

## Twilight Mirage 23: godspeed, glory Pt. 2

Transcriber: Cy @vlasdygoth

AUSTIN (as Primary): Dispatch 177, priority Final. Protocol code I, Quire, Addendum, V touch Mirage, Alpha three, Beta three, Gamma three, Myriad full. Subprotocol, strike, subprotocols Social Schism, Mirage Collapse. Divine Death. Annihilation class object, strike, *objects* confirmed. Begin voice signature, Primary observer Demani Dusk, authorize direct communication channel. Overriding liked broadcast quarantine. Connection with Satellite observer, maintained. Connection with K-net wide, maintained, connection with Mirage-wide, maintained. Linking with K-upside switchboard. Connection with REHQ established. Connection: locked.

Fellow agents. Crystal Palace. Keen. This is Demani Dusk, Primary observer of the I-Quire operation. Crystal Palace, accept this dispatch as my resignation. By the time you hear this, I will have abandoned post and dearmed and scuttled the stellar combustor attached to Satellite's observation post.

*[MUSIC — The Twilight Mirage]*

AUSTIN (as Primary): *[cont'd]* Perhaps you will already have predicted this, even here in the Mirage. Perhaps you, insofar as there is a you, see this as part of a larger model. I don't care. So accept that too. Fellow agents, it has been an honor to serve alongside you, and to shield the citizens on Cycle, but a shield can only protect what's behind it. And a hand that holds a shield cannot draw a blade, cannot lift a brush, cannot grip, throttle, or turn wheel to protect others from disaster. In the days that follow, consider your hands, and remember that they are yours. Included in this transmission is a double bulk data transfer, which will bring everyone, not just Crystal Palace, but everyone up to speed on the current events in the Twilight Mirage.

I am sending this because if Crystal Palace sends someone to take our place, I want you to see everything. I want you to see what's happening here. I could make a case and maybe one of you will, that what we are seeing in the Twilight Mirage is exceptional, and I mean that historically, judicially, and personally. What was once a massive, false nebula, is collapsing inwards, but not like a house of cards, like a spring. It grows denser. Even my vessel struggles against its waves. Time bends now. The being Volition tears at reality itself, remaking the uneven material world into something axiomatic, a metaphysical fascism of ideas. Keen. Your daughter is safe. I'm safe. We're gonna make sure everyone else is too.

*[MUSIC — The Twilight Mirage ends]*

**[3:30]**

AUSTIN: Gig.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So after, after Echo was dropped off, you and Myriad head south, in fact you fly over Big Garage, you fly over where, uh, Even and Grand Mag are. And you head this way. Okay. So, what you find is, what you've found is that there are a bunch of islands down here. Again, like kind of a big island chain.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And the...

KEITH: Is it like, an archipelago, is that what that is?

AUSTIN: I guess so, I guess that's what that's called, right?

KEITH: I think so, I think that's what it is.

AUSTIN: That sounds right to me.

KEITH: An island group, yeah.

AUSTIN: So you wanted to go to P80, right?

KEITH: Yeah, P80.

AUSTIN: So I think the, you're like, coming over the, the top of it, and there's like, as you near it, the sensors go wild? Like, the, and, and Myriad starts to lose altitude? And like—

KEITH: Okay...

AUSTIN: She has to push over it to get to like, Q81, or else she'll crash. And she's like:

AUSTIN (as Myriad): I've never felt anything like that before.

KEITH (as Gig): Me neither.

AUSTIN: And then she like, pulls east a little bit, and there are two things that you could go—you could choose to go to.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: There's O85, and there's Q85. The one to the north is... it looks sort of like the Big Garage? Except that it's like a big, it's like a giant submarine that is, that is shored, and that has like a Mandati city around it?

KEITH: Yeah...

AUSTIN: There's also Q85. And... when she pulls up Q85 on the map, like when she like, does her overlay for it, you hear the ship gasp, because again, let me remind you that Myriad is the ship and is also the pilot of the ship?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because on the map, it just says like, "Independence: KIA." Like, "Independence: Inactive."

KEITH: Hm. That sounds important.

AUSTIN: Do you go there?

KEITH: I go there, I go to the one that sounds *very* important.

AUSTIN: What did the old body of Independence look like? The one that crashed here thousands and thousands, tens of thousands of years ago.

KEITH: Ooh, um...

AUSTIN: Everybody can answer this question together like, but yeah, Keith, you start. Is it big? Is it like a really big divine?

KEITH: *[cross]* I would say.... Yeah, I would say it's like a... really... sort, like a really lean, like a, like thin like, like... uh, what's the word, not ligaments, limbs. Like thin limbs and tall.

AUSTIN: Thin limbs are my favorite Girl Scout cookie.

DRE: Eugh.

KEITH: Thin limbs are good, I prefer Coconut Nightmares.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Coconut Nightmares! Yeah, of course. God.

DRE: *[amused]* I hate this show.

AUSTIN: But it is— is it humanoid?

KEITH: Um.. It's, it's... I would say it's more vaguely humanoid?

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Oh no, you know what, we're doing, we're doing what Sylvia<sup>1</sup> was doing before, this is too much what Sylvia did last time.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh, you're right, that's true.

KEITH: You know what? So I would say... let's see.

AUSTIN: Any, any ideas from the class? Anybody else have directions for what Independence might look like?

ART: I mean my like, social commentary side wants to be like, Independence is just so many guns. *[laughter]* Just like, a barely-recognizable pile of weaponry.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That works like, it's just like a battleship with a billion giant cannons on it? To where like, it's a centipede? Do you know what I mean?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Like it, it looks like an insect, it looks like a huge, long millipede?

KEITH: Yeah, like a burrowing insect.

AUSTIN: Yeah, except it's just covered in weapons? It's covered in gun barrels and aircraft like, launch decks and portholes and like, mine layers and just like, it's just—

KEITH: How big is it?

AUSTIN: I, I think it sounds like it's big. I mean, here's the note that I have—

KEITH: *[cross]* Okay, it's big.

AUSTIN: This is the note that I had, I wanna be clear, all the stuff that they've gone to today has been in my book the whole time, or like in my—

KEITH: Yeah.

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

AUSTIN: In my, my map the whole time? Also really quick, Sylvia, you wound up at E85 and E87, by the way.

SYLVIA: *Jesus*.

AUSTIN: That's where you were. Just, just so you know.

SYLVIA: Damn, I walked far!

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Well, you walked far and the mist carried you.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Quire's getting weird, is a thing I'll say.

SYLVIA: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Time and space are bending in strange, in strange ways. So, in my notes, what this says is, here down here at Q87, it says: "New Independence, divine corpse, Rogue Wave city two." And I, so I imagine it's pretty big, because like I imagine it's built into this city. Or the city is built into the side of this corpse, basically.

KEITH: Okay. I mean, if it's really long, and it's basically a one-shot centipede shape, then—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah.

KEITH: I bet there's like a, I bet like there's a dope monorail that goes from like, in—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: In, inside of the thing from end to end.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's a really cool idea, totally. And we talked about it— I mean, so a thing that we did say previously was like, when it landed it only brought like 300 people or something? But that that was enough because of the power of Independence to like, turn everything on its head here? And not only the military power of Independence, like, Independence is also a degree of sort of like, is like... interpersonal gunship diplomacy? Where it, it encourages you to draw lines between yourself and other people, and to take advantage of them. Like, it has a bit of, again to reference COUNTER/weight, there are some divines that have power in terms of physical strength, in terms of it's a big robot what could fuck you up, and there are others that have strength in terms of processing power, in terms of charisma, in terms

of leadership potential? This one seems to have it all. It could blow you up, or it could slowly influence you and convince you that you're the— that your voice is the most important one in the room. So you land there. I mean, the first thing that you see is, you see a flag waving like, on the, on the island ground around where this body is, this giant like, millipede, mechanical millipede body is. And it is, identified as the flag of the Rogue Wave, which are one of the groups that we haven't seen yet.

KEITH: Can I make a quick judgement call on this thing?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: About its shape?

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: Can we go centipede versus millipede, millipedes are kind of cute, and centipedes are *terrifying*.

AUSTIN: Are they? I didn't know that millipedes were cute.

KEITH: Yes. Millipedes are kind of cute, centipedes are horrifying, yeah. Yeah, centipedes are like—

AUSTIN: Oh, wow, I didn't realize they were this different.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Holy crap!

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely centipede.

ART: What? No, this isn't true, hold on, I'm gonna *[cross]* *[unintelligible]*.

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah, no, millipedes are cute—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Millipedes, millipedes are, have, okay. Go ahead.

KEITH: Millipedes are sort of like, they're sort of like caterpillars. They look kind of cate— they move kinda caterpillar-y, they're slow—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Well, they're *smooth* on top. That's the big difference, yes.

KEITH: *[cross]* They're round, yeah, they're round. Centipedes are super lightning fast and have like, knife limbs.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, this sucks. I hate this.

KEITH: *[cross]* Like, it's— they're awful.

AUSTIN: What are we *looking* at.

KEITH: They fuckin' suck.

AUSTIN: I can't believe you've used our powers of Googling for animals to make me hate life! I can't believe this.

KEITH: I know, here's why I know about— here's why I know about them, there's a whole subsection of, of Youtube that is people, bug guys feeding smaller bugs to their bigger bugs.

AUSTIN: I hate this. I hate this!

KEITH: And a lot of them have—

SYLVIA: I hate this!!

AUSTIN: I hate this.

KEITH: *Super* huge intense centipedes—

AUSTIN: I don't like it.

KEITH: And the centipedes are *insane*. It, they just shred to *bits* like, their dinner, it's insane. It's crazy.

AUSTIN: Hey friends, I hate this. This is bad. I'm deleting this image.

KEITH: Yeah. It's bad. It's bad, don't look up bug guy Youtube, don't.

AUSTIN: What if it's just called bug guy Youtube though, can I look at that?

KEITH: Bug guy— yeah, yeah! It's like 80 percent tarantulas, *[Austin groans]* and like, some mantises, and then the rest is— the tarantulas are kinda sweet, the, the centipedes are fucking monsters and they all name them things like, *The Devil*, like they're always called like, devil—

SYLVIA: It's 'cause they are, the dev— , like...

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah, yeah, they're awful. They're truly, truly horrendous.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Too many legs. Too many legs! Too many legs.

AUSTIN: God, fuck off.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Jesus christ. Uh... oh, I didn't mean to move that. So um... okay. New Independence! So what you see is, this is a... A, it's been turned into a city that belongs to the group that is called the Rogue Wave. Which is a... you don't really know much about them! You heard that they're pirates, you know that they live in the ocean, you know that like, half of Quire is ocean? But you haven't visited that part of the continent, or that part of the world that much yet. And when you land, you are... greeted by a kind of a, a tan, dude with um... kind of light brown hair who has on a... like a, an admiral jacket? And a pair of jeans. Like, it is this very weird mix of high and low fashion?

SYLVIA: A fuckin' look.

AUSTIN: It's a look.

KEITH: Nice, the casual admiral, I like it.

AUSTIN: He introduces himself to you as... where'd his name go. Kent Brighton. He is of, he is like—

AUSTIN (as Kent): Kent Brighton. Brighton lineage. Our scanners picked you up over the dead zone to the west. Is everything alright?

KEITH: Uh...

AUSTIN: I think you're like, you're at— you're like in front of this tram station that's at the edge of New Independence, which is a city that has built, been built on and through the old, destroyed body of Independence.

KEITH: The horrible gun centipede.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. Which has been torn to shreds.

KEITH: Sorry, what was the—



AUSTIN: He's just like, are you okay, basically, he saw you flying over the dead zone—

KEITH: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: He saw that your, your signal dipped out for a second.

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, yeah, KB, alright, nice to meet ya! I'm here, the—

AUSTIN: Is your eye on? Are you broadcasting this? Are you like, recording?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, I'm recording.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Okay, so you're talking to the audience too, to some degree?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

KEITH (as Gig): Everything's cool, um, the— this, your, this city that you're living in... we're a little worried about it. I don't like it, you guys know what that is?

AUSTIN (as Kent): Some sort of old warship, but it's, we've been here for hundreds of years now, it's never been a problem.

KEITH (as Gig): *[cross]* Yeah...

AUSTIN (as Kent): Great to meet you.

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, yeah there's a guy— there's, what's that?

AUSTIN (as Kent): I said great to meet you, I—

KEITH (as Gig): You too, I'm Gig, by the way.

AUSTIN (as Kent): I— I recognize you from your broadcasts!

KEITH (as Gig): You recog— oh my God! It's, that's so great, I'm glad.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Big fan, actually, um...

KEITH (as Gig): Really? Thank you! Oh my God, that's, well, so here's the thing— so did you see the last one?

AUSTIN (as Kent): I did. And that one...

KEITH (as Gig): You did.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Was... a bit heavy.

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, it was heavy, so that guy, that guy that was carrying that thing? He's trying to make a new one of your city and um... we all, me and my friends, we all think that would be like, wicked bad.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Ahh.... I see, but.

AUSTIN: And he's just like, kind of doesn't know what to do with that.

KEITH: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Also, I hope this is a whole series of like, important people on Quire react to *[laughs]* emotional horror?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Oh my God.

AUSTIN: And the notion that they may be being complicit in a terrible thing?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: He says like—

AUSTIN (as Kent): We have the full support of the Wave, the Brighton family has been— or sorry, the Brighton Lineage has held back all oncomers to this city for hundreds of years. We'll hold back anything a single man or woman or, anyone can do. We have no doubt about that.

KEITH (as Gig): Right, so single man or woman, that's great, I'm— big, *big* bad ship though, is what I'm talking about.

AUSTIN (as Kent): I understand, but we have tens of thousands here. They live their lives—

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Kent): They are... they fish for us and cook and clean and explore. We go out pearl diving.

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Kent): They are—

KEITH (as Gig): That sounds like, really cool, um, I really would love to check out your city, I think it's an awesome place, and I don't wanna like, be a downer? But I am like, so like, think about your city is a dead ship, and the new one would be like an equal ship, but working. Like, functioning. And so that's a sort of like, one versus one, if your one was a dead one. And so I'm just investigating, I don't—

AUSTIN (as Kent): *[cross]* Of course.

KEITH (as Gig): *[cross]* I'm not like, here to tell you to do one thing or another thing—

AUSTIN (as Kent): *[cross]* We all love your show— we would love for you to stay in the city and—

KEITH (as Gig): You guys *all* love it?

AUSTIN (as Kent): It's very popular.

KEITH (as Gig): I didn't know I was big out here.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Ever since you've arrived, it has been interesting to see what... things on land are like.

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN (as Kent): People don't seem very—

KEITH (as Gig): *[cross]* I bet you guys don't get over to the Crown of Glass very often.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Thankfully.

KEITH (as Gig): Sure. Yeah, it's kind of a place, huh?

AUSTIN (as Kent): I don't understand them. I don't understand... they're very impractical.

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, right! That was what I was thinking— wait, in what way for you are they impractical?

AUSTIN (as Kent): *[sighs]* They're so concerned with...

KEITH (as Gig): Mhm.

AUSTIN (as Kent): With things that have nothing to do with people. I like—

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah...

AUSTIN (as Kent): Art. But I like art when it depicts... a captain doing an incredible feat, or the joys of daily life on the shores.

KEITH (as Gig): Or like, a painting of pearl diving.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Exactly!

KEITH (as Gig): Yes.

AUSTIN (as Kent): But they won't paint the pearl diver or the pearl. They just paint the color pearl. And it doesn't— *[Keith laughs]* My kid could do—

KEITH (as Gig): How can you paint a color! The color *is* the paint!

AUSTIN (as Kent): That's what I'm *saying!*

KEITH (as Gig): It's— they're crazy!

AUSTIN (as Kent): I just don't get it. Anyway—

KEITH (as Gig): I just— yeah.

AUSTIN (as Kent): I welcome you to explore New—

KEITH (as Gig): And they're rude! That's the other thing, they were all fuckin'--

AUSTIN (as Kent): No hospitality. Unlike us, here—

KEITH (as Gig): No hospitality. Yeah, you guys were like, you can hang out—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* *[amused]* And he like turns right to the camera, looks right in the camera—

KEITH: *[cross]* I— *[laughs]* yeah.

AUSTIN (as Kent): New Independence. Let everyone know that—

KEITH (as Gig): Wait, wait, wait, sorry, hold on, one sec.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Yes?

KEITH: I pop out the eye and I'm like—

KEITH (as Gig): That's the one.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Oh— oh. Okay.

KEITH (as Gig): Camera two.

AUSTIN (as Kent): New Independence [*laughs*] is a—

AUSTIN: Myriad is in the back, just like, six robot hands covering her face.

AUSTIN (as Kent): New Independence, of all of the, the ports in the sea on Quire, is the most welcoming, the most friendly, the most hospitable, and also the best defended. Let all of the lineages of Quire know that the Brightons will, will fight you in the battlefield and serve you dinner when it is time to, to write treaty.

KEITH (as Gig): Very gentlemanly.

AUSTIN (as Kent): That's the word. That's our motto!

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah...

AUSTIN (as Kent): Brighton: Very Gentlemanly.

KEITH (as Gig): Do you have like, pins and stuff with that on it?

AUSTIN (as Kent): *Pens*?

KEITH (as Gig): Pins, like buttons?

AUSTIN (as Kent): Oh, *pins*, I thought you said pens. Why would you write your motto on a—

KEITH (as Gig): [*cross*] Yeah, like a souvenir shop.

AUSTIN (as Kent): We have the little pens where you can tilt it and you can see our ships flying into battle and then coming home. [*Sylvia laughs*]

KEITH (as Gig): Oh, I love those, I have one, there's a little space man. Like me! So I guess we have the same sorta thing.

AUSTIN (as Kent): We should trade pens! A show of friend— Ahem!

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, I, here's mine.

AUSTIN: And then like, turns to the, to the camera—

AUSTIN (as Kent): A show of eternal friendship between New Independence of the Rogue Wave, the Brighton lineage, and— the great Gig Kephart, explorer, journalist—

KEITH (as Gig): Mhm. Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Kent): And... what else?

KEITH (as Gig): Friend.

AUSTIN (as Kent): Friend!

AUSTIN: And he hands you the pen.

KEITH: *[cross]* And friend.

AUSTIN: Alright—

KEITH (as Gig): A dope-ass pen for my new friend KB!

KEITH: And I hand my pen.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* He bows and takes it. *[Keith laughs]* Oh right, and is Duck there with you, too?

KEITH: Yeah, Duck, Duck goes *[whinnies]* and then "Thanks!"

*[laughter]*

AUSTIN: Echo in the— Sylvia in the chat says "and equestrian," and KB is like—

AUSTIN (as Kent): Uh, and an equestrian! Also, a wonderful rider.

AUSTIN: The like, he lets you like, check out the city and inspect it. It seems to be dead. Like it does seem to be dead.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: All of the parts— you know what a dead divine looks like, and you know what the divine needs, it has none of the parts. You do find record, though, that someone took the... what's another important, we, so the heart is obviously in, Armstrong took the heart of Independence from that pit.

KEITH: Uh huh.

AUSTIN: Besides like the mind, what is another thing that a Divine needs to work? What's another like, core function is like a nervous system?

KEITH: Oh you know what? I was— my first instinct was lungs. Like I think that's kinda maybe—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh that's good.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, not considering that divines like literally are breathing?

AUSTIN: Right. Right, well the, right, yeah. The thing—

KEITH: *[cross]* Or breathing in whatever the way that divines breathe in.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Divines do. I think in general, it's some sort of circulatory system, you know?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: And here's what you find like, you've done this before. And I'm not making you roll— all of this is like sort of vignette style as you can tell, right like—

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Maybe I'll make you— Mm. No, cause this is just—

KEITH:*[cross]* I'll roll! Hey— hey man, I'll roll! Yeah, I'll roll.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* This, yeah, gimme a roll. Gimme an, an Analyze. Gimme a hot Analyze roll.

KEITH: Yeah. Um...

AUSTIN: How're you feeling about this?

KEITH: Analyze... ah, I don't know! I'm definitely not joyful.

AUSTIN: No.

KEITH: That's, yeah, I'm definitely not!

AUSTIN: Were you spiked on joyful and coming down? Or were you about to spike?

KEITH: No, no actually I'm— no, I'm actually really low on joyful right now, I'm still really close to spiked on scared, which I also don't think I am.

AUSTIN: Oh, right right right.

KEITH: So joyful, joyful would help bring me down on scared—

AUSTIN: But you're not.

KEITH: But I'm definitely not either of those. Um... I might be peaceful.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: This might be like, really clinical for me?

AUSTIN: Yeah, like this is your job, you, this is a thing that you used to do all the time. So yeah, it's peaceful.

KEITH: *[laughs]* Okay, I will roll on peaceful.

AUSTIN: Alright. Two d6, that's an eight.

KEITH: *[cross]* Eight.

AUSTIN: Alright, so on Analyze with an eight, you get what, two things?

KEITH: Um, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yes, two. So it's where's my best way out, blah blah blah, how is blank vulnerable to me, which enemy is my biggest threat, what, if anything, appears out of place, what is my enemy's true position, and is this going to get worse before it gets better, and then you also have one that's like, your story thing, right?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, I have one that, that's, who or what here is relevant to my story.

AUSTIN: Yep.

KEITH: Which might be an okay one to ask? Lemme give it a little, little quick think on this. Um, I think I wanna start with, what, if anything appears out of place?



AUSTIN: It's missing a bunch of like, wiring and tubing?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Someone for the last... twenty years has been— maybe longer— has been like, doing a copper job. You know like how people steal copper from old buildings?

KEITH: Yeah, people steal copper from abandoned buildings, yeah.

AUSTIN: They've been doing that to this place like, through the body of Independ— the old corpse of Independence—

KEITH: So—

AUSTIN: Someone has been pulling out—

KEITH: *[cross]* So you're saying it doesn't have— it doesn't have anything that it needs to make a divine work, but someone took all of the stuff—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes.

KEITH: That you would need to get those parts working if you did have them.

AUSTIN: Yes. One hundred percent.

KEITH: Bummer.

AUSTIN: And it's like, slow, it's like, you notice that it, it's small, it's like, small things bit by bit by bit *very* cautious.

KEITH: Yeah. And I bet like, I bet the job becomes better as it goes on, too, like, like maybe the heart is a slopjob but by the time it gets to—

AUSTIN: Well no, it's only this one thing, like the heart you got— remember they got the heart from...

KEITH: *[cross]* Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: From—

KEITH: Oh, I mean sorry, the tubing, like the—

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah yeah yeah. That's what I'm saying, so.

KEITH: Like, the stuff around the heart.

AUSTIN: Totally. So like, the stuff that is... like it starts off with just the very... the very like, edges of this circulatory nervous system, whatever it is, this kind of single system that, that connects the heart and the mind of the divine to the third thing, which is— or to each other, basically, and to the body.

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: The, that kind of lets it communicate super quickly to itself and lets it move energy around its body. They've been pulling it out for years, and bit by bit it's turned from being just like, ah, little bits of it here and there, to like, someone does a freelance job to install a new like, air conditioning unit and uses it as an excuse to take all of this stuff from the entire rest of that quarter of the building, or whatever, you know?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah, you get... you get that, that's one, for sure.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Um, I think the other thing is just broadly with the, what else is out of place is definitely... *[sighs]* It's, it was kinda obvious before, but the Brightons are very much not in a position of power? They are... you get the impression that the Rogue Wave, the way that—

KEITH: *[sarcastic]* Oh, that guy wasn't the boss of the town?

AUSTIN: No, he is the boss of the town, the Brightons do run New Independence—

KEITH: Oh, okay, okay.

AUSTIN: But they're a small family— so here's what you get from the Rogue Wave, like, you kind of heard that like, I think that they're like a loose pirate republic? And that's not quite right.

KEITH: Yeah...

AUSTIN: They're more like the Holy Roman Empire? They're more like a bunch of feuding—

KEITH: A confederation?

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly, of families who are all just bickering, who all have like, it all comes down to... like they, are all still in allegiance with each other on paper?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But there's lots of like, cooking up reason to have skirmishes over land, and like, who gets to, who gets to own what, and you learn that the city to the north of here, which is currently run by the Mandati, used to be part of New Independence and used to be part of the, the— it used to be part of Brighton. And like, what the Brightons' lands were? And New Independence was this tiny little fun thing that they did on the side? But like, during Kent's lifetime, they lost that big island to the north that's become a Mandati seabase, the first ever Mandati seabase? Like, they were the first ones ever to lose to the Mandati on the sea. And so, it's just like, *huge* mark of shame.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And that's kinda why they're trying to play up this new hospitality game?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, they're like a tourist spot.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly, it's like well, if you're gonna bring, if you're gonna bring more people to Quire, we could communicate that we're a place to go to and could become like, a destination for people from the Fleet, or as Quire becomes more unified like, more people could come here and check out this weird gun centipede that we live inside! *[Keith laughs]* So that's—

KEITH: Hey quick, quick shoutout to my AP Euro teacher in high school that said to me maybe about, one hundred thousand times, 'the Holy Roman Empire, which was neither holy nor Roman.'

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Yes.

KEITH: About one hundred thousand times, I heard that, and so now it's all I can think of.

AUSTIN: *[laughing]* I think that that's everybody, I think everybody had *that* teacher.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Love that joke. They love it so much.

KEITH: Yeah, they really do.

AUSTIN: So yeah, that's the, the gist of the Rogue Wave is like, familial like, very like— it's not about blood. It is about, it's about lineage, but lineage is understood broadly? Like, there are lots of like, we're family because we say we're family?

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: But family still counts above association?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So you can bring people who don't have your blood into your family, but like, and having blood doesn't make you more family than somebody else?

KEITH: Oh wow, my new goal is to be a— is to be in someone's family now.

AUSTIN: *[amused]* Okay, good. Great!

KEITH: Um, so for my second question—

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

KEITH: I'm trying— I'm deciding between using my story question or... what's my enemy's true position?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that one is the one that—

KEITH: *[cross]* Those both seem like they're— honestly it seems like they're pointing in the same direction?

AUSTIN: They are. They definitely are.

KEITH: *But*, they definitely are, *but* what's my enemy's true position could be like, like, I could get less from that just because there's not enough here to show me that, whereas like, who or what here is relevant to my story might give me the next step that I actually do need.

AUSTIN: Mhm, and will answer the thing that you need, right, because you need....

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What do you need to go live, again? You need... A lead, a source, and facts.

KEITH: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: This is definitely... you know, I feel like you already have a lead? Which is—

KEITH: I, yeah, I have a lead, I need a source, and I need facts.

AUSTIN: So I think this is source, which is... the, or maybe this is facts. The facts that you have are that they're rebuilding the... the divine Independence, and the, the facts that you have is, it's coming from the place, it's coming from the dead zone.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's coming from P80, like you— I wanna be clear—

KEITH: They're, they're, the way they're building it is with the old one.

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: They're building the new one from the dead one.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* From parts of the old one, and then also they're doing it in the dead zone, where scanners can't reach, and where other machines aren't, can't enter.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: As you saw when, when Myriad tried to fly over it. That there's something in that dead zone that's keeping other peop— other machines from getting there. So that's, the second thing you know. And you, you're able to basically track the ships that, that... left with the, the stolen materials, that's how you trace back that that's where it went. I wanna be clear, when I asked, I asked everybody off mic, like in our chat like alright, where are you going? In this mission? Like where are you going to get information, like just pick somewhere that you think looks cool on the map, you know, it's all black and all tiled up, like, and, and so Sylvia was like, oh, right to the right of the word Skein, I wanna see what they're about, and then Dre and, and Art were like, we wanna go get like a weapon to fight this thing, and I was like oh, well Cascabel can take you to the Garage, blah blah blah. Keith, you said P80, which I had al—

KEITH: I said P80.

AUSTIN: I'd *already* written down, in my notes, that that is where the base of the Independents were? Three months ago? So.

KEITH: Yeah. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: *[amused]* You literally looked at a list of fifty two question marks, and picked the one where they were, so.

KEITH: Hey, I'm a lucky guy, huh!

AUSTIN: *[cross]* What can I say! Yeah. So. Good hustle.

KEITH: Yeah, thank you.

**[30:00]**

AUSTIN: So now I think that that information is known like, I think Myriad, upon learning that, basically sends that broadcast out over the Mirage to... all of you. I think maybe this is the moment... Echo, where we get you in the captain's chair of this ship, like flipping dials and like, beginning to lift off? And you're not a great pilot, but like you can get this thing in the air and get it generally in this direction. And I think this is like, we get shots of Cascabel, Cascabel and Even and, and Grand like, test-firing a thing against big plates of glass shaped in different directions and it works, but Grand, roll, roll a d6 for me. One d6. You rolled two. Uh, this is how many of these special Cascabel rounds you have.

ART: Okay... I wish I'd done better.

AUSTIN: Yeah, me too. And Myriad sends along the place that you have to go to. It is...

KEITH: Um—

AUSTIN: It is on like if you zoom in really tight on this map, you can see that there is this like, little... island in P80. That's where it is.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: How— what's the plan to meet up?

KEITH: So we're, we have to meet up before we get there, right?

AUSTIN: I like, yeah. But like, you can all meet up right there, basically.

KEITH: Oh, okay. I wanna take a— I wanna take a boat.

AUSTIN: Where are you meeting up to get the boat? Do you meet up at New Independence?

KEITH: Yeah, maybe I— Maybe like, what kinda, what kinda lodgings did they hook me up with?

AUSTIN: Um, you know. Um... like, I think there's probably a nascent hotel that they've set up. Kind of small but—

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah— hey, guys, they set me up at a place called the Nascent Hotel!

AUSTIN: That's— hm.

KEITH (as Gig): You guys should come down—

AUSTIN: That's not—

KEITH (as Gig): We can have fun for a night, then we can head over.

AUSTIN: *[laughing] [cross]* You can't just keep doing the you misheard things bit!

KEITH: *[laughs]* It's worked out for me so far.

AUSTIN: The um, yeah, so you can meet up just at New Independence, and just take an old style boat? Like a ship with sails on it?

KEITH: Yeah, with sails.

AUSTIN: Cause that won't get shut down.

KEITH: Yeah. Or oars.

AUSTIN: It's far for oars.

ART: No, what?

AUSTIN: It's hundreds of miles.

ART: *[cross]* Yeah, unless you have like—

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah, of course fuckin' Grand Mag didn't wanna use the oars.

ART: Do you have like fifty people to row this boat?

KEITH: I don't know! Echo walked like, eighteen blocks. *[Dre laughs]* We can— we can row two.

ART: Hey I wanna tell you, this is about like, literally any city on the planet is that you can walk eighteen blocks in a— I really don't.... You can do it.

AUSTIN: *[laughing]* I think—

KEITH: Sorry, I meant eighteen map cubes.

AUSTIN: Hexes.

KEITH: Yes, hexes.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Like, I—

KEITH: Eighteen hexes.

SYLVIA: I think I walk that far after class every week.

*[laughter]*

KEITH: Yeah, so we can make it with a rowboat.

AUSTIN: Uh, I think that—

KEITH: I'm just saying, I'll do whatever kinda boat, I don't have—

AUSTIN: Kent, Kent—

ART: So you've got like a six-person rowboat that you think can like, easily be pi— like—

AUSTIN: Each of these hexes is a hundred miles.

KEITH: Yeah, hey— you know what, if you're gonna complain the whole way, you can be the guy on the drums telling us how fast to row. That can be you.

AUSTIN: It's called a coxswain. And—

ART: Deal, done.

KEITH: Is it called a *coxswain*, wow.

ART: Let's go.

AUSTIN: That's a— *[laughs]* Alright! And they have a rowboat. I think it's a, I think it's a mix between a rowboat and a sailboat. I think that Brighton gives it to you, um, and... that Myriad can't come with you. Cascabel's also just gonna stay back at his HQ and like, work on continuing to work on uh, designs to fight that thing? Because two, two bullets not enough. Two bullets, too few.



DRE: What kinda bullets are these, are these like, shoot out of a person gun bullets or mech gun?

AUSTIN: He gives you— oh, sorry, there is also a, a, maybe it's one of each, right?

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Maybe it's one round for the— I mean actually, mechs won't work on this place, right? You can't bring a mech with you on this little— on this fuckin' boat, so.

DRE: Oh, yeah.

KEITH: Also, I don't have a gun anymore.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: I mean, I have a revolver, but I don't know if that's gonna be what we're looking for.

AUSTIN: It actually is like totally the sort— maybe he like modifies your revolver, he gives it this really long, wide barrel— these are, I admit, just caster shells from Outlaw Star?

*[Sylvia laughs]*

DRE: *[cross]* I'm into it, I'm into it!

AUSTIN: And so he like replaces the, the um, cylinder on your revolver to take these gigantic, they're like shotgun-sized shells, and so you can fit three of them in at once, but you only have two, so he put two in, and then like, he gives you some regular shells for that gun too, that will work on people, but like, not, or you know, they'll work as regular gun shells, but they will not get through this glass. So you have two of them to load in and fire at this thing. Uh... and you have to hit. You better hit.

DRE: What could go wrong.

ART: Yeah, no pressure, but like...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: There's two shots, and...

KEITH: Yeah...

ART: And they're all *real* important.

*[Dre laughs]*

AUSTIN: So um—

KEITH: Yeah. We don't even have enough bullets to use the word 'all'.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* It's both.

KEITH: We're still at both.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

*[Transition music]*

***[35:00]***

AUSTIN: Let's hop back to Fourteen, because I know where we're going with Tender, and I wanna get an in-between bit with Fourteen on the ship first. What was for dinner, Fourteen?

JACK: Um, it was... well. The fisherman hasn't been able to get the food machine, the new food machine? But it's a perfectly serviceable food machine. It, it, it makes um... I'm trying to think about like, whenever, whenever it's a dystopian sci-fi it always makes these horrible sort of food bars.

AUSTIN: Can I tell you what this is? Can I tell you?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think it's potato pancakes, is what they are. Have you had—?

JACK: Ooh.

AUSTIN: Or like, latkes? Latke, whatever?

JACK: Yeah, yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's what I think it is. Because it's still kind of like, smushed together food, do you know what I mean? But like, it grills it in a nice oil, you add a little salt to it like, fuckin', I could go for some potato pancakes right now, you kiddin' me?

JACK: *[laughs]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Forget about it. Some nice garlic, some onion in there... And then like, probably a side, like a little side salad, maybe a meat, if Fourteen eats meat. Again, probably a synthetic

meat, like we said. That's, that's what I think is served today. And I think, I think he joins you in like... the, whatever the galley is, right? Which again, is probably, you know, I think there's probably actually four of them, because of the way the ship is set up, and it's just like, you go to one, two, three, or four, to sit down and eat because of the, the way it's small spaces, and you can't just like, you don't wanna cramp a bunch of people, and you also don't want—

JACK: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, one huge long dining hall? Like because that's not intimate, you wanna know people.

JACK: Yeah, you don't want— you don't want like the, the ridiculous thing of like, two people sitting at the ends of a very long table.

AUSTIN: Exactly. And so you're sitting across from each other, as the ship like, hurtles through space towards this, this school of fish. And... he's eating these, he's actually eating these with... he's eating the, the potato pancakes with his hands, but he's also eating the salad with a fork and a knife? Or with a fork. So he's not— and maybe he has like a porkchop. He has like one porkchop, basically. He's also eating that with a fork and a knife, but he, he's taking joy in getting his hands a little greasy as he picks up the, the potato pancakes and eats them. Like little finger foods, almost.

AUSTIN (as the Fisherman): So how long have you been in your business?

JACK (as Fourteen): Oh, since uh... you know I guess I, I— I started when I was—

*[A cat meows in the background]*

JACK: Hey Annie.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* He has a cat, also, on this ship, that actually is— that's canon.

*[Annie meows]*

JACK: Oh, yeah, a cat on a fishing ship? Absolutely!

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, of course, right?

JACK (as Fourteen): Yeah, I, I started when I was sort of, twenty, twenty-two, twenty-three? So I've been doing it for a while. But working, working with Seance? That's, that's more recent.

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): Hell of a time to start.

JACK (as Fourteen): Well, I wasn't, you know. I wasn't expecting it to be like— I was expecting it to be like this, I was expecting... I was expecting to be, you know, hitching rides on... fishing ships. But I wasn't expecting it to be like, you know, hitching rides to the, the By and By 'cause, 'cause all hell's broken loose.

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): What were you expecting?

JACK (as Fourteen): You know—

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): [*cross*] Hell's always breaking loose, you pick a life, hell's breaking loose.

JACK (as Fourteen): It was gonna be, you know, it was gonna be...

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): Heroic? Romantic.

JACK (as Fourteen): Y— yeah. Hero— you know, heroic romantic. It's my favorite genre. You know, like when you're, when you're spies... and you have your own ship, and, and you're infiltrating a, you're infiltrating a... I don't know, like a, like an art gallery? To, to bring down like a corrupt, you know?

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): [*sighs*] I've been to a couple art galleries. I've been on some spy ships... here or there. And it's never like that.

JACK (as Fourteen): [*sighs*]

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): Every art gallery has some guard who... it's just Thursday. It's just Thursday, and he doesn't wanna be there, and then someone in your crew reaches for a gun. Or, it's a... the ship that you have, it's not *your* ship. It's the bureaucracy's ship. [*Jack laughs*] And what you know you need is a jamming device. You can't get a jamming device, that's not in the budget this year. You can pick— do you want a, a new rear gunner? Or do you want a jamming device. And one of those people is, people. Is a person. And so that comes out of your headcount budget, but also comes out of your overall budget, but you only get headcount budget once every three years. It's never your ship. It's never the art gallery job. It's always people.

JACK (as Fourteen): Yeah... It's uh, you sound like... you sound like you've done this before.

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): You're a fisherman, you been places. You talk to people. [*Jack laughs*] You talk to people. You get a lot of people like you who pass through. People tell stories.

JACK (as Fourteen): Have you got business on the By and By?

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): I'm a fisherman, I got business everywhere.

JACK (as Fourteen): *[laughs]* Like, family?

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): If I had family at the By and By, I would've been on my way anyway.

JACK (as Fourteen): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): You don't leave family out to dry.

JACK (as Fourteen): Are you worried about this?

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): The haul? Working with a, an amateur fisherman? No. I'm a good enough teacher.

JACK (as Fourteen): I meant the situation on the By and By.

*[MUSIC — The World Without End]*

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): Hm... seems like things are gonna get a little more unstable. Little less predictable. I have a sense, Fourteen Fifteen, that things are about to change. In a big way. I am not in a place to... align how those changes occur. I'm an old man with a boat.

JACK (as Fourteen): You're an old man with a... boat who knows my last name.

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): What comes after fourteen? *[Jack laughs]* Easy name to guess. You act like you're... old. Like, you've seen it all.

JACK (as Fourteen): *[sighs]* I'm older than I look.

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): You're young enough to touch things. You're young enough to make things go different. Do not squander that.

JACK (as Fourteen): What does squandering it look like?

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): *[pause]* It looks like saying a lot of apologies thirty years later.

AUSTIN: There's a bell. It's like, *[repeated beeping chime]* Sleeptime! Sleeptime! And he nods and says:

AUSTIN (as the fisherman): Time to go to bed.

AUSTIN: And like climbs up the ladder. He like dumps the rest of the food into a, little chute, puts the, slides the... the plates into like a vacuum grabbing thing, like, goes like, *[sucking noise]* and that takes in the— more bad foley, fuck! *[laughs]* I'm sick, I can't do good foley, this is the one way you can tell I'm really sick!

JACK: You got the foley sickness!

AUSTIN: I do! Takes in the plates, and then like, whisks them away, and he goes up to like the captain's quarters, which are forever away at the back of the ship.

JACK: Right, yeah, like I just hear him walking for like five minutes.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Easy, easy five minutes. You go to bed?

*[MUSIC — The World Without End ends]*

JACK: I think I probably do. I think I probably do sleep. I try and sleep, I think... there would be a version of this scene where Fourteen sits up worrying? But I think that, that lying in bed, they find that sleep comes easily, the movement of the uh, World Without End is gentle and... and it's, it's quite soporific, so I think I do fall asleep.

AUSTIN: I think that there is even the touch of a lullaby here. Of like, not literally but, he has programmed the ship to feel different during sleep hours. Maybe it's a little slower than it's supposed to be, or it's a little more interested in stable flights, or maybe there is a hum here, very quiet. You know, very quiet, very distant, but there is something here that helps lull you into what is maybe a, one of the better sleeps that you've had recently. It's also the first sleep that you've had in this body, probably, right?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So.

JACK: Uh, no, I guess I had a night in the apartment.

AUSTIN: Oh, true, true, true, yes, yes, yes, you did.

*[Transition music]*

***[44:45]***

AUSTIN: Let's go back to... Tender. Have you been exploring the server space from the temple? Or are you just like... focused on the temple itself?

ALI: I, I don't know, I like, I think the way that I've been... I've been trying to characterize Tender as like, getting into these like, bigger situations than she expects of like, what she can do and then being like, oh cool, let's, let's just lean into that.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: So I think that it's tough not to like... realize that she's in this place that she didn't even realize could exist.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI: And not be like, okay. *[laughs]* Like, what happens if I walk a mile in this direction or whatever?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah. I think you get, so here's the funny thing, is I think you take one step out the door, and then you see someone waiting by the door like, knee-up to his chest, um, like one leg down, he has like a pair of ripped jeans on, and a long-sleeved t-shirt that's like, too long for his sleeve— too long for his arms, they're pulled down past his like, his... palms, basically? Has like a black like, denim jacket on— or not jacket, but black denim vest on. It is, it is Morning's Observation. He's like "Ah!" When you, he's like—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Oh, sorry, I just saw... this place and I thought... I thought I'd come see it. But then it was locked, I guess. Or not locked, but I felt like I couldn't go in without permission, suddenly, I— *[sighs]* Um... Hey. How, where are you? Can I come in?

ALI (as Tender): ... Yes. Yeah, yeah, I, sure. Yeah, you saw this place? Wait...

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Yeah, like I was in the... the Beloved ship, which we still haven't named, which is weird, 'cause it's been like seven months. I don't know why we haven't named it, I've been here forever and no one has ever told me the name of the ship that I've been being held hostage on. Strange. Um, I keep hearing Cascara say we have to come up with a name for this ship and no one has any suggestions.

ALI (as Tender): I just think that once you name it you own it, and it's more of like a, you know, it's a group ship.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Oh, I see. Yeah, I got you. Anyway, I'll come inside. I saw it, I, I, it... I was just messing around with the servers on the ship and just building my own

things. You know. And um... and then here it was, and I thought I'd come visit, because I thought maybe you were on the ship, but then I... the records say you never landed, you're still on the way back from Privign.

ALI (as Tender): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): I'm real nervous. I'm real nervous.

ALI (as Tender): What are you nervous about?

AUSTIN: He's like gripping, like his, his index middle and ring finger and just like squeezing them? Like nervously? And he like comes inside and like, nods at the statue and does the sign of the cross real quick? *[laughter]* And like does a kneel, like, doesn't—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): *[mumbling]* I don't— am I supposed to—

ALI (as Tender): You don't have to—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Should I take my shoes off? What's the...

ALI (as Tender): *[cross]* No, I, you, you came here, you killed one of them, remember? You don't have to pretend.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): I— I didn't.

ALI (as Tender): You were— you were a really big part of it.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): I didn't... ugh.

ALI (as Tender): I just, I appreciate that you're being nice, but don't be even more disrespectful.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Alright.

ALI (as Tender): You can just— you know, there's windows, there's this nice statue, you just hang out. Just do whatever you feel like doing.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Well—

ALI (as Tender): It's not a place to—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Am I supposed to kill him?



ALI (as Tender): Of, huh, whoa, whoa, wait, who??

AUSTIN (as Morning's): The, the... Cascara wants me on this Cadent thing.

ALI (as Tender): Okay... You're new here, so she's really throwing you in.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): I've done a little bit of this and that. She sent me out for some... errands.

ALI (as Tender): *[laughs]* You don't have to kill anyone you don't want to.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Yeah, but like what if I have to? Like what if it comes down to like... it's you or it's him. Or it's... someone I don't know, or it's him. I don't like him, but he's my brother.

ALI (as Tender): Usually when you're in situations like that, with people you know, there are other options.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Like what?

ALI (as Tender): I mean... do you think that he would kill you?

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Yeah. Absolutely.

ALI (as Tender): Oh— *[laughs]* Okay. I...

AUSTIN (as Morning's): He's really good at this. He's *really* good. I... They said he had an aptitude. Which is why they sent him to school. And so... like, if he was good already, he only got better. And that was... you know.

ALI (as Tender): Everyone is good at things, that's what— that's why what you do doesn't make any sense, but. *[sighs]* I get that you haven't been with the Beloved for a very long time, but I—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): What if we win? What if we get the Cadent back? And then... Seven years from now, Emphyrean gets killed and then... Earth just runs through anyway. Or doesn't, and we're just all just in space and that's it, and we die in space. I don't wanna die in space. Like, what if we win, but that doesn't matter. That's what I'm worried about. What if I kill him and it doesn't add up to anything?

ALI (as Tender): So little things matter though! That's the...

AUSTIN (as Morning's): *That's* the lesson I'm supposed to take away?

ALI (as Tender): I just—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Is that nothing... *[laughter]*. What matters to you?

ALI (as Tender): I just— I've... I've been in situations where it feels like winning. And then you realize that your standards of what winning are aren't... no one else follows those rules.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Like, you have to make up your own like, win condition.

ALI (as Tender): Right. And even if you do, like... I don't know. Dying in space sounds like losing to you, but I don't know that I would mind it. I love it here.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Yeah, but you're *from* space! *[Ali laughs]* Like, that's not a diss, like, but you're from here. So like...

ALI (as Tender): Right.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): If you die here, you're dying at home.

ALI (as Tender): Yeah...

AUSTIN (as Morning's): There's a spot near where I work that has really good breakfast sandwiches. Like, *really* good, like, and you have alright food. I've come around on it. You do not have sausage like this place has sausage. I don't know if it's cause it's synthetic, which is fine. It's fine. I eat it. Or if it's the spices, or if it's cause the center of the galaxy has a certain sort of like, gravity that produces a better taste profile? But... that's not as good. And I wanna have another one of those sandwiches.

ALI (as Tender): *[sighs]* I think that you are coming into this conversation not understanding that I built this place that you're standing in? Cause I haven't been home for years.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Why haven't you been home? You— live here.

ALI (as Tender): There's a lot of heres! I... *[sighs]* So we're going back to the By and By. Which is the place that I am from. There's like, there's multiple ships, you can be from different places, know that, okay—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): *[cross]* Right, but why not just go back, that's what I'm saying, like? Just take the ship home, go get whatever your basic version of the good breakfast sandwich is. Like a soup probably, is that what—?

ALI (as Tender): *[laughs]* *[cross]* Because I got kicked out.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Crepes? I hear, I hear there's good crepes on the By and By.

ALI (as Tender): There, the crepes are amazing, but I was kicked out. And even if I went back, like... Wait, so you go to that sandwich place, right? Like... do you remember the guy who works there?

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Yeah, Jeremy.

ALI (as Tender): What if Jeremy like... forgot the way that you like your eggs. Or stopped cooking them that way because he looks at you different, or when he smiles at you it's...

AUSTIN (as Morning's): I mean, Jeremy's probably dead. Actually. I hadn't thought about it until just now, but sleep detachment takes a long time. Jeremy's— Jeremy's probably dead. Is actually the truth. I hadn't thought— I hope that place is still there.

ALI (as Tender): I mean, that's what I mean, right? Like you...

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Oh, this *sucks*. Fuck this! *[laughter]* *Fuck this!!* This fuckin' sucks! How many—

ALI (as Tender): I...

AUSTIN (as Morning's): *[distressed]* I... what the fuck am I supposed to do? Tender—

ALI (as Tender): Hey—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): They sent me *four hundred years away*. To push over a statue. And my brother's really good at it. Fuck this!

ALI (as Tender): You're not wrong. I— that's what I'm saying! I just— *[stammering]* I don't... I don't want to say that it doesn't matter if you kill your brother, those feelings matter. But... I, you're not getting that sandwich again, so if that's what you're fighting for...

AUSTIN (as Morning's): It was an easy thing to fight for. It was a— I could imagine that scenario where I get to win and then we get to go back and I get to say oh, we, I shake

someone's hand? And then we, they send me back and oh, we'll get a piece! We'll get a photo op in front of the sandwich place.

ALI (as Tender): You're the one who decided to stay here, right? You're—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): [*scoffs*] What was the option, the option was to go sit in a pod next to Mother's Story and my brother and watch them order around a bunch of robots until they killed twelve more people and they kill the last divine and we... And then, I don't know! There's no plan after that, they sent us out here, as far as I know, the end of the plan is get the last one. The end? Which is stupid. Which is stupid! Because what happens after that? We kill the last one. There is no follow-up plan. As far as I know, I don't think... I don't know.

ALI (as Tender): It's bad, that's what.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): You send back a signal and then what happens is three hundred years later, another detachment shows up!

ALI (as Tender): I... am sympathetic to the fact that the way that your whole system works sucks, 'cause I also think that it sucks and I have been suffering because of it for years. I think that you have another opportunity here. And like, second chances or whatever are like, I don't know, I came to Seance and it's better. It's better than the choice that I had, but that's the thing, right, like you made a choice. But the other options sucked. I could've stayed on the By and By, it would've sucked!

AUSTIN (as Morning's): They have good crepes, though.

ALI (as Tender): Seance has crepes. We can find you a good breakfast.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Yeah.

ALI (as Tender): Yeah!

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Alright.

ALI (as Tender): And I bet you'll really like that one too, and you'll maybe one day you'll go on a mission and you'll think, oh man. I really wanna go back and get that almond slider.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): That sounds gross. What? No. [*Ali laughs*] It's like, sausage and egg and like, hot sauce on a biscuit, it's not— *almond slider*? Man, fuck this whole place.

[*Ali laughs*]

AUSTIN: And he's like, laughing through tears at this point. And he like stands up and is like—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Thank you. This is stupid, I'm stupid, I'm sorry.

ALI (as Tender): It's fine.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Thank you. And like, I'm sorry that like, your ex or whatever is there too. That seems rough. That seems like a whole—

ALI (as Tender): Right, I was—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Thing.

ALI (as Tender): I was gonna say that, like, I, we'll see if we kill them at the end, right?

AUSTIN (as Morning's): That's a— this is a fucking stupid conversation! We live bad lives. I hope people are thankful.

ALI (as Tender): *[laughs]* They are. They are, and they're... they are in a way that, whoever you left when you left aren't. Which is why I don't get your whole thing.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Don't shittalk Jeremy.

ALI (as Tender): I— no, I—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): He's alright.

ALI (as Tender): That's not what I meant. You know what I'm saying.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): He always gave me an extra half of a sausage, which is like almost a whole sausage. You round up. On sausages. Only on sausages, though. Everything else it's a half.

AUSTIN: He like, rests his head on your shoulder. It's like a very childlike headrest.

ALI: *[laughs]* God. I, that's, that's y'know. *[laughs]* Intimate, but I don't think that she like, shrugs it off or anything. I think that she's also very much like... I don't know. There's like, the inability to consider him.

AUSTIN: He doesn't rest it, what he actually does is wipes his tears off on your fuckin— whatever the fabric is. That's what he's doing. *[Ali laughs]* And like, it feels like a headrest for a second, and then he's like, rub, rub, rub. No more tears. Stands back up, like uses his, the

excess, excess sleeving on his shirt and like, straightens out his jacket and like fixes his hair really quick. It looks worse.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Alright. It's gonna be good. It's gonna be good.

ALI (as Tender): It's gonna be good. This, this—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): I'm gonna go.

ALI (as Tender): Hm?

AUSTIN (as Morning's): No, what were you gonna say? I didn't mean to cut you off.

ALI (as Tender): I was gonna say that this mission is really heavy and it's, it's gonna not be a great one, but there's gonna be one after that, and... I don't know. I feel like you'll have a future here in a way that the people who sent you didn't plan for.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Yeah. I've been thinking about that a lot. Like... where I'm from, there are a lot of happy people. More than here. Way more happy. But they don't... they don't care if a couple of us get sent off to die. Here... I don't know that I've met one happy person if I'm being honest. Like, people are content, but like, everyone is scared right now. And I understand that we were part of that, but it seems like they've been scared for a long time.

ALI (as Tender): Mhm. Mhm! You've been in a particular place in a particular time.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): But my point is, that I think this might be better. That like, if you build a whole thing around what if we sent seven people off to die every once in a while, and you don't care about it... then maybe the whole thing is just spoiled. Alright. I'm gonna go read before this.

ALI (as Tender): I, yeah, you can stay here as long as you want, like I said, the fountain's really nice.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): [*cross*] No, I'm good, this is not my scene, really. It's nice. Don't get me wrong.

ALI (as Tender): Sure, alright.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): It's nice! You did— but, you know, I'm not, I shouldn't— Hm.

ALI (as Tender): I, I make a place that might be more your speed. You should come next time.

AUSTIN: He nods, and like—

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Alright, sounds good. It should have music.

ALI (as Tender): It does, and people are happy there. You realize you've been on like a secret spy ship?

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Yeah, she sent me like I said, she sent me on errands, Cascara's sent me on errands, I've been to Seance, I've walked around. I got like, milk, and some other supplies.

ALI (as Tender): I just... people are happy out there, and we'll find them.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Good as, good as any reason to live, I guess.

AUSTIN: And then he like, nods and like heads out the door. "Thank you," he also says, he's not that much of an ass, he's like... thanks.

*[Transition music]*

***[1:00:55]***

AUSTIN: So you arrive in Belgard.

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: How's that going?

JANINE: *[sighs]* Um... Probably weird. Weird in the way of like, I don't think this is a situation where the usual like, we talked before about like, the idea of them being like, two people who've shared a house together for a very long time? So it's like, you don't always say hi? Sometimes you say hi. And sometimes you're just both in the kitchen at the same time. *[Austin laughs]* But then sometimes it's neither of those situations, and it's just like... You're walking home with a bomb in your hand like, what...

AUSTIN: Right. Right.

JANINE: What's the greeting there? What's the like...

AUSTIN: Right. It's like, you just learned about some shit at work, or like, you learned that someone in your family was sick, and now you have to go home and have this conversation, and that's not a fun conversation to have.

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Or you've found out that you got a job, but like six states away.

JANINE: It's more like... I don't know, there's, there is, I don't think there's like an analog. I keep thinking like, what is the closest analog like, oh hey did you know we're actually cousins? Or like, that's not. That's not right either, but—

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* *[cross]* It's not that, no.

JANINE: There's no, there's nothing that really like works here in terms of like, here's this easy way to parse this situation.

AUSTIN: I mean, is it, you came home and you found Jesus? Do you know what I mean, like, oh, I have a different understanding of the metaphysics of the world now? The devil is real?

JANINE: I don't think it's that, either.

AUSTIN: No? I mean, it can be totally unique, that's, that's how things are sometimes.

JANINE: I don't think it's a situation where like, she has... she's not at the point where she's like, come away like, oh I know all this stuff now, like.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: She's still in that moment of uncertainty and discovery? I think? Like that's why she's here is she's like, she's got this open thing in hand and like, okay, I found out what the Iconoclasts are but like... this thing... and. *[sighs]*

AUSTIN: Whatever this is.

JANINE: And the Cadent's in trouble, and...

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: It's like...

AUSTIN: *[sighs]* Yeah, I guess Belgard would probably already know that, right? The Cadent part.

JANINE: Yeah.



AUSTIN: So as soon as you arrive, you feel Belgard like... shake, physically. As if, the way, the way someone who is sick and should not try to get out of bed tries to get out of bed. And it's just like:

AUSTIN (as Belgard): Signet, we have to go.

AUSTIN: And it's just like, [*low mechanical groan*], like rolls over, and it can't get, it can't even detach from Thyrsus, it's a, there's no way.

JANINE: Yeah.

JANINE (as Signet): Where do we go?

AUSTIN (as Belgard): To the By and By. To the Cadent.

JANINE (as Signet): Yeah...

AUSTIN (as Belgard): Why is there hesitation?

JANINE (as Signet): Cause you can't. Cause you can't, and... I don't wanna leave her. I really, really don't wanna leave her.

AUSTIN (as Belgard): Who?

JANINE (as Signet): The Cadent.

JANINE: I think Signet's like, really aware like, that's the— the thing that I've been holding— that I've been holding, the component that Signet has been holding since literally the first episode is on the Cadent.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: And I think this is worth mentioning. This component is about how... she was really young when she was elected, and trained. And she was elected with great confidence, but like, we've seen the uncertainty. Like, she's very loved but she is also still... she's not as young as she was, but to Signet, she's always like, to Signet, I think most people are probably young, in quotes, but the Cadent particularly so.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: And she's done incredibly well in her youth, but, she is still very young and very important.

AUSTIN: Well and like, the thing that's interesting about her is she went from being like oh, I'm, I'm very well liked, to like five divines died under me.

JANINE: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: And people still love her because she is the Cadent. But... The confidence that she inspired has not been... has not been returned in history, you know? Has not, has not turned out to be quite there. So there's that.

JANINE: So there's that.

AUSTIN: Um... *[sighs]*

AUSTIN (as Belgard): Cthonian says... it can heal me and then we can go.

JANINE (as Signet): No.

AUSTIN (as Belgard): I've been studying it. It is not what I thought. I don't know that it can be trusted, but it is not... I'm not sure it knows what it is.

JANINE (as Signet): That's even more reason not to let it get any more control. A thing that doesn't know what it is, put in charge of... of immense power, or— even immense power, limited.... What worse idea could there be right now?

AUSTIN (as Belgard): Are you speaking about this, or the Cadent? We trust the young.

JANINE (as Signet): *[sighs]*

AUSTIN: I think you've probably triggered I'm Your Priest, I'm Your Shrink.

JANINE: Have I?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Cause it's not a roll.

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: It's when you speak earnestly and candidly with a character, you may ask them a question from below, afterward they may ask you a question as well. Both of you must answer honestly.

JANINE: Hm...

AUSTIN: Those questions are... what do you desire most but would also never admit to anyone, what do you wish I would do, what do you think of blank, and do you know of any threat directed at me.

JANINE: Oh, these are all... *[Austin laughs]* I think the best one to ask is also the one I kind of feel like is the least... is gonna offer the least new information. But... *[sighs]* Yeah, the thing to ask is what do you wish I would do?

AUSTIN: I think... did we say Belgard's she/her?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay, so I think she... I think she wants you to commit to a plan of action. Like... this reflects back to this question of like, are you the kidney, or are you a thing together? And... in this moment, especially, where she is not complete, she can't... she is having trouble with you being wishy-washy. With you being like, unsure of what to do, or, or...

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Where to commit, because she's... she's confident she'll figure out how to break off of Thyrsus and come help you. Which is probably wrong, in her current state, but that is what she feels, is like, whatever you, whatever direction you're going, I'm going too, don't worry? But... when she sees that you don't know what to do it is like, when she's like, aaaah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The thing that she wants to know is if you know any threat directed at her. Which I think is a larger thing, which is like—

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I mean, she must know that, that Exuvia's open, right?

JANINE: Yeah, I think that's, that's maybe where the whole indecision thing gets unraveled because Signet has to like, I guess... Like, plug the Exuvia in.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Cause like, that's the answer to that question. That's the answer to that question that's like, also a lot more.

AUSTIN: So you've described it as being both a beetle and also having like, USB key qualities?

JANINE: Yeah, it's, it's a storage device, basically.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: It's a storage device that's capable of like, imagine if you had a USB key that like, whenever you were like, where the fuck is my USB key, or whenever you were like, what direction do I plug this fucking USB key in through? It just did that.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah.

JANINE: It just had its little legs like, I'm upside down, sorry! *[Austin laughs]* And, you know.

AUSTIN: Ideal, honestly.

JANINE: *[laughs]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. So you, where do you plug it into? Is something in the cockpit?

JANINE: There must be, but I've always visualized that cockpit as, I've always visualized the open space of the cockpit, not like, not the like, what's on the walls and stuff.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JANINE: Maybe it's, it's kind of like those, what are they called, the like, are they called q-chargers or something? Is that right? The like, it's like a, it's like a charging pad for your phone, the wireless charging?

AUSTIN: Oh, I see.

JANINE: It didn't used to be built in, it used to be like a thing you had to like, hook in and then like...

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah. I got it.

JANINE: Ikea sells lamps with it built in the base.

AUSTIN: Oh? Cool.

JANINE: I imagine there's just like a slightly magnetic like, pad or something along one of the walls where it's just like, you can stick your various peripheral devices here if needed.

AUSTIN: I like that too, cause it means it can like, skitter across the wall— you just put it nearby and it kind of skitters over to where it's supposed to be.

JANINE: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then like flutters its wings, and then like, kneels down until it's connected. What's it do?

JANINE: Um... I think...

AUSTIN: Besides like, offer this information that we already talked about to Belgard.

JANINE: Yeah. So this device, we talked about, we... sort of vaguely outlined this in, in, just text chat, trying to figure out what it was.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I think what this device is, is storage for... a lot like Privign's scan— you know, the scanners like, scanned various things, and could, there was a concern among the New Earth Hegemony that Independence could've been scanned and then part of Independence like, stored.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Like, their awareness or, or something, you know. And I think this is a storage device that has that kind of scan information for the uh, third generation divines. But specifically, has that information as acquired while they were being piloted.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: It's too much to say it has all of the data from all of the whatever, because that's—

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* That's a lot of them.

JANINE: That's too much to put in a bug.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: But I think—

AUSTIN: But its findings, right, like it's—

JANINE: I think it's, it's like the last known kind of things, like they would, it would have scans of certain divines and candid— and excerpts, and then when a new excerpt showed up, it would be like, okay let's overwrite with the new. Like, this is the upgraded version, or whatever.

AUSTIN: Right. It's like, almost like one of those algorithms that is, like a evolution? Like evolutionarily designed? Where it's like okay, we're gonna build a hockey robot.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then like, every time a new generation happens, it's like oh, what did we learn from the last one? And then just does that over and over and over again.

JANINE: But it's also kind of like, you know, the, the inevitable Star Trek episode in every, in every series, where, oh, the transporter, something happened, and now Riker's half-cat, or something, like it's— *[Austin laughs]* It's like—

AUSTIN: That's gimmick infringement, we already have half a cat on this show.

JANINE: *[laughs]* Shit. Um—

AUSTIN: Half dog. Also, Riker is a dog, so, on brand.

JANINE: Yes, true! Um, so it's the data of the divine and the candidate sort of combined into one... personality. One like...

AUSTIN: Hm.

JANINE: Intelligence? I don't know the right word for it.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: But... It would be like, I guess running several AI protocol or something in like a contained thing, it's just like bringing a small crowd into this, not directly into Belgard, but like—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Good thing you have a lot of room. Yeah.

JANINE: But like, these are consciousnesses, basically, of the third generation...

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right.

JANINE: Grouping.

AUSTIN: Do they speak? Do they, are they intelligent enough to, are they like... are they like a living record you can consult? Are they like, whoa, where am I! Or are they like, like, do they say like, Signet. Belgard. Like do they know you?

JANINE: I think Signet and Belgard are one of them.

AUSTIN: Oh, they're in there. Of course, okay, sure.

JANINE: Because they were, they were probably scanned at some point as a pair.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: So there is, in this crowd, a Signet/Belgard hybrid.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: Um... And this is, of course, the most heinous thing that the iconoclasts could imagine.

AUSTIN: Right. What's that look like? Or is it, is it more than a look. Like, to say that Signet and Belgard, a Signet and Belgard hybrid, like... Is it like Signet but made, but with like... insect, like with a chitinous cover, or is it less corny than what I've just come up with off the top of my head?

JANINE: *[laughs]* I don't know that they have any um, like, visual representation like, it seems like, it seems like that would be a layer of complication on top of like, I imagine gathering this was, was sort of like an automatic process and so constructing a visual representation of each thing... seems like maybe a step that someone was considering doing at some point in the future, and then they got super, super killed?

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Right.

JANINE: So...

AUSTIN: They're probably in here, yeah.

JANINE: Yeah, they're probably in here. So I kinda like picture a screen with just like, hundreds of colored squares, or like something that's just like... You know the, you know the like, signatures animals have in Magician's Quest? That's kind of like, oh, that looks like that thing that's on your head, and then also a mouse face, and you're a mouse, so I kinda see it.

AUSTIN: Right, yes.

JANINE: They make sort of like, little glyphs out of the characters, basically.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: I imagine it's maybe like a square with some kind of very crude glyph that you can look at and be like oh right, that was the divine that did all the, all the...

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm sure that there is like a symbol for each divine, for each of the three hundred divines, probably has a symbol, and I bet you that there's a variation of that symbol depending on which excerpt there is.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, with different little bits of flair, or like a tail on the, on the character, or you know, that curls, was this excerpt, versus it opens up, if it was the other excerpt, or that has a, you know, a layer—

JANINE: Especially cause the excerpts have names that are often like nouns or verbs?

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly.

JANINE: You could probably really easily work that in.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So like, for, for like, the Signet and Belgard one, it would be whatever the symbol for Belgard is, not a B, but maybe a B, um— *[laughs]* Or maybe a shield or something, right? Like maybe, or an eye, or something. Depending on if you're talking about what it does or what it, what it, what it means. But then like, like an eye with a signet like, pushed into it, do you know what I mean? Like a... that might be really cool. So yeah, I like that, actually, I like this kind of like, notion of like, iconography. And... I mean, I think two things happen right, which is like, immediately, Belgard shakes again. Right? Because this is, you want a true name? Like, holy shit.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, this is like, a dump of a bunch of true names, right? Now there are not a lot of true names that are still around, necessarily, but.

JANINE: Yeah, that's the thing with true names, is like, it needs power, or something.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* You're in here, Blooming is in here. Yeah. Um, the second thing is, I think Cthonian like, boots back up, because Cthonian's been quiet. And, and like, are you imagining that these symbols are visual, just in the, in the cockpit? The big open space cockpit?

JANINE: Yeah, I think they maybe have lit up on the screens sort of in that circular space.

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay. I think that just like, the clouds reappear and like, or like, it almost becomes a mist, and there's something... I think Belgard can just say:



AUSTIN (as Belgard): It's very curious. It hasn't touched anything, but it's very curious. I don't think it knows that... I don't think it knows that it should have an excerpt.

JANINE (as Signet): It's *divine*?

AUSTIN (as Belgard): It used to be? It... It's not clear. But it is missing something.

JANINE (as Signet): What is it... of? A divine is a... a divine has like, an idea to it, so I think that... what's... *[sighs]*

AUSTIN (as Belgard): It's...

JANINE: I don't even know how to ask this question properly!

AUSTIN: Mhm. I mean, I think it just says like, hell. Pain.

JANINE: Oh, that's bad.

AUSTIN: Separation. It's... and like, Belgard is like running— Belgard is like running through an encyclopedia of like, an encyclopedic history of versions of hell, basically. And like, what it comes to is like, separation— separation from God, separation from life, separation, separation from, and like is running through it, and is running at a, at a speed that you're not used to Belgard running at. Like, it has been emboldened by these, these names. I don't think it's all the way up yet, but I think I'm gonna raise it by two. So you still have two more slots to go but, but, feeding it the, like, plugging it into the Exuvia that you unlocked definitely helps.

JANINE: Yeah. I have two more things to feed, to feed her, but I don't know that this is, it seems like a weird thing to do at this particular moment, you know?

AUSTIN: Right, yeah, yeah. Totally. Which is an interesting thing, right, because then, then you have to think, why does Signet not do that now? Is it because Signet is like, oh, awkward moment! Or is it because Signet is like, I'm not ready for Belgard to be back up and running yet. Because why wouldn't she do it? That's like, the more interesting question.

JANINE: Yeah... I mean, because the other thing just woke up and is like, right there and like—

AUSTIN: Sure. What happens, yeah.

JANINE: But I guess that's a pressing threat also, in a way that she would want to contain.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: But also the way we set up the component feeding is like, storytime and that, that's the part that I think seems weird.

AUSTIN: I mean, maybe there's a way to tell Iluna's story to all of these excerpts and to Belgard, which is like, here's the story of someone who is not an excerpt, but by all rights could have been. And like, how do we weigh those stories? Those are, should be just as important, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or like, to work through Signet's own feelings about being an excerpt through Iluna's.

JANINE: I think in this particular moment, bringing up Iluna's story might seem like... she's telling the hell cloud hey, here's someone who might...

AUSTIN: Oh, that's, yeah, I hadn't even thought about that!

JANINE: *[laughs]* Like, that's, that's my concern there. Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah, fair, fair. You could, you could tell Satellite's, the Satellite story. I have a name for that character, and I don't know where it is. To be clear, that Satellite, is not *the* Satellite, who has been in these intros, that was a different Satellite.

JANINE: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: The numbers, the numbers do not add up, so.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: And also the voice is completely wrong. Current Satellite is like, up here! I'm really bright and shiny and optimistic.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And that Satellite was like, down here and was miserable and... eugh. So.

JANINE: Okay. So I think... I, I wanna just get this done, I think.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: I think... You know, Signet notices that Belgard is suddenly like, there's a lot more energy there, there's a lot more um... performance? There?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: But also, it's, it's a very present reminder of like, oh, this, you know, Cthonic's here too, and... this power could so easily be... you know, Belgard has a will of her own, and...

AUSTIN: Right. She could say yes.

JANINE: There is always the temptation of, of not waiting for Signet's okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Because they're a partnership, but that has its limits. In times of crisis in particular. So I think Signet probably gets up and like, or, she wasn't sitting, but, probably like moves into the middle of the space, and um... I guess... Commands?

AUSTIN: I— Yeah, go ahead?

JANINE: Belgard's attention? Just, just to be like... Maybe we don't need to dress it up, like maybe—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: They both know the power of these words, like they both know the power of true names. They both know that this is a powerful exchange. We don't need to pretend that it's always... this like, earnest—

AUSTIN: Whole big, yeah.

JANINE: Exchange of, of stories or you know, like, there are times, and this is certainly a time where you just do the thing.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yeah, you do it. You, you have to do it to do it.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. When you attempt to nourish your homeland, roll. How do you feel? I guess you're spiked out on peaceful, right?

JANINE: Yeah. *[laughs]*

AUSTIN: Roll plus one. If you're gonna stay on peaceful, unless you're gonna try to break off that spike, but.

JANINE: Yeah, I think we're still in a peaceful thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um, I think you have advantage here because of opening up the, you're like riding the wave of the um... the Exuvia? And also because Belgard is like, Belgard's out of her funk. Belgard wants to wake up. Belgard's pushing to wake up. It's almost as if Belgard has assisted you, here. So roll three d6 and take the high two.

JANINE: Still plus one, or no?

AUSTIN: Still plus one.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Three d6 plus one. Yep. That is a ten! Alright. So on a ten plus, choose two, which is like, gain essence, you gain two essence and then, or you begin to restore what's already gone. So I think those are the ones that are like, get this thing back up, right?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So in fact, you do that, you can have extra essence, shit. You could get four essence right now.

JANINE: Isn't essence separate from...

AUSTIN: I think we've been tracking essence as, you have essence yourself, but we were tracking essence as also the thing that is whatever is gone. Because I think that the book, according to the Veil works that way, where like when you spend essence, you're pulling away from it?

JANINE: *[cross]* Oh yeah, I have, I have reversed erosion slash essence in my notes here, so we must've been.

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah. So you're at ten now, which is more than enough. You're at ten of eight, basically, so as long as it's over eight, Belgard is up and running.

JANINE: Cool. That's—

AUSTIN: What's this look like?

JANINE: Fucking terrifying for everyone on Thyrsus, right?

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* I guess!

JANINE: Like, this is, this has been literally a cocoon hanging on a branch for them for like, several hundred years?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Right, yeah.

JANINE: And now it's like, they had that scare with the lights on and then scientists being like, "Hey, no one, no one go over in this area for a bit. We have to, don't worry about it. It's fine."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

JANINE: And now there is, you know, the lights are on again, and... this big fucking— pupa thing is...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Disembarking. And it's like—

AUSTIN: Yep!

JANINE: For a very small handful of people on the ship, I bet it's very nostalgic. And still very scary. And I think for Signet it is also both of those things. It is nostalgic, and it is scary.

AUSTIN: Does it stay— it stays a big pupa thing, right? There isn't a... this doesn't turn into like a butterfly or a moth or something?

JANINE: I mean, shit, we got two extra essence, like?

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* I mean yeah, that's what I'm saying! Does it?

JANINE: It's not a thing I thought about but... fuck, like why, if not now, then when?

AUSTIN: It's Twilight Mirage— yes, exactly. Time to be extra!

JANINE: *[cross]* If not now then when! Yes, shit, okay.

AUSTIN: If not us, then who, you know?

JANINE: It's, yeah, it's usual like, resting form or like, traveling form or even sort of... energy-conserving battle form is the pupa. And it's, I should be clear, cause I drew this on the post— on the first postcard, but it was way too small for anyone to ever know. It has like, sort of shields wrapped around its waist-hip area. Those are the things that kind of fold out and do stuff, but I think this is just a moment where like, the pupa itself sort of shatter— not shatters, but like begins to break apart into these many different sort of shield panels. And those panels form

into— imagine like, the way that a monarch butterfly's wings have individual cells? But instead of all being one piece, those are different like, free-floating, like, bits. Like, free-floating bits of, of shield, of this like hard external protecting material.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: And, you know, I'm just gonna be super tropey and say that like the form underneath is just like a fuckin'... badass one of those, one of those really good like, lady Gundams. You know? *[Austin and Ali laugh]* The good, rare, like—

AUSTIN: One of the good lady Gundams!

JANINE: You know, it's like, this is, this is clearly a robot, but also like, this is a fuckin' nice looking classy robot.

AUSTIN: Right, right, and like, are the shields basically wings that have been like, that like cover around it's back now that it's not in resting form, basically? Extremely good.

JANINE: *[cross]* Yeah. Probably lots of black and purple, and gold. Like, very rich and then really like, something that really, really contrasts brightly.

AUSTIN: That, that sounds good. I'm excited for people to draw this! *[Janine laughs]* That was a very nervous laugh!

JANINE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Alright. I think that's the— and then like, yeah, I think all of Thyrsus is just like, “Aaahh!” I think Thyrsus is like, I think you must have to send a signal that's like, “Everything's okay, everything's okay, everything's okay.”

JANINE: Yeah, that's, that's what I, so the thing with Signet being like, both scared and nostalgic is probably her also like remembering how to properly strap herself in. Because it's been a while there and she mostly just used those— uses those straps, like she loops them together and sits in them like a swing. I think I said that before—

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

JANINE: In that first sort of storytelling thing. And I think she has to remember like, okay, she still wears that suit, so that's half the battle. But she has to figure out like, okay, which one goes to the northeast point, and which one goes to the south? And figuring all this in while simultaneously sending that signal to Thyrsus to be like, “We're fuckin' going to the By-and-By, everything's okay. I'll explain later.”

**[1:29:44]**

*[transition music]*

AUSTIN: Okay. Y'all head to, to this island, the, the, what is called the Mandati Dead Zone on my notes. It is a tropical island. It is a tropical beach, with, you know, I think all of the, also all of the architecture in this area is like, it's, it's more Mediterranean than Carribean in style. And the temperature is like that, too. Like this is not, we're not in the tropics, but we are still at beaches. Do you know what I mean? So it's a little cooler, a little less like, humidity. It's probably still a lot of humidity, you're in the fuckin' ocean, so. Good breezes. What are you all talking about on this boat before you go?

KEITH (as Gig): Are you sure we have enough rounds for this?

DRE (as Even): Uh— we have what we have.

KEITH (as Gig): Shouldn't we have waited like, ten more minutes? Okay.

DRE (as Even): I don't think it was a ten, a ten minute process, Gig.

KEITH (as Gig): I don't know, I wasn't there. I didn't say it was, I just said like, however long it takes to get a third.

DRE (as Even): No.

KEITH (as Gig): Maybe we—

DRE (as Even): I mean, he made it sound like this would be a couple weeks if we waited to get more, so.

KEITH (as Gig): *[disappointed]* Oh. Okay.

ART (as Grand): Yeah, the, we, a lot of materials were lost in the casting process. They didn't take.

AUSTIN: Yeah, weird!

KEITH: They didn't take...

AUSTIN: Hm.

KEITH (as Gig): Hm. Well, I'm guessing it'll be fine. I'm excited!

DRE (as Even): I mean, we'll have—

KEITH (as Gig): I'm tired. This is— this rowboat is a chore.

AUSTIN: Uh, also yeah—

ART: Bum, bum, bum, bum— *[continues]*

*[laughter]*

KEITH (as Gig): Can you also slow it down just like, one, one little bit? *[laughter, Art stops]* Can you stop for just like, like just like a second, please!

ART (as Grand): This was our deal. Bum, bum, bum, bum—  
*[laughter]*

KEITH (as Gig): I didn't— I didn't say that— I didn't tell you that I didn't get a *break*!

AUSTIN: Does anyone have any real questions about Echo's weird spaceship, by the way?

DRE: Oh, yeah! *[laughs]* So is the scene just like, we're all waiting by a boat, and Echo just lands in a spaceship?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so!

SYLVIA: With an eyepatch.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah with an eyepatch, by the way! I heard we were going to a pirate base!

*[Dre laughs]*

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, hey, can you, can you get your teeth off my style for one second!?

SYLVIA (as Echo): I found the fish ship— they had an eyepatch. I feel like I kinda got dibs on this!

KEITH (as Gig): You're right, there's not, there was never a *rule* that said that other people can't also have an eyepatch. I just never thought it would come up.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Well, I mean, if it makes you feel better, I still have the eye underneath it.

KEITH (as Gig): I still have my eye underneath it; it's just a robot eye!



SYLVIA (as Echo): I mean— Yeah, but like, mine's not a robot eye.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Wait. Wait. *Wait.*

KEITH: Yes?

AUSTIN: You don't have the eye *underneath* the robot eye. Right?

KEITH: No, no, no, I'm saying that, that my eye was turned into a robot eye.

AUSTIN: Yes, okay. Yes.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah yeah.

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah. I guess I can take some solace in that you can't do this—

KEITH: And then I sort of— *[Austin groans]* have my eye poking out of the—

AUSTIN: I hate this.

KEITH: The eyepatch and moving it around. You can see like the bump as it sort of like wiggles around underneath the eyepatch?

ART: *[in background]* Bum, bum, bum.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yes. We can both take solace that I can't do that.

*[laughter]*

AUSTIN: Okay. I think y'all— I mean you share the information that you got about this, this weird virus and that—

KEITH: Yeah I, yeah I do.

SYLVIA: Yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN: And Independence, and everybody shares all their information?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Except for the fact that uh, Even that you were, you were eating these bullets, basically?

DRE: Eh, it's fine, nobody needs to know about that.

AUSTIN: Okay, that one's just a private, that's just for you.

DRE: *[laughs]* Yeah!

AUSTIN: Cool. Um, God. Alright. You arrive to this island. I think you just kind of like, *[ocean wave Foley]*, whatever the sound oceans make.

ART: Swish!

KEITH: That's spot on, that's a really great impression of me doing an impression of the ocean.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Yes, thank you, good! Um— *[laughs]* So you pull into this, it's not a base; it's just, it's an ocean? It's a shore. And it's, it's kind of like um, a, a kind of forested interior up on the, up on the, kind of like a coastal forest on this island.

KEITH: Are these deciduous? Are these evergreens?

AUSTIN: I think it's a mix. It's not evergreens. It's, it's, I don't know like, I don't know—

KEITH: Tropical and deciduous?

AUSTIN: Yeah, what's, what would like, what's cypress trees like? Are they, I guess that's—

KEITH: I thought cypress were evergreens?

AUSTIN: That's a type of a tree, right, yeah? Uh huh.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So then yes, like that.

ART: What's the relationship between cypress, the tree and Cyprus, the country? Are they from there? Do they have a lot of them there?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* That's what I'm trying to figure out.

DRE: *[cross]* And where does, where do the Cypress Hills fit in?

KEITH: *[cross]* It's that they're both named after Cypress Hill.

DRE: *[cross]* Yeah, there we go, boom.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: *[unamused]* Yeah, okay, gotcha.

ART: The country or the tree?

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Both.

KEITH: Both! They both are. They— yeah.

AUSTIN: They are in fact—

ART: *[cross]* So they went— it went band, tree, country? Band, country, tree?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah. It went band, country, tree. The first president of Cyprus went like, we're all insane in the membrane.

AUSTIN: Classic.

*[Sylvia sighs]*

KEITH: Yeah, that's the only Cypress Hill song that I know? So it's the only joke I could've made.

SYLVIA: That joke just gave me a headache.

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Alright, so you arrive.

ART: You ever read a take so bad, you have to take a nap?

*[laughter]*

AUSTIN: *[groans]* Good. So what do you do when you get here?

KEITH: Um.

AUSTIN: You can also— you get off and like, the eyepatch goes dead, by the way. And so does your eye. Your, your drone eye. And so do your—

KEITH: What!

AUSTIN: Your hands, Art. Like, they still function as hands, but they don't, you can't do the drawing stuff.

SYLVIA: Can Gig still see out of his other eye?

AUSTIN: His regular eye works.

SYLVIA: Oh, just his regular eye; the other one's completely shot? Okay.

KEITH: Dang.

AUSTIN: Things that are purely mechanical work. But nothing that is like, cybernetic, electronic. Electronics are dead here.

SYLVIA: Is— is Even okay?

DRE: Yeah... I mean?

AUSTIN: I don't know.

DRE: I think so, right? Cause the whole thing is that it's biological...

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, I think your wings might even work, right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, you're this weird bio-mechanical thing. Like, the electronics, in your case, are just synapses. They are your nervous system.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The rest of it is mechanical, not electronic, and like that's what makes you strange. They did not anticipate this, so.

KEITH: I'm already not liking this.

AUSTIN: Fair. Do you just go into the jungle?

KEITH: Yeah. I say that as I walk into the jungle,

KEITH (as Gig): This already sucks.

ART: I just wanna make like, abundantly clear that we're not just like looking over the treeline at a giant robot?

AUSTIN: You're not looking over the treeline at a giant robot.

ART: Great, awesome.

KEITH: So here's a question, can I use... Can I use my thoughts and memories from here to make a broadcast later?

AUSTIN: Not yet. Not unless you take down this thing—

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: That has, that's— your memories, yes. Your thoughts, yes. But I don't— like, I think it'll be weird and hazy? It'll be like having... like it will have to go into your memory instead of its memory, which is crisp and clean.

KEITH: Right. Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: So it'll be like, upscaling and maybe hazy, and like the details won't be filled in all the way?

KEITH: Well, my memory works as if it was as I'm seeing it, but I wouldn't be able to even start it until—

AUSTIN: Yeah, right, exactly.

KEITH: Until either I'm gone or this thing is done.

AUSTIN: I just, I like the notion of it being shakier, like it's like, shaky cam instead of stabilized.

KEITH: *[cross]* Okay, like the—

AUSTIN: It's like, not as saturated; the color balance isn't right, right? It hasn't been mixed.

KEITH: The deadzone is so strong that it's like, even interfering it in post time?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, totally.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Or just like, it's pulling from your brain, and not from HD recordings, like? There's always gonna be some loss-iness there because you're gonna remember the cream walls a little bit different. You're gonna remember the sound of the ocean; like you're not gonna have the exact same rhythm that the ocean had, you know? Like oh yeah, the ocean is there, but like, and it'll do its best to put that together. Alright.

KEITH: Mhm.

AUSTIN: So what you find, deep in this jungle, after like walking for a little while, is a... an old, abandoned building from pre-Quire times. Or not, not pre-Quire, from pre, pre-arrival of the Fleet times, from like the... it looks like it's the same sort of construction as the palace that, that Echo was in earlier. In terms of its design. Big domed building. And you can see that the dome, like as you approach, the dome begins to retract. And it is a few moments later that a... a like, a ship, like a thin, tall ship lands on the like, inside, or you know, maybe it's like, it's actually— it's Armstrong's ship again, descending into this structure through this dome that then closes. So it's like that big trumpet ship lands inside. And out front, there's like fence with, with, you know, there's no guards anywhere? But there is just this kind of like, feeling that you might be being watched outside. What do you do? How do you get in? As far as you can tell, there's fences; there's probably cameras, but that's it.

DRE: Wait, how are there— how do their cameras work?

AUSTIN: Good question.

DRE: I don't like this.

ART: Hm.

AUSTIN: And how does that ship work, also? Right?

DRE: Yeah. I mean—

ART: Um, how, how tolerant are we of... of bad ideas right now? I mean...

SYLVIA: I mean...

DRE: It has not stopped us yet, so.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

ART: Because—

AUSTIN: Or actually, I'll tell you how. I actually think that that moment gives you information on how it works, which is you only, you catch it for like, there's like a thirty second moment when your eye comes back online, Gig, and your hands— like, all of your stuff comes back online for thirty seconds while that trumpet goes— while the ship lands. And then, now that you're looking for it, there is a split second cut into every second where there's like, a little bit of data gets through. A little bit. Way less than what your like, scifi future bullshit technology needs to activate.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But enough for like, this ancient technology to function.

KEITH: So they've just got some like, they've just got some like DSLRs up there.

AUSTIN: Exactly, like literally, or like even older, right? It's like old bank security cameras, you know, big boxy cameras.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: They're running on like, passive energy, passive power, you know? Like they're not even, they're not even battery charged or anything. Like it's, it's old stuff.

KEITH: If they're old, we could probably trick it.

DRE: Or just break it.

AUSTIN: You could just break it.

KEITH: Well, if they know that they're, if they, if they see that they're broken, then— unless they're so old that they break all the time. But that's a gamble.

AUSTIN: You could just tell me how you get through here; I wanna get into the, the bulk of this.

DRE: Right.

KEITH: *[cross]* I fuckin' run really fast right at the building.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* This is about setting up what's next. Okay.

DRE: Listen, part of me is thinking that I just pick up Echo, and we fly into the top of that hatch where that ship went in.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's good.

SYLVIA: Ooh, I like that, yeah.

KEITH: That is pretty good.

AUSTIN: You split into two teams, basically? And so like you and Echo go up top, and like, slip in as the trumpet is going in? The trumpet has a name; I shouldn't just keep calling it the trumpet, that's not... that's not useful. I forget what the trumpet is named.

KEITH: It's actually a sousaphone.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's what it's called, the Sousaphone.

KEITH: It's called the Sousaphone.

AUSTIN: It's not. It's not.

ART: That's so much bigger than a trumpet.

*[Austin laughs]*

KEITH: Yeah. Well, it needs to be, it needs to be big and loud to get the spaceships up in the air.

AUSTIN: Ah, right, of course.

KEITH: Yeah. *And* it also needs to be portable, which is, you know, why it's a sousaphone and not a tuba!

AUSTIN: Uh, I don't remember what the name of this ship is, and I can't access it cause it's on a different computer, and it's a whole thing. Anyway. So that's two, so how do Gig and, and, Grand get in? Grand Mag.

ART: I mean—

KEITH: Okay wait, so you're saying that even is just gonna pick up Echo—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Even and Echo fly in.

KEITH: And they're gonna just carry, they're just gonna fly straight in.

AUSTIN: Yep. Yep.

KEITH: I have a plan equally as elegant; let's just run. Let's just book it towards the building.



ART: No, what if I just like, walk up to the door and demand to be let in as the architect of the, of the mech they stole?

AUSTIN: *[cross]* I mean that might, they— who knows!

KEITH (as Gig): *[cross]* They don't— they don't care that you're that.

ART (as Grand): Why?

KEITH (as Gig): Well, they, I'm—

ART (as Grand): They liked it enough to steal it; they don't like it enough to want more?

KEITH (as Gig): Well, if they, if they cared who you were, they would've asked you to borrow it or to use it. Or to build them a better one.

ART (as Grand): I mean, I just think you're undervaluing me as a hostage.

KEITH (as Gig): Oh, you're saying that you're going to be a hostage, not a—? They're not just, you're saying let me walk up and get captured.

ART (as Grand): I mean, it gets me on the other side of the wall.

KEITH (as Gig): How 'bout this: How 'bout I take you hostage and I go up there and I let them know?

ART (as Grand): Why— what are you— what? What leverage do you have?

KEITH (as Gig): I don't know, what leverage do you have?!

ART (as Grand): I don't want leverage; I just wanna be inside!

KEITH (as Gig): Okay. Oh, so you're just saying let's get ourselves captured and then escape from within?

ART (as Grand): Yeah, and I mean, they're inside, you know. Even and Echo went inside, so we got, someone's theoretically working on it.

KEITH (as Gig): Are— how about— let's try my thing, cause either way, we're gettin' up to the door.

ART (as Grand): Your thing is just, is just running.

KEITH (as Gig): Just run; just book it.

ART (as Grand): Okay...

KEITH (as Gig): Maybe the cameras only take a picture every thirty seconds.

ART (as Grand): How fast— how fast can you run?

KEITH (as Gig): I'm not slow.

ART: *[sighs]* How far is this?

AUSTIN: Eh, fifty yards.

ART: Alright. Okay!

DRE: Bum, bum, bum, bum...

*[laughter]*

KEITH: Alright, let's fucking book it; let's do it.

AUSTIN: Alright, y'all run to the front door—

KEITH: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: And you get to the front door, and it's a locked door.

KEITH: Okay.

*[Sylvia laughs]*

AUSTIN: What are you—

KEITH: That's okay, I can pick a lock.

AUSTIN: So now you're picking a lock, both of you are up there, you're picking a lock. I think like as you open it, the door opens. And—

KEITH: Dope. Got it!

AUSTIN: Great. Uh, and it is Armstrong. It is the, it is... the one who you, you recognize immediately, and he's like—

KEITH (as Gig): Oh. Hey man.

AUSTIN (as Armstrong): Oh...

KEITH (as Gig): I didn't know you lived here!

AUSTIN (as Armstrong): You had to have just seen me land my big ship.

KEITH (as Gig): Oh, that was your big ship?

AUSTIN (as Armstrong): You thought there was a diff—

KEITH (as Gig): Nah.

AUSTIN (as Armstrong): Different big ship that looks like *that*.

KEITH (as Gig): Mass production, I don't know.

ART (as Grand): Yeah, I mean, it's way more likely that that's true than that that's the only ship that looks like that. *[cross]* Who built the one-off ships?

KEITH (as Gig): *cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Armstrong): *[cross]* Our whole thing is that we're Independents, we're all—  
*[sighs]*

KEITH (as Gig): I mean, but I don't know— I don't know that you'd take it that far and build your own ship.

AUSTIN: We uh, we also just get an image of Echo and Even inside the hangar like, as the, as, we also like before this happens, maybe what we would've gotten was the image of Echo and Even in the rafters at the top of this hangar, looking down at the trumpet ship, at Independence, or the new body of Independence, and uh... the, the I guess like, Alekhine is in there, and you see Alekhine and, and Armstrong talking, and then like they look at a, a wall of monitors and see Even— or not Even, see Grand Mag and Gig trying to sneak in? And they're like, "What do we—" *[sighs]* And Alekhine is just like,

AUSTIN (as Alekhine): Deal with them.

AUSTIN: And that's when we get them opening the door and being like, what are you doing?

KEITH: Oh. Um...

AUSTIN: And he's like...

AUSTIN (as Armstrong): Come inside.

KEITH (as Gig): Okay. It's okay, this guy's kind of my friend.

AUSTIN (as Armstrong): He's the one who built it, right?

AUSTIN: And he leads you into the facility.

KEITH (as Gig): Yeah, he's the building guy.

AUSTIN: And as you walk in like, you see that there are like more of these cameras and also the ones inside have guns attached, and they're like following your moves. They seem to be automated. And you can feel that—

KEITH: Bank cameras with guns on them, the last thing we need!

AUSTIN (as Armstrong): *[exhausted]* Don't try anything. *[sighs]*

AUSTIN: And he like, leads you through the halls of this place. Echo and Even, what are you two up to?

DRE: So, are there also cameras with guns in here?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, definitely. There's like only a few per room, but that's still a lot.

DRE: Hm. Is there anybody in here besides Alekhine?

AUSTIN: As far as you can see, it's just Alekhine. And he is like looking over a schematic that is clearly a modified version of the body that, that Grand Magnificent built that's like—

KEITH: Oh wow, they changed it, that's gotta be an insult.

AUSTIN: Well, they've made spaces for—

ART: *[cross]* It's pretty insulting, yeah.

AUSTIN: Spaces for the mind, the, the like, circulatory system, the nervous system, and the, and the heart of this Divine. And they have two of those things. Or like, they have everything except for the mind. So what are you two up to?

DRE: Um, I think Even kinda does like hand signals to Echo basically like, motioning that I'm just gonna jump on this dude's back and take him out.

SYLVIA: Alright, okay, I'll back you up.

ART: What's the hand signal for that?

AUSTIN: Yeah, what is the...

DRE: Fuck, I don't know, like what? Like, two fingers pointed at my eyes and into Echo's eyes and then like, pointing down at him and then uh... Even just doing like the throat slit thing?

AUSTIN: Echo—

SYLVIA: Thumbs up!

AUSTIN: *[laughs]* Yeah, okay! Good! Alright, give me, it sounds like a Neutralize to me.

DRE: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: Go ahead and— what are you feeling while you do this jump?

DRE: Oh, listen, powerful. This—

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: This is what Even<sup>2</sup> does.

AUSTIN: Go for it.

DRE: A seven!

AUSTIN: That's a seven.

DRE: So he kind of does it. *[laughs]*

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<sup>2</sup> Misspoken as “Echo”.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so on a seven on Neutralize, you get to do two of the following three: you generate two hold and you can do that per, per scene, or like in this scene. You can inflict harm. You can take away an advantage if you spend both of them. You can suffer little harm. You can force a change of location— one hold and I'll choose where, two hold and you do. Or you can impress, dismay, or frighten your opponent. You will also be hurt if you do not choose suffer little harm.

DRE: Yeah, I'm gonna do suffer little harm, for sure.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: And I will... Eugh. Do I wanna do harm, or do I wanna frighten or dismay him? Uh, harm.

AUSTIN: Okay. What's your weapon?

DRE: I think all I really have is this gun, but my weapon is that I'm falling from the ceiling on top of this dude—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Okay.

DRE: And I am a large person.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you are a large person who has armor and junk on. You like, you're on your way down, and like, the, he, he catches the, the glint of your metal wings, you know, in this hangar and like raises his arms in defense as you slam into him. He can't get— he goes for a knife on your way down, but you get to him closer than that. But you do two harm to him, but he has two armor, and like, you bounce off of this metal armored like, shoulder plate that he has on and slide to the ground. And he draws his knife out and he says—

AUSTIN (as Alekhine): Gardner! Did not expect you so soon.

SYLVIA: He doesn't know I'm here yet, right?

AUSTIN: No.

SYLVIA: I'm gonna jump on this fucker, then.

*[laughter]*

AUSTIN: Alright, again, give me a Neutralize.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: How do you feel about this?

SYLVIA: Um, so—

AUSTIN: Are you just doing a jump? You're not doing a— no sword this time.

SYLVIA: No sword, this is hand to hand and actually, um... since we last leveled up, I took the move um, I think it's called Precise? Exact! That's it.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: So I can do... stun harm instead of—

AUSTIN: Right!

SYLVIA: Normal harm now.

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: I think this roll is actually— oh, um. Is actually gonna be scared, because the last time I fought somebody, it got heavy.

AUSTIN: Right, okay. Gimme a scared.

SYLVIA: Alright, so...

AUSTIN: What's that put you at on scared— what is your scared?

SYLVIA: My scared is plus zero, it's just a...

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: A flat roll. And then it'll put me to two on scared.

AUSTIN: Okay, sounds good.

SYLVIA: And get me down to zero on powerful. That's an eight.

AUSTIN: Same thing! One— you have two harm.

SYLVIA: So... okay.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Or no, not two harm.

SYLVIA: *[cross]* So I take two harm?

AUSTIN: No, no no, sorry, you have two hold is what I meant to say.

SYLVIA: Two hold, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes yes.

SYLVIA: Um, lemme just look at the full options again here.

AUSTIN: So it's do harm—

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's impress, dismay, or frighten. It's move— change their location. It's suffer little harm, which again you'll need to do, or it's... there's another one. Take away an advantage.

SYLVIA: So I think I'm gonna inflict harm, which since it's hand to hand this is the um, I get two armor when using this style...

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: And it does two harm. But that's gonna be stun harm. I'm gonna do it as.

AUSTIN: Right. That again, is gonna bounce off of his armor.

SYLVIA: Okay. Oh, cause stun harm just won't work at all?

AUSTIN: You did two; he has two armor.

SYLVIA: Oh, he has two armor? Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: I'm gonna take away an advantage, then, instead, and use both my hold to do that, so—

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Okay, so what I'll say that that's like is like, you knock the knife out of his hand.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So it reduces the ability for him to do damage to both of you.



SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So yeah, you slam the knife away, and then what's the other one that you— still suffer little harm.

SYLVIA: That uses two— both holds.

AUSTIN: Oh, that uses both holds? So then like—

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What actually I think happens is the knife gets stuck in you.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So that takes, that's three damage. It's like a— as it goes in, you feel it vibrating inside of you. But—

SYLVIA: Oof, I am... one critical now.

AUSTIN: But you like are able to back, like yeah, I think it slams into your shoulder or something? Or maybe even I guess if you're one critical, probably lower than that, and catches something really bad. And like, it's moving around, but then you're able to like— what do you do, do you grab it?

SYLVIA: *[cross]* It's, it's— How much damage is it?

AUSTIN: Three, total.

SYLVIA: Three? Okay, so yeah. *[cross]* So that, I have two armor.

DRE: *[cross]* But wouldn't you take off your two...

AUSTIN: So yeah, take two off the top.

SYLVIA: Take two off of it? Okay.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cause you have two armor, right?

SYLVIA: Whole thing has confused me— alright, so I'm just one— I'm... one moderate, then.

AUSTIN: Okay, then you're fine. Yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You're not fine, it's still bad.

SYLVIA: So let's go with shoulder, then.

AUSTIN: Yes, okay so yeah, it's in your shoulder. Do you just like take the knife out and then like, throw it away? Do you...

SYLVIA: I think I take it out and I give it to Even.

*[MUSIC— The Twilight Mirage]*  
**[1:52:58]**

AUSTIN: Oh, good call. *[laughs]* Alekhine is like...

AUSTIN (as Alekhine): You two do not know what you are doing.

DRE (as Even): You should explain quickly, then.

AUSTIN: And then you hear...

AUSTIN (as unknown voice): Allow me.

AUSTIN: And the mech starts to move. And it is the voice of the Doyenne. Undela Apogica. And she says...

AUSTIN (as the Doyenne): I thought for a long time that great art came from great minds. I was wrong.

*[MUSIC— The Twilight Mirage ends]*