

Twilight Mirage 11: What We're Capable Of

Transcribed by Elliot @cordialement#1268

[MUSIC - "The Twilight Mirage" begins]

AUSTIN (as Satellite): Signal route, grey. Mirage density, opaque. Proxy chain, linked.
[sighs] This better work. Primary?

AUSTIN (as Primary) Satellite.

[MUSIC ends]

AUSTIN: You can see the-- you can see Thyrsus. You can see the body of the ship you're from, as the body of Belgard lights up. Uh, it's like-- like in my mind the sound is like the sound that's in science fiction movies as things turn on, which is like [makes a low percussive sound], you know?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Bit by bit, all these lights start to come on.

JANINE: So here's the thing I'm curious about, because my sanctuary already has a quality that might conflict with this.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: My sanctuary already has a voice that speaks to me.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. There can be more than one voice.

JANINE: Okay, I just wanna make sure that was known.

AUSTIN: That's totally fine. Um, in fact I think-- [laughs] No, maybe there is nothing here yet. No, there is a voice here, and the voice that you're familiar with says

AUSTIN (as the voice): This isn't me.

AUSTIN: And then like [low booting up noises] as the Divine comes back online. Um, and the cockpit door opens for you to leave.

[JANINE sighs]

AUSTIN: And then I think we just get this really great, like, Windows 95 startup sound. And then like the projector slowly replaces the outside view of Thyrsus with the view of rolling green hills, blue skies, and a single white cloud. But it doesn't do anything else, it just stays like this. Fourteen, Fifteen.

[ALI chuckles]

JACK: Hi.

AUSTIN: We need to make that other move, now.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: After a gift your disease manifests itself, roll +Symptoms.

JACK: Okay, which is-- it's the same roll again, right?

AUSTIN: It's plus one, yeah, it's the same roll again.

JACK: Uh, do I mark an emotion here?

[AUSTIN sighs]

JACK: This is tough, because I think at the moment that this roll is being made, Fourteen is kind of... nothing.

AUSTIN: So, peaceful then.

JACK: [laughs] I guess-- I guess so. Okay. So I'm gonna mark--

AUSTIN: What's the data like? Is the data at pea-- like, is the data resting? Is it hectic? Is it-- do you know what I mean? Like, is it...

JACK: Yeah, um...

AUSTIN: Is it roaring through the data-sphere? Is it like...

JACK: I think the [sighs] So I rolled a-- what did I roll on the... I rolled an eight.

AUSTIN: You did.

JACK: Which means...

AUSTIN: It's gonna be a few hours, but you'll be none the worse for wear.

JACK: Yeah. Okay, so... I think the data is patient.

AUSTIN: Okay. That sounds--

JACK: Which I think is a sort of peacefulness.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that sounds peaceful to me.

JACK: Okay, what am I rolling here?

AUSTIN: Symptoms.

JACK: What's this called?

AUSTIN: This is called Trigger, because there is the... the disease is triggering.

JACK: Yeah, 'cause the transfer's about to happen. And that's when things go badly.

AUSTIN: It's happening as it's-- yeah, exactly. Oh, sorry! Woah, you got a-- you crushed-- actually, here's the thing is, you actually got a 12. Because we noted that your prognosis increases. Your symptoms increase when the gift fires.

JACK: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: So actually you should've rolled +2. Which means you rolled a 12. So... On a 10+, the MC chooses one, and your symptoms manifest as well. Um, on the 7-9, the MC chooses two from the list below. On a 7-9, the MC only chooses one. So... I think-- I'm trying to make sure I'm reading this right. That's like a really... Oh! Okay. So, on a-- you wanted this to be low. I understand now.

JACK: Yeah, that's what I figured. I thought it was--

AUSTIN: I get it now. Yeah, of course. So you take one harm.

JACK: So actually I did very badly.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so you immediately-- you come out of this feeling bad. Right?

JACK: Okay.

[ALI sighs]

AUSTIN: And then on top of that, I also choose two from the list below. Whereas on a 7-9, I only would have chosen one, and on less than that, I would have chosen none of these things.

JACK: This is just light harm, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's light harm. Yeah. "Everything fades to black as you pass out; you lose control over blank; one of your symptoms manifests itself in a big way; or, you lose track of blank." Also, this is the other half of this, which is your symptoms increased. That doesn't just mean your number increases. [laughs]

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: Jack. That means you choose another one of these symptoms.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, what is it? The-- do you want me to read the options?

JACK: Yeah, let's hear them for the podcast.

AUSTIN: "It's replacing and/or eradicating your memories." Got it.

JACK: Yep, that's a bad one.

AUSTIN: "Your physiology produces a cytotoxin when blank."

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: "You're turning into some other form of organic life through metamorphosis; you're being replaced by or incorporated into the Veil; there is a noticeable change in your dermis."

JACK: [laughs] What?

AUSTIN: To your dermis, to your skin. Which like, that already happens normally, but I imagine this means texturally, maybe, or like, who knows? "You grow additional and/or new limbs and/or organs, perhaps losing old ones; your body rejects or is rejecting cybernetic implants and/or your neurochip; and, you have a mental projection only you can see with its own agenda." I'm gonna lean towards not that one, since everyone has one of those now. [laughs]

JACK: Mhm. Yeah. This would just otherwise be the episode of everybody getting [laughs]-- everybody getting one.

AUSTIN: Everybody gets a friend. Yeah.

JACK: Um, the one that's leaping out to me is "You're being replaced by or incorporated into the Veil."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Me too. So, I'm curious, how do you think that looks? Like what's that mean for your-- for Fourteen Fifteen's selfhood? Like what is being replaced by or incorporated-- like, is Fourteen Fifteen showing up in the V-- which way is it going, in this specific instance? Cause I think that is the symptom that's gonna manifest itself.

JACK: [sighs] So--

AUSTIN: I have ideas both ways. I'm curious about what you think.

JACK: Yeah. I'm kind of-- we're probably gonna speak about this more directly in a second, but remember how we talked about how Mrs. Castlerose uses the Veil in the construction of...

AUSTIN: Oh, we've talked about that privately. I don't think we've talked about it on the show before.

JACK: Yeah, I meant you and I. What if it goes beyond that? Beyond something that Castlerose has done. What if the Veil begins to-- to do something there?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: There's information that neither Fourteen nor Castlerose intended.

AUSTIN: Right, so traditionally your new body would be something that Castlerose would put together--

JACK: Actually-- yeah, can we just narrate this?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

JACK: Okay so some time ago, probably within the last six months, a large ship was smuggled onto... I guess Emphyrean. But there are similar ships on other ships in the Fleet, and a container-- a cooled container was taken off this ship in the dead of night, and it was stored in a warehouse somewhere, where an aid or a guide... you know, almost like watching the box in *Twin Peaks*, maintains this-- this strange cooled container.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Uh huh.

JACK: And inside this container are maybe 30 bodies? Um, they're actual bodies. They're not Veil bodies. You know, you could touch them and-- You can touch stuff in the Veil, but they're... they're bodies. And they're all sorts of different people. There's, you know, like a balding man. There's a woman in a dress. There's, um, a robot. And these bodies are just kind of lying there in the dark. And when Castlerose needs to dispatch an agent, um, she pieces together a cover story about what one of these bodies were, and presses a button, and the agent wakes up. I'm not sure if they wake up in the warehouse, or if they've been pre-moved to a location.

AUSTIN: You mean placed in the world somewhere somehow?

JACK: I-- Because I rolled-- I think if I'd rolled badly--

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah.

JACK: The answer to that could change.

AUSTIN: Right, yes.

JACK: So I don't think I wake up in the facility.

AUSTIN: No. But nor do you awake in the comfort of a friend. To a comfort of a friend. You wake up-- you're out for a few hours none the worse for wear, but you're not in like-- you're not in a terrible dark room, nor are you in, like, with Castlerose, or with the Beloved.

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: You know, with Cascara.

JACK: And I think we talked about, you know, Castlerose kind of weaving a cover story from the Veil. And this isn't an infallible cover story, you know.

AUSTIN: [exhaling] Right.

JACK: Someone smart, or even just, you know, being curious in the wrong way could pick it apart pretty easily. But it doesn't need to be a perfect cover story, it just needs to be perfect for long enough for Fourteen to make a move. Or for an agent to make a move. And so I think what's happened here with "you're being replaced by or incorporated into the Veil" is that there is more to that story than Castlerose or the agents, or Fourteen, expect.

AUSTIN: So what is the new body?

JACK: So I think... I think what this looks like for Fourteen, and this is an experience they've had before, is that everything is very dark, and they hear Castlerose's voice say,

JACK (as Castlerose): Okay, listen very carefully.

JACK: And then like a badly spliced together series of holiday photos and videos?

[AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: Fourteen-- and the equivalent of the mouse cursor is on these occasionally, because Castlerose has to do this for everybody-- [laughs]

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: We see a series of images. And the images are of a-- a poster for what looks like a play, or an opera. The poster shows a figure in a, kind of a... almost like a Venetian mask, a colorful mask. We see a crowd applauding, we see bus stop adverts for this. Uh, we see a-- a woman stepping off a stage into an orchestra pit, and Fourteen Fifteen is told that they are now Worthy of Grace, an opera singer. Who draws large audiences. And draws great crowds. And this is their new body. And then Worthy of Grace opens her* eyes.

AUSTIN: Um, and so the thing here is that-- the added bit here is that you're being replaced or incorporated into the Veil, right?

JACK: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Um... I'm curious if maybe... Worthy of Grace-- so the notion is that Castlerose invents Worthy of Grace, right?

JACK: Mhm. Yeah. And Worthy of Grace has existed before. An agent has presumably taken on the body of Worthy of Grace before.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see, there's been a Worthy of Grace in the past. I got you. Okay. Um, hm. Has-- has anyone like killed somebody as Worthy of Grace before?

JACK: No, there's lots of bodies. There's *lots* of bodies.

AUSTIN: But what have they done as Worthy of-- My question is like, if an agent's taken on the body of Worthy of Grace, is it just like for another type of mission entirely?

JACK: I think it would be another type of mission, or it would be like... the opera singer archetype?

AUSTIN: Oh I see.

JACK: They might not have been Worthy of Grace--

AUSTIN: I gotcha.

JACK: --But they would have been, like, Castlerose wants to be able to reuse the cover stories as much as she can.

AUSTIN: Right. Um, can I complicate this using-- I can.

JACK: Sure. You can-- Absolutely.

AUSTIN: You failed. This is-- this is how this works. Um, where did you imagine you would be waking up?

JACK: In a room somewhere, presumably on... Seance?

[15:00]

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Um, there is-- you open your eyes, and there is a room filled with people clapping and cheering, and someone is at a podium, um, like speaking, and I think you're just very-- So two things happen. One, the pain hits; take one harm. Two, um, one of your symptoms manifests itself in a big way, which I'm about to get to that. And then the second thing I choose from this list is "you lose track of blank" and it's you lose track of-- you lose track of Fourteen Fifteen for a moment. You're just like-- you're not really... You don't remember being a hitman right now, you don't remember being, like, part of the Beloved Dust. You just like, "Oh, I've woken up and I'm on a stage. And there are people in front of me and there's someone on a podium and everyone is clapping." There are hundreds of people in front of you. There are people taking photos of you, you're in a beautiful dress. And what do you do?

JACK: [laughs] Uh, I-- I smile?

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Uh, I look at the person on the podium.

AUSTIN: Uh, and they're like

AUSTIN (as the person on the podium): [grunts] For the first time ever, uh, Worthy of Grace, from the Mesh. We've-- come on up! Give us a little somethin'!

AUSTIN: And it's like, uh, a middle aged guy who'd balding, who has on like a tuxedo. It's not a-- he does not know how to wear a tuxedo, like he's not-- It's not his cut. Um, and he's like clapping. [claps] And--

JACK: To be clear, this shouldn't be happening, right? At all.

AUSTIN: Nooo. No. Uh... Something went really weird here. [amused huff] I don't know if this has been going weird, maybe. Maybe this went weird when the body was set up forever ago. In fact maybe this is like a weird delayed reaction. Worthy of Grace fully exists. Worthy of Grace has existed as a virtual idol for quite some time. They're a-- they're a virtual k-performer. They are like, have been this like pop idol that does this blend of opera music, and like high fashion, and like very theatrical pop music. And, oh my God! They... they finally have a real body! And this is the [JACK laughs] like, the ribbon-cutting ceremony for you. And everyone knows, "Oh yeah! It's you, it's Worthy of Grace." People have been meaning-- like, this has been about to hap-- This has been announced. For a long time. And this is who you get put into.

JACK: [exhales] Okay. I'm gonna get up there and I'm gonna sing.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Just like-- this is like a podium mic, this is not ideal, but like you totally do. And you totally do. Fourteen Fifteen the musician is here, and singing. Into like a bad school podium microphone. Maybe you're also wired up. This is part of the thing, right? Does it just turn into an amazing number? Like do you shove the-- the podium away and reveal that you've been wearing a lav microphone the whole time, and like...

JACK: [laughs] Oh, God, I don't know. Yeah, I think so. Yeah, I think that's this character.

AUSTIN: That's... it's really good.

JACK: It's a new body.

AUSTIN: It's a new body, and maybe somewhere in the middle of that song is, you remember who you are, but not right away.

JACK: Oh. Yeah, I remember. I remember 16 measures in, and my--

[AUSTIN, JACK and ALI laugh]

AUSTIN: [sighs] Good. Great. And I think like maybe this is also part of it, is like, oh no, it's not that you are Fourteen Fifteen who is pretending to be Worthy of Grace. You're-- Fourteen Fifteen and Worthy of Grace have meshed, or have blended now. And like you know how to sing. You like singing. It's-- it's good. Like you are this hybrid person now. Which is great. Which is good. They're not a voice in your head, you're just... it's both of these-- You're this thing that has been alive in the Mesh for long enough to have a fandom. [amused huff]

JACK: [laughs] Oh dear.

AUSTIN: And I think that's what Castlerose says to you in like a comms unit.

AUSTIN (as Castlerose): Oh dear.

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: Like, this isn't what was supposed to happen. Um, great, good. Great and good. Beloved, um... back on the Belgard. I'm just-- What is the response to Belgard waking back up? Like, Signet, you know this is wrong-- Like I wanna be clear about you. Like, I don't want this to be a thing where, like, the wool is being pulled over your eyes.

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah, no, she's definitely not happy.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: [wails and then laughs] Is there a thing we can do?

AUSTIN: I don't know. I didn't expect this to happen. I didn't expect the white cloud to be anywhere near the body of a Divine in now, especially. But I know what it wants. So... Right now it seems content to sit. I'll say that.

JANINE: I mean, it better be, 'cause I don't think Belgard can do anything. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like this is the body of a Divine that got smooshed up to the point where it sure doesn't work any more.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Mhm.

ALI: I-- I don't wanna complicate this here and make it worse, but I would like to make it clear like, does Belgard activating-- like does anyone else know that this is happening?

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, no. I think we're-- that depends on how far ahead you guys wanna jump, like. Yes. This is not a thing that will go unnoticed by, like, Blooming, certainly. Certainly people high up in Thyrsus, but like... Does it-- does it have lights on the outside? Is it a thing that could be seen visually?

JANINE: Hmm. I never really imagined it having lights on the outside.

AUSTIN: Okay. Then, I would--

JANINE: Like on the inside there would-- there would be a bunch, 'cause there were a lot of, like, projector-y things

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: And you have to be able to see what you're doing and where you are.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: But like...

AUSTIN: Then-- Then yeah, I think Blooming knows, because Emphyrean would know immediately. Um, and I think there's probably someone who is important inside of Thrysus that would know also.

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Or like someone who's like, "Yo!" Like...

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: "All of the readings just jumped! What is happening?"

JANINE: Yeah. It's like they have a car on cinder blocks in their yard and someone just turned it on.

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Right. Yes. Exactly.

JANINE: It's like, probably can't take it anywhere, but it's sure on.

AUSTIN: No. [sighs] Yeah.

JANINE: That engine's sure going.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: [resigned] Oh boy.

ALI: I would like to fix this, 'cause I feel bad, but I feel like-- this is like a couple game sorta situation.

AUSTIN: Yeah. This is not a thing I think one or two rolls is gonna-- Eh, it might end up being one or two rolls in the end, but like it's not-- this is not a thing I think we will deal with today.

ALI: Yeah. The consequence has to sort of been being...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

ALI: A through line.

AUSTIN: But based on the condition it's in, it's also not like... And then you leave it, and then it takes off and flies away. Like [ALI laughs] you can be confident that it's not--

JANINE: Yeah, that's-- that's the thing I imagine that happens is that like... [sighs] So a thing that we already sort of touched on is that, Belgard's still in here.

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah.

JANINE: Um, Belgard speaks and Belgard only speaks to Signet, I imagine through the interface, and just sort of like a... It wouldn't-- it's not telepathic, but for all intents and purposes it's like a mental thing.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: And I imagine like Signet speaks back, and I imagine there's like a really, really uncomfortable conversation? Um...

AUSTIN: What's that-- Let's have that uncomfortable conversation.

JANINE: [despairing laugh] I don't-- I don't... [sighs] want to have [laughs] the full... [sighs] I don't know that it's interesting to have the full conversation, cause I think the conversation just ends with like--

AUSTIN: It knows things. Or, she knows things. Like, the thing that I wanna know is,

JANINE: [overlapping] "We have bats." Like, "Oh, there's bats in the attic."

AUSTIN: No, no, no, she knows... This is not a bats in the attic situation.

JANINE: No?

AUSTIN: No. We could have that conversation next time, but like that conversation is not, "Well this is inconvenient."

JANINE: I mean I think the conversation is probably just like

JANINE (as Signet): What is this-- what does it have access to?

AUSTIN: Um... So, it's not telepathic. I'm trying to think is there like a cool way to visualize Belgard speaking to you. Um, but maybe there isn't. She says,

AUSTIN (as Belgard): I have it confined to the cockpit.

JANINE (as Signet): Can you... keep it confined to the cockpit?

AUSTIN (as Belgard): Mmm... I don't believe I can.

JANINE (as Signet): How long do you think you could maintain this as it is now?

AUSTIN: There's like a communication of a sort of, like... I think she says,

AUSTIN (as Belgard): A month or two maybe.

AUSTIN: But the way that like a person would say, like, "Aww, I really have to go to the bathroom, but I can hold it for probably like ten minutes," which is not a lot of time? Like a month or two is not a lot of time for a Divine, it's like instant, you know?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So it's like, that's not gonna give me a lot of time.

AUSTIN (as Belgard): A couple of months? I can hold it back, bit by bit. But... Perhaps I can direct it so that it has limited access. It's offering to fix me.

JANINE (as Signet): Do you think it can?

AUSTIN (as Belgard): Yes.

JANINE (as Signet): Do you think it should?

AUSTIN (as Belgard): No.

JANINE (as Signet): [sighs] I'll talk to the Cadent.

AUSTIN: She like, gives you a positive response, and then redirects her many, many activities, or like calculations or whatever, to maintaining this control. Did you deactivate the brain lobby now that the white cloud is gone? That Chthonian is gone? Or are you just hanging out there with Signet?

ALI: Um, boy howdy, I dunno.

AUSTIN: You can do that now. The white cloud was keeping you from-- That failed roll was White Cloud, was Chthonian, keeping it locked. With Chthonian gone, you can totally shut that down, but Signet will remain as an NPC in your subconscious.

ALI: Yes. I dunno, I feel like the impulse here is to like... there's like a guilt here that's like, oh, this shouldn't-- I should have kept this bottle closed? Um, so I think the desire to like kind of keep it open-- to keep the door open is kind of there, right?

AUSTIN: Oh, I see what you're saying. Right.

ALI: Which is [laughs], yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. What a fickle-- what a fickle creature.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: You put it in front of one Divine, and it just jumps ship.

ALI: [sighs] Yeah, um, sorry.

AUSTIN: No, it's fine.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: It is early in the season to have stumbled into some hefty material.

ALI: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

ALI: Yup.

AUSTIN: What I will say is, like, I am interested in keeping this as like, not the backburner? But I am interested as this being the new status quo. Not an immediate crisis.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: But it is-- you don't leave a pot boiling for too long, you know?

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: I think maybe the thing that happens here is, I'll make kind of a soft move. Which is, this is the point at which... Cascara calls you.

AUSTIN (as Cascara): You're back! Blooming reports that everything is back to normal.

JANINE (as Signet): Did she seal off the...

AUSTIN (as Cascara): Yeah.

JANINE (as Signet): ... problem cell?

AUSTIN (as Cascara): It's quarantined. Whatever that thing is, Signet, it's uh... It's not leaving that box. Report in as soon as possible. Debriefing and new information's coming.

ALI (as Tender): Definitely have some of that.

JANINE (as Signet): Mhmm.

AUSTIN (as Cascara): I've sent message to Fourteen, but I've not heard back yet.

ALI: Oh, what about um... Soul?

AUSTIN: Sho.

ALI: Sho?

AUSTIN: Sho is probably just on the line, too.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: And she's like, um

AUSTIN (as Sho): Are they okay?

AUSTIN: And Cascara says, like

AUSTIN (as Cascara): Fourteen's been through worse.

AUSTIN: And hangs up. We can jump ahead here a little bit. And I kinda wanna see just like a little bit past these events. My guess is that Blooming is like-- and Empyrean have like, as long as you'll allow it, assigned researchers to like what the fuck is going on with, uh, Belgard?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But if you don't want that, then she'll respect that. And she'll let you handle the investigation yourself?

JANINE: I think Signet will 100% allow that just because like, [sighs] I don't know that she could keep doing things elsewhere if that wasn't happening.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yep.

JANINE: Like if that situation was just staying as-is, I don't that she would feel okay being anywhere except there, even if she couldn't do things.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like she would want to keep an eye on that. It's not like having a pot on the stove, it's like having the oven on, and knowing the oven is on, and you're out and you're not going home. Like you have to go home cause the oven is on. It's not an excuse. For real this time, the oven is on. [laughs]

AUSTIN: The oven is actually on. Yes, totally. You have people minding the oven. That is what I'll say, and they are... They're not you. Like at the end of the day, this is still, the oven is on and they don't know... they don't know from oven. They know from ovens. They don't know from your oven.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know?

JANINE: But I mean...

AUSTIN: They're not chefs. They're not gonna finish that meal.

JANINE: Signet's...

AUSTIN: But they're gonna make sure it doesn't burn down the kitchen.

JANINE: Yeah. Signet's specific, like, use here isn't necessarily a use... Like the knowledge that she has of Belgard I don't know that at this stage has a particular advantage.

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: So I think she can ... she's okay with that.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um, so I don't wanna get into like, what comes next from the Beloved Dust, but I wanna know, are there big picture things that happen over the next couple of weeks or whatever.

JANINE: I have a question.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Does Sho tell on Fourteen not knowing how many Divines there were?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: That's a good question. Um, yes. But only to-- Oh, to Signet. Huh.

JANINE: Cause she said...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: [laughs] She mentioned it. I don't know if she follows through, or if she backs off.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, totally, of course. Absolute-- I think she does it like when you're back--

ALI: [overlapping] I told her not to!

AUSTIN: Yeah, she's... That's not who she is.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I think she's like, I think she's just like in full on gossip mode when she sees you again, Signet, and she's like

AUSTIN (as Sho): They were really brave, but also, I think that they would do better in their job if they read the texts more. If they read the

AUSTIN: I have a-- I have a fuckin' word for what this is, and I've already forgotten what my special word is for the collected books of the Divine Fleet.

[30:05]

AUSTIN: God dammit. It's not the Catalogue. I read a thing about this-- Oh. It's the Assemblage.

AUSTIN (as Sho): If they read the Assemblage more closely, if they studied the texts, they would-- their bravery would be complemented by knowledge. That's all I'm saying.

JANINE (as Signet): Uh...

AUSTIN (as Sho): They didn't know how many there were!

JANINE: To be-- So, to be clear, I do really want this scene. I also think that Signet is like, in a place?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Um, she's in a weird place. To be clear, she probably wasn't in a great place like the past month.

AUSTIN: Yeah, sure.

JANINE: But she's really good at just, you know, that line that I always write at the top of her sheet, which is like, you find your-- Service is peace. Like you find your peace through acting for others, and doing stuff like that.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: So I think, you know, she was already not maybe super happy, and the whole-- the stuff with Belgard has maybe put her into a weird place.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: I think when Sho comes to her with all this really [laughs] excited gossip, I think she like, listens really attentively. Not really attentively, but she listens. And then she comes back with like,

JANINE (as Signet): How specifically do you think that would improve their performance?

AUSTIN: She like thinks about it really hard, and then she says,

AUSTIN (as Sho): The history of the Divines is... a living lesson, for all that we have done well, and all that we have failed to do. If that knowledge cannot improve us, then no knowledge can.

JANINE (as Signet): Does knowing that they didn't know the answer to a question that you knew the answer to-- does that knowledge change who they are? Or does it just

change how you see them? Does it make them any less brave, or any less strong, when it came down to it? Or does it only affect how you see them?

AUSTIN (as Sho): Difference is the heart of the Fleet. It makes them different than me. That does not mean that they cannot do incredible things, but I... It is my goal to be... as....

AUSTIN: And she's like, reaching for words.

AUSTIN (as Sho): I'm not... judging them. I don't think that they are bad. I just wish we shared this. I just wish... they knew the Divines the way we did. I'm sorry.

JANINE (as Signet): You said yourself that difference is the heart of the Fleet. You don't need to have everything in common with someone to share something, and even when you have a difference, it's important to remember that the spirit of divinity isn't in the numbers or the names. It's in the meanings. It's in... everything they represented and the qualities that we try to embody. And you can live those qualities without knowing how many there are. Or every specific one on the list.

AUSTIN (as Sho): I know you're right. [spirited] But how didn't they know that there were 300 Divines? It's the whole thing!

AUSTIN: And she like, is laughing now, but she's let it go.

[JANINE, ALI, and JACK chuckle]

AUSTIN: And just like, shrugs, and then like, walks over to the fruit dispense, and is like

AUSTIN (as Sho): I'm gonna have some potato salad.

AUSTIN: And then makes a plate of potato salad. She is good and pure, and is trying her best.

[ALI laughs]

JANINE: She is.

AUSTIN: Also I think, by the way, Morning's Observation is just like walking around the ship at this point.

ALI: Um...

JACK: What was the nature of the bargain that Signet made with Morning's Observation?

JANINE: He was--

AUSTIN: Signet?

JANINE: Definitely supposed to stay in his room, right? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, basically.

JANINE: The promise was basically that like, he wouldn't have to stay in a box.

AUSTIN: Yes, that was the promise. Yeah, exactly.

JANINE: [overlapping] Like... [laughs] Which is fair.

AUSTIN: At this point-- yeah. At this point, I think he like-- he just kinda nods at the potato salad, and is like

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): Yo, could I get some? Of that? I'll just go back to my room...

AUSTIN: And then, like, Sho's like

AUSTIN (as Sho): [sighs]

[ALI giggles]

AUSTIN: And then gives him a spoonful-- like a big spoonful of potato salad, onto like a plate. Like a bright green plate. And he carries it away. And then he comes back like five minutes later and he's like

AUSTIN (as Morning's Observation): Fork.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: And gets a fork, and then leaves again to go back to the room. Um, yeah.

ALI: I have kinda like a specific end of mission shot for Tender. And I guess like the scope of it is up to Jack. I think like the last image of her in Belgard with Signet is her like, pulling out a cigarette? And like knowing how rude that is and not caring. [laughs]

JANINE: You're just smoking in my dead best friend's body, that's fine.

ALI: [laughs] Yeah, I had a really long day and it's like, this is what I'm gonna do right now.

JANINE: [overlapping] You wouldn't smoke in my car, but you'll smoke in this friend-corpse, that's good.

ALI: Yeah. Sorry. [laughs] I feel really bad right now. And then it cuts to her either like... I think that she's either trying to find Fourteen Fifteen again? Or is either maybe waiting for them in like a meeting spot they might have where it's like, "Okay, I'm gonna come back and, you know, we'll go to this cafe." Or she's actively trying to be like, "Where's their data? Maybe I can find their body before they come back, or whatever." Um... And I guess the other half of that is up to Jack, if they have that bond or not.

JACK: I'd be up for a meeting spot. I assume that Fourteen would try and hunt down Tender. It would be a two-way thing, right?

ALI: Right, yeah, cause you can't-- I can't leave your sight, so it's like, "Oh, immediately I have to go get in touch with Tender." So it's like... yeah. There's like a tea shop or something near...

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI: Like in the middle of where their apartments are. Actually, I don't know how that works. Maybe you live somewhere else now that you're a different person.

AUSTIN: Yeah, are you still on Seance?

JACK: Uh, I think so. But I think that Fourteen rejects the tea shop as a meeting spot.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Huh.

JACK: And gives an address. And it's the lobby at the bottom of a very tall, uh, very slick glass hotel.

ALI: Oh.

JACK: And, yeah. How long do you wait in the lobby for?

AUSTIN: Oh, geez.

ALI: [laughs] It's just an address?

JACK: Uh huh.

ALI: I think-- oh, God, I'm just doing Castille again. But I think that she like... goes there every morning. Maybe there's like a coffee shop in the lobby. And she goes there every day and she gets like a muffin, and like a latte, and sits down and waits. Like finishes them, and then leaves. And like smokes her like weird rose-gold vape, and like...

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI: Waits like maybe [laughs], like an hour to an hour and a half, and then leaves if you don't show up.

JACK: So I reckon after like, three or four of that happening?

[ALI laughs]

JACK: Worthy of Grace comes and sits down, uh, I guess next to you at the bar? At the coffee shop bar? And immediately signs something for the bartender, for the barista, who is like "Oh my god!"

[AUSTIN and ALI laugh]

JACK: And just turns to you and says,

JACK (as Fourteen): The gunslinger is dead.

ALI (as Tender): Oh, and this is-- this is the new one?

JACK (as Fourteen): I've been here all along.

[ALI laughs]

JACK (as Fourteen): Do you want my autograph?

[ALI and AUSTIN laugh]

ALI (as Tender): Yeah, let me-- let me buy you a cup of coffee, and then I will get your autograph.

JACK (as Fourteen): I'll take it.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: There's another thing, Fourteen. Another one of your memories has to be gone.

JACK: Oh, it does, doesn't it?

AUSTIN: It does.

JACK: Do you-- are you gonna tell me what it is?

AUSTIN: It's interesting, because like, there's a pressure on me to make it something that the audience knows? That's from our time, right? Because those are the memories that they know, already. But there's also this like well of past memories that we've never seen or spoken about.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm very, like... I'm very torn because of that, is what I'll say.

JACK: Yeah, it's like, do we wanna play the-- do we wanna play the classic

AUSTIN: [overlapping] I think I'll save-- I think I wanna save the, it's a memory that everyone has seen. Because that's gonna hit harder later. Um, so maybe it's-- Oh! No, we can have our cake. The time you got really mad, and spent all summer chasing that person down, who was burning down all of those restaurants. That's the memory you lose. The angriest you've ever been during a hit is swept away.

JACK: I think that Worthy of Grace takes from their bag-- I said, I used she/her pronouns earlier, and that was a mistake. Um, Fourteen Fifteen and Worthy of Grace use they/them consistently. Even if I screw up, which I should work to do less.

AUSTIN: Which, yup. We all do.

JACK: Worthy of Grace removes a bright red fountain pen from their purse, and reaches across to a napkin, and writes in big letters "Fourteen Fifteen" on the napkin, and slides it across the table towards Tender.

[AUSTIN and ALI laugh]

AUSTIN: That's really good. That's really good. Uh, okay, also Tender, and if my voice sounds different, it's because we're recording this later, because I realized we didn't do this scene that was very important. We need to talk about your emotional spikes.

ALI: [laughs] Yeah.

AUSTIN: You are spiked out. Question, like, so you have five in Peaceful right now, right?

ALI: I do indeed.

AUSTIN: Is that kind of why Tender was able to just, like, "I'm just gonna sit in this bar until we meet up."

ALI: [laughs] Yeah. I think a part of that is like, I think it's like maybe tradition, but I think being able to sort of ignore everything else, and be like "Yeah I'm just gonna hang out and smoke in this cafe every morning."

AUSTIN: Right, right, right.

ALI: Is easier to be when your Peaceful is spiked out?

AUSTIN: Right, right. It's not like you're sad. It's not like you're like, you know. It's not like you're powerful, it's like "I have to be out there in the world." You're peaceful and like, that means... I dunno, you tell me. What does having peaceful spiked out look like for Tender Sky?

ALI: Um... I dunno, it's tough cause it's like, thinking about what her life outside of work is like is kind of weird. Cause she's like this person who is like a weird secret agent, and then also like a club runner, but is also like so separate from everything that she grew up around?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Like she doesn't really-- she's really separated from the By-and-By and like her home and like what she grew up with. So I...

AUSTIN: Well is this-- Is this a situation where she would make a reconnection to that? Or is this just kind of an emotional place where that comes up in thought?

ALI: It's tough, cause like considering everything else that happened in that mission, it's hard not to think that that's where her headspace would be at?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Cause I think that [laughs] literally, after seeing herself and Open [Metal] like mind connected, is tough to be like, "Oh, okay, that was weird. I'm just gonna..." [laughs]

AUSTIN: Right. "Move on now."

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And that mind connection is still there in a sense, right? Like... Or the connection with Signet. Not the connection, but Signet is now permanently in your subconscious now, right?

ALI: That is-- that is true.

AUSTIN: And so like, that's also an added element here, which I am very interested in how that all shakes out.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I honestly don't know how it will.

ALI: Yeah, I mean, yep.

AUSTIN: From a move perspective... I'll just read here, cause this is I think going to be the first time that people hear anything spiked out. "When a PC marks the fifth bubble in an emotion, all of the modifiers change, and the state that the fifth bubble was marked in becomes +1. And all others are temporarily locked in at -2. In addition, the player chooses one of the following when another move is triggered."

So the next time you do a move, you either can... to keep using the spiked out emotion-- You can either choose to keep using the spiked out emotion, in which case the emotion spike in the state decreases by one, and when all emotion spikes have been removed, all state modifiers go back to normal. So like right now you're at five spikes in Peaceful, which means your Peaceful's at +1, which is higher than it normally is, which is normally a 0. But after you do five Peaceful things, your stats will go back to normal. Also everything else will be at a -2.

Or, to use a different state at -2. So if you do another move and you-- you roll at -2, you may then erase all emotion spikes in the spiked out state. You must still then mark an emotion spike in the state you just rolled. So the next time you do something, if you do a Joyful thing, then you're gonna be rolling at -2, because you're spiked out in Peaceful, but it will erase those Peaceful spikes and you'll go back down to your normal stats. Is there anything you wanna do in this kind of downtime betw-- at the end of this kind of adventure mission thing, besides meet up with Fourteen Fifteen?

ALI: Um, yeah, I was-- When we were talking about it before, I was thinking of her, having a scene with her where she's like creating a like, an environment to worship in? By herself.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's interesting. Okay. What's it look like, or how does she-- what's she do? Tell me, tell me about this whole thing.

ALI: [laughs] Fair enough. Cause I think the thing that's interesting about this especially is like, the other times that we're gonna see her on the screen doing this is like her creating environments for other people?

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: Whereas this is like, kind of like a way--

AUSTIN: Is this new? For her?

ALI: Um, I... [sighs] I don't think that it happens super often.

AUSTIN: Okay.

[45:00]

ALI: Um, it might, though. Like, cause I feel like it's a way for her to visit her home? That isn't... you know, like going to the ship, and having to face people, and do all of the things.

AUSTIN: Right, right. It's like when I used to-- when I was away from New York, I would play Grand Theft Auto IV

[ALI giggles]

AUSTIN: And it would absolutely-- like it's nothing like New York. Or it's like New York, but it's not really like being in New York in any meaningful way, but there were... I think I've said this before, but there were moments in playing GTA 4 and now 5 now that I used to live in LA, where for a split second, going at high speed around a corner, thing meld just so that they scratch the same part of your memory that produces a feeling of like, "Oh yeah, I've been there before." And it's not-- you don't, and also you don't have to go say hi to anybody. I don't have to--

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: You know. If I play GTA 5, I don't have to message all my old CalArts friends and be like, "Oh, I'm in town. I'm gonna try to find an hour so we can go get lunch, and also that hour's actually gonna end up being two hours, cause that's how lunch hours go." And like, I just get to like drive downtown and remember, "Oh yeah, there was that parking lot that all of my friends went to that time when we went to the museum together and we all parked in this parking lot that we stumbled into." And that's in the game. Weird. Um, anyway that's my weird divergence on this notion of digital lobbies.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Digital places to worship. Grand Theft Auto, a digital place to worship.

ALI: Right. [laughs] Yes, of course.

AUSTIN: God.

ALI: Yeah. I think the benefit of her being able to design it herself, though, instead of you having to like, deal with what Grand Theft Auto put together...

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI: ... is that like, she can put in the things that are...

AUSTIN: Right, right.

ALI: That she remembers. Even if it's not one to one to whatever the church that she grew up and studied in was, but like... she can recreate like the way that the wind hit the curtains, or whatever. Or like--

AUSTIN: Right, but is it even-- is it even more like impressionistic than that? Because you know, her memory is probably imperfect. But like the things she remembers, she remembers very clearly.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So it's not the church as it was or the temple as it was, but it is the temple as she remembers it? Which is an interesting divide to think about.

ALI: Yeah, for sure. Cause I-- I don't think that she's even attempting to make like a one to one... recreation of it, but like something that kind of fits the same-- I don't know, it's like if you moved to a different place, but you wanted to kind of redecorate it like your old house was. So I think that it's like...

AUSTIN: Well let's construct it, and then you can describe what it's like, because some of these things will...

ALI: [overlapping] Yes. Fair. Oh, I am gonna have to roll.

AUSTIN: ... help describe it. You are. So how do you feel while constructing this?

ALI: Um... Peaceful.

AUSTIN: Okay. So roll...

ALI: Cause I feel like-- Yeah, I feel like the thing is that like [laughs], we're gonna just keep saying like, "You know that time when like," but you know when you're like...

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI: When you've had like a really bad experience, or you're really anxious about something, and instead of being able to like, deal with it, you're just like, "Oh..."

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: "It's fine." Like you're not dealing with it because... You can just sort of pretend like it's fine, and I feel like that's what kind of the Peaceful thing is going to stay as, cause it's easier just to... Like, willing up the ability to do something Joyful is harder than just being like, "Oh. Yeah. Sure." [laughs]

AUSTIN: "This is fine. Yeah. I'll just go do this thing."

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like there's definitely-- there've definitely been times when it's like, "I'm super depressed and I know that if I get out and start doing things, I'll start working towards being less depressed." And frankly, spiked out Peaceful can look like depression as much as spiked out Sad, for me?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Where it's just like, oh, I don't have the will to do-- I just, I need to be completely still.

ALI: Right, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: And so I can imagine myself like dragging myself out to the movies or to see friends, and being just kind of quiet and introspective and pea-- quote unquote "peaceful". Whereas there are times when just like, there's no way I can put the fucking face on. I'm just not gonna be able to be like you said, it's so much harder to be Joyful at that first step. So yeah, Peaceful. Peaceful. I like it. So yeah, give me Construct.

ALI: [overlapping] So to Construct, I have to roll plus... Cyberbrain.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] 2d6... Well, you're gonna be running-- Yeah, you'll be rolling +Cyberbrain anyway because it's whatever move, which is also +1 in this case.

ALI: Okay. So... [hums]

AUSTIN: That's a 7. So, when you host a digital lobby, roll +Cyberbrain. By default, the effect will last only as long as you maintain it, will only be able to house two minds, will have an unsecure open connection protocol, and appear basic and without detail. On a 10+, choose two.

On a 7-9, choose one: It will persist for a while without you actively maintaining it; it's highly detailed and expansive; it has no cap on population; or its connection is secure from intruders.

ALI: [laughs] Sure, okay. And I get one of these?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: Boy howdy. [laughs] Okay. There's definitely one of these that's like, interesting not to take, but I have to see if to see if that's like the honest thing to do.

AUSTIN: I mean, you gotta not take three of them, so...

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, I also have an idea with this, but I wanna...

ALI: Oh?

AUSTIN: I have to just check something really quick. One second.

ALI: Okay. [laughs] Yeah, cause I feel like... It persisting is not necessary, because she would be going in and out of it willingly anyway.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

ALI: Same with the population. Although it doesn't really need to be highly detailed and expansive?

AUSTIN: I think detailed is the one that... is tough for me, because like, you described the wind blowing curtains, and that's highly detailed for me.

ALI: Right, yeah. Yeah, fair.

AUSTIN: The thing that I'm-- the thing that I'm thinking about right now is that in the upcoming expansion to the Veil, Fraser is adding reaction clocks for sort of player-based things? So the example that he gives in the book is that like, I'll just read from it. "Clocks come into play when stakes' questions are formed by the natural events of what the players do or unfold, and you, the MC, have just the answers to one such question, or perhaps altogether new stakes' questions that germinate are directly actionable the next time you return to the fiction." Ordinarily... Or, I'm gonna just keep going.

Here we go. "For instance, if the stakes' question was, 'Are there repercussions for the telepresence now that their identity was broadcast?', the answer that you come up with may be

a reaction.” So, it’s sort of like, when... It’s sort of like in *Blades in the Dark*, for people who’ve listened to Marielda, the players can set clocks for their own things. That like, as they step towards success, the world changes around them. And in the *Veil*, that’s based around some sort of question.

And I kind of like the notion of like, what if this is a thing you-- what if this is an ongoing project for you? And not just a thing... Like, right now the first thing that you do here will add this to it, its quality as a space that you’ll continue to work on. Do you know what I mean? So if you give it ‘highly detailed’, then it will become highly detailed. It won’t have any of those other things, but the next time you build it, it will already have ‘highly detailed’.

ALI: Okay, I get what you mean.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Do you see what I mean? Like, and then--

ALI: She’s like slowly building this place instead of...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Instead of it being just like a thing she does once. You know?

ALI: Right right right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then also it will remind me to return to it, cause I’ll have a clock for it, one. And two, it also means that like, I can have the world react around it based on what you choose here, too.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: So what do you think?

ALI: Um... In that case I think I’m gonna pick that it’s highly detailed and expansive.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: I like the idea of it being-- well, because it’s a place that she keeps going back to. Like in the course of whatever... two or three weeks between these missions is. But like each time she goes, she like builds it up a little bit more? Um, and... yeah.

AUSTIN: What’s the name of the... of the temple? If it has one at all.

ALI: Oh. [laughs] That’s a good question. Um... Man, I’m not like super...

AUSTIN: I’m just gonna write Tender’s Temple for now.

ALI: [laughing] Yeah. I'm like, not super homed-in on what the naming...

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's fine. We'll get there.

ALI: ... stuff is for over there yet.

AUSTIN: So, it's highly detailed and expansive. What's it look like? What's it look like for her to make it? Like what's it look like from the camera's perspective?

ALI: Would she need to like, log in the way that everything else does?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

ALI: Okay. Yeah, huh.

AUSTIN: Or like, if she doesn't then that's a feature of her cyberbrain, right? And we should talk about what that looks like instead.

ALI: [laughs] Yeah, cause I feel like... It's weird, cause like, she's constructing this place, but not... But not for anyone else, so I don't know that she would be making it in a way that would be...

AUSTIN: Well, its connection is not secure from intruders, so for now, it is absolutely for other people.

ALI: Yeah. Then maybe she just has like one of those, if we've been imagining those as one of those spa chairs, but like with wires, or however...

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: ... we've been picturing this. Like, maybe she just has one of those in her room?

AUSTIN: Yeah. There's not like any physical connection.

ALI: Right right right, yeah.

AUSTIN: It's not like a Matrix chair where it, like, you jack in. Like it is just like...

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Everything that we've seen so far has just been like, "Oh, it's a comfortable chair." Or it's a bench. Like it is... those spaces are meant to be... strange, and not necessarily like-- Those spaces are meant to be that sort of weird mundane place where like... Like actual

threshold spaces in the real world. Things like the... the lobby of a hotel. The... if you go to like a gym, the front area of a gym where sometimes there will be like a smoothie shop, and like a couch and a chair. And it's like, "No one is here to hang out, bro. We're just--"

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: But like those spaces are actually kind of weirdly important in terms of clearing your head on your way in or out of a place. And architecture is like, filled with a history of those things, and that's what I'm trying to evoke with those. Is like... however advanced our technology is, people still need to decompress, and prepare. And so like, all of those things are kind of meant to evoke those like, liminal spaces is I guess the word you should google if you're interested in these things.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Churches have them too, right? Like you don't walk into a church and then you're immediately in the big area. You walk into a church and there are candles in front of you, and you can kneel and say a prayer by yourself, before you then join the communal-- the community. And this is the same thing. So, but yeah. I think your brain also just lets you fuckin' do it here. Or not your brain, because you don't have a physical cyberbrain any more, your...

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Whatever that is that we have to get to the bottom of.

ALI: Yeah. But I think that it's maybe like... I like the idea-- The idea of decompression, I like the idea of her maybe having this like... shitty, dark, kind of cluttered like apartment that nobody goes into. And then she goes into like her home office, and it looks like one of the lobbies.

AUSTIN: Right. Totally.

ALI: It's like more bright, and there's like a nice couch and like a plant or whatever, and then she sits down and starts to do this thing. Um, and I think... [sighs] Hmm. When I think of the space itself, I think of kind of a... like kind of a place with like, big windows, but with white curtains in front of it?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: And I think that it's a completely empty room. Like there aren't any pews, or like... chairs or anything. Because people who are in there are either, like, kneeling or standing. Or like talking amongst themselves.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: It's not like you sit down, and someone preaches.

AUSTIN: What's it look like when she makes it? Like is it already made when she arrives, or is she painting? Is she...

ALI: Um, I think that--

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Does stuff just appear digitally? Like...

ALI: I think that it's... It like starts with the floor. It's kind of like that... [laughs] It's that kind of like Sims thing, where you kind of see the like outline where a wall should go?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: And then once she pays attention to it and puts a thing there, it's like there's a wall there now, and you can put the curtains up.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: It's like... [sighs] It's like when something is gridded in that way, where like you know, oh, this is where I put this... doorknob, or this door, or the window, or like whatever else. Um, and then I think it just kind of comes into being. It's like a blank space, and then it kind of gets all pixel-y, and then it forms like the actual environment.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. And so what's she do when she's there?

ALI: [sighs] I think that she, she kneels. And she... she kinda just hangs out. I think that like the--

AUSTIN: Is she meditating? Like what's the...

ALI: Sort of, yeah. I think it's kind of like prayer, in... in silence and by herself. I think that there's like-- there's not like an altar so much as there's like a focal point of the room?

AUSTIN: Right. Is--

ALI: I think the front of the room-- Oh, sorry.

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

ALI: [laughing] Okay. I was gonna say that I think that the... there's like... I don't know what exact culture or whatever it's from. I've seen it a lot cause I'm from California? So I assume that

it's like in a lot of Spanish places, but like where there's kind of a mosaic of a figure, and then like a fountain? Underneath it? Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah, I know what you mean. What's the-- who's the figure?

ALI: Man... [laughs] Cause we don't even have like a Cadent or anything for...

AUSTIN: Well, the Cadent is for the whole Fleet.

ALI: ...this location. Yeah.

AUSTIN: The Cadent is everybody. There isn't like a single-- Do you know what I mean?

ALI: Oh, no, I mean an Excerpt for...

AUSTIN: Right, there is no more Excerpt for Anticipation. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, it could have been the last Excerpt. It could have been, you know, it could have been the first Excerpt.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I don't know who that is, you know?

ALI: Yep. [laughs]

AUSTIN: But it could have been. It's up to you, like we don't need a name for that person right now necessarily, but I am curious. Like...

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: What sort of person would--

ALI: Maybe it's all of them.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

ALI: Maybe it's like a wall where like, because it's a mosaic, it's like really... I don't wanna say crude, but really simple...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Images of each of them.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Is it actually all of them in a... like in a row? Or is it a situation where like-- Like, I imagine, and this is not how physical things work, but we're not in the physical world.

[1:00:02]

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: And also we're in a world of hyper technology. But I imagine a single mosaic in an arch, right? Like a single figure. Almost like a stained glass window, or again like a mosaic figure, but it-- the tiles are like, I don't know the fucking word, like lentric-- lentricular?

[ALI giggles]

AUSTIN: Lentric, I don't know how to pronounce that word. Lentricular. Which is like... Like a weird-- it has like a weird... Lentricular printings are things where it's like, oh, when I look at it from this lens it's like-- it's this character, and when I look on the other side it morphs, and now it's a different character, or whatever. They're like transformers? They're like, if you look at it from the left, it looks like it's a car. You look at it on the right, it's like, oh no. It slowly turns into Optimus Prime in robot mode.

But in this case it's like, depending on what angle you're at, you're seeing a different Excerpt there. And like from straight ahead, it's like the... tiles are-- there are only x number of tiles in this portrait basically, right? And they're always in the same place, the head is in the same place. They're not changing poses or anything. But for every place in this room, when you look at it it's a different Excerpt. Because there have been so many, right? Like it's 30,000 years of Excerpts.

ALI: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: And so it's like, it's the same one. And depending on where you sit, you actually like get access to a different Excerpt to like reflect on, basically. Maybe even access information about them. Like you know, this is the one who, you know, saved the Fleet this time. This is the one who devoted their entire lives towards like, building a relationship with a different ship. Here's one that like-- this is the Excerpt who helped, you know, codify the system of different levels on Anticipation as a ship. Or on the By-and-By as a ship. Here's the person who designed the By-and-By. Before that, you know, all the followers of Anticipation were spread out on a bunch of different ships. And that way it's sort of like a living canon of all the different important Excerpts throughout history.

ALI: Ooh, yeah. I think in that case it should probably be like in the middle of the room?

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool.

ALI: And that's why there aren't like seats or whatever? Cause you kind of go in and you like sit at the angle that you wanna be, depending on what kind of like-- yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: That's really good. But it's always facing you, no matter where you are, it's still facing you. Right. Cool.

ALI: [overlapping] But like [unintelligible]. Yeah.

AUSTIN: I like that a lot. And also, I think it hits in with the By-and-By part of like, moving is-- Because you're moving, you're accessing something special, right?

ALI: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Taking a trip means something, and in this case it literally transforms the room for you in this important way. So I think while you're sitting, you just feel somebody else's presence here.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like you feel... Like the way that the pressure in a room can change. Um, and... Open Metal is here. Watering plants.

[ALI chuckles, then groans]

AUSTIN: What was she doing the last time that you, like, dealt with her?

ALI: In like... life or like in the game? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah. In life. Well the last time that we saw her in game wasn't her, it was...

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: ...The iconoclasts. Like this weird, mocking image of her. And I guess my-- here's the other question is like, is there a way for Tender to know the difference between a subconscious projection of her and it's really her?

ALI: Um... I think so. Because like, that's, I mean... The subconscious version of someone is so much different from like, seeing them? Like in real life?

AUSTIN: Right, right. Yeah.

ALI: Even if it's someone you like see every day, that I think there's like an obvious kind of... division.

AUSTIN: Like not even a tell, but just like-- yeah, yeah. Clear division.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And yeah. It's her.

ALI: [laughs] Sick. Um, I think the last time they saw each other was probably, like, while they were doing the trials for like what had happened there.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Like they were both being questioned for... for whatever it was. And like, it was probably like when they were both sat down by the council, like at separate tables, and told [laughs], "This is what you're guilty with and this is what your options are." Um...

AUSTIN: She like stops watering one of your plants, and looks over at you, and says,

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): They didn't take it from you.

ALI (as Tender): They-- they didn't. They tried to.

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): They tried to?

AUSTIN: And like a grin crosses her face.

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): How'd you hold on to it?

ALI (as Tender): It... It wanted to stay.

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): It's a piece of metal and machine. How did it want to stay?

ALI (as Tender): No, it is... It is Anticipation itself.

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): I said you should be a goddess, and... you fought me. And now you're telling me you're one with Anticipation itself.

ALI (as Tender): I don't have any other way to explain it, so I know that this is what my purpose was.

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): The trial left you with such confidence.

ALI (as Tender): And what did it leave you with? Are you really happy with just tending the shrines?

AUSTIN: She like, her mouth like-- When she looks at you, her mouth never closes. She's just like always like... a little... like slackjawed presents the wrong image, do you know what I mean?

ALI: [giggles] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like slackjawed suggests like, in awe or confused. But she's just like, not interested in closing her mouth.

[ALI snorts]

AUSTIN: Um, she... steps towards you a few steps. Um, what are you wearing? Like what's the-- what's shrine wear look like?

ALI: Aw, man. So I described it in the... the last episode, and I think that it's probably really interesting that she'd be wearing it again, but it's like a... it's like a white robe but with a bunch of like different patterns stamped onto it?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: There was a specific design, but I'll link you to it after this, cause it's not important right now. But it's like a lot of different colors, a lot of different geometric shapes.

AUSTIN: Oh, right right right. I remember this now.

ALI: Yes. And like literally sections of the pattern, like you can see the square here, and you can see the square there, and they kind of just go on top of each other in that way.

AUSTIN: So she's wearing like the same thing at this moment. Like the same as she was when she appeared as like the iconoclasts version, like Tender. Um, and then as she steps, it's like... I've used Google Paint or like Google Brush a couple of times as like an analogy here because I think it's a really neat way to think about digital spaces? Um, where... It's like her... Her robe starts to become unraveled and then repainted on her as different layers. It's like the base layer is this like brown leather-- or it's like brown leather pants. Almost like... almost medieval looking on the pants, or like early modern. Like, you know, 1800s or something, with like big knee pads that are made of dark metal, and then like a long blue... like military shirt? Like a button-up military shirt?

And then she has like a sash going across her shirt with a big like... It's like-- I'll say the shirt is blue, so I think that the sash is this like deep, dark red with a single yellow line going through it.

And then a big pauldron on her left arm. She's like a knight now. In fact she even has like an ornamental sword at her side. In fact I think she probably looks-- That we get this shot where it's her and then she's standing next to the icon in the center of the room where there is an Excerpt who is wearing a very similar outfit. Um, and she's like...

ALI: That's annoying.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's very annoying. And she has a cape now also. And, uh... The cape is probably that same dark, red crimson from the sash. And... She says, this is in response just as a reminder, to you saying, "Are you still tending the shrine?" She says,

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): I'm tending something much larger now. The By-and-By is the largest ship in the Fleet, but we are not its center. We should be.

ALI (as Tender): I don't know how you haven't learned that being so ambitious is a bad idea.

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): [sighs] Tender...

AUSTIN: She like steps closer to you now.

[ALI lets out an exasperated sigh]

AUSTIN: And like reaches a hand out for yours. Both hands out for yours.

ALI: Um, I think that I keep them on my knees. Like on my lap.

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): [sighs] You never looked good as a coward. Ambition is... all there is. It's what got us this far. A willingness to take risks. A willingness to do what others said was impossible. You, with all of your power, you should know more than anyone else how important ambition is. Otherwise... [sighs] It's a waste. And don't... talk to me about moderation. We were not moderate when we decided to build the Fleet. We were not resigned to what was possible or practical. It took fearlessness to make a home this beautiful. And I am willing to be fearless.

ALI (as Tender): When they built the Fleet, they did so in thinking of everyone in the Fleet. You never consider how the things that you do will affect other people. There's no reason for us to be at the center. Just like there's no reason for you to be at the top.

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): We think of the people in different ways. There are so many on the By-and-By. So many more than there are on Gumption's Gambit or on the Sky. So many more who suffer. Whose voices are not heard. Who, in time, will rebuild this entire Fleet, if they survive. If they receive the support of the Cadent. Putting the Cadent in the

same place as the final Divine, it's foolish. She should not be on Seance. She should be at home with us. And the Fleet will follow.

ALI (as Tender): Have you been to Seance?

AUSTIN: She nods.

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): Of course. It's beautiful. It's-- for a graveyard it's a hell of a place to walk around. But I'm not ready to bury the Fleet yet. I'm moving on this, Tender. And I would've loved to have your support on it. But barring that, this is me telling you not to get in my way.

[ALI laughs]

ALI (as Tender): I'm busy these days anyway.

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): Okay. A hell of a thing that you got to keep, that brain. A hell of a thing.

AUSTIN: And she like draws her-- She like turns her back to you and draws her blade and slowly cuts into the air. She just like makes a circle in the air, and a thin, white, bright line appears until it is like a portal, basically. It's like a half circle. It's like more than-- it's 3/4ths of a circle. And then it like, it shines like the corona of an eclipse, and then the whole middle turns white all at once, and she like turns back to you with her blade out. And you just get like this solid silhouette of her again, just like the completely black, backlit by the light behind her. She says,

AUSTIN (as Open Metal): There are so many "what could have been"s. This next one, I'm going to make sure it is.

AUSTIN: And she like steps backwards into the light. Um... And it like does this weird thing, which is, it doesn't... It like detaches from the layer that it's on in Photoshop, in a sense.

[ALI chuckles]

AUSTIN: Like it unmerges with the layer of the temple? Um, and goes up into the sky, and it is just a bright white sun above this temple now. And it's just added here. That's just also part of your space, is her like portal here.

ALI: [snorts] Cooool...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Okay. I have a question before we wrap.

JANINE: Oh, I have another thing, too.

AUSTIN: Well that's my-- It might be the same thing. Do you visit Blueberri Jin?

JANINE: That's-- Yeah, that's what I was gonna bring up is... like, yeah that's the thing that I promised to do. I'm still need to do.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um, one of the things that we mentioned was that it takes a month to acclimate to the simulation traditionally.

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: That's the rule. Like you could go in quickly like you did under certain circumstances, under like life or death circumstances you got the approval to do that, but you shouldn't have done that. And I think probably in all of the, like, analysis of everything that happened there, people will say, "Ah, yeah, that's where the subconscious got in. That's why the iconoclasts followed in, is cause you didn't spend that month, you know, acclimating. Obviously it was for the best in the end, no one's upset, but like that's the sort of thing that can happen when you don't spend that month, you know, getting built into the system." And so I think they insist that you'll spend that month doing that before you visit.

JANINE: Yeah. So... [sighs] When I made that promise, we kind of sort of discussed it last time. The previous time. Whenever it came up. My original thought was like, oh, well I should use some of the Faith that I have on the Cadent, and do something with that to some end, to make that more reasonable. Cause it was hard to imagine Signet taking that much time off of, away from her duties?

AUSTIN: Right, right.

[1:15:00]

JANINE: But I think I've... [sighs] I think because of everything that happened, I've come around on the other side of that, which is like... Signet doesn't take vacation time.

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

JANINE: Like I'm sure vacation time is provided.

AUSTIN: Yes, totally.

JANINE: And has been for her duration of time that I'm sure, like, she probably has enough vacation time to take like a 10 year sabbatical.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Like she could just go, if it-- you know, and it would on paperwork be totally fine. She doesn't do that, though. But in this particular case, I think-- I think maybe the exception she would make would be to like, tell the people working on Belgard and tell Blooming and the Cadent, like, if something-- if anything happens on that front, pull me out. But otherwise, I think she does go in for that month of acclimatisation and stuff, to visit Blueberri.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um..

JANINE: She takes that time out. I would say she also probably like, gives Nideo-- she probably gives Nideo like her, it's not a patrol schedule but like, the places she usually is that people find her? To be like, if you have people who can go to these places, let me know. It would be helpful. Stuff like that.

AUSTIN: Do you have-- do you have Faith on Nideo or is it the other way around? I forget.

JANINE: Um... I don't think it's-- I don't think it's either? This isn't like a thing...

AUSTIN: Yeah. I'll let it happen.

JANINE: This isn't like a thing that I'm binding them... Although I have Faith-- I have Faith on important Faith people, like I have Faith on the Cadent. Who also has Faith on me.

AUSTIN: I think what I'd say is, Nideo will say like, not like-- you know. It's not like covering for you. But will make sure that those services are continue to be provided? Basically like, in exchange for Faith on you, though. Like of course, you know, I would-- we all serve each other. Which is, you know. Remember, please, remember this.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But isn't asking for anything specific outside of that right now.

JANINE: Yeah. That's fine.

AUSTIN: Related, briefly, Fourteen Fifteen should take one Faith on Aura Antigua. Okay. So you go in. And... I think it is... They are in... God, what's the best room for them to be in? Let me think. Um, I think it's... they and-- no, I think just by themselves. You're going in to see--

JANINE: Sorry, is Blueberri they or she?

AUSTIN: Blueberri is they/them.

JANINE: Okay. Okay.

AUSTIN: Korrin is she. She/her. And I forge-- I think, I have to look at my notes for Softstone. But Softstone probably won't come up. I don't think you're gonna go see that robot... person. I think that robot was he/him.

JANINE: I'm surprised enough that Korrin and Blueberri are together.

AUSTIN: Um... Softstone, also they/them.

ALI: But it's like the thing for them, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that was the thing that you did. You gave-- you didn't hook them up, but you like convinced Blueberri to take care of Korrin. So yeah, I think it's Korrin--

JANINE: Yeah, but I didn't realize that would be for like a month. I thought that was just while she was wounded.

AUSTIN: I think that was a moment.

ALI: [overlapping] Well, now they're pals. Like that was the-- [laughs]

AUSTIN: So yeah, so... So I think, you know, you get this visit with them. Um, and you... [sighs] I think maybe even-- the counselor wouldn't tell you this, I think Blueberri tells you this. I think you just get the meeting with-- You walk into a little... it's like a little patio overlooking a wine-- like a vineyard, basically, right? And Korrin is leaving as you come in. And... Just kind of smiles and nods to you and walks away. And Blueberri tells you that their counselor has been really impressed with the way they have been socializing lately. That they have been letting themselves build connections with other people, and that they... like, are no longer avoiding the responsibility of personal connection the way that they had been before. And they're like,

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): Thank you so much. I-- [sighs] People always expected a lot from me. And... they pushed me to do things I didn't think I could. But you didn't make me do it. You convinced me that I could. I didn't think I could. I didn't think that was the type of thing-- I didn't think that was the type of thing I was built for.

JANINE (as Signet): Well, there's-- [sighs]

JANINE: Wait, are we just like standing on a patio?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you're just on a nice patio looking out over a vineyard.

JANINE: I trained a month to go stand on a patio?

AUSTIN: It's a very nice patio.

JANINE: [sighs] I guess. Um...

AUSTIN: Like it's a very nice patio and also when they saw you, they didn't react like you were something-- like you were an invader. Do you know? Like--

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: There's a slow process by which-- it's not just you're acclimating to being there. It's acclimating to your presence. So that things don't just like jump all out of place and be weird and stuff.

JANINE: Mhm. Um... okay, yeah I think Signet just says, you know,

JANINE (as Signet): Most of us are capable of a lot more than we think. It's just a matter of... matter of doing it for the right reasons, or...

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): I didn't think you'd be capable of visiting me, if I'm being honest, but you did.

JANINE (as Signet): I took a little time off.

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): That's good. Let me show you the vineyard.

AUSTIN: And like hops over the railing down onto like the hill that's right there. And is just like, looks up and is like,

AUSTIN (as Blueberri): C'mon!

JANINE: [huffs] Um...

AUSTIN: Is Signet in, like, full regalia?

JANINE: No, I think... I think-- I imagine part of like, look, you're spending a month to acclimate to a place. There's probably like, you have to dress to fit the place.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: Like if you show up in full regalia, what is the point? [laughing] Like, what is even the point of any of that? So I imagine she's-- I imagine she's actually dressed very similarly to the way we saw her when we had that sort of flashback to when she was leaving. Just like, really

simple light cotton dress. Like, probably mid-length sleeves and a little collar and buttons up the front. Her hair is probably just loose. You know, very... simple, straightforward, unadorned, but just like, you know, classic.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think Blueberri has on, like, I think maroon riding pants? Like I think that their whole outfit is like equestrian. Gray, like, jacket with-- they might even take out a little black riding cap, and put it on? I mean, fuck it, they might even produce two horses for you to like hop on and then y'all can ride through this vineyard. Like this visit isn't just like a 15 minute visit. Like, you didn't wait for a month to be like, "Oh, hey, how's it going?" Right?

JANINE: Yeah. This is like a nice weekend.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, exactly. Exactly.

JANINE: There's something I wanna do, though.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: So I've taken a component on Blueberri based on the explanation that they, you know, had always felt they were under a lot of pressure, and had a hard time sort of socializing with people, and... so I took a component based on that. I want to immediately expend that component, though, using True Name. Specifically I-- Specifically the thing I wanna do is, I want to assist Blueberri. Like I want Blueberri to do--

AUSTIN: Oh, sure.

JANINE: Like we're doing things. I want Blueberri to do something really well so that they feel cool in front of me.

AUSTIN: Aw, that's really good. Yeah. I think that-- that can just apply to the whole weekend, right? Like they make dinner one night and it's better than it has any right to be. And they, like, show off some, like a painting they've been working on, or like-- and it's not that the painting is better, but it's that they have the confidence to explain the process with clarity.

JANINE: They don't point out all the flaws in it, either.

AUSTIN: Right. Exactly. They don't throw themselves under--

JANINE: [overlapping] Like, "Oh, I messed up this part."

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly, exactly. And I think that that's-- I think that on actually your last day there, there's like a dinner type thing that's like... you, and their counselor, and Korrin is there, and... Korrin's counselor is there. You're like a guest of honor. The Vice-Warden is there. Like

it's a nice little event. And at the event, the... Korrin's counselor announces that Korrin will be-- Korrin's stay has been completed, and Korrin will be leaving soon. And you can see that there is no envy in Blueberri. They're like at peace about that. And like confident that that's-- that they're remaining because they have more work to do, and that they'll get to leave soon, too. And I think there's probably a brief moment where Korrin also thanks you.

AUSTIN (as Korrin): I didn't think-- I didn't think...

AUSTIN: This is probably a private moment. I think probably still out on-- It's the same patio, but the patio is just bigger than it was before? So that there can be just like, a whole dining set now, instead of just being a nice little patio. But like off in the corner at night, I think Korrin, who is just like-- I haven't described Korrin in a while, but like, very dark skin, kind of like... thick, you know, curly black hair, but shaped up into like, almost like wings? And I just like-- I just really wanna spend a moment to say that like, I think her skin looks really good in the night. Like with the moons, like, reflecting off of her skin. We don't-- on a podcast, we don't describe skin texture and tone and color very often? But it's this very beautiful dark brown, with like a nighttime blue on it, and we just don't see that very often, so I'll just say that. And I think she's just like...

AUSTIN (as Korrin): It was seeing what you did with Blueberri that pushed me to really commit myself. I coulda left this place ten years ago if I'd wanted to, and I just didn't. I just didn't. I didn't want to. Uh... So, you know, helping people and all that, that sounds pretty good now. That sounds pretty good. So thanks.

JANINE (as Signet): You know, I left under pretty similar circumstances when I was here.

AUSTIN (as Korrin): You were here?

JANINE (as Signet): Lots of people come here.

AUSTIN (as Korrin): Yeah, I guess that's fair. I guess that's fair. Uh... guess it's time to get back to the party.

AUSTIN: And she just walks back over and like, Blueberri like gives her a big hug and then Blueberri pours some-- some more wine, and there's like, a little bit of like a dance, but you know? Like a brief celebratory dance, not like-- No one's dancing, you know what I mean?

[JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: You just kind of like do a wiggle? They do a little wiggle. And Korrin is like, alright.

JANINE: It's the dance you do when there's two cou-- when both of your counselors are there, like...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh huh. Yes. And I think that's just like the vision that we get of that place. And like I think maybe even we would have seen like Bluberri, like, shows you what they go through on a day-to-day basis, right? Like here's when I'm in the library for, you know, some time and I'm reading about blah blah blah, or I'm watching these videos, or I'm... talking to my counselor about blah blah blah. Obviously that's a private thing, you're not there for that, but like, oh, and then this is where I go and meet blah blah blah.

But like you just get-- you get a vision of this place working, and it's very clear what you've assured, which is... Whatever threatened to corrupt this and hurt the most vulnerable people that were here, the people who need most the attention of a system that cares for them and that offers them the opportunity of self-improvement and reflection. Like, the Beloved Dust assured that. And it is working as intended. Uh...

[MUSIC- "The Twilight Mirage" begins]

AUSTIN: And then I think probably as you're waiting to re-acclimate out, which is a much quicker process, we do just get one shot of that-- you know, the prison is laid out, the Contrition's Figure is laid out the way it's supposed to be. But Declan's Corrective still has that solo cell at the end of that hallway. And I just like... Just images of-- an image of his eyes looking outward. Down on everything else. As you re-acclimate out into the world. Maybe a brief moment of eye contact, maybe.

[MUSIC ends]

[1:30:00]