that you have in your head. Like when I say Freddie Mercury everybody gets like mustache, white tank top, [Ali laughs] like shaved head, right? It's different, it's *no* mustache, it's like, kind of like longer dark hair, black leather jacket, like silver chains, black like, rock- rock and roll tank top, with like a band on it, and like the leather jacket's a little too big for his frame.

Austin: And then it's, it's like Thin White Duke David Bowie, it's like white, you know, buttoned-up shirt with cufflinks, and like a black vest, and like a popped collar, white collar, and like he's, he's at his most like, fascist looking, it's *bad*, it's like [Ali laughs] even David Bowie says, "Hmmm, I may have gone too far, during that phase, that was maybe not a good look." Except it's a *very* good look for this guy, who has a mech that I'm curious what it looks like. So those are the, those are the two characters, who wants to design their mechs?

Jack: I think I know the Thin White Duke's mech.

Austin: Uh-huh?

Jack: I think it's pinstripes.

Austin: Ooooh...

Jack: But I think it's as though, it's as though you built a kind of a humanoid mech, almost like, like... what was the mech, the mech Socrates piloted, where it's essentially like a...

Austin: Integrity, was that, yeah.

Jack: It - it's essentially like a suit of armor...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right.

Jack: Rather than like a big mech. Say you built one of those... and then you, you put vertical pinstripes on it [Austin laughs] so it's striped black and white from top to bottom. And then you sliced the mech along the pinstripes and put them together so it's all these black and white strips have come together, and it looks as though...

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Ohhhhhhhh! Is it - and it's humanoid, though. Does it look like a person?

Jack: Oh yeah! It's absolutely humanoid. It's, it's - you know those, that like medical process they can do where they essentially take like, scanned slices of a body?

Austin: Yeah! Uh-huh?

Jack: But they do it top to bottom?

Austin: Yep!

Jack: This is like what if they did it left to right?

Austin: Right.

Jack: And they were striped black and white and shining like metal.

Austin: Awesome. So then what does Killer Queen look like? Which is a great name [Ali laughs] for a mech, I'm just gonna say!

Ali: [overlapping with Austin, laughing] Such a good name!

Jack: So good!

Ali: And I am trying to not just think of the, the JoJo stand.

Austin: Right. Of course, of course!

Ali: [Laughing] Which is just a, a buff cat man!

Austin: Uh-huh! I mean, listen, like...

Ali: That isn't what this is, I think that this is like, this is a little out there but I think it's kind of like, the, the silhouette of what you think of a traditional UFO is?

Austin: Mmmm.

Ali: And the like, the...

Austin: Mmmm, I love that.

Ali: Yeah. I think [laughing] the like, the pilot is exposed in this sort of like... what is that? Like a half circle, like window, whatever.

Austin: Yeah, like the, like the... the little like, *dome* window, that you think of as the -

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah, dome is the word that I was thinking of.

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah, totally!

Ali: And I think that, yeah it's like, it like - there are like really bright colours on like, the bottom half of it, and... it might do like, kind of weird like, heat/stun/cooling ray sort of situation from the bottom of it?

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Oh, awesome. Cool. How big is it, like is it, is it, is it... like a *car* sized, or is it like a *tr*- like, is it... is it as big as a building is wide, or is it as big as like, a... like a car, or like a truck or something, do you know what I mean?

Ali: I think that it's like, it's probably more like car sized, in like width -

Austin: Okay.

Ali: But I think that the, the lights on the bottom of it can do some of those like, theatre lights sort of things, where the like kind of movement and like...

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Yes. Good!

Ali: Depending on the angle that they hit they can hit a really wide thing or be like a really tiny spotlight.

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Right. Nice, nice. So, it's like hiking through the woods as these two things [Ali giggles] like fly overhead. Also I think maybe that... the Thin White D's mech... again that's, that's - it's *Warsaw*, but it's pronounced the way that Warsaw's actually pronounced, which is Warszawa... is, is like doesn't have jump jets, it's just like flinging itself from treetop to treetop. And we're just getting like, the whole ground shakes when it does that. And it lands on another one and like begins scanning the ground for people, and birds fly up off in the distance, it's really good.

Jack: [sighs, as Fourteen Fifteen] This is a problem.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Uh huh? Sho like, Sho reaches for her sword and then is like, nah! Takes her sword, or takes her hand away, 'cause like what is this sword gonna do?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) No. I've seen these before. They're real good pieces of work but they, you know. They're pieces of work.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Can't you just talk to them, don't they work for the same company? [Ali laughs] Aren't they killers like you? Can we offer them more?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Okay, well. Firstly, I don't appreciate that. [Ali laughs] Secondly, possibly. But the risk is, we'd have to offer them a lot more. I don't know, it's, it's, it's *really*... Buying a Castlerose agent, buying *off* a Castlerose agent isn't impossible - unless you're the target - but it's really really hard!

Austin: (as Sho Salon) How much would a target have to pay you to get them - to get you not to kill them?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) A target?

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Mmhmm.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) I just said that targets can't - that's not how it works, targets cant...

Austin: (as Sho Salon) What about a third party? How much would I have to pay you to make you not kill someone?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Oh my god, you guys.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Sho is this the right time for this? [sighs] Tender what are we doing?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Are you aware of any weaknesses or anything, since you're so familiar with them?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Wow!

Ali: [as Tender Sky, laughing] I just!

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Two of my colleagues show up [Austin laughs] and it's just -

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I just, after that whole *thing*, I'm just - we're kind of rushing!

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Okay, okay, right, fine.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) We've run out of time after that.

Jack: What's Mercury's - what's Mercury's character called?

Austin: Ahhhh... Mr. Fahrenheit.

Jack: [laughing] Mr. Fahrenheit, that's so good! [Ali giggles] I just put that together.

Austin: Mmhmm!

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Okay, fine. Mr. Fahrenheit is hasty. He, he, he, he moves too fast. We fought once. I killed him. But that, you know, that's not how it works, again. [Ali sighs] The Thin White Duke he's really, he's the opposite, he's really meticulous, that's why they're, that's why they're a good pair. You know, he was the one landing and checking... If we can take advantage of that somehow? But I really don't want to engage Castlerose agents if we have to, because I'm already in a lot of hot water, and that would make it a lot worse.

Ali: [as Tender Sky, sighs loudly]

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Can Massalia draw them out? Maybe they can get them to leave the, the area, think that we're attacking from outside? And we can just sneak past.

Ali: I think if Massalia kind of buzzes in at that point and they're just like:

Ali: [as Massalia D'Argent] I'm capable of that.

[Austin and Ali laugh]

Austin: Morning's Observation calls in and is like:

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] I can like, ah... I can like open the window too so you don't have to like blast the whole thing this time. [Ali laughs]

Ali: [as Massalia D'Argent] Open the windows.

Ali: And then they just close the comms.

Austin: Alright! I think that's my scene, is like setting that up, and then if we're gonna get past them, we'll find out in Tender's scene?

Ali: Yeah, I... yeah, if these are the big bads of the - I don't know if the final scene should be like the show-off against Open and...

Austin: I thought that would be challenge three for sure.

Ali: Okay, okay. Alright!

Austin: Right?

Jack: Yeah, I think that like, the big things we're here for are what like the third one is here.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah. Yes!

Jack: This is the mini-boss. And in our case, the mini-boss is Freddie Mercury and David Bowie! [everyone laughs]

Ali: Right, right, yeah. I like, completely lost that we just started this challenge, I thought this was the last scene of it.

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Yeah. Oh, yeah. This is the last scene now, yeah, of this challenge.

Jack: So I really wanna play this Suda51 game.

Austin: Oh yeah, me fuckin too! [Ali laughs] Suda! Reach out! Reach out, homie. Honestly: Swery - I know that the cat thing didn't work out super well... you wanna take another run at it, you let me know, we'll get you something.

Ali: I think that the, the most interesting scene to be next is like, what happens after that happens? Like if...

Austin: Oh, like you wanna skip ahead.

Ali: Yeahyeah, so like Morning brings the window down...

Austin: Right.

Ali: And Massalia... shoots, or like does some sort of thing and like, they kind of...

Austin: Like, draw out the...

Ali: Yeah, but then we have to do the actual like, thing...

Austin: Breaking in.

Ali: Right, the thing of breaking in or like, destroying them or whatever. The break-in thing is the focus here, so that's probably the... the thing we should be doing? But, like I... yeah.

Austin: Yeah, like where are they holding the Cadent? Where in this central park on this spaceship are they holding the Cadent? Is it the fake castle? [Ali and Jack laugh] Is it the... is it a cave, like?

Ali: Yeah...

Austin: Is it a... Is it a golf course? Is it the like fake, or like the, the... like, whatever the club is, the golf house club thing. [Ali snorts] You know what I'm talking about.

Ali: The Tavern on the Green or whatever.

Austin: Yeah, the Tavern on the Green, yeahyeah, exactly.

Ali: Man, I also sort of don't want to miss like, the fight scene of those two [laughing, unintelligible]

Austin: I mean that can be happening in the background, right?

Ali: Yeayeahyeah.

Austin: Like, as we do this next thing. Also that's what fan fic is *absolutely* for.

[Ali laughs]

Jack: Also, I just, just so we make sure that door is not closed, also fan art!

Austin: Yes a hundred percent! Thank you.

Ali: Mmhmm. Yeah where *are* they keeping her?

Austin: Is there like a theatre up here, is there like a..

Ali: Oh my god...

Jack: Oh, is it!?

Ali: Is it like that *weird*-!? [laughing] Me and Jack found like a puppeteer's cabin, and it's like -

Austin: Not that!

Jack: But it's like a, yeah, we found like a, it's like a, it's like a... [Ali laughs]

Ali: So it was like, it was like a cabin, that you can spend like...

Jack: [overlapping with Ali] I'm Googling this now. Central Park, puppet theatre.

Austin: Oh, the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre

Jack: Yeah the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre

Ali: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah the, so the like... the thing about this that I want to take is that the... the story of that theatre that had been told...

Jack: [overlapping with Ali] Yesss!

Ali: [continued] Was that it was like broken down multiple times, and then like rebuilt to be in Central Park, and I wonder if there's like -

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Ohhhhh! Oh, this is rad!

Ali: Yeah, if there's like a thing that on Seance, that they took when they took the Cadent and like re-created the like, base or whatever.

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Right! *That* - right, they like literally re-created - they didn't just steal the Cadent, they stole the Cadent's like, entire home. Like, maybe there's a rule about, you can't touch the Cadent, right? And like: "Listen, we are not here to hurt the Cadent. We are part

of the Fleet. We are *not* touching the Cadent. We are gonna touch her home, we are going to literally -" [Ali laughs]

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah... It's like a, oh, it's like a really good inversion of the like, don't let vampires into your house. Like, we have *stolen the house*.

Austin: [laughing, overlapping with Jack] Yes, yes! It's also extremely Carmen Sandiego! [Ali laughs] Like oh, she stole the White House, I got it! Like literally it's just whatever the version of the White House is, is now just in the middle of this...

Jack: Wait, Carmen Sandiego stole the White House?

Austin: Oh, yeah. Carmen Sandiego steals like, like the Statue of Liberty, the Pyramids of Giza, like... She'll steal big shit.

Ali: Huh!

Jack: Okay.

Austin: What's the biggest thing Carmen Sandiego...stole? [Ali laughs]

Jack: Look, not to be the person here who's doing the whole like, how did the friends make - how, how did the friends afford the apartment in Friends... How do you st- how do you steal the-? [Ali laughs]

Austin: How do you move Earth?

Jack: Uh- give me a lever big enough?

Austin: I mean, actually we answered. We actually, we actually answered how, how Earth got stolen before, but! Divines, turns out. [Ali giggles] Turns out it's Independence, it was Independence

Jack: Big rockets?

Austin: Yeah. But no, in this case it was- it was big rockets plus giant - right, yeah, it was, right, true. But no, in this case i think it's *little rockets*? Like I think it is like, it's some sort of force field with hover jets attached to it, that literally lifts it up off the ground then encloses it in like, a bubble?

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Oh yeah it's the- It's the fucking Twilight Mirage!

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yes. Right.

Jack: [continued] Like, someone has definitely built a vehicle that is capable of moving buildings.

Ali: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

Jack: I mean humans have! We have those! Okay, where were we?

Austin: I don't know. We were about to start a scene. Oh, we found [laughs] we found where they're, where- it's a puppet theatre? It's *not* a puppet theatre, it, it's the Cadent...

Ali: It not a puppet theatre. It's like-

Austin: I do- like, go ahead.

Ali: I wonder if there's something cause like, their intention is to be the, the top, like to be the new Seance, so

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Yes. Yes, or that is... that is Sui Juris. That is *not* the New Earth Hegemony's...

Ali: Nonono. Yeah. But like, if, if there was like a... I don't know [laughing] a thing that an Excerpt, like a place that they go to, to either, like that only they have access to, because they.... Are an Excerpt...

Austin: Like, are you describing like a place where an Excerpt goes to meet the Cadent? Like, a visiting house or something, you know what I mean?

Ali: Yeah!

Austin: Yeah, I kind of like that. What if it's like a, what if it's like a, a four-st - In my mind it's like a four-story building shaped like a, like a tall tower, like pagoda tower, or like a, like a pill? Like, it's like, a big cylinder tower, that is like... like octagonal or something? And the entire thing is like, the - it's connected by a bridge to the Cadent's house, and the Excerpt goes through the bottom and climbs the stairs to go to the top floor of it. It's only again, like three or four stories high? But it's like, it is, it is connected to the main temple and like, like home of the Cadent, but the Excerpt can't go into the Cadent's home, the closest they are allowed to get is this place.

Austin: And so, they like waited for, waited for the Cadent to supposedly go to meet with Blooming, Emphyrean's Excerpt, and then just like - or like set up a fake meeting or something, and then like, took this place. So not only did they not *touch* the Cadent, they also didn't like, take the main temple or anything. They took this visiting house, or this like, this meeting room.

Ali: Right. 'Cause now the By-and-By is the, is the place you have to go to speak to her. Yeah, okay.

Austin: Yes. Yes exactly. It almost suggests like "Oh no, we wanna talk. We're going to negotiate, in this negotiation chamber." The Negotiation Chamber is the new WWE pay per view? [Ali and Jack laugh] Hoping they can negotiate for some better help!

Jack: They don't fight!

Austin: Yeah, exactly. God... Okay. So who, what... and where?

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Then this is, yeah! This is like a separate interesting thing, 'cause then is it like... [laughs] Do we... just go in as if we... were demanding to meet the Cadent?[laughs] Like!

Austin: I don't know!

Jack: I mean, yeah like, I wonder if there's I some sort of protocol about this space that we can... If them, albeit via loophole, observing protocol with this...

Austin: Right.

Jack: I wonder if there's some way we can observe, yeah.

Ali: Yeah...

Austin: We *are* the Beloved...

Ali: We are.

Austin: Right? Like can we request - Oh! This is it! This is like - we can request confirmation that we still, that we are still allowed to act. Like, the Cadent needs to decide whether or not we are still, you know, supported by her, by her like... like rule of law or whatever, right? I'm trying to find the exact phrasing that I used before.

Jack: But would would Sui Juris respect that? I guess we don't know, yeah.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] I don't know! But that could be the thing that we pull, right? It specifically says here, in again, in the Living Library of Memorious volume 103, and then a weird symbol that I don't know what it is, [laughs] the Beloved were founded alongside Seance itself, soon after the death of Affinity the Tenth of the Lost Divines, per the pact that brought the group into being, it can operate with no less than three and no more than fifteen members, including a commanding officer. Empyrean extends their Divine authority to the group, whose members must first be approved by the sitting Cadent.

Austin: What is Sho hasn't been approved yet? What is Sho, Morning's Observation and Chiron still need approval?

Ali: Hmmm.

Austin: Like is that a way for them to say, like, "If you're really part of this place, you *have* to let us up, so that you can grant us like real, like move from..." I think Sho is even gonna make, like wants that to happen as part of the thing that she wants from *you* Tender? Is like, "Prove that you actually think that I'm part of this team, and like, let's have the Cadent make it official."

Ali: Ummm.

Austin: Instead of being like, pro - what's the... probationary terms.

Ali: Yeah, I mean I think in terms of like, writing a story, us just walking in and asking for a favour is really great [starts laughing] well not like a favour, but like....

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Yeah. Yeahyeahyeah.

Ali: In terms of this being the break, and it's just like, we need to have a meeting with our like, yeah.

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Yeah! It's like way more interesting than we like kick down the door and start shooting right?

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Oh, that's so good!

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Yeah! Right.

Austin: We've done that part already, right? And in fact, you know, as we do it, out - [Ali laughs] we get a wide shot and it's Massalia doing strafing runs and shooting at the Killer Queen and Warsaw, and like, trying to fight them and hold them at bay while we just knock on the door? [Ali laughs]

Jack: Because like, as far as the Mirage is both aesthetically and also like internally, these things are not mutually exclusive.

Austin: [laughing] No, no.

Jack: We can be fighting the Castlerose agents and... Yeah! God, what if it's like? Can I propose something?

Austin: Mmhmm!

Ali: Yeah!

Jack: What if there's just like a clearing, with this thing in the middle.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Yeah. Mmhmm. Right.

Jack: And there's like a couple of Torch Units patrolling around the outside and maybe some NEH and Sui Juris and like synths or humans walking around the outside and this voice just calls out from like the forest, and I don't know who it is but it's like, I don't know which one of it is, but it's like proposing the terms of our engagement from inside this kind of thicket around the clearing.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right. What's it, what do, what's voice that - who says it? And what do they say?

Ali: I think that I do...

Austin: Mmhmm.

Ali: Because I think like, especially since this being like Tender's scene to this beat, quotation marks. And this is sort of like a way to test if... what Open's intentions are?

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Right. Yeah, totally.

Ali: If her thing is that she's been like, supposedly still serving the church or whatever this whole time, like how sincere is that? Like how willing is she to, you know, keep going through the motions and the whatever Signet's whole belief used to be. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: So yeah I think that she kind of like, steps in front of the group and i don't know if there's like, there's probably *not* like special code word. But there's probably like a, there's probably a thing that this is called, right?

Austin: Definitely, definitely! I think like it is, as written it is... it is the... you know, the Approval of Divine Authority by the Sitting Cadent. And I'm sure that there is a whole long passage that, either Tender knows as a priestess, or that Morning's Observation can like [Ali starts laughing] send into you earpiece? You know what I mean, like reading, "paragraph seven, clause twelve, clause b... as it is written in the thing, blah blah blah."

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] I'm gonna have - Yeah, I'm gonna have my cake and eat it, and say that like Morning's starts to do, and you get the scene of that, but then Tender starts like filling in the words before he tells her.

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Uh-huh! Right, rightright, perfect.

Ali: It like comes back to her and she's like, alright. And yeah I think that it's just like.. My name is Tender Sky on behalf of the Beloved subsection Dust to request the approval from the Cadent, yada yada yada...

Austin: Right, right. What happens? Does it work? I kind of want there to be a - I kind of want there to be a... condition here, which is like... I want Open Metal to come to the balcony and look down over all this. [Ali chuckles] And of course like the Torch Units, now they're looking into the woods, like they haven't gone out yet, but they're like scanning. And Open Metal's about to be like "Yeah of course come in." And then Robin's Song appears at her side and whispers something into her ear. Robin's Song again is Morning's Observation's brother, who is just like his twin basically, except no tattoos and like, bleach blonde hair and very good teeth. And is like, and whispers something, and Open says - this is my proposal anyway - is like:

Austin: (as Open Metal) Two of you. Two of you can come up. No more.

Austin: So Sho and somebody else is the proposal. If that sounds interesting to everybody else as like a condition, as a consequence to this plan.

Ali: Yeah for sure...

Austin: It's like Sho and her... not her patron but like her... there's another word I'm looking for here. Not mentor, but like, advocate, basically? Sho looks at both of you [Ali laughs] and is like:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) So?

[Jack blows a huge sigh through pursed lips]

Ali: This is a narrative decision?

Austin: It is.

[Ali laughs]

Ali: I think obviously Sho/Fourteen is the one that's kind of been built?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And then I don't know if in response to that, Morning and Tender should like sneaky sneak?

Austin: Right, should be like the backup plan? Or like they should sneak in after security dies down a little bit, basically? Yeah, I kind of like that.

Ali: [overlapping with Austin] Right or I don't know, maybe actually that's the thing I don't know if maybe Tender is not willing to do like you know, go against the like process that way?

Austin: Oh-oh! Interesting!

Jack: Oh! Because that would be a violation of the - huh!

Ali: Right, that would be sacrilegious in some way, in a way that Tender's not willing to...

Austin: Right! Right, if this whole thing was about testing to see if Open was being honest, then like you can't be the one who's like not -

Ali [chuckling broadly] Rightrightright!

Jack: Right, this can't be a diversion. This as a diversion would be incoherent.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Right.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: So then is it Tender and Sho, because Tender's taking it seriously?

Ali: I don't know, well it's either that because Tender is and has to, or it's Tender sending FOurteen because that's what she wants from FOurteen?

Jack: Oh to like, do the damn thing?

Austin: Right,

Ali: But then I don't know what... Because then she wouldn't, we're saying that she wouldn't cross that line, so I don't know what would happen in the next round.

Austin: I have some ideas about all sorts of stuff that could happen.

Ali: Yeahyeahyeah.

Austin: But the, the thing for me that I'm curious about is, do you want this scene - Okay, do we want this scene of Sho and Fourteen talking to Sui Juris and trying to convince them to back

off? Or, do we want the scene of Sho and Tender and Tender's confronting Open Metal? Right? And having that whole conversation?

Jack: I - the scene that I would most like to see would be you and Open Metal inside this weird thing that is built for a meeting? [Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: So I'm happy to be outside. I'm happy to be outside with Morning's Observation, honestly.

Ali: Yeah!

Austin: Okay. Let's do that, then.

Ali: Okay!

Austin: Alright so I think that it's just this shot of Tender and Sho walking past all these Torch Units and a couple of NEH - or a couple of Sui Juris troops, right? I also think that it might be the case that you've seen as we've walked, some of these people are like, are members of... Or maybe we even saw this. I'm gonna do some retconning. Like as the elevator came up, there are people who are staying behind. Who are here to stay with Sui Juris.

Austin: We get people who have like, you know, hats or armbands, or something on that identify them as Sui Juris deputies, like people who just joined up in response to all of this. And it isn't so much that they have quote-unquote *taken* the top three floors or whatever. It's like there are people in the top three floors who are just living their lives under this, and are fine with it, and are like, "Yup! It's about fuckin time!" You know? So, it's not as many - I think the bulk of people are like "It's time to go!" But - I think actually the bulk of people are like "I just want to live my life, actually!"

Austin: There are people who are like die hard pro-Cadent, and there are people who are like "I don't know! I don't what to do! But I don't want to go live on Quire yet, and I don't wanna do like... this is my home!" I think it's a mix of those things, and I think here what we're seeing is like, people who live on this station, who live on this ship and like have since joined up, *not* people who were in that initial broadcast. All of *those* people are inside. Andyeah, you just get everybody walking past, heading in. And I think that's scene, right?

Austin: Okay, so we're gonna, it's the second challenge, it's time to draw more car - more tokens. So, each player takes two red. There's one white, one red in the pool right now. Each player takes two red. If your main character is unhappy about the path the Fellowship is taking, hold one red stone. If your main character actually wants the quest to fail hold two red stones, otherwise hold no red stones. Let me know when you're ready!

Ali: Alright.

Jack: Ready!

Austin: Go! Alright, one red from Sho. Zero from [Jack laughs] Tender and from Fourteen.

Jack: My thinking there was like, had we got up here and they were in some weird military entrenchment, I would feel way worse about leaving the people of the floors below.

Austin: [overlapping with Jack] Oh, yeah. Totally.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: But we got up here and it's like oh my god, they've stolen the meeting place!

Austin: Totally! I think Sho is just like -

Jack: [overlapping with Austin] Sho is pissed. Yeah.

Austin: Sho said, "This is the thing I want." Sho didn't get the thing she wants, it's honest for her to hold one red.

Jack: Yeahyeahyeah.

Ali: [overlapping with Jack] Yeahyeahyeah.

Austin: Okay! Each player takes one white, one red. Read aloud: as a player, do you think that the Fellowship did what was necessary to succeed? Hold white if yes, red if no.

[Jack chuckles]

Austin: Ready?

Ali: Mmhmm!

Austin: This is as players, not as characters.

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Go! Okay three whites! So in this round it will be four whites and two reds. Alright, so it's actually one D-6 this time, because 1 and 2 are red. One is the default red, one is the red added from Sho, then there's one default white and then we each put in a white. So it's one D-6, 1 and 2 are red, 3 4 5 6 are all white. Rolling! It's a 4, so first one is white. Now we're rolling one D-5

and again, 1 and 2 are red, 3 4 5 are white. And it's lagging, and it's lagging... and that's a five!
[Ali chuckles] Another white, good work!

Austin: So that means that we succeeded at the challenge! They let us in. Let's take a break, but first, what's it look like when we go inside?

Ali: [laughing] Oh-ho ho! Hmmm... Seance was like so... Seance was a place that was like scrapped together, like it was a crazy scrapbook of everything, and I kind of want this place to look like the opposite of that?

Austin: [overlapping with Ali] Yeah! Yeah. Mmmmm, interesting.

Ali: Like this, very much like... There would still be a Cadent, despite the situation the Fleet is in, right?

Austin: Right, right.

Ali: And this is the Cadent's space. Like if the Cadent doesn't, isn't... The Cadent is like the *leader* of the excerpts, or?

Austin: The Cadent is the human representative - is the *chief* human representative in the Divine Fleet, in the Resonant Orbit. She is, like ideologically the political descendant of Kamala Cadent. She is like, the person who's supposed to hold the fleet together and make sure that it serves the needs of the people, and not just the needs of the Divines. Which, increasingly is a strange position to hold!

Ali: Right, yeah... Hmmm. I don't know if we wanna re-do this, but I wonder if it's sort of like the Tristero suite sort of situation, where it's like a place that was like important to Kamala Cadent?

Austin: Ohhh, interesting, like a specific place. Like this is the - this is not just a place, this is the place where Kamala made the pitch to the Divines that like, the first group of the Resonant Orbit Divines agreed.

Ali: Right.

Austin: Which is like maybe that's why it is like a - it is a ten-sided tower or something like that, and it is the first 10 Divines, like one side - or no this should just be a place that she did it, it wouldn't be designed to look like that originally, right? It would just be like - what would she have done? Where would she have held this? Where would she have like, had this conversation?

Austin: It's hard not to imagine like a star chamber? Like a sitting room that has like, a map of the stars above, or like a collection of constellations in the ceiling, and then just like a long, war-room table where like everyone is seated around -

[2:00:00]

Austin: [continued] or like a parlor, like a smoking parlor or something? Or a classroom? Or a... like what are other things, where do people have debates like this?

Ali: I like, I wonder if it's more of like an observatory?

Austin: Mmmm. That's interesting.

Ali: Where the thing... 'cause the thing that you're doing, if the conversation is being had with the focus not on the person that you're speaking to, but like -

Austin: [overlapping] Right.

Ali: The... the grandness of the thing that you're speaking about.

Austin: [overlapping] Right, well - I just realized what she did to do this, I just remembered like how this worked, which is, she does the same thing that Grand Magnificent does: she draws in the sky. Like in the air, she does that light illumination stuff?

Ali: Oh right, yeah.

Austin: But she did it 30,000 years ago, so she probably just doesn't have it in her fingers, there's probably a big... like, planetarium projector that projects light you can draw on in the middle? What she did was like, sketch out what the resonant - the notion of the resonant orbit, all of these planets that are so different, that have such different... such different orbits, but that can work together in perfect harmony, and be in time to each other. And she was making this whole case with - about the value of independent freedom, but also having a strong basis for being in alignment around certain core issues and how blah blah blah blah blah.

Austin: [continued] And so maybe you walk into that room, and it's *that* room, it's like a projector in the middle of the floor. The middle of the floor is just empty, right like there was just a projection - an ancient projector projecting upwards, surrounded by a guard rail, basically? And that's what everyone's attention would be focused on, would be whatever the drawing is in the middle - of space, of like planets orbiting around each other, in this case maybe of the Twilight Mirage itself.

Austin: [continued] And we get an image of all the ships coming towards Quire. We get like not an image but the little dots inside of this projection of all of the ships moving through the Twilight Mirage towards the By-And-By. Just little dots, almost like LED lights, lighting up and then

fading, and then lighting up a little bit closer and then fading, almost like as if bulbs are turning off and on, but like floating in the sky. And then Open Metal sees you, and sees Sho, and again I think Robin's Song leans over and whispers something to Open Metal. And I think that's the end of the challenge, which we succeeded at. Alright! Third challenge.

Jack: [overlapping] Oh, lord.

Austin: If this the third ch- so this is, I did... or *Jack* did the first one, I did the second one?

Ali: Yeah, so this is me.

Austin: So you *set* the third one, but are *not* - you can't be in the first scene, which is good, 'cause it means we get to like [Ali and Jack laugh] it means we get to build on it.

Jack: I love it!

Austin: My suggestion is probably do Fourteen first, so we end on Tender? Right?

Ali: Uhhhh, *yeeeeeeah*?

Austin: Okay so it'll go Fourteen -

Jack: [overlapping] Or do we want to go... or do we want to have Tender being the second one, and then have the consequences of that as the last one?

Austin: [overlapping] As the third? Yeah.

Ali: [overlapping] Sho's... yeah. That can be a thing.

Austin: Or no it'll be... that would be Sho-Tender-Fourteen. So we can do Sho-Tender-Fourteen, or we can do Fourteen-Sho-Tender, or we can do... That's it, those are the only two we can choose from because you can't start. So either you go second or you go last. But first we have to pick the challenge. So, this is the third challenge: you're establishing the final task that after everything that has happened we must complete to finish the quest. So if you scroll down again, there are all these challenges.

Austin: [continued] This is interesting because none of them are like: *you get it*. None of them are like: steal it away! [Ali chuckles] They are: case the joint, get the layout or security plan, get equipment, acquire the keys, defeat security - maybe we take that very broadly? I don't know. Get someone on the inside, which we've kind of just done. Break in, get away, lay low, cover our tracks, find and eliminate the rat, get rid of evidence, fence the goods.

Ali: Yeah, defeat security seems like the most... like, it would have to be a very broad definition of defeat.

Austin: [overlapping] Yes, yeah-yeah-yeah. Totally.

Ali: But...

Austin: Because the alternative is like, get away, or just smash cut to [Ali laughs] we have the Cadent. Which is funny! [Jack laughs] But might not - but would miss the scene that we all really want, which is the Tender/Open Metal one, right?

Jack: [overlapping] Right, I want Open Metal.

Ali: Yeah, I think that's probably the best one, I don't know if like...

Austin: Alright. But again, we'll just think of it very broadly, as like defeat can be... defeat can be a lot of things.

Ali: Right, I mean I feel like at the end of the day we don't, we like - our characters don't want them to get to go through with this plan? So...

Austin: Right, right-right-right. Yeah exactly. So whether through talking or through something else.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Alright, so does Sho start or does Fourteen Fifteen start?

Ali: Umm....

AuSTIN: And what is the scene? Or I guess I should - no, you don't do that. You choose...

Ali: I choose.

Austin: You choose who would first step up to address this problem of defeating security.

Ali: Right. I mean I feel like they left the door open for that for Fourteen a little bit?

Austin: Yeah...

Ali: But I don't know if we'd rather have it with Sho right now. Yeah.

Austin: I'd do either. Again I think the more interesting thing is, do we wanna end on Tender, or do we wanna end on Fourteen. Like, for me it's like, if we open on Sho, then it's all - then we

jump *right* into the conversation and debate about like, why everyone's doing everything that they're doing, etcetera.

Ali: Right, yeah.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Austin: Which to me I think is second. I kinda wanna open on something else, maybe?

Jack: Yeah, I'm up for that!

Austin: Like does, does - do we get the opening on Mother's Story showing up? Like to fight Fourteen in the woods or something?

Ali: Yeah, is the... is the thing like, especially with the... the like wants and desires, was there like -

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah. Yeah. Right.

Ali: [continued] - a thing that Tender told Fourteen to do? [chuckling] It's just like, while we go inside you do this, and then it's Fourteen's scene to decide if that's the thing they're gonna do.

Austin: Right. Like you secure the perimeter and make sure there aren't any snipers waiting to kill us all the second we go inside [Ali chuckles], or you secure an exit route for the Cadent or something

Ali: Oh yeah! I think that's actually really good.

Austin: [overlapping] Right. God! Yeah!

Ali: Because that's like - cause like, 'keep us alive' is one thing, but like 'make sure we get out of here' is a very easy thing to be like, oh I can do that *after* I do this thing.

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah! Yeah, what if you need to get us a ship that can get us out of here, or something.

Jack: Yeah! Or like, I mean - what's the like... I'm trying to think of a sort of framing of this that allows for an ending that is... more visually or narratively interesting than like, 'they fly off in a ship.' Like what are some ways that you can leave the By-and-By that are like... We could smuggle someone off, or like arrange for -

Austin: I mean I think it has to be that *you jump. Right?* [Ali chuckles] I think it has to be like, you've travelled the far dist - the whole distance of the By-and-By -

Jack: [overlapping] Oh yeah, yeah yeah!

Austin: [continued] - in a blink. But like, but like have the way out prepared at the bottom. You know?

Jack: Yeah! Yeah, I'm up for that.

Austin: My suggestion is that this is Fourteen, Morning and Massalia getting... what was the name of that ship Jack, that you left?

Jack: Uhhh.... The good ship?

Austin: The one that you came with the fisherman on.

Jack: Oh, the World Without End?

Austin: Yeah, is it like getting the World Without End, like getting down to the World Without End and prepping it?

Jack: I mean, I don't know if I'd want to do that without the permission of the fisherman!

Austin: Oh, the fisherman gave you that ship, that was - I thought that was implicit. The fisherman *left*. The fisherman was like 'A'ight BYE. I'm gonna go get on another ship and fly away, that ship is - I'm done with this ship now. Cause I'm the fisherman and...'

Jack: [overlapping] Oh! So. Okay. I read that as... I read that as the fisherman is leaving and is hanging up his fish hooks. I did not read that as we've gotten a ship, but I totally - I'm ready to take a cool fishing ship. My own fishing ship.

Austin: Okay. Oh! I very much, I very much want to see more of that ship in this game. And in my mind the fisherman like, gets on another ship and flies to a planet we've never heard of, and lives out a long weird life somewhere else?

Jack: [chuckles] Yeah, yeah. Yeah, alright! Yeah, I'm up for like, finding a way to get to and then prep the World Without End.

Austin: Yeah. So we do just cut to like, opening the doors on the bottom floor, and it's Fourteen, Morning's Observation... I don't know where Acre is at this point. Maybe Acre is also there, maybe not, I don't know. And like, is... Mother's Story already down here, like protecting the port? Or I guess *not*, because the ports are supposed to be safe right now. Right, like we have the ports, so I don't want to go against that, that's what we set up.

Jack: Oh, I know! Hmm...

Ali: Well, we could've docked at like - 'cause we wouldn't have taken one of the like, parking spots, so to speak, at like where the evacuation is?

Austin: Oh true, True.

Ali: Like we should be... somewhere else.

Austin: Yeah, fair.

Jack: What if it's that group in an elevator, descending?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And then the elevator stops...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And the doors open...

Austin: At like, *floor six*! [Ali chuckles] And it's supposed to go to floor one. And the doors just open and they don't close?

Jack: Or they open and like... oh yeah! I, I can't tell if I prefer if they open and they don't close, or they open and Mother's Story, who was expecting to just move within the station, boards the elevator.

Austin: [overlapping, laughing] Just gets on!? Makes eye contact with you all?

Jack: And it's just this like incredible tense moment.

Austin: [overlapping] Right, I love that, let's do that, let's totally do that. So it's like: gets on board, she h-

Jack: It's me, Sho...

Austin: Morning's Observation. No no, Sho... Sho is not there. Sho is -

Jack: Oh right! No no no, true.

Austin: Yeah, [Ali chuckles] Sho is in the, in the... the place, the like, observatory thing. Yeah.

Jack: Has left, yeah. Me, Morning...

Austin: Massalia isn't there, 'cause Massalia is outside in this moment, right?

Jack: [holding back laughter] It's just, it's just me, Morning and M- [bursts out laughing]

Austin: Uh huh!? And Mother's Story, who he *knows*. Who Morning's Observation knows, and she has like -

Jack: [overlapping] Who was originally on his *crew*! On her crew!

Austin: Right, totally. She has, she has her two little drones. They also have, they also have names, because again, all of the - everything, all of the robots, the Torch Units and otherwise, are all named after different things in the old food group. And so it's Arborio and Basmati? [Ali and Jack laugh] All the little hover drones are grains or pastas or rices. And so it's Arborio and Basmati. And they're just hovering around her, the ones that she had in... the ones with the little stun zappers? And probably one Torch Unit with her, total? Just a regular sized one. It's, its... Elderberry. [Ali chuckles] And ummm... Yeah, I think she just makes eye contact, or I don't know! Actually, Ali, do you want to play Mother's Story in this sequence, since I'm Morning's and Fourteen is Fourteen?

Ali: Uhhhhhh, sure.

Austin: So I think, like you come in and Morning is just like: "Ohh, *shit!*" Like, greasy hair, like pulling it back behind his head. [Jack chuckles] Almost like trying to, like... stands up straight, like almost goes into put-on-the-uniform mode.

Jack: She probably doesn't know that he's defected!

Austin: No, no, she absolutely knows -

Ali: [overlapping] Oh, she knows! No she immediately looks at him and is like -

Jack: Oh no I meant, I meant prior to this point.

Ali: Mmmm?

Jack: Would she have heard that Morning's Observation had, rather than just being imprisoned, actively joined?

Ali: I... heeeeeee, he's been doing some stuff, like -

Austin: [overlapping] Yeahhhh, he like been running errands, yeah, yeah.

Ali: [inaudible] like running errands, like yeah. People have seen him on the ship with like going with coffee for Cascara or whatever like - [Austin and Ali burst into laughter] Like he's, yeah, I think that she like immediately looks at him and is like:

Ali: [as Mother's Story] Don't bother. You're not gonna impress me.

{Jack laugh-gasps}

Ali: When he tries to like-

Austin: He like, slumps down a little bit and like, fixes his jacket anyway. He has on that blue like scaly jacket that he had on when we first saw him, and like a ripped t-shirt underneath... Here's my question: does Mother's Story recognize Fourteen Fifteen?

[Ali and Jack laugh]

Austin: Can we just do the fuckin Coen brothers shit? [Ali laughs] Can we just end this scene? I have a- hmm. Alright, here's my proposition: I think Morning's Observation is like *really upset*, and just like looks over at Fourteen, who again, does not look like Fourteen. Has gray skin, has head spines, has arm nubbins, like from the vestigial like arm nubs, and I think Morning's Observation is just like so upset and says, like turns to Fourteen and says like...

Austin: [as Morning's Observation] God! How many weeks has it been? Since I been with you?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) You know, I'd say it's been a good number now, I'd say: fourteen, fifteen.

Austin: And just like, boom! [Ali laughs] Just like again, wide shot, Coen brothers... Like the shot of a gun goes off inside of the elevator!

Jack: What we get is, we just get the elevator doors opening and Fourteen Fifteen and Morning's Observation leaving the elevator.

Austin: Right! They have their gun back, they have the classic-

Jack: They're just, they're just like checking that it fits into the holster.

Austin: [laughing] Right! And then like, it's just the hover drones are hovering over Mother's Story's body! [Ali laughs] She just didn't -

Jack: I don't think we even see it! I don't think we even see it!

Austin: [overlapping] Right. Right, right.

Jack: I think what we see is the door, the elevator doors close in front of one of the hover drones.

Austin: [overlapping] Fuck. Yeah. Uh huh? And that's it! We don't get, we don't get a big fight scene, we don't get anything else, we just get -

Jack: Well I love this! I love this because like for the first time, *for the first time in this damn show*: [Ali laughs] this is what a Castlerose assassin should look like.

Austin: Right! Right! Uh huh! Literally. Yes, a hundred percent. I think Morning's Observation walks out crying. Like, rubbing tears away. Like this isn't how he wanted any of this to go.

Jack: [overlapping] Yeah. yeah, yeah. No.

Austin: But it was also like, "You know what? Fuck you, actually".

Ali: God...

Jack: Yeah. Yeah I'm really happy with that just being like a weird stubby scene.

Austin: Right. Well then, those doors close, and then we get a different pair of sliding doors opening as Sho as Tender walk into their scene. Which I'm going to set as being in that Obser-

Jack: Wait, what were you - did you have something else, Ali?

Austin: Hmm? Oh, sorry.

Ali: No no no, I - no. [laughs] I just, I really like that scene, that it's like, you just hear Mother's Story's voice being really disapproving [laughs].

Austin: [overlapping] Yeah. Yeah. Right.

Ali: [laughing] And then it's like, *that's it*. [Jack laughs] And not even to *Fourteen*, like it's like, it's Dwayne Johnson shooting that guy without even looking at him in Fast Five [All laugh together].

Austin: Yes. Yes. God. That's good, that's a good moment. [Ali continues laughing]

Jack: [holding back laughter] What was her last line? "You'll never, you're never gonna impress me"?

Austin: Yeah! “You’re never gonna impress me.” Like maybe we don’t even see her *face*, you know!? Like just, like her armor.

Ali: Yes, just her voice.

[Jack laughs]

Austin: Like we get the back of her head, we get the drones that like, you know it’s her. Grand opening, grand closing. God *damn*! [Ali laughs heartily]

[2:14:52]

Austin: Alright, ah...ah, but then yeah. So then we get the doors closing on – as Fourteen and go to set up the ship, however they want or whatever we need, we’ll come up with something dope for when this comes back around, I’m sure. [Ali laughs quietly in the background] And then the doors open – different doors. We, like hardcut to other sliding doors that open up to reveal the observation room or the, um, the, the like planet – the planetarium. But like whatever they – planetarium works, the orrery, it’s like a holographic orrery, uh, like – it’s like, uh, a mechanical gold sculpture of the stars and planets orbiting each other, but it’s, it’s all light instead of being mechanical or - maybe it’s both, like, maybe it is mechanical, but the pro– has projections of sun’s like using the same sort of like –

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: – almost like candles, almost just like gas that’s being pushed up into the air and then lit on fire. Very bright white, all like orbiting around each other. The original model of the resident orbit the sort of like... thesis point of the Divine Fleet and, um ...and Sho and Tender are brought in to meet with Open Metal. Um, and, and the rest of, uh, Sui Juris, and Robin’s Song’s here. Jack, can you play Open Metal?

Jack: (laughs with exaggerated nervousness) Yeah. Okay.

[Ali laughs]

Austin: (sighs) And the Cadent’s here also. Uh –

Ali: Yeah. Oh, okay. Yeah.

Austin: Right? The Cadent is here –

Ali: Oh, yeah.

Austin: and is, like, seated in Kamala Cadent's throne or whatever. Not throne probably, um, it's like a stool? I guess it's like near whatever the operator thing is for – for this big mechanical contraption. It's like, where is she supposed to seat – sit when she meets with Excerpts?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: (takes a deep breath) How's this start?

Ali: Um, I think that it should start with Sho speaking to the Cadent [Austin hums agreement]. Like just going, cause like it's this attitude –

Austin: Like doing the thing?

Ali: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. The – Sho, like, bows her head and says like:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) I have served on a probationary status for three months with the group known as the Beloved. My commanding officer Pure Cascara wishes to – [Sho takes a deep breath] wishes to let me and two other probation – probationary members, Morning's Observation and Chiron, your former body-guard, create a new subsection of the Beloved, named the Beloved Lost. I am here to... request your confirmation of the extension of divine authority as written in the assemblages [there is a long pause where Sho breathes deeply and audibly several times]. It is an honor to be in your presence, even under circumstances such as these. And I will do everything in my power to serve the divine fleet and the resonant orbit to – to the greatest of my ability...in the reign of the Cadent under Mirage.

Austin: – and like, bows her head completely, um, and takes, like takes a single knee. Or takes – actually goes – goes down on both knees, um, and like, like a low – like a low seated, like knee – kneeled sitting position. Like, her legs bend all the way down, you know? Um, and then bows and puts her head to the ground. Um, I think at this point, her dress has, like – the light is shining through all of the stained glass windows all at once. Um, and you can, like, see the bright – uh, the brightness of all of the excerpts. Um, does anyone want to be the Cadent for a moment? She's also young. She's probably Sho's age. They could be cousins, like, they could be – they could be school friends.

Jack: Yeah, I'll be the – I'll be the Cadent.

Austin: My only notes on the Cadent are she's optimistic and confident that this is all gonna work out.

Jack: (as the Cadent) Sho Salon. You may stand.

Austin: Sho, like, [Austin breathes deeply] comes back up to her full kneel and then stands. But even still, uh, no, she stands and, like, she straightens her back and stands in a sort of relaxed, um, like, the sort of forced relaxed pose that you, that you go, that you take, if you've been like trained by the military, you know, uh, like hands behind your back or something. Um, and, and, like, a slightly wider stance than what actual relaxed standing looks like. But like, this is the way you're supposed to relax in the presence of the Cadent.

Jack: (as the Cadent) Sho, you mentioned during your presentation that you wished that the circumstances of our meeting would, uh, would have been different. I have, uh, no such wish. For you to come to me in this time and for you to make your case, thus, having overcome the difficulties required to get here, having boarded the By-and-by at such a time of crisis, demonstrates all that I would want in a chapter of the Beloved. And if your colleagues show the same bravery, initiative, and spirit, as you did in getting here, I could not hope for a better chapter.

Austin: Sho, like, smiles and bows her head.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Uh, thank you. Thank you so much.

Jack: (as the Cadent) It is my pleasure,

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Perhaps it is not my place, but are you okay?

Jack: (as the Cadent) [laughs] Thank you for asking. Things have been better, but things have also been worse, and they will be good again.

Austin: She nods.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Thank you, Cadent.

Jack: (as the Cadent) And thank you Sho.

Austin: She takes a step back and, like, looks over at Tender. It was like, kind of like, I've – look, now what, we're here? [Ali and Jack giggle.]

Ali: Um, we did not think of a step two to this plan, did we?

Austin: No. [Jack laughs] Like, do you think Open just knows that? Do you think Open at that point steps forward and is like:

Austin: (as Open Metal) You didn't think of a step two to this plan, did you. Oh, sorry. I'm just playing –

Jack: (as Open Metal) Tender Sky.

Austin: Okay, good. Yes. Good. Okay.

Jack: (as Open Metal) So you decided to come in here.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) It's a meeting place after all.

Jack: (as Open Metal) That is what it is. Uh, it was a meeting place to meet with the Cadent, which you have done. So, uh, I take it you'll be leaving now.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) No.

Jack: (as Open Metal) no?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) You know this isn't right. And we'll be leaving –

[Ali giggles.]

Jack: (as Open Metal) – which – which bit?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Um, stealing the room that we're sitting in... the woman who resides in it.

[a long pause]

Jack: (as Open Metal) So...

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Why have you done it if you are so faithful? Why, tell us why?

Jack: (as Open Metal) You gave a beautiful speech. Can I just say that?

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Thank you.

Jack: (as Open Metal) [laughs] Ah, she's good, Tender.

[Tender sighs.]

Jack: (as Open Metal) Faith, Sho, can be expressed in many different ways. I'm sure Tender understands that.

[Ali laughs.]

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I don't actually. I'm pretty consistent in the way that I show my faith.

Jack: (as Open Metal) And how is that?

Ali: (as Tender Sky): By stopping you from breaking yours?

Jack: (a sig) I think a couple of torch units kind of step up the side [of] Open Metal.

Austin: (laughs with Ali) Yeah.

Ali: Is it just the full, like there's the torch units, um, is – is older brother here? Robin's Song?

Austin: Yeah, Robin's Song is also here, and he's just letting this happen. Like he, he believes he isn't, he's in control of the situation, right? Like there isn't a bad outcome for him here.

Jack: Right, right.

Austin: As long as he doesn't get killed, he wins.

[Ali laughs.]

Austin: Right? Like.

Ali: Yeah

Austin: There's already been, like – the second that part of the nation succeeded from another part he won. As far as he's concerned, he's just here to like, make it be the best possible victory for the Earth. Um, he's so shitty. Oh, what a little shithead. [Ali and Jack laugh.] God.

Ali: yeah, I think that's the thing I think Tender says, like:

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Are you aware of the history of the people that you're working for?

Jack: (as Open Metal) The earth? I know something of them.

Austin: [As Robin's Song] We're not liars.

Austin: – says Robin's Song.

Jack: (as Open Metal) They're not liars.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) See, they are the reason we're in this position. You've aligned yourself with someone who is trying to pull this place down one by one

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Is that so out of character? [says Sho] After the whole – I've read the dossier. I know what happened on that planet that you wanted to become – become like Divine's yourself... or something else.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I think that's the thing that's strange.

Ali: And I think that she's, like, keeping eye contact with hope and the entire time it was like –

Ali: (as Tender Sky) The last time you would have done something like this, you were trying to rebuild.

Jack: (as Open Metal) Every pearl, Tender, needs a piece of grit. Now, the question that you should be asking yourself, and you should be asking yourself too, Sho, is: am I the grit or am I the pearl?

Austin: Robin's Song nods along with that, like, yeah, it's good. [Ali laughs] And then he's like, he's like, you know:

Austin: [as Robin's Song] Open Metal and I talked about this when I laid all the cards on the table and what she told me, what you told me, Open was that you tried to rebuild something and now you wanted to try building something. And I told you, and I'm telling you all now – telling you, Sho. When you try to rebuild something, there's all sorts of problems. You have the – the structure of what was already there and you, you like it, right? You have a house and it burns down. You want to rebuild it and you go, okay, well, I know what it used to look like. I want to rebuild it. I want to make it look like what it used to look like, but you don't have access to the wood you used to have access to, or the wallpaper isn't in style anymore and it costs extra to import, and that's a whole thing. Yeah, you want to rebuild it exactly the way it was. You say, okay, I want to build – there was a little part where the – there was a – an alcove, but the only reason there was an alcove is because one day, three generations ago, someone's dad punched a hole in the wall, and so he just brought the whole wall down instead and turned it into a little reading nook. And like, you could rebuild that reading nook, but it's not part of the original design. There's all sorts of problems when you rebuild something. Trust me, I'm from Earth. But if you build something new, it could be whatever you want. It could be a whole new vision of how society could work for people. You cut off the fat, you cut out the systems that don't work for people, that don't keep people safe, you build something new. Right, Open?

Jack: (as Open Metal) Right. And I'm sure that's something that you would want to be a part of, isn't it?

Austin: Sho just, like, looks at the Cadent.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Your idea of building something new has been to put people in distress and in agony until they're willing to follow you.

Jack: (as Open Metal) Well, something beautiful will blossom. What is it a little time in the dark?

Austin: [as Sho Salon, uncertainly] Tender. I'm very, I – Cadent, what do you want? Why aren't you fighting back or telling them they're wrong?

Jack: (as the Cadent) I am the Cadent.

[MUSIC - "Sho and The Cadent" starts]

Austin: [as Sho Salon, taking a deep breath] The Cadent is – is wise and takes action and leads us and gives us a model. It gives us a model for our best selves. We look up to the Cadent and we say, 'if I had the authority and the knowledge and the ear of so many, how would I act?' And that is how I get through my days. I study what those like you do, but now you're sitting in front of a model. What do we do? What is the future of the divine fleet?

Jack: (as the Cadent) Sho –

Jack: Oh, man, this is really cruel.

Jack: (as the Cadent) Sho, as the Cadent. I have my Beloved.

Jack: And I think Open Metal is kind of just, like, looking at –

Austin: Oh, fuck.

Jack: –they're just sort of like standing and pacing.

Jack: (as the Cadent) Now. I am lucky to be in the presence of two agents from two different Beloved factions. However, as the senior member and higher rank, my actions in this situation must be reflected through Tender Sky. That is the will of the Cadent.

[Ali burst out a quick, disbelieving laugh]

Austin: Sho, like, just bows her head [Ali laughs uncomfortably again] and just kind of looks over to you. [Jack laughs, pained] I think that's that Sho's scene right? Now we're in Tender's final scene.

Jack: Oh, God...

[the music fades out and there is a brief transitional pause]

Austin: So I'm curious, Tender, what is the scene? Where, and who – is it just an extension?

Ali: Um, yeah, I, um, I'm trying to think of if there's anything for fast-forwarding. Like, um...

Jack: Yeah. I wonder if like – you talk about, like, where do we jump forward? I wonder if the place where we jump forward to is we essentially do the, like, force a change of location thing because Tender has... gone for it, in some respects,

Austin: Right.

Ali: Maybe. Yeah. I'm trying to wonder what, like, the hard action here is. And, like, us changing location is definitely the most interesting, like, camera thing. Um –

Austin: Right.

Ali: – I don't want to, like, close the door on that, but like, I wonder what the actual, like, what is the final act of this? Um.

Austin: I mean, like, my question is, like, so the Cadent says, basically 'you are my right hand'. Like, what do you do to... cause whatever you do is blessed by the Cadent, which is this weird reversal of how Sho thinks about the world, right?

Ali: Yeah. I don't think that, like, the characterization of Tender up until this is someone who is not like willing to shy away of power given to her [she laughs].

Austin: Right.

Jack: Mmm.

Ali: So, I don't know if this is the, the, the best version of it, but like, like essentially killing Robin's Song and then, like, asking Open which side she's going to take.

Austin: Right.

Ali: 'cause it's the thing of like, I'm going to give you the second chance. Like the last time you – you said that you were going to repent for your sins and you clearly have not. Um...

Austin: Right. Can I propose, like, a sequence here?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: –the visual thing. Like, what if you just draw Sho's sword and just, like, cut Robin's Song, like, across the chest and then like reach for Open and slip into the change of location into wherever you were years ago. And like the final sequence, the actual final scene that you frame, is you and Open Metal back there, or like in a weird version of back there. [Ali laughs] It's slipping around. And is, like, being impacted by the – all of the weird psychic energy that the Twilight Mirage is in the middle of capturing. And it's like, we then do slip into paprika, right? Like you kill Robin's Song, like, without any doubt. Because that's the thing that she's 100% sure on, right?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: It's like this guy sucks. He is manipulating –

Jack: This guy's a real shit-head

Austin: He's a real shit-head, this guy. And also he's, he's lazy. Like, he, he doesn't, he's not ready for me to cut him in half.

Ali: Yeah. Um..

Jack: (laughing) Um, who is?

Austin: Right. And then, like, from there we slip into – it's like the reverse actually of the traditional new type thing, right. Which is like, it's not that you go into the new type of place. You go into the psychic realm and, like, have the debate. And then, oh no, violence intercedes. And you're committing the violence; Tender commits the violence that she believes is necessary here.

Ali: Mm-hm.

Austin: That like, regardless of whether or not Open Metal can be convinced, Robin's Song is not going to be, we're not bringing him over. Like...

Jack: Wow.

Ali: Yeah, we are not interested in his, like, vision for the future.

Austin: Right, right.

Ali: And also he is just like the clear, like string-puller here, whereas like Open is in this sort of gray area.

Austin: Right.

Austin: But I think taking Sho's sword is like, little... mean. (overlapping) Maybe.

Austin: (overlapping) Yeah, that's fine. That's fine. You don't have to. I just, I mean, I just think it's a dope visual. [Ali laughs.] That's all.

Ali: I think that like, maybe if it's like not Tender, like, taking it. But, like, Sho – in the Cadent being like “Oh, I default to Tender Sky,” Sho being like, okay. And like –

Austin: – offer, offering the sword. That's kind of dope. [Ali agrees in the background] Oh, that's actually super good. That's actually incredible because then it's like

Jack: (overlapping) Especially –

Austin: (overlapping) you go ahead.

Jack: Oh, it's cause – it's cause Robin's Song is, like, looking around, like, what is happening?

[Ali laughs.]

Austin: Right, exactly. And also just, like

Jack: [as Robin's Song] And is she giving her that sword?

Austin: This is the way Sho – Sho wants trust, right, and, like, wants to be part of it. Like, Sho, in a sense, it would be Sho saying like “all right. If the Cadent is gonna default to you, then I'm going to put pressure on you. Here's my sword.”

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Like wheels down – one knee – offers the sword up. Hilt first.

Jack: Yeah, that's so good.

Austin: Yeah. That's it for sure. So then grabs the sword. What's it look like?

Ali: Yeah. I like, I – I've been imagining them like this entire time. Like if the floor is tiered where –

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: – it's like Tender and Sho are on the top all the way to the left, and then Open and Robin are on the top away from them. And then the Cadent's, like. On the bottom –

Austin: (simultaneously) – in the middle

Ali: (simultaneously) – in the middle, like, two or three steps that go up and down. Yeah. Tender taking the sword. And like, I wonder if it's more interesting that she goes around instead of past the Cadent

Austin: Right (continues to agree quietly).

Ali: – to go attack this dude. And I think it's very clean. I think that it's very quick. Um, I think the approach is slow, because it's sort of like, it's kind of a cat and mouse sort of situation. [She laughs]

Austin: Yeah yeah yeah, definitely.

Jack: (they laugh, then with relish) ey, ey, ey...

[Ali continues laughing while Austin makes suspicious humming noises.]

Ali: Like, she's definitely to kill this guy, but was, like, going to play around with it a little bit for us. But the actual, like the – the like pulling of the knife and the like slash down is all very precise and clean.

Austin: Right.

Ali: Methodical. Um, And I think it's that same exact thing where like, she – she kills him and puts the sword of way while maintaining eye contact with Open Metal.

Jack: Oh my God!

Austin: Yeah. And then, and then there's just, well, right, well, and that's the Sho – well, that was the Sho scene, still, right? Cause now what we get is your scene, which is just like, we should just go as extra as possible, here. Are we back in the aquarium? Like, is it back into like sea space with – [Ali laughs] with Open Metal? Are we back in the base where you did the cyber brain shit years ago? What was the planet like when – where you did the experiments and were trying to set it up for colonization and stuff?

Ali: I've always had in my head as like a lot like the, the planet from [Nausicaä](#)

Austin: Oh, yeah, sure.

Ali: – where it's like either these like sprawling deserts or there's this, like, really densely packed forest.

Austin: Yeah, right.

Ali: And I think that it's the opposite: where like, their main base was probably in the forest. 'cause it was safer than being out in the sun. Or, like –

Austin: Right? Sure.

Ali: – to travel these huge distances. Um, and I think that they had, like, it was probably something, like, not similar in – it was probably similar in size and shape to the room that they're in now. So it's just like –

Austin: Right.

Ali: – the scene of this kind of distorts and becomes this, like – the shape of the room is the same, but like the vision of it gets all weird.

Austin: Can I – can we do like the anime cut in for a half a second of everyone looking up, not everyone, but it is, it is – we get, like, the sound effect for what a Stratus is. [Ali laughs] Stratus is a term from [Counter/weight](#); it's like people who are, who are, who have these like near psychic powers. These, like, people who can just barely see the future or who have an uncanny ability with machines, or who can hack things with their minds, right? Like, Mako – [Mako Trig](#) was a Stratus from, um, from Counter/weight, the previous season set in the same general world. Um, and like this isn't a spoiler, like that's the character concept. He's a thing called a Stratus. He does things called – he “clouds” things. Other characters could do it, but here it's like – all of the Strati look up for this. Like, make the sound. You slip away with Open Metal into this place. And then we just get shots of Declan's Corrective. We get a shot of, um, of Morning's Observation, uh, looking up... and then I'm trying to think if there's anybody else who's confirmed on this in like – [Ali laughs] as a Stratus of some sort, but I don't know. I feel like there has to be a third or fourth. I mean, like Open and you, right? Even – I don't even know if Open is, actually, you might be like taking her to this place, right?

Ali: Yeah, maybe.

Austin: My gut says that like, somebody else could, but I actually don't – I can't think of a third character who in my brain is already – I think, like, we probably get Volition as being something that's in the same chain, right.

Austin: Which is like, this deep black comes for a brief second, but then you fill it with whatever the space is that you fill it with and push it away to make your space with Open Metal, I would say. Oh, we get Signet. Who is in your brain already [Ali cackles.] We get – we don't get real Signet, right? We get the copy of Signet who lives in your brain now. She might even just be there in the background, like, not as a character, but just as like, she lives in your subconscious now, right?

Ali: Yeah, yeah. Um, um, I was going to suggest another Stratus, which is the, uh, the like clay-making person or like –

Austin: Oh yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Lily Lysander, absolutely. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Um, and I do think that that's it. And I don't think we've seen anybody else on Quire or here who can do that stuff? Um, no. All right.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: So where are we? We're in a room. We're in a room that's the same size and shape, generally...

Ali: Um, yeah, but darker and like, I think that it's as if an entire room was lit up by fireflies, almost. Uh, yeah.

Austin: Oooh, that's good. Yeah. Does it have the other parts of your subconscious, of like, the scale being weird?

Ali: Yeah. I feel like it's like, because she's so new at this, and because this is such a raw time, like this is not her doing this in a controlled thing, that I think all of, all of that comes because there's just, no, there's no filter there – in a way that she's like predetermined to be like, oh, I'm going to make this, but you know, very carefully.

Austin: Right.

Ali: – be able to shoo these things out. The ultimatum is tough here. Right? Cause it's like... you have been making all of these mistakes, all your life.

Austin: Just roll into it more naturally than that, right? Like I – (to Jack) Open Metal. You've been transported to a strange version of the place you were when you tried to convince Tender to become a goddess with you. What do you do?

Jack: [laughs] I think like, sit down *hard*.

Austin: Ha.

Jack: Um, and like, I'm not sure what I sit down on, but I – like, it's just a shot of like Open Metal, just, like, dropping.

[Austin hums understanding.]

Ali: She says something like:

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I am becoming the thing that you wanted to be. And it is because I stayed in service.

Jack: (as Open Metal) How are you doing this?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) It is like breathing.

Jack: (as Open Metal) Show me how.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I have no reason to trust you.

Jack: (as Open Metal) Well I'm sure... well, I mean, look, I mean, I'm sure that could be a reason. I'm sure a reason could be found, Tender. It's like breathing, you said?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Why do you want this so badly?

Jack: (as Open Metal) Tender? You have gained this gift and you can't see it. It's – it's beautiful, Tender. To be able to take something and shape it and ... act upon it.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) You're right. It is beautiful. And the reason why it is, is because there is something out there that let me have this. I don't understand why you haven't considered your place in things beyond being below other people.

Jack: (as Open Metal) I think I've considered my place in things enough.

[Ali laughs briefly.]

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I think that's the problem. Open, this power is grand and it is unfathomable and I could do everything that you would want. But I know that I'm not the answer to every problem that exists.

Jack: (as Open Metal) So what do you choose to do with it?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I think that depends on the Cadent now.

Jack: (as Open Metal) Well, she gave you a – she sure did, didn't she?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Open in the time that we've been apart. When you reflect on the actions that you took, do you ever feel regret.

Jack: (as Open Metal) Yes. Not often, [Ali and Austin laugh] but I don't know. I don't know. They say that, you know – the thing they say about regret is that, you know, you can't sleep at night. That's what they say, right? Or you can't look at yourself in the mirror, and I sleep just fine when I look fantastic. But there are nights when I wake up and it's not yet morning. That is true.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) The reason I brought you here is 'cause I still don't know what to do with you.

[Both laugh briefly and breathily.]

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Yeah. I know in my heart, in service of anticipation, I did the right thing, but I wonder because of where we are now, if it would have been better if I had gone through with it. So I could control you – to, to be the counterbalance to this part of you.

Jack: (as Open Metal) That is how you would have used your power?

Austin: There's a, it's a subconscious version of Open Metal that lives inside of Tender Sky's brain, [and] like peeks around the corner. And she's a little girl. It's like Open Metal as a nine year old and she just looks, and there's a confused – just a little color.

Jack: Can I see this?

Austin: Yeah, of course.

Jack: Oh, my God.

Austin: I think like the projection of Signet, who has just been in the background, like, moving dials around or looking at books, goes over and like kneel – like kneels next to the child version of Open Metal

[Jack laughs.]

Austin: – and like [to] shoo her away, but like takes her hand and does like, maybe she escorts her way. That's a very Signet thing to do.

Ali: Yeah. Mmm-hmm.

Jack: I love that subconscious Signet is – is Signet – is Signet-ing it up in here.

Austin: Yep.

Ali: It's a lot of time together.

Austin: Yep.

Ali: It's an accurate –

Austin: Yep. It's a real projection. Totally.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Of course, that's what I would have done. Isn't that why you would have wanted me there?

Jack: (as Open Metal) I suppose it is. Why does anybody want anybody there?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) You've been lonely, haven't you? You were able to stay home, but you should have left for the same reasons that I did.

Jack: (as Open Metal) Have I failed, Tender?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I think that you failed a lot of things.

Jack: (as Open Metal) Right.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I – I feel bad for you, cause I know how desperately you want to be the answer to a thing, but it can't just be you, and it can't be you if you're willing to be taken advantage of by, like, those fucking earth guys, are you kidding me?

Jack: (as Open Metal) [laughs bitterly] Well, you know, their terms seemed good.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) The reason I don't know what to do with you is because I'm afraid of what you'll do next. And if the world is changing, and it has to change, and it has to be rebuilt. If those things are true [she exhales]. I don't know the length that you will go through to put yourself in the center.

Jack: (as Open Metal) I don't know what to say. What do you want me to say?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) (laughing) I want you to be honest, I want you

Jack: [as Open Metal (overlapping)] Tender, the world is –

Ali: (as Tender Sky) (overlapping) to learn something from that.

Jack: (as Open Metal) Well, I have learned, I have. I have learned that actions that I have taken have had consequences that I... did not intend. And I have learned that, thought the world is changing – and I was right, and I was *right*. Though the world is changing, it is not changing – I cannot predict its orbits. None of us can predict it's all bits. Tender. If you think I'm going to leave this space and hold myself up in some new fortress and piece together, some plan to put myself at the center of it. I do not think I can do that, but if you expect me to go out there and not work to build and not work to change, to change myself and to change the way people live, that is not a promise I can make, Tender.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) It's not one that I expect.

Jack: (as Open Metal) You keep saying –

Ali: Sorry, sorry, the wind is wild. I can barely hear.

Jack: Yeah, I can like, hear, tiny –

Austin: It's unbelievable right here now, too. I looked out my window and I, you know, as always, this should be happening in the game as well, but like I looked out my window and saw a bunch of things flying through the air.

Jack: (overlapping) Oh, wow.

Austin: (overlapping) I realize now they were the leaves, but they were like, it was like a flock of birds, like through the – through the power lines. Um, and I imagine that that's also happening here, right? Like you're in the – you're in the woods of this place and all the trees are bigger than they should be. You're – I mean, you're not directly in the – well, maybe you are, like, maybe the walls have begun to fade away and you're just in the woods and the wind kicks up and the trees start losing their leaves. And they're like, they're turning from green to brown, bit by bit. And they're, like, blowing through the wind as this conversation comes towards its end. Um, And the trees are falling over. Like it's getting – it's getting to be like monsoon winds, like terrible hurricane winds. And you can start to see out into the hot desert where – where – you know, you, you never went out there for too long.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: You never went out there for too long, and the trees are falling over and the desert is getting closer and closer and closer, and you can see planets all around this planet that you're on. Um, and it's wrong. Like, those planets shouldn't be there. This is something else.

Something else is happening while this happens. Like, something is really – you didn't put those planets there. They're coming up over the – over the distant horizon. And it's like, this is all happening. While Open is talking about changes coming, it is.

Ali: (she laughs) Yeah.

Jack: (as Open Metal) And you keep saying “work out what you're going to do with me”. Those words: work out what you're going to do with me. I think you've – you've made it, Tender. You've gotten us here. And the Cadent has given you her command. We are entering somewhere new and beautiful. And vast, Tender. Just... fast. I do not want to bring everybody into an orbit. I want to make one little thing – one little thing – move beautifully. And that's all I ask.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I feel sorry that you don't appreciate the beautiful things you've already made.

Austin: What are those?

[Jack and Ali laugh.]

Jack: Good question.

Austin: 'Cause they should fade up here, right? Like they should, they should be here.

Ali and Jack: (simultaneously) Yeah.

Austin: As both the way that Tender sees them and the way that Open sees them.

Ali: Right. It's all the like insignificant things that you have in a relationship with someone (she laughs) like, um, [Austin agrees] and like, I dunno, like it shouldn't be – I don't know that it should be so centered in the – the relationship that Tender and Open had with each other, but it's a lot of that. It's like the – like the, you know, that time that you left flowers at the office, and it was like really nice. Or like, we went on a date one time and it was like – you know, um, you organized the whole thing, and it was like really amazing, but it's also like

Austin: – little notes by the coffee pot, right?

Ali: Right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: But then also probably work stuff, right? Like a really good Excel spreadsheet. Like not a joke, like you fucking work your ass off –

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: – and you figured out how to make the – our entire trip, like, cost way less fuel because you figured out that we could shave this and this and this. And like, that's a beautiful thing that you did.

Ali: Right. Or, like, even smaller moments from Open's life, like, you know, the leg – that time that you covered for your brother when he was being bullied or, you know, those, those sort of like the, the, like, grand scheme of her life, of all the, like, kindnesses that she's done.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Like both just personally and also like through –

Austin: I have a question.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Does Tender think that the thing she figured out with the cyber brains was beautiful, like at a pure aesthetic level? Or is it so tainted that she, she...

Ali: I think that she does. I think the, like the, the thing with Tender is the, like the ambition there is worth being impressed by, and like, you know, compliment it

Austin: – even this moment that is hideous –

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: – in moral, right – I had the potential to do this thing.

Ali: Yeah, I think that this is interesting. And I think that it's able to become, like, the climax of the scene, 'cause Tender's finally able to express, like I do believe that this thing that you tried to do is beautiful. And I do not want to stop you from, like,, trying to be able to shape the world.

But as soon as you are able to break your ideals and your religious beliefs and, like, leave so much of yourself behind to be able to do it, it is not coming from a place of self sacrifice. It is – It is – coming from your like, inability to trust in people's ability to come together and find a solution over just thinking of yourself as one.

Austin: Yeah. And just for complete clarity, the thing that you're talking about, which we've like – we've talked about and talked around and gestured towards is like, she built something that would have let you use your cyber brains to become god-like? In some factors.

Ali: Yeah, essentially. Yeah. It was like she had built something that would combine their cyberbrains.

Austin: Right.

Jack: Huh.

Ali: So they would become a Divine and replace Anticipation after it stopped working, which is kind of out there.

Austin: Right, right, right. Is that like a device that's like two chairs, basically?

Ali: Yeah, y'all probably, aren't going to get this reference, but there's the, um, in the last couple of episodes of Utena, how they have this, like, bed that they sleep on together where it's like a circle, um, where like they're connected in a way and are always, like, looking at each other in a way that's – um, but still, like separate, right?

Austin: There's still actual separation. Like, they are not one being. But, but there is that like, yeah.

Ali: And yeah, so that's the – the – like the – this place, like, it was this weird darkness. Um, but it kind of blossoms into this bright, like vision of all of those – those things

Austin: Right. Does Open see them as beautiful, or does open see them as failures... or like, insignificant?

Jack: Um. Oh, God. Um,

Austin: Both literally and figuratively.

Jack: Yeah, I think – I think Open would see them as insignificant if they weren't being presented in this kind of, like, remarkable, magical hellscape... (Ali laughs) that Open has, like, desperately sought for all of their life, right. And I think – I think in that context, they do appear beautiful and they do appear magical.

Austin: Right. Now what? I – maybe we actually don't get this. We don't know. We don't know because we can't solve this challenge. We have to pull stones.

Ali: Oh, okay

Jack: Oh my god, yeah.

Austin: We don't know if you win or lose, right? Like I think Open's response to all of this has to be decided by that, right? Like we don't get to decide that Open is like "oh, you're right, and here's the Cadet". (Ali laughs) Like, we should not close that. We need to now – I think that's the moment, right? Like you see the bed or you see the device and like everything's blossomed and beautiful... now what? And so to decide that it is time to...

Jack: Oh my god.

Austin: What's up? You've looked at the rules.

Jack: It's no – it's just, I mean, yes, I remember the rules. It's just also like –

Ali: Are the rules bad? Are we okay?

Jack: Oh –

Austin: We'll see.

Jack: The game is interesting.

[Ali laughs.]

Austin: Alright. The first and second was – first and second – here we go, third challenge. Alright. [Reading from the rules] Start with no stones; add one white, one red. So we're at one and one. Then add one white for each successful challenge and one red for each failed challenge. We're up to three white, one red. Each player takes two red. Read aloud. If your main character is unhappy about the path the fellowship has taken, hold one red stone. If your main character actually wants the quest to fail, hold two red stones. Otherwise hold no red stones – or hold no stones. So again, unhappy: one. Want it to fail: two.

Jack: Ready.

Austin: I'm not.

Ali: (with a sympathetic laugh) Aww... yeah.

Jack: (overlapping) Aww, hi Sho.

Ali: (overlapping) Sho's in a place right now.

Austin: Sho's at least a one. I'm debating if Sho's a two, like, straight up.

Ali: Oh, wow.

Jack: I mean, does Sho want it to fail?

Austin: Why are we rescuing the Cadent who can't take action? Who cares?

Jack: I mean, very good point.

[Ali laughs.]

Austin: Like that's not – like, Sho gets why Fourteen Fifteen kills people now. Right. Like, this is it.

Jack: That is the opposite of the way I was hoping this arc would resolve.

Austin: The solace, but the solace is, yeah. Yeah. Okay. Sure. Of course you kill people, right? Take my sword. (Jack laughs tightly.) Two red stones. (overlapping) Uh, reveal.

Ali: (overlapping) Whowee, okay.

Austin: Zero and none. Okay. Um.. I want her to start a school. Urgh, okay.

Jack: I mean, I – I'm with her.

Austin: No, I get it. Um, alright. (Reading from the rules) Each player takes one white – one white, one red. Read aloud: As a player, do you think the fellowships succeeded the challenge? Hold white if yes, red if no. Ready?

(Jack and Ali hum affirmation.)

Austin: Okay. Three, two, one: three white. Okay. So – (a cross between a sigh and an exhale) decide secretly, reveal simultaneously and add to the pool; put the stones in a cup. Deep breaths. (audible deep breaths; Ali laughs) Alright. Three red. So one, two, three are red. That's from two of Sho's. One is the default white. We start with one. Then we get two from the two successes. Then we get three more from – so, wait: one, two, three... four, five, six white. Six white, three red. So it's a one D9. One, two, three are red. Seven: white. Now I roll one D8, same thing. First three are red. (loud exhale) Oop, I just typed it wrong, I'm so nervous. Phwar, four. For two white: successful.

Ali: (overlapping) That's good, right? 'Cause two... cool.

[(overlapping) Jack makes grateful noises in the background, while Austin expresses audible relief.]

Jack: Yeah, that is good.

Austin: That's good. (he exhales audibly several times in relief. Jack laughs.) Huge relief. I think that that's yeah, one, two. Yep. Uh huh. We're good. Made it out. Made it out somehow. I was fucking so sure that we were fucked. All right. All right. So now we – we narrate how we succeeded. Describe the outcome. White-white means win the challenge. Um, and uh, we have to talk about what happens next. So what happens now? In this moment, like we zip back out from that space. Does Open Metal, just give the Cadent up. Like what happens?

Jack: Yeah, I think – I think – I don't think Open Metal is broken. I think Open Metal has realized that (laughing) things could be different –

Austin: Right.

Jack: – that they didn't do a super great job. So I don't think the shot is Open Metal just sort of, like, retreating and slumping back against the wall.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I think instead they walk up to the Cadent and they, like, I don't know if the Cadent's restrained in any way. I doubt they are.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Oh, I know what they do. Uh, they just walk over to the door and open it, right?

Ali: Yeah. I like that. I think that the, like, ultimatum there was not, like, fall in line.

Austin: No, no, no, totally. Let us –

Ali: – stop seeking this power that you already have.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Um, so yeah. Um, Sho, like, turns for – away from the Cadent and looks to you, Tender and says

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Thank you. Can I have my sword back?

Austin: And just, like, you've never seen her be so certain. And that is sad.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Of course, Sho.

Alo: And then I think like Tender, both not wanting this to be the thing and like –

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: – to zoom in on this. Just puts it away and gives it back to her.

Austin: Um, and then I think Sho just leaves. Sho takes the Cadent by her hand, like doesn't ask, she just takes the Cadent by her hand and guides her out. Where do we meet up with Fourteen Fifteen (Ali laughs) and Morning's Observation and the rest?

Ali: Um, well, we were trying to get to that spaceship, right?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Um...

Austin: At this point – by this point, outside the windows, we are in conflict. I think maybe open knows this and probably tells you all, right, which is like, the hegemony is bringing more people. They'll – I mean, you know, this already, right? You were – you were – you were briefed on this. The hegemony had a huge ship coming with way more people. Um, and it's like, I think it arrives in the background at this point. And as it does it, like we slip into the final phase of this, which is the evacuation and it's like... it's war, right? Like the New Earth Hegemony, their play here failed, but this new group has arrived under orders to win. Um, and I don't know how that shakes out yet. 'Cause we haven't played the evacuation game yet. But that's happening as the Mirage is collapsing in on itself, as Volition is just like barfing up...um, axioms –which are the things that are, like, the post-Divines that it can make, um, they're called axioms – into space and we just, like, I think we just see the three – we see the Cadent turning to look out the huge window at the end of this forest in all of this, like, from the top of the tower, or as, like, just before walking down and seeing like the opening shots of the week-long war as this combination is like – threefold conflict unfurls. Um, and as Quire turns in the distance and the strangest thing happens, which is like: Quire is turning, and as it turns and you see the clouds and stuff, you know the sun does like the – it comes over the horizon for a moment, and then something else comes over and eclipses the sun, and it's like a second Earth or Quire-sized body comes and blocks out the sun for just a moment...

And then, like, another one behind it. And things are just – there's this moment of nausea, I think, from everyone all at once. Um, and I think we just get a call-in from Morning's Observation, who is like:

Austin: (as Morning's Observation) Uh, some weird shit is happening. Uh, I'm getting a call. Everyone needs to evacuate now.

Austin: Um, so where does the ship go? Where does The World Without End show up?

Jack: Um, Oh man, I'm trying to think of – like, is the – is the image of it rising up behind the window of this thing?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: Um, I don't know if it breaks the window, but Massalia does!

[Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah. 'Cause Massalia rammed one of the other mechs through the window and like slammed it to the ground and like spiked it, like with a – like it has, like, a jackhammer – a – a pile driver like that just, like, punches literally a huge iron spike through its arm to pin it to the ground.

Jack: And the glass-fixing drones show up, but get tangled in the net of the World Without End.

Austin: Ohhhh. Yes. Good.

Jack: Um, and people are running like – like, members of any age (overlapping) are running towards this ship.

Austin: (enthusiastically, overlapping) Yes, yeah. Yes.

Jack: Yeah, like, this is like – everyone is aiming for this at this point.

Austin: Yeah, just to get on it. It has this huge front, like top – in my mind, you've described the ship as being like this long needle, right. But in my mind, it ends with a deck – it ends with, like, a wooden floor on the deck, like a deck that you can walk around on.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: – alright. And then it has, like a – almost like a U-shaped, not a U-shaped, but like a – I'm gonna to draw it super quick, which is just like, it's this long ship, right.? Like that. And then it just kind of has like a little, like – ooh, that's not right. [I'll] do that better. Like.. this. Right? And everything to the top end is all wooden.

[Ali and Jack make noises of agreement, along with quiet "yeahs".]

Austin: It's like a needle. It's like a needle or a fountain pen. But the – to the tip of the fountain pen is this, like, wooden deck you can stand on.

Jack: I think also there's – you could walk down here as well. Probably like, there's, like, thin galleys down the – down the length of the needle.

Austin: Yeah. And the people are just like hopping on and are like scrambling to get inside somewhere, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Cool.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Um, what do you do with Open Metal, Tender? Do you just leave her? Does she stay? What does she do?

Ali: (laughs) Um, I think like – I don't know. At her opening the door, there's like, the.. the like vision of everyone also leaving, and then like Tender, waiting to be the last one out. And it's like up to her what she wants to do, I guess, like, I don't know. Um...

[Austin audibly exhales.]

Jack: It's – it's a tough – it's a tough one. (Ali laughs.) You're right. This is like a narrative... this is – this immediately becomes, like, a narrative problem of like, what is more exciting? (Ali laughs briefly again.) Is – is the shot of Open Metal running through the forest towards this ship – scene from the ship – good, of being like, oh my God, Open Metal is on the ship, or is 'Open Metal disappeared' more interesting?

Austin: Yeah, like, gets on the elevator instead. Like not –

Jack: I think it's up to –

Austin: –left behind, but yeah, it is. I'd like Ali to, like, what do you think is more interesting with her?

Ali: I feel like the arc of Open Metal that's interesting here is that – like the, like, knowledge that her desire to...help people is a pure one.

Austin: Yeah. Right. But also the thing you've introduced in this sequence, like from that last conversation for me, is that she wanted to be bossed around, right? Like the thing she needed was someone to tell her what to do, not...

Ali: (laughing) Yes, yes. There's also that.

Austin: Which, right? Like, which I only mean, like, I'm not joking around with it either.

Right. Like I do think that there is a degree to which it was... the reason she wanted you to have power is because that way she knew that whatever you said was true and good and that that was the direction that she could have, which is like a very selfish thing. 'Cause it means putting the weight of decision making off on somebody else, right?

Ali: Right.

Austin: Like all she wanted was to be ordered around because it's way easier to be ordered around than to decide for yourself what to do. And now she's decided what to do for herself. But even then she found someone to kind of boss her around. Robin's Song, right? So, like –

Ali: (with a giggle) Right. Yeah, exactly.

Austin: This is a Situation where what she is – what's more interesting? Is it that she has found solace in letting you boss her around again, or is she now off in the wind to find her own way?

Ali: Um, I think I prefer that second one.

Austin: Yeah, me too.

Ali: Um, just because I don't want, like, again, I don't want this – the exchange that they had is not Tender saying "fall in line".

Austin: (in the background) Right, right.

Ali: It is "find more genuine... and, even if they are small, find more legitimate ways to express this thing that you want".

Austin: Yeah. I think that that's true. I think that is the Twilight Mirage thing here for sure, right.

Ali: So I don't know if it's like – maybe it's her going to the elevator to like help the evacuation. It's that, or something

Austin: Yeah... yeah!

Ali: Or like, even if we don't have to fill out that cleanly,

Austin: I mean, you know what she said was – I kind of like her as stubborn, but good. (Ali laughs) Being like "all these people listen to me." Like, Sui Juris doesn't just go away after this.

Like, and “there are people who already listened to me on the lower floors,” and [she] goes to help them.

Ali: Oh, right! ‘Cause there’s all of these other people who are like, (overlapping) yes, I’ll stay. Yep, good idea.

(Jack makes noises of agreement. eg: yeah, yeah.)

Austin: (overlapping) Yeah, I’ll stay. Totally. This doesn’t do that faction, right. Yeah. Um, um, and she like, yeah, totally. And like goes to meet up with them and – and like get people out onto... onto escape pods and into big vessels and stuff like that. Um, and goes on to – you know, I don’t think that she’s going to come up by name in the evacuation game, um, but I think it will be a player in that game, you know, uh, in – in or – in that effort to help evacuate people, and will definitely be a political force in the next arc of this game, uh, you know, to some degree.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Um, so there’s that. Okay. So everyone gets onto the ship and takes off. What’s it like to fly the ship, Fourteen?

[Ali chuckles]

Jack: Ah, so what did we say the –

Austin: Ah, no, that’s what we still need, we still need Fourteen and Sho, right?

Ali: Oh yeah.

Jack: Ohhhh, yeah.

Austin: I think we need to get like Fourteen and Sho, like: Sho gets onto the ship. Like, again, holding the hand or holding the wrist of the Cadent, holding her by the wrist and guiding her, um, the way that Signet – the like, projection of Signet did Open Metal – um, the little girl Open Metal, and like takes her into, like, she just walks onto the ship with a perfect stride. Um, and just shouts to you, Fourteen, and is like –

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Where should we put her?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Oh, well there are cabins. Uh, there are cabins, it’s a long corridor.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Where’s the safest one? She’s precious.

Austin: – and she says it the way you talk about cargo.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Well, um, the captain's cabin is down here.

Austin: She nods and like, you know, takes the Cadent there and – and like puts her – puts her away basically. Um, and is polite, but is cold to the Cadent at this point.

Jack: (quietly) Yeah.

Austin: Um, and I just kind of want a scene of like her and Fourteen in the, like – on the helm of this ship. What's that look like, Jack?

Jack: Did we ever describe the helm (overlapping) of The World Without End?

Austin: (overlapping) I don't think we did. We talked about the navigation room, where you, like, where the fishermen, um, showed you where the flocks of fish were, but not the actual helm.

Jack: So the helm is.. um, it, uh, it is, uh... it is a ship that requires – it doesn't require – it is a ship that *can* be flown with a copilot.

Austin: Mmhmm.

Jack: So there's two chairs, um, that, uh, the chairs are...the chairs are kind of mounted on like... cubes or boxes so that they are a higher level. You have to climb up a set of steps to get into them. (Austin makes noises of agreement). Um, they – they spin; they're good chairs. Um, the cockpit, the – the control panels themselves are, like – I think that they are like... resin or Ebony.

Austin: Mmhmm.

Jack: Um, in like the – they're wooden handles, uh, inlaid with like ceramics. Um, and it's clear that they've been, like, well-used and well-kept. This doesn't look like a – this could very easily look like a, sort of like a cargo vessel, like a sort of like, oh yeah, you just smash these controls around.

Austin: Mmhmm.

Jack: But these have been like, well kept. There are like mobiles hanging from the ceiling that shows little schools of fish –

Austin: Yeah...

Jack: – and show, like, planets orbiting each other.

Austin: Not to scale, but like...

Jack: No, no (laughing briefly)

Austin: It's still very good.

Jack: Yeah. Um, and they – they make... they make a little quiet sound as they move. The ship is very quiet.

Austin: I think she sits in the copilot chair next to you as the group, like, as you all take off, basically. Um, and [she] like, runs her hand along the resin and, like, appreciates it.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Who gave you this ship?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Well, it was a – I booked passage here from a fishermen. Um, we did some, we did some work together on the way. Paid my keep. I nearly went out again, actually, I got caught up by one of the nets, but he took care of me. And then when we got here, he just left and he's not coming back.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Hmm. I'm really sorry.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) What are you sorry about?

Austin: (as Sho Salon) I was very mean to you. I was very dismissive. I thought I knew more about the world than you did, and I didn't. You knew more.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) I don't think that, I don't think that that's the thing to apologize for. I've been around longer than you and that doesn't seem to count for much, but I know more about, at least I hope I know more about, what I am.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) I thought I had a really good idea of what, and I was who I was, what I could do to help people.

Austin: And then she smiles at you a little bit, um, and, like, wipes away a tear. And is like:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) I just learned I have to be a different thing, a different person.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) You want to know something really exciting?

Austin: (as Sho Salon) What?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Every time, every time it happens, I do this thing. I have an apartment. I have an apartment in the Sky Reflected in Mirrors. It's kind of crappy. It's not great, but it has a little mirror and a little shaving bowl. And I stand in front of the mirror and I look at myself and I say "what am I going to be? What's it going to be this time?"

Austin: (as Sho Salon) That's hard. That's so hard. I... have spent a long time knowing what I am and having certainty that what I aspired to be and what I aspired to do were in line with each other, that if I was what I thought was the best version of myself that would lead me to achieve the goals that I worked for. And that alignment –

Austin: She laughs to herself.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) – the orbit is resonant.

Austin: She stops.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) *Our* orbit is resonant. Not because it is safer for the planets not to collide, but because their arcs are more beautiful together. It's early in the assemblage. And I aspired to be in sync with the Cadent because I thought the Cadent – because I thought all of the Cadents were... the best you could be, I will find a new orbit, I suppose. I will try to be my own Cadent.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) I don't think – you don't have to do this on your own. Those aren't mutually exclusive. It's not mutually...

Austin: (as Sho Salon) I know.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) We can be here.

Austin: (as Sho Salon) I know. It's just going to be hard. I still think you should feel bad when you kill people.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) I do. Every time. I feel terrible, Sho.

Austin: She, like, looks up at you and she says:

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Even Mother's Story?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Okay. That one was – alright, that one's like a freebie. I closed that one. That one's sorted. How did you know I got her?

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Morning told me.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Did he tell you how it went down?

Austin: (as Sho Salon) He said it was incredibly badass. I couldn't tell if he was lying.

(An unidentified snort of laughter in the background)

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) No, it was great. It was really great. But that's – I – look, that one's a – (overlapping)

Austin: (as Sho Salon) (overlapping, excited) Did you know that Tender could use a sword?

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) Sorry?

Austin: (as Sho Salon) Tender used my sword. She killed... she – she killed Robin's Song.

Jack: (as Fourteen Fifteen) (overlapping) I mean –

Austin: (as Sho Salon) (overlapping) Yes, I think he's dead. And she just (makes a sound like the slash of a sword). It was like – one move.

Austin: And I think we, like, fade out on what is maybe the most depressing... but also like, I don't know how to feel about her liking killing people or, like, getting why you kill people now.

Jack: (laughing) Right.

Austin: Um, because –

Jack: I mean, I dunno, I feel like there's that, and then there's also the... maybe the Cadent isn't the ideal.

Austin: (overlapping) Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. With that part,

Jack: (overlapping) I pretty much do agree, like –

Austin: – yes a hundred percent good. Um –

Ali: Yeah, I feel like if – Sho hasn't villainized Fourteen Fifteen for the job that they have, Like, Sho coming to a sense that like, I couldn't do what you do, but maybe there are places where it's necessary is... a net positive.

Austin: I don't know that she thinks it's necessary. I think she wants there to be a world where it isn't necessary.

Jack: I think – I think Fourteen probably also wants that.

Ali: Right, yeah, yeah...

Austin: Right. But – but has never communicated that clearly. Right. And like –

Jack: Right, uh, although – but is getting closer to it.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Yes. Yes. But also the thing that they, that was never communicated – that Sho never picked up on – was like the world is this way. That like – the world doesn't have the model you can follow. There isn't a perfect; you can't be the perfect being who solves everything without – you know, cleanly. Um, uh, which is interesting, given how clean this was, right? No innocents got hurt. She's happy about that. Robin's Song was a shit head, like: can live with that.

Jack: I had a blood grudge.

Austin: You had a blood gr – a blood grudge. You got your gun back, and Tender didn't have to kill Open Metal who was a. Genuinely decent per– like not decent, genuinely was... misguided and, but also had a point, right? Um, also had like, as the people who seem to have followed in line to, like, Sui Juris... it's like, hey, maybe there is something there to some degree. Um, alright. All, you wanted to – you want a Tender – Tender/Morning scene, maybe?

Um, yeah, I think there's, there's probably,

Austin: Also, I want to be really clear: I don't ship them, but Tender Morning is a very good shipname.(Ali cackles) Um, so what's the scene that you want? ... (overlapping) on the ship.

Ali: Yeah. I don't know. I think that there's, um, there's definitely space there considering the... (laughs nervously) last conversation they had.

Austin: (overlapping) Yeah.

Ali: (overlapping) The climax of –

Austin: Are you the one who tells him?

Ali: I think –

Austin: He asks you, is the thing, right.

Ali: Oh, okay. Um, Cause I would expect her to, like, go talk to him and sort of dance around it.

Austin: Right. I think he's going to act like – so yeah, you come in, you dance around it for awhile, right? Like, you're playing pool, in my mind. You're playing pool. There's a pool – there's a room with a pool table here.

Ali: (laughs) Um...

Austin: Um, He's playing pool. That's the thing he's doing.

Ali: Okay. Like, solo...

Austin: He's very good at pool... is the thing. Well, he's very good at playing pool by himself; who knows what happens when the second player is there, you know? (Ali chuckles). Um, but from a perfect break, he can – or like from a, uh, as a solo player, he can break and then get like, can win basically in, in a very efficient way. I do think the second, a second player was involved, he would lose. Um.

Ali: Yeah. I think that she – she comes in and asks him about what he thought of the mission.

Austin: (as Morning's Observation) It turned out all right. It turned out... it turned out – it turned out it – um, I'm glad the Cadent...and you know, I'm glad, yeah. What happened with – I know we – Story's gone. Is Song – is my brother – um, did you just, like, talk him into letting us have the Cadent or... (overlapping) or what?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) He isn't...

Austin: (as Morning's Observation) ...Yeah, I mean, I guess he wasn't such hot shit, huh?

[Jack and Ali laugh in surprise.]

Austin: Yeah, he, like, looks off to the side a little bit. Right. And then like takes another shot. Another ball goes into a pocket.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) (a sigh) I didn't feel that it was necessary to try to rehabilitate him.

Austin: (as Morning's Observation) I guess that's what this whole gig is. Right? Like you make the decision about that. You decide if someone is, like, did you make that call for

me, or – or was that somebody else? If you had done it differently, what do you just – don't worry about it? You know, don't even worry. Don't even – don't answer. I don't want to know.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I came here to ask you how the mission went for you. Cause I – I wanted to tell you that I wouldn't have made the same decision that you did.

Austin: (as Morning's Observation) Which one?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) The – the being here. The working with us. I don't know what options Cascara gave you. I – I'm also here as punishment, but...

Austin: (as Morning's Observation) Yeah, I just want to say, I read your dossier too.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) (laughs) Is that just ...out? (overlapping) People...

Austin: (as Morning's Observation) (overlapping) No, I'm very, I'm very good.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) And then showed it to Sho?

Austin: (as Morning's Observation) Sho is convincing. (Tender snorts) We're on a team together. We're partners.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) No, I know, I know, That's –

Austin: (as Morning's Observation) You've got to share with your partner – that's what Cascara taught us... (he sighs) I'm all right. The mission went fine. I'm happy to be here. I'm – there isn't – we've been over this. There isn't a going home for me. I'll figure it out. I don't know what comes next, but I'm not, um, I'm not eager to join back up with them.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) Okay. I just wanted you to know that I'm... I'm happy that you're here –

Austin (as Morning's Observation): (overlapping) Thank you.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) (overlapping) – and, like, you did a good job today.

(A long pause.)

Austin (as Morning's Observation): It was real scary. There's a lot – I guess I'll get used to it. There's just a...

Austin: And he takes another shot.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) You will get used to it.

Austin (as Morning's Observation): Is that a good thing?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) I think so.

Austin (as Morning's Observation): In another world, someone like you gets captured by someone like the New Earth Hegemony and tells *you* you'll get used to it. It might not even be another world. It might be three weeks from now.

I think what y'all have here is good. I think that this works; I think that you try to take care of your people. I put it all out there: I think that there are problems. I think that there's not a lot of you. Um, and I think that makes it kind of easy, comparatively, but I think what you have is pretty good and I'm happy to be part of it, but it's not that hard to imagine a world where, like, Waltz Tango (Cache) finds out that like there's a lot of work for him in the hegemony, and he thinks that sounds good.

Like I don't – when I first came here, I just did a thing because it was a job I could do. And because I was worried about my brother, and because I thought it would be a way to do more than wash dishes. I didn't have some great ideology. And then I got here and Cascara treated me pretty good. And y'all were pretty all right to me, given the situation.

And I read a bunch of stuff and I watched some – some videos and I played out some scenarios in my head and they're all – like, I stand by it, but I don't think it was like... Like, it was the right decision for me, but I don't think it was like capital R, capital D the Right Decision. I think I'm – I stand by it, but I don't think it was like the only way – the only possible outcome.

I could just see it happen the other way so easily, with so many people. And I just don't know what that means. It's not my place to know what that means, I guess. Sorry. It's a lot to put on you. I'm not like, I don't think you're going to be able to give me the one true thing about how you've lived your life, or whatever, but. That's where my brain is at right now. My mind is right here.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) No, I – I understand. I – I only meant that you'll get used to it, and that you won't be afraid anymore.

Austin (as Morning's Observation): I don't mind being afraid. That part I'm fine with. I'm just, uh, I just gotta find like, uh – I want it to feel like a Tuesday. I don't mind if I'm scared on the Tuesday, but I know it's a Tuesday, and not like, "oh, what weird shit is going to happen today? What ancient space station is going to beep at me and tell me that there used to be a – a robot God, and everyone was mad at it", or like, "oh no. Today I need to deal with the fact that my brother is here and is trying to sow seeds of civil disunity."

Like maybe we'll get there. Cause that's the thing. When I talk about Jeremy and that place with the sandwiches, it was like, "oh, it's Tuesday morning. I have an extra 30 minutes. I'm going to go through and get a sandwich." And the part of it that I liked... it was the sandwich, and it was Jeremy and – but it was that I could just do that on a Tuesday. but nothing here ever feels like a Tuesday.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) (overlapping) It'll come.

Austin (as Morning's Observation): Yeah, always a fucking holiday in the divine fleet.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) It'll come for you, Morning. You haven't been doing this very long.

Austin (as Morning's Observation): It's easy to say that now, but like, look.

Austin: And then like, it looks like – he probably, like, slams his hand down on a button that de-tints the windows, right. And then like, there, there are, like, planets that were not there a day ago that are like forming in the shadow of Volition.

Austin (cont): And like, I think he – you see them immediately in the same – the same, like, spectrum of like the jellyfish thing, the black inky space that Volition, or that Declan's Corrective showed you. And it's, like: Here. Here are nine – nine – eight things forming an orbit around Volition. A dark sun in the Quire system.

Austin (as Morning's Observation): Like, I don't know how many Tuesdays there are going to be. I don't know if it's none, or eight different ones on eight planets.

(Music: "The Twilight Mirage" starts quietly in the background)

Austin (as Morning's Observation) (cont.): It's going to be a while until I find a Tuesday. That's alright, I'm happy to be here. But, like, I'm not going to put on a face, Tender. This still fucking sucks.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) It does. You're right. You're allowed to feel that way.

Austin (as Morning's Observation): Alright. (after a pause) Does this place have a kitchen?

Ali: (as Tender Sky) (laughs) I hope so.

Austin (as Morning's Observation): What were you going to say? Sorry.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) No, I was going to say that we had a win today and that's worth celebrating.

Austin (as Morning's Observation): True... true.

Ali: (as Tender Sky) So we should find that kitchen.

Austin (as Morning's Observation): We should find that kitchen.

[Morning's Observation sighs deeply as the theme music swells. "The Twilight Mirage" plays.]

[Music ends. End of episode.]