

Twilight Mirage 67: Futura Free Pt. 4

Transcriber: Lu

[SONG "Twilight Mirage" STARTS PLAYING]

AUSTIN (as Keen Forester Gloaming): Exigency Register A-TM-V-742 - Total Record of Events, Entry 001

To whoever finds this message: My name is Keen Forester Gloaming. I am, at time of this recording, the Chief Intercessor of the Rapid Evening in the Quire System and Primary Observer of the Twilight Mirage. I speak these words on the eve of Crystal Palace's arrival and the scheduled deployment of a limited scope stellar combustor to destroy the Divine Volition and its'...

Well shit, I guess I have no idea if any of those words mean anything to you.

Alright, let me start from the very top:

My name is Keen, and I come from a place called the Principality of Kesh. It is a collection of hundreds of worlds, tied together by a lesion in our history: A long time ago, my people spent eons enslaved by a technological tyrant, extraction exalted. And then, by luck, we found ourselves freed and empowered. And using that strength, we faced our oppressor down.

And in the generations that followed, we learned that the galaxy was filled with other threats just as--if not more--terrifying. The stars were as a forest, and it was on fire. And so we had a choice: Look away, and let our faces feel the heat from the safety of our veranda at the treeline, or intercede.

And we would not turn our backs as trillions burned.

But our efforts to save others cost us dearly, and in time, our wills shook. No terror defeated seemed lesson enough for the galaxy at large. There was always some new case of unchecked ambition, the arrival of a monstrosity we could not comprehend let alone predict.

And so, somewhere along the way, we built a machine that could uncover what our eyes could not. It is a collection of axles and algorithms, pulleys and passive dynamics. It is a structure that reveals structure. We called it the apparatus that sees the world as it is. We called it Crystal Palace.

And it told us that, with this new information, we would save a great many more people. And we did. But Crystal Palace does not lie, which means that it also told us the hard truth: that we could not save everyone, that there was a distance beyond which its own predictions would falter.

And so like armadillo curling into shell, society itself bent into permanent shape, hiding inside armored plates of reliability, and, for those deep in the populous heart of the Principality: repetition, too.

Some folks think Crystal Palace started the cycle, but I don't buy it. There is something beautiful about a watch that winds itself.

Which is probably why those living beyond the cycle line didn't even notice it for those first few beautiful loops: 2000 years set to quartz-rhythm, gliding over and over again in pendulum precision. An arcing dance of lives: a deliveryman, a gardener, a crankish politician. People found themselves in roles, not lives--repeating the steps of someone millennia their predecessor.

And as is our paradoxical way, when those Off Cycle finally noticed this happening, they interceded. The loop was modified, just in the way Crystal Palace told us it would be. A system was put in place. When someone On Cycle comes of age, they step off the dance floor, they climb to the balcony, and they see the ballroom for what it really is. And they are given a choice:

Join the Rapid Evening off cycle, in a world that carries always the rare possibility of the terrible improbable. Or return to absolute certainty, to the heart of Kesh.

But this system, this Mirage, has proven treacherous to reality itself. And so the Cycle is broken, and what comes next for Kesh is not beautiful clockwork. It's a factory fire.

I have been a member of the Rapid Evening for a long time, for decades. I have done things I regret, and which the apparatus has told me I will always regret. And yet the first time in my life off cycle, that I truly, really, deeply wish that Crystal Palace would be wrong.

But I know better than most that wishes do not hold back tomorrow.

And I know that when it all happens, regardless of what I want, regardless of what I think is best for the galaxy, I will be standing in its halls of glass and steel, helpless. Just five or six steps away from where I will stand, a spark will catch the tinder of the galaxy, and I will be the only one close enough to stop the blaze.

And I will fail.

[SONG "Twilight" STOPS PLAYING]

AUSTIN: Ready?

SYLVIA: Yeah, I'm ready. I'm good to go.

AUSTIN: *Well-*

[Everyone, overlapping]

SYLVIA: Wow!

ART: Woah!

KEITH: Wow!

JANINE: Damn!

DRE: Wow!!

AUSTIN: That's- interesting!

SYLVIA: That's the king!

AUSTIN: So this is the King of Winter. Crystal Palace is arriving on the horizon, right?

KEITH: Okay

JACK: What does that look like?

AUSTIN: Uh- like Seance? It looks almost exactly like Seance. Like, it is a long, octagonal floating city like Seance was, except, instead of being this remarkable mixture of different cultures like Seance, which- y'know, it reflected all of the different Divine Fleet subcultures that had found their way onto the ship- the city around Crystal Palace is fairly uniform. It's like, very Victorian? There's ridges on roofs, and there's the light trim around windows and doors, and there's some strapwork and detailing, and most of the buildings are this light brown or red, and there's lots of brick, and iron, and cloth, and cobblestone, and there's this sort of like, this haunting light of lanterns pointed upwards at these structures. And in the middle of it all is Crystal Palace, it towers above everything and it wraps around the *entire* exterior of this huge, octagonal tube. And i- it sort of brings the entire world into order, it has like an organizing presence- it's like a lord, or a river. It's like a glass structure, it is *literally* the Crystal Palace of England- the World's Fair Crystal Palace- it is that. And inside of it- and you can see this through all your images- is another version of that- the node that was like the Rube Goldberg machine, with all these different levers, and ball bearings, and pulley springs, and all of that- like an old fashioned Ada Lovelace- uh- styled computer. It's one of those. And it's *huge*! It's massive, it's like, as big as- y'know, it's a mile around or something. And the thing that you- which is maybe expected, you knew it would be a big computer. Maybe what you didn't know though is... that it would be filled with people. Thousands of people, attending to this thing's needs, picking up little tiny pieces of paper that have slots on them and feeding them into card readers, and taking out the print-outs that come out of this thing and deciphering them, and putting them into a different computer- it's just this

constant churn of people that make Crystal Palace work, thousands of them per- any moment, right? It's just attended to the way you would have to attend to a sinking ship. Just constantly bailing out information and filling holes with new data, and turning it into something that works. Because if you stopped doing that, if you removed the people from the machine, if you removed the subjective interpretation of all this stuff- none of it would be... conscionable- you couldn't even understand what it would be, or it would be all noise, because it's predicting *everything*. And so these people are constantly applying the human filter on top of it, in order to make it readable- and *this* is why there are mistakes sometimes. Crystal Palace doesn't get anything wrong, sometimes someone's bias slips in. sometimes someone thinks that they like the right hand side more than the left hand side and they slip up- it's like that scene in Ghostbusters when Ray needs to clear his mind and he thinks of the Stay Puft marshmallow man- you have to have a clear mind when you work with Crystal Palace, *constantly*, otherwise your mind, your information will spoil what's coming out of it- and if it spoils it, you're replaced. And it continues working. And that's been going on for thousands and thousands and thousands of years, and now it is at your doorstep.

KEITH: What happens when you get replaced?

AUSTIN: A new person goes in, and you go out of- you step out of the world of knowing about kinda how this works and back into the beautiful clockwork world of the Rapid Evening- of the Principality of Kesh.

KEITH: Oh, so you just get to go home.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And live the life that you're scheduled to live. And they don't- I don't think that anyone on the Rapid Evening says that that's a bad thing. But there's a reason they chose to be agents of the Rapid Evening, and to live with some feeling of agency, even if they don't believe they have one. They don't- they believe that they don't- that everything they're gonna do is predicted by Crystal Palace, and *yet*, they would rather be doing things that are on the periphery, on its boundaries, where there's slightly more of a chance of it getting something wrong? That on the interior, where it's *a/ways* accurate. Which is scary for you, because... [laughs] you are now at its per- or, at its center. Or it should be scary, it's getting here. So, let's finish your turn out, Echo. Or actually- fuck it. Like, it's here- I'm gonna read from the rules, I'm gonna return to the rules and see what the rules say- or if we just go into our final turn. I opened up the Genius page for the song Futura Free, that's not it- [laughing] that's not- that's not it.

[someone chuckles]

AUSTIN: So- fuck. Okay. I have to reveal the NEH clock, and I need to reveal the DFS clock. The NEH... [sighs] has been promoting their Splice really well! Really,

really well. People like it, it appeals to people to go into a different world. Even now, someone could live an entire life inside the Splice before Crystal Palace does whatever Crystal Palace wants to do, the timing on this couldn't have been better. Um... so. Choose a project run by your faction, add two more months to that clock, as members of your faction are pulled away by the allure of the Splice. If you have no active project, then add Population as a new scarcity, as you lose members of your faction to the Splice. If you already have Population as a scarcity, then choose an abundance and reduce it directly to scarcity. So... [sigh]

ART: That's everyone.

AUSTIN: That's everyone. Including NPC's

ART: Alright.

AUSTIN: Never has it looked better to tie yourself to a computer. [laughs]

[JACK chuckles]

AUSTIN: So, I'm just erasing progress on each of these clocks- which now means that they probably don't have the time they need, right?

ART: Advent doesn't-

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: NEH...

KEITH: NEH and- yeah, [ART overlaps] the Divine Free States.

ART: [overlapping] NEH definitely has enough time but i- i-

KEITH: Yeah, Divine Free States will finish on the last- on the last one.

AUSTIN: Oh- Well, depending on which one I take- yeah, I'm gonna let the other DFS one fire, but the new one- or, what was the new one at the time will not fire. The Rapid Evening, do they have- oh yeah, they have- uhh. That one is actually kind of- so it's a weird situation, as soon as Crystal Palace shows up, this one... can't happen anymore? 'Cause that one was-

KEITH: Which one?

AUSTIN: That one was that they were gonna *leave* until Crystal Palace showed up? But they can't really do that anymore. I'm gonna lose- I'm gonna add the stealth loss for them. But everyone else I think is still in the same position- um, including the NEH, right? Yeah they did- I got rid of it- I actually lowered it, so yeah. Their population is still there. Um... but is- that population is now like, in use- y'know what I mean? it's a fad, it's turned into a fad for a lot of people, and for some people it's

turned into more than a fad, so. Uh, okay. Qui Err Coalition, you do gain the negative population- okay, Waking Cadent, you already had a negative population.

JANINE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: So what happens here.

JANINE: Um, I think the thing that happens is... uh... we have a lack of supplies-

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Like, the thing that happens is, we see what's going on, we already don't have a lot of people so it's like- we gotta cut this thing off.

AUSTIN: Yep! [laughs]

JANINE: [amused] We don't have- we can't afford to lose people to fantasyland, right now.

AUSTIN: Totally. You're like "Fuck this, turn this off- we don't get to have this anymore". Seneschal's Brace, how 'bout you?

DRE: Uh- we just lose population, right?

AUSTIN: Oh right, you just lose- you don't get a choice.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right, totally. Um.. okay, cool. So that was- that was the old uhhh NEH. Continuing to-

JACK: [overlaps] Oh, another clock.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh! Now, Palatine happens, which is the DFS's project. So, the Divine Free- so. Nideo was not pleased by the fact that you uh- stole Gumption. But to some degree he was okay, 'cause he was already working on a new one. They.. they view the new Divine Platine, who is an expert in information and data- in this world with the Splice and all that, you need to have an expert in information and data- the Rapid Evening have agents and allies everywhere, you need someone who can see where things are going! Uh- and so, Palatine is like a surveillance state Divine. Palatine is... the Divine answer to a kind of temporary, short term localized Crystal Palace. It's fundamentally about what *people* will do, less so about physics, right? Crystal Palace does it the hard way? Crystal Palace does it by like, "hey, how do brains work, physically? Okay, I can predict the outcomes." It's like- it's like- this is a hard deterministic universe, the world- the Twilight Mirage. And so it's able to be like "okay, so if the brain will fire this way, people will do that", and that's *really* hard to do. The... the Palatine just has like a psychographic understanding of everyone? It understands everyone's- [amused] it's like it's done the biggest, longest personality

quiz for everybody? And just knows more about you than you know about yourself. And so, what I need all of you to do is- sneak in- maybe write down right next to your names here- the following things, because you're adding a trait that I can do to counter your use of any one of your traits [JACK laughs] And those are: Echo, haunted. Even, obsessed. Fourteen, dying. Gig, reckless. Grand- I had cowardly here? You still good with that?

ART: Uhhh- sure.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: [overlapping] Yeah- I mean, if you have a second one I'll hear it.

AUSTIN: Signet- [pause] Hm.. No, what I have written down is cowardly. Signet, cold, and Tender- I had preoccupied, but you used anxious earlier, and maybe that's stronger.

ALI: [laughs] Sure.

AUSTIN: So go ahead and just write those down. Um- and so what I can do is just say "okay, you're trying to be a daredevil, Even? But actually your obsession with Advent is getting the better of you. Um- Fourteen, you're passionate? But you're also slowly dying, and that passion cannot get over the stress that's being put on your body. So, that's us, right now. Um- boy! That's a fun thing to do! Alright, well-

JACK: Let's do it!

AUSTIN: I have to reveal [sighing] *more clocks*...

JACK: Fuck- oh, really??

[DRE cackles]

AUSTIN: Hm, really. Yeah. I unnamed all these clocks- so the good news is, they all name themselves, immediately. There is no- nothing here is... [JACK laughs] hidden. Uh- [laughs] you'll note that this fun one just has the number seven in it 'cause they've already advanced one of these- and I swear it was already there. So, the Advent reveal a seven-step clock to extract with their plunder.

JACK: [long, distressed sigh]

AUSTIN: The NEH is going to begin to emergency extract the Mirage? From the system. It's taking the Mirage, 'cause it's afraid that it's gonna blow up and then it's gonna also leave? So instead of doing it in that nice, clean way that it's been doing, it is now just kinda- basically fracking the Mirage? Which- [JACK overlaps]

JACK: [overlapping] Oh my *god*.

AUSTIN: - Which Our Profit justifies as the fact that there's already a hole in the Mirage, and Crystal Palace is going to blow up the Mirage anyways, so we should take what we can get and leave, and go bring the Splice to other people, look at how happy everyone is about it? Everyone's happy about it, so y'know. Um... the DFS are, [laughs] at the end of this six-step clock, launch a unilateral attack on the Rapid Evening? Um- This is gonna go poorly. The reason you know all of this, by the way, is fun. Demani Dusk and Gray Gloaming are able to tell it to you because they're now close enough to be completely in connection with Crystal Palace? And Crystal Palace can see all of this stuff. Um- hey, Janine?

JANINE: Yeah?

AUSTIN: It's time to leave.

JANINE: Fine- I was hop- I was like "is he ever gonna- there has to be some kind of clock, because there's some shit that like-"

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh [JANINE overlaps] Oh, wrong one.

JANINE: [overlapping] Signets not in charge of this!

KEITH: [overlapping] That's the wrong-

AUSTIN. That's the wrong one, sorry. Boop.

JANINE: Signets not in charge of the Waking Cadent, so the fact that there weren't any clocks- that was kinda weird.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. There was always a four-step clock that would happen as soon as the winter hit. Uh- not winter. Whatever we're calling this- midnight hit. Uh- and then- yeah. So I think right now- I think that the plan is still the same. Which is, they are going to- Rapid Evening still, at this moment, plans to deploy a limited range stellar combustor.

JACK: [groans]

JANINE: That doesn't make sense.

AUSTIN: Why?

JANINE: Because they said "deal with Volition or we're gonna blow you up" so we dealt with Volition.

AUSTIN: Prove it. What do you mean you dealt with Volition, there's a giant sun and there's hole in the Mirage!

JACK: Sounds like some people wanna fucking blow up [AUSTIN overlaps] the Mirage.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, it sounds like- [JANINE overlaps]. I'm being-

JANINE: [overlapping] They know everything! They have access to this info! [laughs]

AUSTIN: But Volition is still here! They know that Volition is still here.

ART: There's definitely not eight more turns left.

AUSTIN: Well- this fires at the end of the thing, right? Like, that's- I have to mark it the way I have to mark 'extract', so. That is when- oh I'm on the wrong thing. But no, Volition is still here, no one killed Volition.

JACK: One of us is gonna have to go see Demani Dusk [laughing] and fucking kill her.

ART: [JANINE overlaps] The big red line though Volition suggests we dealt with Volition.

JANINE: [overlapping] I mean- yeah, that card said that threat is removed from the map, basically.

KEITH: Wait, hold on- the Rapid Evening, they're a bunch of jerk liar idiots- [AUSTIN overlaps] they're not-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, I'm being dead serious! They said- yeah the threat is removed from the map, I was also very clear: Volition can still make axioms.

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: The threat is removed from the map! But so is the threat from so many other things they decided to blow up, they're the Rapid Evening, they don't take a chance on this shit. Like, it's so easy to kill Volition, why not just kill it. That's their view. Even having Aperture out there is *terrifying*. Or it wouldve been, but you stopped it, right? That's why you spent resources to stop it. They also don't know how many axioms are still out there in the system.

ART: We can do this-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] If you're the Rapid Evening, there's plenty- so what I'm saying is, you can convince them- you can *try* to convince them to not do this. Remember, destroying clocks is not going to war all the time. But you're gonna have to convince them to do it. I didn't show up and say the bomb went off, but the bomb is still coming.

ART: We have enough turns to do this.

KEITH: Well, some of it.

AUSTIN: Some of it!

ART: A *lot* of it. And we don't have to discover these clocks 'cause they're- [AUSTIN overlaps] discovered? Okay

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Correct. They're all discovered.

KEITH: Alright. [unintelligible]

AUSTIN: I'll go over them one more time [laughs] In fact, I can at this point just reveal the ones that are still hidden from you, 'cause there are still the old ones that haven't been revealed. The NEH is gonna start being super rich because of the Splice- it turns out you can be super innovative while being in there? And then the NFS is also gonna try to steal and repair the remains of Gumption. So, Echo. What are you doing as the clock ticks down?

SYLVIA: Okay. Alright- so I'm- I'm gonna attack something here 'cause I need to stop something from happening. Um... I don't know how well it would go to just immediately jump at the stellar combustor, so...

ART: Well, it'd get a lot of help.

SYLVIA: Yeah...

AUSTIN: -probably would get a lotta help! Uh- I don't know what stopping it looks like yet.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I don't either... that's why I'm scared to say "let's do it", but...

JANINE: I feel like shooting it apart is a taller order than like, convincing them Volition isn't evil.

SYLVIA: Yeah...

AUSTIN: I think both of those are tall orders but you're right that- [JANINE overlaps] Yeah

JANINE: [overlapping] Well yeah but in a different way.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes.

SYLVIA: What I was gonna do is try and stop the DFS attack so they can work with us as well, theoretically, hopefully.

AUSTIN: Not a bad idea.

JACK: *Oh*, to target the DFS this time around and then [AUSTIN overlaps] in a future turn be like- alright, let's- let's...

AUSTIN: [overlapping] An unilateral- yeah.

SYLVIA: So I was gonna go for that, because at least then we have the option of adding people to this, and having less civilian casualties?

JACK: Yeah, and whether or not you-

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. [overlapping] And even if you said "Hey don't- don't. Hey, don't."

JACK: Yeah, and even if it's like... if we can stop this attack, it even leaves the door open to sorta what you were talking about like, maybe we can convince them- like, it either- stopping the DFS attacking either means we all get around a table, or it means us lot all arm up and go at the Rapid Evening

SYLVIA: Yeah. Yeah. I think I'm gonna go with that, and I'm gonna spend my trait 'fiery'

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Hmmm.

SYLVIA: And my contempt token?

AUSTIN: Uh- I am going to... enact your 'haunted' here, to cancel out your 'fiery'? And the thing that it is just like... there is a degree of- it's like being around these people who have slipped into such a war-like mode? You spent the last few months or whatever, of this game, being around the Qui Err Coalition- who certainly have military forces, but who have been very clear about being... defensive in nature, for the most part? And negotiation for territory and such? This is the first time that you've seen the whole Divine Free States war machine, which has been building up- especially since Quire died. Which also have been [laughing] towards the end of last session, and we skipped that. Just like- even being around these folks, it's like walking through a police stat- I don't- maybe this is a me thing: I don't like being around police! Uh, cops fucking *suck*.

ART: Sure do.

AUSTIN: And being around them can be very scary, and it can be very like- "oh wait, these are people who are trained to use force, and who historically have used it against people like me, often unfairly". And... that is the feeling that passes over Echo. "Oh, these people *wanna* go to war". And that makes trying to convince them a little harder.

SYLVIA: Okay

AUSTIN: So, you still need to spend more- so what level of attack are you trying to go for?

SYLVIA: I... I mean, ideally, I could do a heavy here? But I'm happy to also just slow this down, so it just doesn't happen?[AUSTIN overlaps] 'Cause I think if I slow it down, mathematically it wouldn't work?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right- the time, basically.

ART: I'll help. That'll- that'll get you the resources.

AUSTIN: How are you helping?

ART: I'll spend a contempt.

AUSTIN: How are you *helping*?

[someone chuckles]

ART: Um... I'll go.

SYLVIA: Yeah like- I'm going to talk, I'm not going to- yeah.

ART: Yeah. Grand can talk.

AUSTIN: [amused] Okay! [ART laughs] uh... so what's the game? So- wait, that's now two contempt tokens-

SYLVIA: Yeah

AUSTIN: That's it, that's good. So can you cross off haunted and...

SYLVIA: Uh- fiery.

AUSTIN: Fiery, yeah.

SYLVIA: Um.. And I was thinking of 'An Animated Disagreement', could work for this?

AUSTIN: Totally could.

SYLVIA: It's the only one I can see for this.

AUSTIN: I think it's a great one! So you're meeting with High Clef Nideo. Uh... here's what i'll say, I think 'cause you're helping, any of you can answer any of these challenge questions here. Um... here's what you notice about Nideo, uh... he is cut out for this, which is maybe not- form reading about this guy in the papers, or knowing that he kinda climbed the ranks, sometimes you think "okay, he's probably over his head-" *He's not*. He has an attention to detail, he surrounds himself with

people who are fundamentally very effective, and very good at giving him information he doesn't wanna hear? Um- and forcing him to take action on that? And in some ways that suggest that might be a good thing for you, because you're one of those people. Um... but also, he's someone who is, as an executive, able to make decisions quickly- y'know, it's part of why he grew to this level- with the Cadent Under Mirage out of kinda pocket for the DFS, there needed to be someone who defaulted- who people defaulted to to make decisions, and he started as the person in the room who could do that, who is willing to say "yeah, let's just do this thing. like- we can't take every little thing up for a vote, so, here's what we're gonna do". And most of the time it was right? And when it was wrong, he *made* it right. Uh- and that all comes through to you as he's like, ordering people around, and you catch him somewhere- where are you having this debate? What are the conditions of it?

SYLVIA: [sighs] I think... like. We're going there to negotiate with them...

AUSTIN: Yes

SYLVIA: So, in a- I think it's a gesture of good faith for Nideo to decide where we have this conversation?

AUSTIN: Sure. Um... maybe meet him actually in what's like, sort of, kind of, neutral territory? Which is at the... y'know what, it's at the Temple of the Lost, after this Advent raid has failed- which is why Grand was already there, Grand was on Alter already when he sent the mech-drone, [laughs] the mech-bomb- so you kinda meet there, they're cleaning up after the attempted Advent raid, it's become clear that Grand helped foil that raid by killing Kitcha Kanna? Which is why he's willing to meet with Grand at-fucking-all. Um... and Sho, you're meeting in kind of a- Sho Salon kinda guides you into a meeting room inside of the temple, so it's like- it's lots of stoneworks, lots of relief etchings in the side of the wall of various Divines, the sun is coming in- the new sun is coming in through these like, open air windows that have been- windows is the wrong word. As part of the etchings, there's sometimes just not wall? So like, y'know, there will be the etching of , and in parts of- the wings would be in space, like- the space in between is just empty, so there's light coming through these holes in the wall, and that is the natural light here. And I think there's. I think Nideo brought in very comfortable sitting for all of you? [laughs] um... so you're sitting there in a kind of triangular form, Sho is in the room, I suspect that Nideo has some more people in the room too? Of his kind of management team? And probably some students of Sho- some high ranking students of sho's.

AUSTIN: So. The audience conducts the discussion. Audience members, you take turns posing challenges to the position holders. Both position holders must answer each challenge. You decide who goes first, or let one volunteer. Once both have answered, award one coin to the one you think gave the best answer. You *have* to choose. If either position holder goes too long, you can cut them off- hoots and boos

optional- and award one point to their counterpart, or else just ask them to kindly wrap up. They are absolutely not allowed to interrupt or rebutt one another, if either position holder interrupts or tries to get in a rebuttal when it's not their turn to answer, cut them off at once and award one coin to their counterpart. After three challenges, you compare coins. Whichever proportion of coins each hold, they can be confident that if they were forced to commit, the same proportion of the audience, real or imaginary, would side with them. So... who wants the first question, audience?

DRE: Please explain how your position is the most urgent and expedient.

AUSTIN: Who is that to?

DRE: Uh... let's say it goes to- so we're saying Echo and Grand are like, one-

AUSTIN: They're one, I think they- either one of them can decide which one to take here.

DRE: Yeah

ART: And everyone has to answer both, so-

AUSTIN: Yes, totally

JACK: It's just who answers first, right?

ART: Um- got it, got it. yeah.

AUSTIN: Uhhh- I don't think that both of you get to answer this question.

JACK: Well no 'cause then- how does the coin thing work, once both have answered- oh, you mean both Grand [AUSTIN overlaps] and Echo? Oh yeah-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] -and Echo, yeah. One of them has to answer.

ART: [overlapping] It's true, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: They get to pick which one answers but- yeah. Both sides. Yeah.

DRE: [overlapping] Um- so I'll say, Grand and/or Echo go first. Or I guess Grand or Echo go first.

ART: [stage whispering] Do you have this one?? I don't have this one-

[DRE chuckles]

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think I do, I think I do

ART: [stage whispering] Okay... [DRE laughs] That's good.

SYLVIA (as Echo): It doesn't matter how quickly you get to your grave if you end up in your grave, right? So, what's planned right now- it doesn't end with the Divine Free States still existing as a thing and- if you're trying to get to the point where you can be free from the Rapid Evening, or the conflict going on here, getting there by dying? Might be the fastest way to do it, but it's not necessarily the smartest [laughs]. We're not asking you to wait forever, we're just asking you to wait for help. If we don't tackle this problem as a system, each one of us is just gonna be taken out one by one, and that's- that doesn't help anybody.

AUSTIN (as Nideo): May I respond?

SYLVIA (as Echo): Yes

AUSTIN (as Nideo): I sat and waited for help when Gumption and empyrean were killed, and it did not come. I sat and waited for help when the NEH first arrived here, and instead our fleet was driven to ground. I will not stop and wait for help from those who do not have the trust from their own people, from those who have not managed to make allegiances, from those who are unequipped to deal with this directly. I have a responsibility to my people, and to shun that and hide behind cowardice, will only get them killed quicker. If we're going to face this thing, we should face it now, while we're prepared and before they can set up their defenses.

DRE: Um... I... will give the coin to the DFS.

AUSTIN: Hm-okay. Second question.

ART: [quietly] Guy doesn't even know me.

[DRE and AUSTIN burst out laughing]

ART: Where's the thing where this just turns into a Jerry Springer episode?

AUSTIN: [amused] If you do it, I get a coin, is actually a thing that happens. Which- that's fine-

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah...

JACK: Or alternatively, if you could bait Nideo into doing it, you get a coin! Um... okay, I have one. Please explain your commitment to your position, even if it's not actually true or right. And I'm gonna let High Clef Nideo kick that one off.

AUSTIN: Um-so I think Nideo... lets himself visibly sink into his seat for a moment, and then says- he looks at both of you in the eye, with like, mask off- fucking mask off, here's where we are. And he says-

AUSTIN (as Nideo): We are staring the devil in the face. There is... [sigh] for those on this world, for those on the worlds of the Divine Free States, nothing to be done.

They cannot *imagine* defeating something that can see the future. And that is absurd. We spent 30,000 *years* in paradise, that we built together with our Divines. If they cannot imagine, it's my job to do so for them. I will be their steel and their courage, and I will make the decision that in fear, they cannot bring themselves to.

ART: [quietly] This is another one that's bad for me [SYLVIA overlaps] I don't have a lot of like, moral high ground on commitment [JACK laughs]

SYLVIA: [overlapping] Yeah, I know, I know [laughs] No, you have- you have moral low ground, just- [stutters] don't worry about it. Um... [laughs]

SYLVIA (as Echo): [sigh] I understand having to make... the- [huffs] having to make decisions that no one should be at to make. I've had to do it during... the Miracle, I had to do it- [scoffs] I had to stab my own brother to- to get him to see: maybe don't team up with Advent. We took care of Advent, and no one thought we could do that, I'm- and I did it. I mean, Grand did it with killing people, but I did it by *helping* people. When I first showed up on Quire, I was shown something that... a lot of nights I've spent wishing I never saw. I saw- before this was even a system, when Quire was just a planet, I saw what happened to it, and I saw the effects that that war had on the people who didn't make that decision, and who weren't prepared for it. If you're going to force people to do this attack, you need to be honest with them about your chances to succeed here, because if you truly think you're doing the best thing for the free states and for the people that you're responsible for? You need to let them know that the risk of death is more than anything- we can esc- they need to have- the Rapid Evening don't have the blockade anymore, they can leave. You need to give them that option, and you need to consider the fact that maybe they're interested in an alliance as well. [sighs] you can't just take away everybody's voice because it's easier and because it helps you make [huffs] whatever- it helps you make whatever decisions *you* think help things get to the right ending. All I'm asking you to consider here is that there's more than one way to go about this, and that doing it will help people live, instead of this system... the Divine Free States disappearing and then this system disappearing right after because we didn't handle this the right way. I'm not asking for subservience or anything, and I'm committed to you being able to do whatever you like ehan we're done here, but I'm just asking for negotiations to team up in the *near future!* This is a thing we kinda have to deal with sooner rather than later [laughs]. Advent was the threat keeping us from acting in helping you out. *Obviously*, right? Come on. [laughs] Now they're gone, and we're here, and we're ready to do this, and... that's all I have left to say.

JACK: Okay. I'm gonna give a coin to, uh... to Echo

SYLVIA: [long relieved sigh]

[JACK and AUSTIN chuckle]

AUSTIN: Alright. One more.

KEITH: [old man voice] Please. [everyone cackles] Please, I'm an old man, and I have a question for the High Clef! Please explain how your position is best for the most people! I'm an old *o/d* man! [AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN (as Nideo): What's your name, sir?

[DRE laughs]

ART: [off-mic] Oh *my god*.

KEITH (as old man): [laughing] Oh, no! I forgot it! [SYLVIA & DRE cackle] I'm so terribly old!

AUSTIN (as Nideo): Many lose track of their names even before they reach old age. I- [sigh]

KEITH (as old man): It's Henry

AUSTIN (as Nideo: Henry, thank you so much for attending this meeting. That we didn't announce publicly. It shows a commitment [DRE giggles] to the Divine Free States, and... a passion for civic duty. I appreciate it, deeply. [sigh] The truth is, we stand at a crossroads, in the Quire System. There is a world in which we as a group attack the Rapid Evening and drive them away, and what is left... are dogs biting at troaths, scrambling for territory. Civilians warming their ire for their neighbors, finding excuses to hate those in other worlds. If instead the Divine Free States move *decisively* and emerge as... heros in the system, the future will be clear. Our people are well fed, our borders devendable, our government functioning. We have food. We have transportation, we have space, we have knowhow. The Divine Free States will usher in an age of prosperity for *everyone* as the leader in this system. But, if we wait until every minor power can throw in, and if despite the sacrifices of the Divine Free States' soldiers, we are forced to cut the pie with every small faction, we will move into a time of war. Internally. There will be no stability, there will be no-unification. Only more petty squabbling. I am thinking of the future of every living soul in this sector.

SYLVIA (as Echo): I understand where you're coming from, and I understand that you believe it when you say you are doing this on behalf of every living soul on this sector, um- I also don't think you know how wrong you are, and I'm sorry if that's rude to say. Um... but it doesn't matter if the DFS do a show of power, if that show of power results in... catastrophic casualties. Even if you succeed, how many- how many people do you think you're going to lose? Like, generously speaking, 75%? [sigh] You need to realize that what the Rapid Evening is proposing is something that they've clearly done before, something that they clearly are very good at, and aren't

really here to listen to anything other than a united front against them. I'm not here to try and... take away anything from the Divine Free States. I'm not here- I understand the worry of war, *especially* with how the system has been for the past- god knows how long. All that said? Doesn't matter if it's not here anymore [humorless laugh] And that's what's gonna happen, is the Rapid Evening- If you are able to stop them just by yourself and then everyone defers to the DFS- great, what's stopping them from coming back and doing this again. What's to stop form going "yeah sure, they did that, but it's *just* the DFS, they're small now". We need- [frustrated huff] there's eight planet- *eight planets*? There's so m- [laughs] I think I got that right. This isn't just a place for what's left of the Divine Fleet, this isn't just a place for... [sigh] this isn't a place for just a group here, we need to team up and we need to ensure that not just one of us survives, but that all of us survive. That's all I got.

KEITH (as old man): [clears throat] I give my token to... Echo. Take it! Take the token!

SYLVIA (as Echo): Oh- thank you. Thank you sir, thank you.

AUSTIN (as Nideo): Thank you, sir, for coming, Henry, that's- [sigh] Tell Mell hello, I miss the pies he used to make.

KEITH (as old man): Ohhh, Mel says best wishes as always...

AUSTIN (as Nideo): Thank you, thank you so much.

KEITH (as old man): *Oohhhhh*

AUSTIN: [amused] Okay! That's it!

ART: Alright!

AUSTIN: So I think... he relents. Um- and it's like-

AUSTIN (as Nideo): [sigh] Drow, can you add a meeting to- put some time aside for future conversation with the Quire Coalition and... see if the Cadent would like to speak too. We'll find time.

AUSTIN: Uh- so I'm gonna freeze this.

ART: [relieved sigh]

AUSTIN: Boop! Frozen. Ookay! Good job Echo! [ART overlaps] Gig Kephart-

ART: Yeah-

AUSTIN: Oh wait- I have to advance clocks. Let me advance clocks.

ALL: Wait- we're freezing that and then we'll have to sater another clock that's...?

AUSTIN: That was about freezing the clock, that was a level two attack that they did. They did not spend-

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: -like a level three-

SYLVIA: [overlapping] -enough resources to-

JACK: [overlapping] But like- I guess the clock could be like-

AUSTIN: The clock is that you convinced them to not do this. That is the clock.

[JACK overlaps] Or that is-

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah, I mean- like, a future clock- maybe we could roll... let's go talk to Demani, or [laughs] let's go fight Demani. We could roll that clock together with the DFS.

AUSTIN: Wait, Demani is cool, Demani is not here to hurt you! Demani-

JACK: Oh, sorry- Keen! Sorry-

AUSTIN: Keen Forster Gloaming

JACK: I don't wanna fight- [AUSTIN overlaps] we could go talk to Demani, but uh-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, amused] wait, Demani is good! Yeah. um- no, I don't think you've earned that! I think you've stopped them from killing a bunch of people. Of their own. Which is good!

JACK: Okay! That's- that's progress!

AUSTIN: That's progress, yeah! That is. Because that would've happened before the combustor blew up, y'know what I mean? Like, they would've thrown themselves against that thing, and gotten millions- hundreds of thousands of people killed.

JACK: And then the combustor-

AUSTIN: And then the combustor- may have blown up! Or may *not* have, that would've been worse, right?

JACK: [sighing] Oh, yeah...

ART: Yeah, losing all your shit and *then* winning? [AUSTIN chuckles] Just as bad, that was gonna be the crux of my version of that argument but- not my scene

AUSTIN: [overlapping] It turned out, Echo had that shit!

ART: [amused] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Echo just needed you to stand there and look pretty, Grand.

ART: Yeah-

JACK: Hey, Grand? [laughs]

ART: Yeah?

JACK: Any bombs there, or...?

[DRE cackles]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Oohhh

ART: Y'know- uhh. I did have my Cascabel gun.

AUSTIN: Okay!

JACK: [laughing] Okay, okay.

AUSTIN: That's good. Alright-

KEITH: You don't even need that anymore, you can just have any kinda gun now!

AUSTIN: True! I mean, it's still a nice gun, I wanna be clear about that.

ART: Yeah. Don't hate on my gun. Jeez

KEITH: Eh, I'm sorry.

AUSTIN: Alright, Gig! What are you doing?

KEITH: Yeah, I'm gonna start a clock, I wanna start a project.

AUSTIN: Okay, what is your project?

KEITH: Uuuuummm. I want to fix our population deficit.

AUSTIN: Good call. What's that look like?

KEITH: Um... I think that it's- so like, its one project, represented by a clock, and the project is, like.... Gig is- I do not think happy with the sort of- everything?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

KEITH: And I think the most visible part of that is watching the Splice steal the ability from people to be like... in the nice place that he thought that he was helping make?

AUSTIN: Right, he spent a lot of time building physical things, [laughs] and then they were like "Yeah, but I got Buzzfeed"

KEITH: I got- yeah [cackles]

JANINE: [laughing] Buzzfeed and Second Life.

AUSTIN: I got Buzzfeed and Sec- I think it's the same thing in the Splice.

KEITH: [laughing] I can go in there and read Buzzfeed, they got it in there!

AUSTIN: That's perfect, yeah. It's sunny in here, forget about it.

KEITH: And so I think that Gig is going around and like, making... fun. Like, making things that are fun to do, and to be a part of? And that you can help out with, if you want, and I- I hope by the end of the clock people will want to.

AUSTIN: So that is- what types of things are fun? What type of events are these?

KEITH: Um... okay, so, I think- I think it's like a lawn game? It is a contest of... slowly increasing in lavishness, lawn games. So like, you start with croquet, and badminton, and by the end is waterslide racing.

AUSTIN: Is this like- there's something interesting here which is, there is a *sun* now. Right? So is part of this "Yeah you can go see the virtual sun but we just got this real sun"

KEITH: -we just got a real sun. [AUSTIN overlaps] it's like warm, it's *warm*.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] We just got this- not that the virtual one is fake, but this is a specific different one that's new and- come hand out in it!

KEITH: Uh-huh

AUSTIN: The Splice isn't going anywhere, you can always Splice back up after

KEITH: Yeah- don't you wanna play boules [pronounced 'bul'] , and then lawn darts, and then do a waterslide race?

AUSTIN: Did you say bull?

KEITH: Boules? Yeah! It's-

AUSTIN: What's boules?

KEITH: Boules is, uh... y'know the balls you use for bocce ball?

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: Those are boules.

AUSTIN: *Oh*. Okay

ALI: Ooh...

KEITH: Boules is an italian game based on a french game called Boules, and there's different kinds of- basically each bocce game differs in the way that you throw the ball?

AUSTIN: Gotchu.

KEITH: Yeah. And boule is my [laughs] bocce of choice.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Okay. Wow. must be nice to have a bocce of choice! [ALI giggles] Alright.

JACK: Did you say lavish? I always- when you said lavish I thought you meant like- fancy. Or posh.

KEITH: No...

JACK: And then when- the first thing you said was like "stage one is croque" I was like- Holy lord stage four is gonna be *amazing!* [AUSTIN cackles]

KEITH: [amused] It is amazing, but it's waterslide.

JACK: I thought elephants were gonna get involved but no, it's actually a lot better than-

KEITH: Yeah [AUSTIN overlaps] Gig's version I think of lavish is a little different than...

JACK: [laughing] Than-

KEITH: [mumbling, unintelligible]

AUSTIN: Cool! And as a weird- quirk of this system, that is gonna advance, because it advances between turns. Clocks advance between turns. What's this- [JACK overlaps] look like?

JACK: What's this- lawn games is [laughing] *so good...*

AUSTIN: Yeah- I guess it's what you just said, right? You're going around and- [amused] hosting these lawn games.

KEITH: Yeah- I mean, I guess I'm- I go- maybe I go into the Splice real quick and be like "hey, were doing a- [cackles] we're doing a thing!"

AUSTIN: God...

KEITH: "You wanna come and check it out?"

AUSTIN: You do a broadcast *inside* of the Splice? To be like “Oh how do I go to that party?” and the answer is “Oh no, it's not *in here*.” You can't-

KEITH: Everyone gets an invite to it.

AUSTIN: Right. Good. Great.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: Cool, alright!

KEITH: And then- here's what I want, I want it to have the scope of like- the sort of like, everyone following the World Cup- but it's also all your friends that are doing it.

AUSTIN: So it's like- it's like that first year of Xbox Live happened and everyone was looking at like, Geometry War scores? And-

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: Like, whatever was happening- like *everyone* was paying attention to what you what- [KEITH overlaps] the leaderboards, the achievement points?

KEITH: [overlapping amused] Leaderboards. Uh-huh, yeah, yes.

AUSTIN: Cool. I like that a lot, I- I like that a lot 'cause now what we have is [amused] “the apocalypse is coming, and everyone is checking on your friends croquet scores”. And I don't mean that ironically, I mean that as like- this is- in the movie version of this, the TVs are constantly watching local waterslide competitions [laughs]

KEITH: Yeah. Not- not just local, [AUSTIN overlaps]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Your friends. No.

KEITH: Like, oh, my next- my neighbors, [AUSTIN overlaps] my neighbors today are doing bocce [cackles]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Greg from around the block! Right, yeah! Greg is out here doing lawn darts and he's *fucking great*. Are you... do you compete, or do you just kinda oversee the games?

KEITH: I can't not compete! I can oversee the games too, I think I can be impartial on that.

AUSTIN: Okay! Okay, you've got like a backup judge whos like “alright I'll make sure he's not cheating”

KEITH: Yes! [cackles] well maybe- I don't know the thing- uhhh, well, y'know what, okay. That's a good point, 'cause I was saying- I don't think I designed all of the games, but then- [AUSTIN overlaps] I think maybe I actually did.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right, I get- but then you did. [laughing] Yeah, you actually designed all the games, for sure.

KEITH: Maybe- maybe there's a for fun round. Maybe-

AUSTIN: Ohhhh!!

KEITH: -I get to compete, but I don't get to- like, maybe I'm [AUSTIN overlaps] ceding my wins.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] It's like Mario Party! It's like- [laughs] y'know in Mario Party before you do a game, there's like- you do a test run, you're like the animation that shows you how everything works?

KEITH: Yeah!

AUSTIN: [amused] It's like- alright, Gig demonstrates how this works-

KEITH: There's- there's four testers. If anyone doesn't know how it's played, it's me-

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

KEITH: -it's, um... Yam, and it's Duck [AUSTIN laughs] And we go through, and we do the tasks-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, amused] Oh, it's the- it's the snake? It's the [laughing] Grass Snake?

KEITH: [amused] Yeah, and it's the Grass Snake.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Good! DLC characters for the Quire Olympics! [KEITH laughs] It's like- alright we're gonna show you the water slides...

KEITH: This is how this goes-

AUSTIN: But actually- that brings up something that I think is genuinely *good*, or interesting about this that I didn't think about, which it- [stutters] I don't know that, for instance, Duck can go in the Splice? Maybe Duck could go in the Splice, right?

KEITH: Uh- yeah

AUSTIN: But like-

Keiht: Maybe Duck could.

AUSTIN: -there are horses that probably can't.

Keith: How do you get in there, by the way? How- what's the login-

AUSTIN: I think it's a lot like the moving into the- y'know no it isn't, I was gonna say it's a lot like the beginning of the Twilight Mirage, where we had like- um, the waiting room kinda liminal spaces? I actually think it's a lot more like flipping a light switch? That you go- you have a bed that glows, you lay in that bed, and you close your eyes and open your eyes, and you're in the virtual bed or whatever.

KEITH: Oh so you have a Splice bed

AUSTIN: You have a Splice bed, yeah, exactly- or a Splice center or whatever- I mean, it depends on what ship you're on, it depends on- it certainly depends on y'know, uh... how much wealth you had going *into* the Splice, to some degree. Like, the Splice evens things out, you can do whatever you want once you're in the Splice, but like... I bet if you are rich and have a very cool ship you have a really cool Splice bed, y'know?

KEITH: Yeah. And I think that makes sense 'cause then- then it's like- well, if you have a Splice bed, then the reason that some reasons might not be able to use it is that some horses don't understand what a Splice bed is.

AUSTIN: 'Cause the Splice bed is- right! And they don't have- [KEITH overlaps] animals can't give that sort of like, mental consent-

KEITH: [overlapping] But I think Duck does.

AUSTIN: Duck can. Duck definitely can.

KEITH: Duck can

AUSTIN: [animal foley] Uhh

KEITH: Other Duck types could.

AUSTIN: [amused] Other Duck types could, exactly. But- but animals-

KEITH: But- no one has ever had a good answer for what Duck is.

AUSTIN: -ever. No.

KEITH: *Ever*. No one has actually ever known

AUSTIN: I can tell you what Duck is, actually.

KEITH: Oh- okay

AUSTIN: [amused] Duck is a... a waterslide champion, that's what Duck is [laughing] [KEITH cackles] As displayed in this- but i- I think this is an interesting thing! One of the things that separates- one of the things that like, gets people to "oh yeah, lawn games are cool too, maybe we'll hang out with the Qui Err instead of being on the Splice all the time" is like, okay there are things- like, you can create a fake dog on the Splice, and- you can create a virtual dog on the Splice, and it's a *good* dog, I'm not saying it's not a good dog? But you can't bring your dog into the Splice probably, or if you can it's kinda weird, 'cause that dog was not like "I'm ready to go into the Splice"? Y'know?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah...

AUSTIN: I think that's an interesting distinction there. Any notes on the lawn games- the Quire lawn game tournament two years after the Miracle of the Mirage, or y'know two years post-Miracle or whatever. [KEITH overlaps] A year and a half.

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah well i- I just want everyone to know that after competing in a lot of these games I do thing that the, uh... the prehensile mane is an unfair advantage!

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay, Duck-

KEITH: And that's why I lost!

AUSTIN: Okay well, I'm glad- we'll put that on the records, there will be an asterisk on [laughing] Qui Err Wikipedia [KEITH laughs] Qui Errrpedia says: Duck won in the exhibition of the lawn games, *but* it's under protest, Gig says maybe not a fair win.

KEITH: Maybe not, yeah

JACK: It's a very Mirage response, isn't it?

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yeah

JACK: To be like- to be like "we're gonna invent a lawn game" [laughs softly]

AUSTIN: Well, y'know- the season started with a game, the season started with the Games, right?

JACK: Yeah, with the- miracle. What was it- no, it was called-

AUSTIN: No, the Mysteries.

JACK: The Mysteries

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Alright, um... Signet.

JANINE: Uh-huh...

AUSTIN: How you doing over there? You'll leave soon

JANINE: Yeah... [sigh] yeah.

AUSTIN: You leave and just don't ever return.

JANINE: This is gonna be a weird question, I don't remember- Privign has a lot of weird shit in it that I don't 100% remember what it does, so I wanna just ask- is there some kinda thing where you could- [laughs breathily]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

JANINE: -where you could like, hook it up to a person and then like, see what they're thinking? [AUSTIN overlaps] Is that a thing? Okay- it was like a robot thing...

AUSTIN: [overlapping] So- no, the- specifically there was a Rapid Evening observer robot- there was an early early early version of, um... a body that was used that was similar to the one that Gray Gloaming has- the robotic one. Like an early satellite unit. Is that something you wanna build, what's- [laughs]

JANINE: No... [sigh]

AUSTIN: [amused] Okay. [JANINE overlaps] Are you looking for something-

JANINE: [overlapping] I'm just trying- I'm trying to find in fiction a way for the thing that seems like a cool way to do stuff to work. Um.

AUSTIN: [amused] Okay

JANINE: Maybe - maybe- maybe the Exuvia? I- [huffs] The thing-

AUSTIN: You're tryna see- what are you trying to do? [laughs]

JANINE: The thing I wanna do- I'll just say it outright- is, I want to go to the Rapid Evening people and be like "Look, I'll show you what's up at Volition" and then I want to do the like, thing, where Signet can like, connect with someone telepathically, but I want it like, projected

AUSTIN: Hm...

JANINE: I want it like, visible- I wanna show- I basically want to show the Rapid Evening Polyphony and Volition and the like, city and stuff, now that Volition is a Divine and that clock is still active.

AUSTIN: Right. I think you could *probably* do it? And the other thing you could do is use a stream thing, that like Gig, Our Profit and I think the Waking Cadent all had one?

JANINE: If the Waking Cadent has one then-

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that that's how she sent out the message to be like "Yo let's come hang- get on my ship, we're getting outta here" [laughs]

JANINE: Yeah... [ALI & DRE giggle]

AUSTIN: Um... that's how that went, by the way- she's changed a lot since Polyphony! Uh, so... y'know. Um- so yeah, I think she has that- through I guess that's not directed, right? That's just... everybody in the system sees this, y'know?

JANINE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Um... this is a heavy attack, right? This is like- you're trying to stop the limited range stellar combustor project-

JANINE: Yeah

AUSTIN: -by convincing them that Volition is chill now.

JANINE: Yes. If anyone would like to help with this id appreciate it, but also I'm [AUSTIN overlaps] willing to spend my resources.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yo what do you have to spend?

JANINE: I have 'good-hearted'... I have 'resolute', I think both of them are pretty applicable here, 'cause this is specifically Signet being "I'm leav-" Signet has an out here, Signet's not gonna die.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JANINE: Signet can just go if she wants. [laughs]

AUSTIN: 100%! And I'm- I think that why 'cold' will cancel 'good-hearted' or 'resolute'? Right?

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Is like "oh actually, I could just leave, it'd be so easy for me to just leave, you won't believe how easy it'd be: none of this ever happened".

JANINE: I think- yeah, I think it applies most to 'good-hearted', like- theres part of her that's benevolent but that's not the part that's necessarily, actually making this move forward and that's her- her resoluteness that- it's not that- that- [sigh] it's not that it's in her heart to do it, it's- y'know, the fact that's her job wins out I guess is what that looks like, this is what she does. Even when she has her out, this is... her thing.

AUSTIN: So then here's my question- two questions, what game- I know you're gonna need help still. What game is this?

JANINE: *I don't know*, i've been looking at those and I have *no idea* what it would be

AUSTIN: I have two different ideas. One is... that it's a chase, and the chase is that you have a copy of Volitions mind with Polyphony in it in the Exuvia, and you need to [JANINE overlaps] break in-

JANINE: [overlapping] Oh that's a good point.

AUSTIN: -to Crystal Palace? And like, upload it. You have to be like "Look, here is it, here's the data *direct*. Look at this shit, it's cool" [laughs] um- and that could be a fun chase sequence? But that could also end up being a thing where you meet sword to sword, or whatever else that is like, you trying to get past someone to do that- but at that point you're choosing a game, y'know? Um...

JANINE: Yeah

AUSTIN: It's like the- it's like a reverse heist, y'know? Where does the heist break, does it break once you've gotten into Crystal Palace by yourself and you're like, doing flips and jumps and running around? Or, does it happen- and if that's the case, then is this a situation where it's like, the people who are helping are helping by keeping the Rapid Evening occupied outside, and we're getting shots of- I'm now just committing to this, basically [laughs]. Uh, but- through the windows of Crystal Palace you're seeing the various people helping by like, fighting the Welkin Absolute, fighting the new units that have arrived with Crystal Palace- again you're out on this- the edge of this system, so it's a super super dense version of the fog? Of the Mirage? Um... and ist just lights and thunder from where people are fighting and shooting and stuff, and you're gonna do a chase inside?

JANINE: Mh-hm

AUSTIN: I think that that- maybe works? Um... but again, you could also meet sword-to-sword and that could be fun.

JANINE: I think... chase works a little more thematically? I don't think- I think this is like- sword-to-sword makes it feel more fighty, and this is specifically an exchange of inf- or, an attempt to put something in someone's hands, basically

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JANINE: So sword-to-sword feels a little aggro in a way that I don't know is right, and also, a chase is also fitting for what is happening, for like- the thing has already been done, it's just that they don't believe it, it's not- yeah

AUSTIN: Right. And so the- again, the big picture here is, you're basically taking- I mean, has done this for a long time, the Exuvia has been about understanding people's minds, the minds of different beings, and so you're basically taking like a compressed version of Volition and Polyphony and them *together* as a unit- [JANINE overlaps]

JANINE: [overlapping] Hit Clip, if you will.

AUSTIN: Uh- [amused] you're taking a Hit Clip. Of course. And uploading it directly into the Rapid Evening's Crystal Palace to be like "Look, you're right, it's a .0000001% chance that Volition doesn't kill us all a thousand years from now, but look, the data supports that this is that .0000001%". Okay. So. what are you paying for this with? So right now you're at one, [JANINE overlaps] because I've cancelled out-

JANINE: [overlapping] Uh, I also put my contempt token in, I just did that.

AUSTIN: Oh so you're at two, you need- you need one more, is what you need. Right?

JANINE: Yeah. Um- if anyone wants to jump in, by all means, if not, I think, uh... hang on I have to get a colored cross to draw with...

SYLVIA: Um... You said we need people to sorta help outside of the ship right? Like- I'm happy to help, I can use my courageous token here to sorta... help in the combat

AUSTIN: And that is the end of Echo, Echo has cashed in. Not the end of Echo, Echo is fine! But Echo is caching in their final token, their final trait. Great!

JACK: This is goooood, this is so good because like- when Echo- what was it that you tried to use that you got haunted, was it mighty? [SYLVIA and AUSTIN overlap] That haunted cancelled?

SYLVIA: [overlapping] Uh... fiery.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Fiery!

JACK: Fiery, you were like "I'm gonna be fiery" and then it cancelled out and now all you've got left in your fuel tanks is just sheer courage, and you are actually incredibly courageous.

AUSTIN: Uh, what are you- how are you helping, and what's this look like?

SYLVIA: I mean... they need someone to sorta help be in charge of the- of the actual warfare outside I'm assuming, right?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

SYLVIA: I think I'm in my Independence unit, and just- directing traffic and also trying to distract the Rapid Evening

AUSTIN: Uhhh, here's the best bit, is that we now get to see Ballad and Echo back to back in their respective Independence Mark 1 and Mark 2 units?

SYLVIA: I have a cape too now.

ALI: [softly] Hell yeah [giggles]

AUSTIN: Yeah you also have a cape now, hell yes, absolutely.

ART: Don't fuck with the design. [JANINE chuckles] Like the cape is fine, but don't-fuck with the guts of it.

AUSTIN: Um- who else is there in the background? What's- what's popping? Is the world without end here?

DRE: I mean, if you need somebody to fly a ship somewhere...

AUSTIN: You don't have to spend something to be in the background, is what I'm saying- oh yeah actually, who drops off- I guess, does dock? And let you off, Signet?

JANINE: Hm, how- Yeah I guess- I guess so. I was trying to think of like, [soft laughter] is this a situation where it could just walk in- I don't know how big that Crystal Palace is. Um-

AUSTIN: It's *big*. It's Gigantic. Its as big as Seance, it's like a city- is like a city in space.

JANINE: is not super nimble though...

AUSTIN: No. I mean, 's- wait, is pretty nimble, right?

JANINE: Well, in like- in big- space. Space nimble.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JANINE: I guess- I guess I brought into those weird caves in Volition too, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Here's my question, also, is what do you say to , when you disembark? Are there words, are there like "hey, this could be it"? [JANINE overlaps] Cause if you get caught, this is bad.

JANINE: [overlapping] I think- yes. There is always a degree of "hey, this could be it", right? Like, that's- that's the thing, that's- I don't know that they say anything, but I think this is the moment to say that like, s big lack, 's big thing that bothers her more

than anything in the way Volition was bothered by other things, is that 's... Excerpts are always mortal?

AUSTIN: Right

JANINE: Like.. She has kept Signet around for a very long time, through various means... Signet's belief, initially, to never let anyone- to never leave anyone behind when you could save them was 's belief.

AUSTIN: Right

JANINE: That was why Signet left, was.... did not want to lose another Excerpt, and- convinced her, basically-

AUSTIN: "You have to go"

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So it wasn't a betrayal so much as it was literally listening to the Divine who-

JANINE: Yes

AUSTIN: -who- from the outside it looks a lot like betrayal and cowardice [laughs], but., looking back-

JANINE: So hates this.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JANINE: Because... technically is the one who is leaving Signet this time

AUSTIN: Right

JANINE: Which has happened before, but this is a very particular kind of thing, this is- different.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah the- Crystal Palace and the Rapid Evening is such a different, more dangerous thing than...

JANINE: Yeah

AUSTIN: -any foe we fought, besides Volition? And in- like, Volition and Independence up there. Rapid Eveni- Crystal Palace is... an annihilation class object! [laughs] y'know, like- they exist to stop to stop things like Crystal Palace from existing. So... um- okay. So there's this huge battle happening out in the- in the clouds, I think they're orange clouds now, and- y'know, there's- there's these like, sparks in the distance, and every now and then a ship you recognize, like the world without end or the open hand or the Bolero Smooth like, slips into view in the

background? And- is chased by something that is- y'know, *legally*? Far enough away from being TIE fighters that we don't get sued! [laughs] But boy do they make a cool sound [ALI chuckles]. Maybe more like TIE interceptors? I feel like that's much more like the Rapid Evening- anyway. So, chase. Do you have a name- I have a list of names of various Rapid Evening agents here? But I think this has to probably still be Keen Forster Gloaming, right? As the person who- who *already* knows how this chase ends, but gives chase to you anyway. Um... which one of you is the hunter, which is the quarry, I think Keen is the hunter, you are the quarry, right? You can both ask details about the landscape, what's ahead, what's behind... again, to paint this, it's like a very- it's a very nice- y'know, the bulk of the ship that Crystal Palace is on has living quarters and stuff that are all- they all look like... uh- edwardian or richardian or whatever, I don't know my british, uh- architecture enough. Uh- houses- what someone like me would call Victorian, but is probably wrong? Y'know, townhouses- like, urban, urban environment here. Um... and, kinda towering over all is Crystal Palace. So maybe we start this as you're trying to get to Crystal Palace- maybe like a block away from Crystal Palace? When Keen forster Gloaming- there's like a strike of lightning, the clap of thunder, and Keen forster Gloaming steps out of a building as if he'd teleported from the Welkin Absolute to that building, and then stepped out the front door? To lay eyes on you as drops you off, basically. Um.. so. Conducting a chase: the quarry conducts the chase. First say where you're going, lead the hunter through a series of four challenges and admissions. Choose freely, except that the third one must be an admission. So- you're the quarry, so you'll lead me though three challenges and one admission- or any number of admissions except the third one *has* to be an admission. During the chase you and the hunter collect coins representing the distance you're able to gain on one another. Um... after a total of four challenges or admissions, compare coins. If you have more coins than the hunter, you break away and escape. If the hunter has as many cons as you or more, you then will choose one. And there's a list thing of things you can choose

JANINE. Okay... I scramble up a steep incline, follow me if you can keep up, but throw, on tails the way is exhausting and I gain a coin.

AUSTIN: What is... what is the place that you're climbing, what's it look like?

JANINE: So I'm imagining... the real life Crystal Palace, um...

AUSTIN: Yes

JANINE: That's what I'm basing my thoughts on-

AUSTIN: Yeah- it's that except bigger. That's really it, yes.

JANINE: Yeah. That had, if I recall, sort of different levels for the exhibitions. So I'm imagining that sort of- as Signet enters, she is immediately making her way up to one of the upper floors

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. So it's just like, you're bursting through the front door, effectively, right? And running past all these little side rooms where these like, hardware computers are whirring and twisting and turning and clicking and clacking, and you find a stairwell up, basically, right? So it's all- people who work here don't even stop to look at you as you move through? After all, they know this is coming, right? Um... and Keen- there's another clap of lightning and- there's another clap of thunder and a shock of lightning and again, Keen forster Gloaming opens a door and walks out from it. Um- there's a reason the Rapid Evening can always be where they need to be. [laughs] They're the only faction in this game that, besides like, people with Divines, that can fucking teleport. So, uh... I'm gonna roll! Let's see- that's two. Two is tails, right? Heads and then tails? Uh, so...

JANINE: On tails the way is exhausting and I gain a coin.

AUSTIN: There you go, nice work!

JANINE: Okay. They don't- do they alternate or do they- [AUSTIN overlaps] okay, okay

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, you- you choose challenges, the only thing is the third one has to be an admission.

JANINE: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: You can also choose an admission if you want- y'know, whatever you'd like.

JANINE: Yeah. Uh... [amused] we'll see how it goes, it seems very high stakes and I'm very worried about that...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JANINE: Um... also there's like a narrative flow here that i- that I found that I'm okay with. Uh- I raise along a high and perilous ledge, follow me if you dare, but throw. On tails, you have to slow to pick your way carefully along and I gain a coin.

AUSTIN: Uh... alright, let's see

JANINE: Rapid Evening can teleport but Signet's a fucking acrobat

AUSTIN: That's true- and apparently it is! So- y'know. He like, sees you do the jump and jumps up after you? And like- wait, where are you? are you on the outside of the building now, are you climbing on the inside of rafters, what is this?

JANINE: This is like- y'know how- this is a break, slightly, from the Crystal Palace metaphor, but y'know how malls sometimes have those- they have the second and third floor things, but then on the outside of that they'll sometimes have ledges where they put plants and shit?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JANINE: So, I imagine there's sort of- it's meant to be kind of like a decorative, horizontal latticework-y thing, or maybe glass or some sort of framework or something, and instead of following the walkway Signet's just like "okay bye", [AUSTIN laughs] hops the railing and then starts going across that- 'cause she's- 'cause she is y'know, good at placing her feet and stuff.

AUSTIN: Okay, I rolled another tail so you gain another coin. I think- like, jumps out after you? And then notices the height, and then a... low flying member of this fight like, comes a little too low? And there's the streaking sound of fightercraft above? And he has to hold still for a second- also his teleport isn't recharged yet, so he has to wait or that. And then finally there's another strike of lightning and he has then appeared behind you again. Your turn.

JANINE: Uh...

AUSTIN: This is the admission.

JANINE: [overlapping] -the admission, yeah, yeah. Um... I come to a dangerous climb or a leap and I hesitate, stilling myself. Throw, on heads you raise up behind me and so gain two coins.

AUSTIN: So we've already rolled tails twice, this is-

JANINE: We're due, unfortunately.

AUSTIN: We are due, and that's a one

JANINE: Ugh....

AUSTIN: Um, so... what makes you hesitate? What makes Signet, the Excerpt Signet, hesitate?

JANINE: I imagine it is straight up a jump, like I've deliberately avoided the walkways, I'm taking this sort of weird, ornamental path that is probably not made to support the weight of a person who is running? Uh.. probably running in heels! Um... and I imagine it is just like a moment of like- am I really sure of my footing here, can I really just make this jump? Am I just gonna fucking fall into that fountain or- exotic plant or whatever the hell [laughs]

AUSTIN: [amused] Uh-huh. Um- this time he doesn't teleport, he uses something that you didn't know was there, which is like a- like a pulley system? Like a rapid- like the elevator, but it's like he just puts his foot inside of like a little... there's like a rope hanging down, with like a little handle in the end for your foot? And you put your foot in it, and you hold onto the rope, and you pull on it and it yanks you up? And it's the

way, uh- mechanics and engineers get up here to start repairing stuff, parts of Crystal Palace? So he just grabs and pulls it and it 'wooop'!- brings it all the way up to where you are very quickly? And then makes the jump that you hesitated at. Your turn, last challenge.

JANINE: Alright... um...

AUSTIN: Or admission! Y'know, if you decided that you wanted to do an admission and just tie that's totally up to you, but that seems- [JANINE chuckles] very rough!

JANINE: That seems silly...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JANINE: Uh... okay. Um. I reach clear ground and lead the way. Follow me if you can rally yourself, but throw: on tails you stand gasping and I gain a coin. This I think is a kinetic sash move.

AUSTIN: What's that look like, for you?

JANINE: [overlapping] This is- this is Signet being like "actually, I would like to be on the ground. Um... and I think it is deploying the sash but then using it to sort of catch herself and then land on her feet

AUSTIN: You're basically using the like, Breath of the Wild, like.... [JANINE chuckles] uh- what's that thing called? The hang- hang-glider? What's it called?

JANINE: I was actually thinking- I wasn't thinking of her using it as a hang glider, I was thinking it of using it as- like, she sends it down and it sort of curves into a c or s shape in the air-

AUSTIN: Ohhh, okay. [JANINE overlaps] You're surfing.

JANINE: [overlapping] -and then she steps on it a couple times and- no, just... stepping. On the fabric.

AUSTIN: Okay. Gotcha. 'Paraglider', thank you- thank you Keith. I'm rolling- and that is a two! Which is tails!

KEITH: Oh, wow

AUSTIN: So the way is exha- oh no, it's 'on tails I stand gasping and you gain a coin'. And I think he sees you-

JANINE: [overlapping] Damn right!

AUSTIN: -all at once. Uh- and is just like... he- this time he was chasing you hoping to change history, right? He knows you get there, he knows you upload Volitions mind. He knows what comes next after this. And was hoping to stop *you*- he was the one who wanted to be the low probability outcome, and in this final moment, Keen Forester Gloaming, he has devoted his life to Crystal Palace above his family, above his own desires, and certainly above his morality, cannot overcome his faith in Crystal Palace and *has* to let this happen. And so you do. What does it look like, when Crystal Palace takes in a copy of the mind of Volition and Polyphony?

JANINE: Uh... [exhale]

AUSTIN: Like, obviously Crystal Palace is like "oh yeah, cool, they're not gonna- kill us"

JANINE: Yeah....

AUSTIN: But- what's this mean for Crystal Palace?

JANINE: I don't know, that's a hard question 'cause I feel like I don't understand Crystal Palace to the depth that like- that is necessary to answer that competently?

AUSTIN: W- maybe we don't need an answer yet. Well be back in this universe at some point

JANINE: I don't even know what displays look like in there really, or...

AUSTIN; Are they like punch cards and printouts?

JANINE: Right, yeah [AUSTIN overlaps] it's so- exactly, so it's like-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] and sounds? I think it's- I think it plays some sounds, right? Um... y'know like, when a hard drive, or when a 3D printer is used to make music?

JANINE: Did you watch that video I sent of the self-playing violin ?

AUSTIN: I did, yeah. I think it's like that, maybe? And it just starts making that noise. It just starts playing a song, with it's machines, instead of predicting things. Um..

KEITH: Have you seen tape- uh, analog tape synthesizers?

AUSTIN: Uh-uh

KEITH: It's the same idea, it just like- uses the speed at which it's fast forwarding and rewinding the tape to make different sounds?

JANINE: Hmm, yeah

AUSTIN: Totally. It's that sort of thing, and it plays a song. Um. And then it just stops, and- there's like a printout? And the people who work here get a day off, and- like, they all get up and go home for dinner.

KEITH: [quietly] Sweet.

AUSTIN: And... I think Gloaming comes to you, Signet? Um... god, what does he even say. He says-

AUSTIN (as Keen): How confident are you that one day, as far away from this as Volition was from the creation of Crystal Palace- that that thing won't turn back into what it was. Into something that'll try to cut a hole between this world and some other.

JANINE (as Signet): I don't pretend to be sure of that, at all. But what I am sure of is that, in the time it takes for that to happen, an innumerable number of people will be born and live good lives, and die in their time, and- y'know, their children and other children will do the same, and, whatever comes, comes in the space left between when you would've destroyed everything, and when Volition possibly, maybe, one day... might.

AUSTIN (as Keen): Hm... I wish that put me at ease. But you work with the thing that can see the future and long enough, it ain't. Time flattens. Then is now. The whole point of what we do here is to look past our... [sigh] *obsession* with the present. To look at what horror is coming down the line, because no one else will. And, uh... I just hope you're right.

JANINE (as Signet): You should get a hobby.

AUSTIN (as Keen): I paint. Little figurines.

JANINE (as Signet): Oh, that's actually very nice.

AUSTIN (as Keen): It's, uh... not a memory I think about that often but... it's a good one.

JANINE (as Signet): Do you not do it that much anymore?

AUSTIN (as Keen): A thing my daughter and I used to do.

JANINE (as Signet): You should get back into it.

AUSTIN (as Keen): I will think about it. [pause] We're not gonna leave, I hope you understand that. There could still be Axioms here. There could still be... [laughs] we

know the Iconoclasts still move, and dream of something worse than Volition ever was.¹ [sigh] But Crystal Palace... doesn't see us lighting any fuses anytime soon.

JANINE (as Signet): It's really the most I can ask for at this point.

AUSTIN (as Keen) I guess congratulations are in order.

AUSTIN: And, uh... he like, nods his head? And goes sit down at like, the control panel- the central control panel for Crystal Palace? [amused] I'm guessing you get the Exuvia back?

JANINE: Yeah

AUSTIN: The Exuvia flutters back over to you, presumably?

JANINE: Yeah

AUSTIN: Um... and like, comes back into view to pick you up outside I guess?

JANINE: Yeah. I was gonna say 'and then we go for ice cream', and that's not *right*, but- there's like a sentiment there that's like- there's a sentiment there that is correct, of like... Belgard is probably relieved in a way where it's like "we should do something!" but we have to go, 'cause- [AUSTIN overlaps] the ice monster wants to leave soon...

AUSTIN: [overlapping] 'cause everyone- yeah, the ice monster says we gotta go home [chuckles] Ice monster is my turn on the xbox- Ice monster says-

JANINE: [overlapping] Ice monster probably has ice cream, now that I'm thinking about it

AUSTIN: [laughing] That's true! Dre in the chat says- [JANINE chuckles]

DRE: Yeah, you go for Dippin' Dots, 'cause that's the ice cream of the future.

AUSTIN: That's true. Alright! Well, I guess I'll cross this fucking clock off.

JANINE: [relieved sigh]

AUSTIN: Came down to the fucking coin flip, huh!

JANINE: My hands were shaking...

KEITH: When do they have to go back on that, by the way? When has it been around long enough and still isn't ice cream- like, it's still Dippin' Dots.

AUSTIN: It's still Dippin' Dots, they're not-

¹ Originally transcribed as "we know the Iconoclast still move in dreams, something worse than Volition ever was."

KEITH: It's not like- "you guys wanna go out for solid ice cream- for like, *whole* ice cream?" [DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: For *old cream*, Is what we'll call it

DRE: Uuugh [KEITH cackles] Please don't? Ever?

AUSTIN: No? It's not old cream?

SYLVIA: [overlapping] Nah

DRE: [overlapping] No.

AUSTIN: Hm.

DRE: Thanks I hate it, Austin.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Alright! Your turn?

JANINE: [laughs nervously]

AUSTIN: That's three.

ART: No way to even generate contempt.

AUSTIN: Not yet! Even- [JACK, quietly: oh-] it's your turn.

DRE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Wait, what's- what's up? Was that Jack?

JACK: Oh no, I was just curious about what happens- the stellar combustor is *here*, right?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Oh yeah, they have it! It's under lock and key!

JACK: Is it just like- it just turns out that the stellar combustor that isn't going to explode looks exactly the same as the stella combustor that *is* going to explode? There's just a machine somewhere [AUSTIN overlaps] that is basically the same?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Ohh- I just saw Mission Impossible Fallout, so as you know, there's like a little orb that's [JACK laughs] having the explosion bit, and that bit goes like "clunk, clunk" and falls in the ground and it's fine, like it's- it's disarmed, you know?

KEITH: Um, okay

AUSTIN: - but they're not *giving up* their stellar combustor, are you kidding me.

KEITH: Are they- are they gonna leave?

AUSTIN: No!

KEITH: No? They're just here-

JACK: No, they said they're not gonna- they're gonna like-

AUSTIN: They're gonna be space cops! And try to track down the Iconoclasts, and like- y'know, make sure there's no lose Axioms

JACK: So it's like- [KEITH, laughing: 'ts annoying] It's like-

AUSTIN: And here's the thing, I think I know who would be cool with them being space cops.

JACK: The fucking DFS!

AUSTIN: The *fucking DFS*.

KEITH: Yeah

JACK: This is great, because now, the bomb is gone, we can all get real petty again [AUSTIN cackles]

JANINE: Don't take this from me....

DRE: [laughing] Time to get *real* messy in the Mirage!

JANINE: [laughing] Oh my god...

AUSTIN: [laughing] Even Gardner, your turn!

DRE: Alright well, I was thinking of all the ways I could fuck with a stellar combustor, but now-

KEITH: It got fucked with!

DRE: Yeah...

KEITH: Or got turned off...

DRE: [sigh] Can I just start a clock where Even Gardner goes and eats all the technology inside Crystal Palace? [KEITH cackles]

AUSTIN: I-

ALI: [amused] Just do it, buddy [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: - I- is that like a date clo- y'know, you and Cascabel roll [KEITH overlaps] out for like a good-

KEITH: [overlapping] Hey that's- that's only a one week clock! [laughs]

AUSTIN: [amused] That's- yeah, it's a one week clock! Goddamn, talk' about selfish!
[DRE cackles]

KEITH: It's done, at the end of your turn it's done!

AUSTIN: It's done, you got it. [pause] Oh- I guess it's an actual question, like- what's up- are Even and Cascabel hanging out during all this shit?

DRE: Yeah. Yeah

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay

DRE: I mean- it's- it's almost the fucking end of the world, of course Even's hanging out with Cascabel

AUSTIN: Right- we get the Mass Effect before the final mission-

DRE: [laughing] Yes

AUSTIN: -hookup scene?

DRE: Uh-huh. Yeah, probably

AUSTIN: *Hell yeah.* [KEITH overlaps] Is this in the World Without End?

KEITH: [overlapping, unintelligible] -everyone come watch this!

AUSTIN: Yeah, everyone- hey!

DRE: [laughs] Hey check this out!

AUSTIN: Do you have enough loyalty points, did you- did you do the loyalty mission for Cascabel? I don't know if we did [KEITH laughs]

DRE: No, but then I gave him like, 15 gifts [AUSTIN cackles] and we were cool.

ALI: *Wooow*

KEITH: [overlapping] Gi- gifts? Like sending...

AUSTIN: [overlapping, laughing] That Dragon Age one- I guess Dragon Age II did that too, didn't it?

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: God...

JANINE: It also had like, special- like you would go to a vendor and be like “Oh this is a pouch for Fenris! [AUSTIN laughs] He’ll sure like this pouch!”

AUSTIN: [laughing] Uh-huh [JANINE overlaps] That happens in real life!

JANINE: It was very specific, weird- I *guess*

KEITH: It also only- they only- they *only* have gifts pretty much in, uh... The Old Republic

AUSTIN: That’s true, yeah. Oh god..

DRE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Um- what are you doing this turn?

DRE: Uh.... Alright so, i- I am interested in doing something that would continue to fuck with the Rapid Evening and basically... get them out of the system?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

DRE: But I’m also looking at this ‘extract with plunder’ clock for Advent

AUSTIN: Yeah that one *sucks*. They fuckng *suck*.

DRE: Yeah they do. Um...

AUSTIN: I mean, you’re obsessed with them.

DRE: Uhhhhhhhhhhh [AUSTIN laughs] Thanks Janine.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah! In the voice of “Fuck ‘em up Sokrates!”, [everyone laughs] Janine says “Fuck ‘em up, Bugman!”

[DRE and KEITH cackle] [everyone laughs]

SYLVIA: [out of breath] I was thinking “Welcome back, Kotter” for some reason...

[DRE cackles, AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: [to the Welcome Back, Kotter theme melody] Fuck ‘em uuup! Fuck ‘em up, fuck ‘em up, fuck ‘em uuup.

SYLVIA: Yeah!

DRE: What’s up, Mr. Bugman!

[groans, AUSTIN cackles]

SYLVIA: Okay, we need to...

ALI: Okay...

AUSTIN: We've *got* to keep going, we're almost there!

DRE: Yeah yeah yeah

AUSTIN: We're so close...

DRE: Okay, yeah no, let's fucking- let's put the last nail on Advents coffin.

AUSTIN: *Alright*, what does this look like? And what are you spending to do it?

DRE: Uhhh, alright, I'm spending my contempt token-

AUSTIN: One. It's- it's a heavy attack, you're stopping this shit

DRE: Yeah- yes, yes

JACK: Oh *my god*, are you going to destroy the Catapult?

AUSTIN: [gasps excitedly]

DRE: Oh, hell yeah!!

AUSTIN: Oh *hell yeah!!*

KEITH: Oh wait- but they can leave anyway, right? They can just leave on their ships

AUSTIN: Yeah but all their shit's on the Catapult!

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah but they can't, and also like- the Catapult is a machine so powerful that it could break through the Mirage?

AUSTIN: Yeah. *Already*

JACK: They've got to put all their good shit on *there*.

KEITH: Okay. Well- do we wanna risk destroying the stuff that they stole?

AUSTIN: Good call!

KEITH: -instead of returning it

DRE: [overlapping] Oh- good call

ART: Yeah

JACK: [overlapping] We could just-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, maybe that's why it's a-

KEITH: [overlapping] It's a long museum!

AUSTIN: [laughs] Oookay. Maybe this is why ist a heavy attack, and it's like, a combination of things-- we need to blow this up, and also we need to steal all this shit back, that they took from us

DRE: Okay. Here's- here's what I can use.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Unless you have a better idea- yeah

DRE: Um... alright, so I'm using my contempt token

AUSTIN: One

DRE: Um. I will use my 'desperate'

AUSTIN: Okay. Um... I think your obsession is too... you're like, you ever get where you're like, too on your own head about something? Where it's like-

DRE: Yeah

AUSTIN: - I need to do this, but I *really need to do it*-

DRE: [overlapping, amused] No, never, Austin. [AUSTIN laughs, JANINE chuckles] Never.

AUSTIN: [amused] So I think you're just too on your own head about it? So the- part of this is that you *can't* focus- you're so focused on how important it is, that you need to get it done, that you can't actually keep focused.

DRE: Okay. Um.. well I'm gonna use.... Daredevil

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

DRE: And I'm gonna use... okay, I know mine's broken, can I borrow someone's Independence Mark II?

KEITH: Uh... I don't have-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Both- everybody has- yeah, everybody has neutral Independence Mark II's at this point

KEITH: Well- we could go scarce, right?

DRE: [overlapping] Ohh, yes, we have to use-

AUSTIN: We could go scarce. We could go scarce.

KEITH: How bad we need Independence Mark II's? [JACK laughs] I'm- the thing you could also do is you could use the strike force... like, we don't-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, amused] That's true, you could use the strike force.... Ohhh....

KEITH: -need it for the combustor, we don't need it for Volition... we don't need it for anything, really!

DRE: Okay. Yeah

JACK: This is great, because this is just like the Mirage saying like "alright, well- we didn't need it for the death god, and we didn't need it for the, uh, bomb? So we're just gonna go fuck up the nazis instead?"

[crosstalk]

KEITH: [overlapping] We're gonna take all out shit back from the fascists.

AUSTIN: Uh- point it at the Catapult!

DRE: Alright. So if I do... my contempt token-

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, one

DRE: - daredevil-

AUSTIN: Two

DRE: And I'll need the strike force

AUSTIN: [overlapping] And the strike force, yeah, that's three.

DRE: Okay

AUSTIN: What is this scene? Uh- the thing that's wild is like, I don't have any soldiers left for them. I had to come up with *new ones*.

DRE: [laughing] God... [KEITH overlaps] no, you got one!

KEITH (as Flanger): [overlapping] I'm fighting on the front line, and I will do anything- [crosstalk, unintelligible] on the oncoming onslaught [unintelligible]

AUSTIN: [laughing, overlapping] Oh my GOD... [DRE cackles]

JANINE: [overlapping] Uh-huh...

DRE: Yep, uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Oh no!!!

DRE: [overlapping] God... Austin, I meet sword to sword with Flanger [cackles]

[KEITH and JANINE laugh]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Fucking....

JANINE: [laughing] Oh my god...

ALI: [laughing] You sure you don't wanna steal some time? [everyone laughs]

DRE: See what- see what all those tentacles do with a kiss-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Actually wait- how bout this, how bout this. What if this is stealing time together with Cascabel, before you do this?

DRE: [interested] Oooh. Okay

AUSTIN: [amused] That's the sound Cascabel makes [ALI giggles]

DRE: Oh- okay! [cackles]

KEITH: Now- I will counterpoint, are you sure you don't want to ask, uh... [laughs] you don't wanna ask Flanger "we lock swords, and your mouth is near my ear, what do you say?" [laughs]

DRE: [giggles] Just- just go ahead and give me the take on that one, Keith.

KEITH: Um... [laughs]

KEITH (as Flanger): We could end this right now, we could- [laughs] we could go to the backroom and end this right now! [DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: I hate this.

DRE: I don't wanna know -

ART: [amused, overlapping] Wait, what happens in the back-?

KEITH (as Flanger): [overlapping] Did you bring a Mass Effect gift for me?

DRE: Nope! [laughs]

AUSTIN: [loudly] I'm pulling the curtain! Only you and- [laughs] only you and your chosen partner play, ask them how the two of them came to be stealing time together. I imagine we're on the World Without End, the night before the raid on the Catapult- also I wanna be clear, losing this does not look like- losing this looks like the- like it breaks, y'all aren't on the same page, not like you don't get laid, y'know what I mean? [DRE cackles] Just wanna be clear. You can- this can go various ways

and still win, I wanna make sure that's not a... [sigh] what do you notice about each other? What have you heard?

DRE: Uh... I mean, I'm sure as the word has gotten out that fucking guns work again-

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

DRE: Uh... I bet- [sigh] I think this version of Cascabel is probably in a different place with that than like, original Cascabel?

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh

DRE: Specially after- like, Cascabel basically had to chase down Even and be like "Hey don't use a *gun* whenever you're annoyed about something??"

AUSTIN: Yeah. So I know exactly what Cascabel's working on when you find him, which is- he's making you a new version of the Mirage shield you used to use. That is something that you can just use whenever you needed to? Like- it's like built into your- it's like a thing you can attach to your body, and it lets you just... spray out this Mirage shield? From like, your arms or wherever- yknow-, like you just raise your forearm up and it just happens in front of you? From your hand or something? And that will protect you, and it's like- he makes it clear he wants to get into keeping people safe in a different way now. Um... converse as you like, naturally. Or- what's he notice about you? Is it the tension, is it the- I mean I think the thing that he notices is- here's what me, as Cascabel, notices is that- hey, Rapid Evening's dealt with. Hey, Volition's dealt with. (as Cascabel) You're looking for a *fight*. [laughs softly] You need to stop looking for a fight. Like, we can go do this one, it's fine, but- like, again, hand on cheek- there's something coming after, and it's not a world where you- have to shoot people all the time. We both have to figure out what the hell we're doing in that world.

DRE (as Even): I mean- I *want* to be in that world, and... not to get all stereotypical 'one last job' on you, but it can't be that world if Advent still has the capability to- get back together.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): [overlapping] I know, I know, I'm not saying it is that, I'm saying... I'm not saying don't do it, I'm saying... all the while, as we *blast those fuking fascists outta the sky*... let's dream about what comes next.

DRE: Uh- I touch your hand, may I?

AUSTIN: Yes.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): Even. [pause] What if we took over that little dinner, and I started building other types of stuff, like- what if...

AUSTIN: And he pulls you a little bit closer-

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): What if I- you know, I don't know Janey and Surge that well, but like, I bet I could take up cars alright?

DRE (as Even): I mean... you know I'm into anything that goes fast.

AUSTIN: [chuckles] He laughs. I touch your hair, may I?

DRE: Um... you may, but first I want you to know that have never had anybody do that, since my hair changed? And I'm not sure what I'll do.

AUSTIN: Hm... he does it anyway. I'm guessing it doesn't kill him [laughs]

DRE: No, it doesn't. I think it probably like... reacts somehow? It like ruffles or something but I don't- I mean, it doesn't like- yeah, something like that.

KEITH: [overlapping] It ruffles itself?

AUSTIN: Right. Um... I think he like-

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): *Huh...*

DRE (as Even): I mean- yeah. It's- Listen. I'll- I can't cook, but- that sounds good.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): I mean- hell, no offense Even, but I don't think that anyone would wanna eat any on the food you think tastes good. [laughs].

DRE (as Even): Yeah, I can't taste anything, that's- that's- you can't make a joke when I just already said it myself-

AUSTIN: [amused] I touch your lips, may I? Shushing you.

DRE: You may.

AUSTIN (as Cascabel): We'll figure it out. I just need to know that you're *committed* to figuring it out.

DRE: Um... I- don't only touch, but I kiss you, may I?

AUSTIN: You may. And let's draw a curtain upon what follows.

DRE: Yep

AUSTIN: And that- I think that fight goes really well! They don't have *shit!* [laughs, DRE chuckles] And you have all the reason in the world to tear them limb from limb. [scoffs] And save all that stuff, right- I think that's part of this, right? That conversation was about what comes next, not about- not *only* about how to kill fascists? But also about building a world afterwards. And so, I think in the fight that

follows, Even and Cascabel make it a point to... save things, right? Like, there are times when you could use the grenade launcher [laughs] to blow up four people, and you don't because it would also fuck up one of the Divine relics they managed to get up to the Catapult.

DRE: Yeah

AUSTIN: Or- or where you could do it, but it would fuck up with a little remaining bit of the Wandering Sea that they'd stolen. So- so yeah! Yeah. You get it. Good scene. Oh- Even, cross off your stuff.

DRE: Yeah, I'm about to do it.

JACK: Oh, I'm- clocks, clocks tick.

AUSTIN: Oh, clocks tick! *Oooh*, okay, clocks tick! Great!

JACK: NEH are about to get rich!

AUSTIN: NEH are about to get *richer*!

JACK: [overlapping] *-richer*!

AUSTIN: And the Waking Cadent has- has- time has drawn. On the Waking Cadent. Um.... I don't need a big scene with the NEH, it- because it doesn't look like- oops, I used the wrong one for 'extract with plunder', I made it look like they did it successfully, they did not, boom! [DRE chuckles] um... because it doesn't look like *money*, that's like, not what the wealth of the Splice is about. There's this game, um- Art probably knows it better than me, actually- called Freemarket?

ART: Hmmm

AUSTIN: Did you ever play Freemarket? 'Cause I can never find anyone to play Freemarket with.

ART: No, I also couldn't find anyone to play Free Market with.

AUSTIN: It's so weird!

ART: If only we had some sort of tabletop group...

AUSTIN: Yeah, if only, if only we did. Um- here's the introduction of Freemarket, this is a game that was... by- did Luke write it? Do you know?

ART: i- if he didn't write it he certainly was involved

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Jared- Jared Sorensen and Luke Crane wrote it. Um.. and so, from the introduction: "We are a society of functionally immortal, cybernetically modified, telepathic infovores-" Okay, they didn't know what vore meant at the time,

I'm sure- "Our society is centered on a reputation-based economy in which the basic needs of all — sustenance and shelter — are accounted for. If you wish to do more than just survive—if you wish to create, perform, build or destroy—you must win the approval of your friends and the community at large. Our "community at large" is currently about 80,000 strong. It is contained in a Stanford Torus-style space station parked at a lagrange point between Tethys, Titan and Saturn. Our habitat was designed to hold 40,000 comfortably. We've modified it to accommodate our expanding numbers. Considering that there is no death, no laws and no crime in our society, we think we're doing a fair job. You are now one of us. Welcome!"

Transhumanist RPG set on Freemarket station, card based mechanics, it's a really interesting game in which what you do is... make stuff? Is- if you have all the time in the world, and you have infinite resources, and you have a community, what do you do? And in Freemarket, the RPG, you- you produce projects, and make art, and politic against your friends [laughs] and are kind of shitty, but kind of wildly weirdly optimistic. Um... and it's a game that I don't know that I would ever play? But I do think it is the thing that happens inside of the Splice day in day out. And... that is like, the thing they've achieved! And the- in the remains of this game, over the course of the next three turns, people live complete lives inside of the Splice. Um... and create new things there, and they- they have entire communities, families, they- they marry and have AI children in the Splice, and- from outside of it, and sometimes dipping in, Our Profit watches it all happen. Um- and is more and more determined to bring this, her personal utopia, to the rest of the galaxy- and maybe even beyond that. So, I'm giving the NEH the wealth abundance.

KEITH: I can't believe the current most popular faction is the system is like a weird cult. I can, I'm lying, I can.

AUSTIN: You can, come on.

JANINE: This whole game is that, and has been from the start, right? [laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] It is a- [KEITH overlaps]

KEITH: [overlapping] But this one's a lot cultier.

AUSTIN: Mh-hm. Um...

JACK: And richer

AUSTIN: Hey, Signet, what's it look like? When y'all leave?

JANINE: Uh.... I think it is... so Privign is a space station, I'm- I'm assuming it capable of motion? Like I'm assuming that would be like, part of the preparation if not something that was already in there?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JANINE: Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that's true. I think that's something that was part of their prep, right?

JANINE: Yeah. I think it's like- [sigh] I think it's like a bunch of engines fire up that maybe the people outside were not expecting to see fire up, 'cause Privign's just been sitting there for- forever

AUSTIN: Forever, yeah

JANINE: [laughing] Like, for- for a fucking age and a half Privign has been a- as much of a landmark in the system as the planets.

AUSTIN: Right

JANINE: And Privign just like, boots up, and starts slowly moving towards that hole, I'm guessing

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so

JANINE: I don't know how they stand in the way of that? I- I don't think they- like, that's probably one of the things wheres like "well, they're just-

AUSTIN: They're leaving, yeah

JANINE: "Do we stop this giant space station?" Like, they're not going towards- maybe there's like a moment where it's like "oh they're going towards Alter!" and no they're not, they're not going towards Alter.

Asu: [overlapping] They're not going towards Alter, yeah

JANINE: They're leaving

AUSTIN: Yeah

JANINE: And I think like- I think it is like, a quiet and weird thing? Like, the natural [sigh]- the natural thing is like- it is like a solemn procession, it is like- [pause] it is like service is over, and... now everyone is leaving, and you got the people with the incense and shit and they're just- they're going out the door!

AUSTIN: So is this kind of- it does feel like a ritual thing, it doesn't just feel like a spaceship-

JANINE: Yeah, I bet- I bet Privign could go faster. Um...

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: But it's not, it's- they're taking their time, they can afford to, this isn't like- this isn't like running away, this is a very deliberate departure.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh...

JANINE: So I think in that sense it's solemn, and low-key, and not very obvious? It's probably really easy to miss?

AUSTIN: Yeah

JANINE: If people aren't looking, I think the most obvious visual tells are like... a bunch of people got messages, probably, from people who are on Privign and they're like "We're going. Um... and you didn't get to come here 'cause-"

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: - you didn't want to, or like, because of- y'know

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Some shit happened

JANINE: - you waited until too late and then there was the barricade up and it's like- "we're going, sorry" Um...

AUSTIN: Is that something that... I mean, one thing is if someone at the end still wants to send people there, they could theoretically start a project to do that? But- is this something where you're like... do you say goodbye, is really what my question is. Or do you just go.

JANINE: [sigh] So- Signet is kind of a weird example because she... has a limited power to see the people she cares about, but- even in the best case scenario that's really short?

AUSTIN: Yeah

JANINE: Like, if you were saying goodbye to your best friend it's like- well that's okay, once a week I can look at you for two seconds [laughs] [AUSTIN chuckles] Like, that's- that's kind of comforting? But like-

AUSTIN: But also not that comforting.

JANINE: But also not great. Like- it's one of those things where she'll feel good about the fact that she can every now and then pop into Tender's head and give her a thumbs up or some shit? [AUSTIN laughs] But...

AUSTIN. That's cute

JANINE: -in some cases that's not enough? Um... [sigh] like I think- I think Signet as a person would've liked Blueberri to come along.

AUSTIN: right

JANINE: But Signet as an Excerpt had prepared Blueberri to specifically act when Signet wasn't there, [AUSTIN overlaps] even though she didn't think it would be in this context-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] That was the whole thing

JANINE: -she didn't think she'd be leaving in this way... she prepared a bunch of people she cares about to operate without her and the things that she brings to the table, so... she's kinda always been on this path...? But I think- I think in Blueberri's case in particular- like- so for a lot of people I don't think she leaves anything because it's like- this is what it is.

AUSTIN: Yeah

JANINE: Um.. But for Blueberri I think she specifically leaves... I'm imagining she leaves a letter that's like, really apologetic, 'cause the last time she and Blueberri spoke, um... or the last time they had a long enough conversation, it felt to Signet like she had misjudged Blueberri maybe and that misjudgement caused Blueberri something. Um... and that's something that Signet regrets a lot? So I think... does our stash matter? We're not in that system-

AUSTIN: No, no. [JANINE overlaps] I mean, it does-

JANINE: [overlapping] So I think the thing-

AUSTIN: - it does in the sense that like- it does fictionally. Um- y'know what I mean?

JANINE: Yeah- Signet doesn't really have a lot of private property already though, like-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, no, totally

JANINE: so I think she leaves a chunk of- [AUSTIN overlaps]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] But it means like- you're not retiring, do you know what I mean?

JANINE: [mumbling] Signet's not gonna fucking retire.

AUSTIN: I know, exactly, exactly.

JANINE: That's- I think she keeps a little, as a sort of just in case thing?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Sure

JANINE: She leaves a- she sends a chunk of credits to Blueberri with a letter that's- that- y'know, I don't need to go over in detail but I think the letter is basically a thing of like... if it's not what you want to do, then you need to find what you wanna do. Like, that's- the first task id to find your own peace, and... not necessarily someone else's, y'know? If it's too much or whatever

AUSTIN: Totally. Alright. Fourteen Fifteen

ART: Lemme take contempt for that, that was fucking sad.

[JANINE chuckles]

AUSTIN: M- 'kay

JANINE: Bye y'all, hope you don't need more help!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JANINE: I'm outie!

JACK: Just out through the h- out through the hole?

AUSTIN: Out through the hole, yeah

JANINE: Out through the space hole!

AUSTIN: The Divine fleet rises again, and with it- y'know, five Divines, fly away. The bulk of the living Divines in the system.

JANINE: [laughing] The ship to Divine ratio is a little fucked up right now

AUSTIN: I think you pick up ships in the way out, right? Not a bunch, but like-

JANINE: I- y'know, thts epilogue material, i've got thoughts.

AUSTIN: Okay, good.

JACK: Um.... Okay

AUSTIN: ... Fourteen.

JACK: [sigh] So during the time between my last turn and this turn a lot has happened [laughs]

AUSTIN: [cackles] It has!

ART: Great understatement, Jack. [JACK & AUSTIN laugh]

JACK: Um... so, looking at it, the NEH is going to... extract-

AUSTIN: I- don't know that that's true- um-

JACK: They probably want the Mirage?

AUSTIN: They want the Mirage still- I think this is- the way I have to make this work is, this was gonna be about fleeing the stellar combuster, but *now* it's about Our Profit being overcome from seeing the Splice in action? Where it's like "I have to bring this to people. This is too important. This is not my life's work, it's a sin for me not- I have the ability to do it, I *have* to do it. Quire is dead, the Divines have left. The Mirage isn't protecting anything anymore, it's time to take it- there's a *sun* here now, I have no reason not to take it"

JACK: Yeah. Um... Nideo is gonna steal and repair the remnants of Gumption.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JACK: The Qui Err Coalition is going to- this is great as well 'cause if that clock fills, the- the lawn game season is gonna be compelling enough that it's gonna pull people even out of the capacity of this place. Um...

AUSTIN: Right, yes! The Splice doesn't disappear then, but it does raise population, it counteracts the population drop that happened before.

JACK: Like- a bunch of folks would be like "this is great"

AUSTIN: Yeah, a lot of people- the thing that I'll say- [amused] we gotta go back to first principles of this season, which was- for the people of the Divine fleet, the virtual and the real are both real- the virtual and the *material* are both real? And so, in some ways I think Gig's lawn games plan is reminding that- or, reminding the people of the Qui Err Coalition, or explaining- not explaining, but demonstrating too the folks there that... 'oh yeah, the Splice is cool, you can do all sorts of cool stuff there, but you can also do cool stuff here- and neither of those is less valuable'

JACK: Yeah yeah- that's the way it works in our favor this time around, right? Is that like- citizens of the fleet will be like 'oh, yes. [laughs] Both of these are good, and I can enjoy this one right now'

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um... so I'm kind of torn, because... no, I think I know what I'm gonna do, but I think I'm torn on the way up to that, which is- we were talking earlier about bolstering the Qui Err Coalition or bolstering Seneschal's Brace-

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: To potentially- like, in the absolute *best* case scenario here, where we get rid of the *real* assholes and are left with the medium assholes- um. How best do we-

how best do we do in that situation? But I think a lot of what we've been talking about during this finale is 'look, we need to get rid of the real fuckers first'

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: So I think I'm gonna try and destroy this extraction. The clock that is now labeled as extraction

AUSTIN: Yeah. How are you doing it?

JACK: In terms of which game?

AUSTIN: No, in terms of fiction.

JACK: Oh, Christ- Um... what's- it's called the Restitution of All Things-

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: Um... what is the device that is syphoning the Mirage?

AUSTIN: Imagine that they're almost- in my mind they're like what if a martini shaker was a piston. And-

JACK: [laughing] It's such a specific thing you've just said!

AUSTIN: - free floating through the Mirage? And are pistoning- it's like the top of a martini- y'know how a martini shaker has that great shape?

JACK: Yea yeah yeah

AUSTIN: It's like, it tapers- it goes from being really tight, to open, and then tapers again?

JACK: Yeah, really quickly

AUSTIN: The top- yeah, really quickly, but the top part, the very very very top part- where there's the little- I don't know how that's called, on the lid-

JACK: [overlapping] The grill thing

AUSTIN: Yeah. That part-

KEITH: You mean the part where it like lifts off the cap?

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah

ART: Bout?

AUSTIN: H- no, I guess it's- it's actually just the cap- [KEITH overlaps] it's the lid.

KEITH : [overlapping] It's the lid, yeah

AUSTIN: That opens up, but it's just a cylinder in there, is what it looks like. And then it's like [suction noise] and it sucks in some of the Mirage? And then it compresses it, and it goes down. And it leaves, and sucks in more, and compresses it, and goes down. And it's basically compressing the Mirage into a solid form. It's like what if you could package a sunset, y'know? Into like a cube

JACK: Right. Um-

AUSTIN: And it's moving those into the Restitution of All Things

JACK: And is the-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Like a weird alien french press, yes, thank you Janine, yeah.

JACK: [laughs] Is the Splice contingent on the Restitution of All Things?

AUSTIN: No- they've already won that one.

JACK: Oh okay

AUSTIN: The Splice is already deployed to everyone here. Um... everyone has access to the Splice already. Um- unless they've turned it off the way that the Qui-err Coalition- no, sorry, the way the Waking Cadent did.

JACK: anAd if we sink the Restitution of All Things...?

AUSTIN: The Splice stays on. The Splice is like the internet, it's distributed.

JACK: But the siphon stops?

AUSTIN: [amused] Sure. You could also stop the siphons, I mean... you don't have to kill the hundreds of thousands of people living in the Restitution of All Things to do that

JACK: Right. Yeah. I'm just-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] That seems- again, Fourteen Fifteen was *just* saying they weren't a killer, so [laughs]

JACK: Right, yeah, exactly. Um... I'm just- I was trying to think of... the ideal situation here is- they say that when you encounter a bear, and the bear is gonna attack you, you should make yourself as large as possible? Um... and- and- y'know, try to be an imposing shape, in the hopes that the bear will back down and back away?

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: And they also say that if you do that to a mountain lion the mountain lion will kill you?

AUSTIN: [amused] Uh-huh

JACK: - will just go like “Ah. A larger shape. [AUSTIN overlaps] Excellent, dinner.”

AUSTIN: [overlapping, laughing] “Time to kill you”

ART: There are bears where that is *not* true, consult your local bear expert.

JACK: Yeah, no, there's lots of different kinds of bear [KEITH overlaps] and some of them will be like-

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah, I have heard that tactics for black bears and brown bears are opposite.

JACK: [laughs] Yeah! Which is- it's-

KEITH: Yeah, it's tough

JACK: - oh, god, why are there so many- and then with polar bears, you're- just the worst kind of bear. Um... I love the idea of facing down the NEH, and saying... “stop this, or we will destroy these things”. But I don't know if realistically- Our Profit would just say “o- yeah? What are you gonna do about it?”

AUSTIN: No, that's not what she would say. What she'd say is “millions of people like this thing already, I'm gonna bring it to more people”. Maybe this is a debate that you wanna have with her or something but-

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah, alright. Yeah yeah yeah!

AUSTIN: - part of my question for you is like, what is Fourteen's reason for wanting to destroy- to stop people from having this?

JACK: Because you can't just show up in an entire system and say “Ah, yes. The sky, please”

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: Um... it is over- and- y'know, you can't- the argument of ‘well, the sky is very nice’? Is not a good enough argument

AUSTIN: For keeping it?

JACK: For taking it for yourself.

AUSTIN: I think also for keeping- we should have this debate.

JACK: [laughs] Woah- okay

AUSTIN: What's- frame this debate for me.

JACK: Okay, uh...

AUSTIN: And also what are you spending for it

JACK: Yeah that is actually perhaps the more pressing question

AUSTIN: *Uh-huh*

JACK: Uh... so I'm gonna spend...

KEITH: Wait- whats the actual- what's the-

AUSTIN: He's doing a hard attack on... NEH, a heavy attack on NEH, to convince Our Profit not to extract the Mirage.

Keith: Okay

JACK: Um... I'm gonna spend my ghost.

AUSTIN: Okay. Get rid of that ghost. Contempt.

JACK: [overlapping] Okay, contempt is gone. Um...

KEITH: Mirage goes- Splice is gone too, right?

AUSTIN: No, no.

KEITH: No? What do they- what are they on the Splice with if not through the Mirage?

JACK: So they- they-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] They would be leaving the Mirage in the air enough to like, let you connect to the Splice, right? The Splice is like, in the air at this point.

JACK: They just think the Mirage is very powerful and...

AUSTIN: The Mirage is helping them communicate- is helping them connect the Splice, but they don't need the whole fucking Mirage to do it, y'know?

KEITH: Oh, okay

AUSTIN: They don't need to spread the super dense Mirage everywhere, [KEITH overlaps] that's what they've cracked

KEITH: [overlapping] So- so you're going from like, fiber optic internet to dial up? It's enough to get you into that place?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, no, it's not- no, the Splice is almost [JACK overlaps] overwriting the Mirage at this point, do you know what I mean?

JACK: [overlapping] They've *done* the Splice

KEITH: Oh, okay

AUSTIN: They're using the sort of connective tissue of the Mirage as a thing that they're putting data into? And it's almost- we had this, um... it's almost like the- god, where was it that we had just like, everyone was online all the time.

JACK: Pokemon Go?

AUSTIN: [amused] Pokemon- it's almost like Pokemon Go! No, it's like- I think it's almost like, they think of the Splice as the Twilight Mirage version 2.0 where like, you don't need the parts that hide you from people trying to find you in space, all you need is a thin layer of it to connect people. Twilight Mirage previously did all of this other stuff, and you don't need any of that! All you need is the part that puts your brain in a virtual space

KEITH: Right

AUSTIN: We can get rid of the camouflage, we can get rid of the light and the heat, we can get rid of the part that makes it possible to live on planets- like, all that stuff can go away!

KEITH: Like- we've got the sun.

AUSTIN: Right, you have the sun now! [JACK chuckles] right

Keith: Um... okay.

JACK: So I'm gonna-

KEITH: [overlapping] And that's the thing, trying to keep them from taking it.

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: I'm gonna spend my ghost.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, one.

JACK: Uh- I have to spend three, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah

JACK: And then I'm gonna spend 'sturdy'

AUSTIN: I'm cancelling 'sturdy' with 'dying'.

KEITH: Yeah that- [AUSTIN overlaps, unintelligible]

AUSTIN: [overlapping] You don't have to die, until you're ready to, 'cause you could go into the Splice. And that's a thing you have to get over

JACK: Yeah. Um... and then I'm gonna use 'passionate'

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, so that's two.

JACK: - oh- here let me cross these- let me cross these out.

AUSTIN: Yep

JACK: Yes

AUSTIN: So you need one more

JACK: Uh- and then I'm gonna ask for help.

ALI: Um... [sigh]

DRE: Oh, buddy, I wish I had anything to give [ALI laughs]

KEITH: Yeah, I got it. I'm here.

AUSTIN: How do you help?

KEITH: Um.....

AUSTIN: Like, fictionally speaking- I saw that you spent a contempt token

KEITH: I did, yeah. Um... I think that Gig... likes the Mirage

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

KEITH: Uh... I don't think-

AUSTIN: But fictionally speaking how does Gig help Fourteen make the thing that's happening happen- like, what do we see on the camera.

KEITH: Um... what is the game we're gonna play?

AUSTIN: I think 'An Animated Disagreement'

JACK: [overlapping] Uh- 'An Animated Disagreement' [KEITH overlaps] and int-

KEITH: [overlapping] Um- maybe- oh, maybe it- maybe it's a broadcast of the disagreement, so it's like the audience is now... everyone. [AUSTIN overlaps] including the people in the Splice

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right- that's interesting. Yeah I like that a lot, I like that a lot.

JACK: So... so we get this shot of the Restitution of All Things, just *absolutely* filling the screen

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JACK: like, the cinema black bars, right? And the Restitution of All Things is just stretching. Um... and then- and then, in that way that the opening shots of Star Wars movies have always been very good at doing, with just a subtle adjustment of the camera, like- three or four ships of the Seneschal's Brace fleet are in the foreground heading towards the Restitution of All Things. Which is in orbit around- it's not on the map, is it?

AUSTIN: What's that- the Restitution? Is in the north-west, it's far on the north-west. It's north-west of Crown- it's west of Gumption.

JACK: Oh, it's hiding in the top left corner of the map

AUSTIN: Yes

JACK: Um... yes, so I guess- oh no, Gumption's body is probably being moved from-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, yeah, it's- at this point it's probably back- ill move it, in fact.

JACK: Yeah. Um- and then just a smash-cut to the- the corridors that we saw when Grand came, and smash-cut to people working inside offices, inside the Restitution of All Things- seeing these people- this small contingent from Seneschal's Brace, Gig and Fourteen moving through these corridors.

AUSTIN: They give you some Qui Err Coalition, so that's even- like-

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah yeah, I wonder if- I wonder if Qui Err is brought like a-like... like an- not an entourage but like "oh , here are the three people that have come with you on the ship"

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JACK: Um... yeah, and I think we meet-

AUSTIN: Well I think- I think Iota Pretense is there too, 'cause Iota Pretense is the one who convinced Our Profit not to do this months ago, right before the Schism

attack, right? So she's had this argument already with Our Profit, and won it the last time

JACK: And she's sort of like “alright, fucking- here we go again” [laughs]

AUSTIN: “Here we go again”, yeah. So-

JACK: Um- yeah, and i think we’re ushered into the room into- whatever the equivalent of Our Profit’s throne room is, which is probably like a-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, it's the- it's the negotia- it's the Center Centra... it's in the snow, we’re in the snow- we’re in a cabin in the snow, and the center of the Restitution of All Things is a snowy retreat

JACK: Ohhh, yeah!

AUSTIN: It's the Centre Centra Diplomatic Retreat. So it's like a frozen lake, and a little old cabin, and- inside the cabin it's like, nicer than it should be inside of a *cabin* [JACK laughs] but that's like, that's what it is- and there's tea served, and this is a kind of... y'know, dressed down conversation in a sense.

JACK: Is this the place where the bomb went off? Like, ages ago by now- yeah, okay [laughs]

AUSTIN: [amused, overlapping] Yes, huh, yeah

JACK: God...

AUSTIN: You're scanned *very* carefully for bombs!

JACK: Yeah, I imagine that the security is just-

AUSTIN: Normally you just get scanned when you land, but this time you're scanned twice!

JACK: Oh, god. And there are more of these armored robots that I am [AUSTIN overlaps] around, right?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Oh, yes. 100%, yeah. I mean- in fact, she’s probably guarded by another one right now, yknow?

JACK: Yeah. It just sort of like, eyes me up, it's just like...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, yeah. Alright, everyone plays. Um... not everyone, this is- this is the wrong one. Oh no, that’s right, that's right. We need audience members to ask us questions.

ART: Please explain how your position carries the weight of tradition, law and social order.

AUSTIN: To?

ART: Um, why don't we- why don't we start with Fourteen.

JACK: Tradition, law and social order... I think Fourteen-

JACK (as Fourteen): Many of you will have seen the shape that has opened in the Mirage in recent days. For some of you this will not have been a surprise. You will have seen that dark space, those bright lights before. But for those of us who were born and raised here- that expanse is a great surprise to us. But, it was in that space, many many years ago and far away from here that the Divine Fleet was formed. And it was formed in difficulty, and it was formed through hard work. And in order to find a place of safety, and find a place where we could build, and grow, it made its way to what we call the Twilight Mirage. In those days it must've been as much of a surprise to them as this black window is to us. It's never stopped being as beautiful. Our society *is* the Twilight Mirage, it's is what we have built from, it is what we have built *in*, it's what we have woken up seeing and gone to bed seeing. you ask about tradition, law, and social order. The Mirage is the fleet, and the fleet is the Mirage. And to *remove* it with these... machines? You might as well be taking the ground beneath us.

AUSTIN (as Our Profit): It is... hard to hear you say that the fleet is the Mirage and that the Mirage is the fleet, because... when I see the fleet- when I see now the echoes of it in the Free States and in Seneschal's Brace- I see so much more than a splash of color in the sky. I see a set of ideals. That is what guides... you, and it's what guides the Divine Free States, and it's what guides the Qui Err Coalition- and it is what guides us, in the New Earth Hegemony. [huff] The... goals of my people have always been, ever since we wrest control of our history from the clutches of Independence, to bring about a place where those who have ideas can bring them into existence. Can share them with others, can be inspired by their rivalries, can be lifted by their ambition. The social order of Earth is not tied to the soil of Earth, the law of the Church of the Self is not contained in books, the *tradition* of the Hegemony is not in a figurehead like me. It's in how normal citizens operate their lives. And I would leave all of that behind to usher us in to a more perfect world- one where our original goals can take new shape, where we can offer to those who would have it a place where they could live, create, share, and flourish.

ART: Oh, those are both really good. I was like, really set on- [huffs] I admit, I sat back like "oh, Fourteen crushed that, good point." [AUSTIN laughs, JACK chuckles] And then...

JACK: Our Profit has always been incredibly persuasive, right?

ART: Yeah...

AUSTIN: [overlapping] She believes what she's- she's not Nideo, is that thing I will say about her, right?

JACK: Right, yeah.

ART: Yeah, I'm... I'm sorry, I'm gonna- I'm gonna give that to...

JACK: No, that's fair, this is how the game is played.

JANINE: Can I ask- I know I'm not here but- it's not me anyways-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

JANINE: Um... please explain how the other position has merit and is worth real consideration

AUSTIN: To who first?

JANINE: Oh- to, um... Our Profit.

AUSTIN (as Our Profit): now- I understand what you mean, at the same time, Fourteen Fifteen, when you say that the fleet *is* the Mirage. History carries weight. The Mirage kept you safe from *my* ancestors for years. I do not deny that pulling that away is like lowering a flag. And I deeply understand, as best as I can from having spoken with the members of Seneschal's Brace and the Divine Free States- who I've met in the Splice and who i've found time to speak to- that pulling the Mirage with us out into the black would be trying. I do not deny that. But I believe that we must be brave, and when I speak to those on Seneschal, and those on Crown, and those on Alter and Gift 3, I see bravery.

JACK (as Fourteen): You have built a beautiful machine, and it is all that I can do to not find myself within it. It allows citizens of the new Earth Hegemony and citizens of the Fleet... to do something which has long been important to both of our cultures. To find the time to build, and to find a place in which to build. And it is also true that your Splice maintains a certain tenance of our fleet's understanding, which is that the line between what is real and what is virtual is such a thin one as to be not there. Your machine is incredibly compelling, and I can understand why, given the resources that you have, given the vast wealth, given the political capability, you would take the opportunity to strengthen that. But you would take the opportunity to strengthen that from somebody. And I cannot sit there and let that happen.

JANINE: Oh boy... um, I think I wanna give that one to Fourteen? That last line was good.

AUSTIN: Alright, one more

SYLVIA: Please explain how your position best serves the neglected interest of the underprivileged. And, um... I think I'll go with Fourteen to start the time? 'Cause I think Our Profit started the last two, right?

KEITH: She started the last one

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Just the last one.

SYLVIA: Just the last one? Oh, okay. Then, uh- I'll still go for Fourteen, I don't know [laughs].

JACK (as Fourteen): We did not ask for your machine. And I can see you, and I can see your comrades at the other end of the table, think to yourself "Well, so many of you have- so many of you have decided to join us." And I will not deny that impulse, and I will not take that away from those people. Their decision, as I said, is entirely understandable. But we *did not* ask for your machine. After *decades* of war against your planet, the Restitution of All Things showed up in the Twilight Mirage like a new star. And we did not know what to do. For a while, there was panic. I believed that you would- [amused] you would destroy one of our planets, which is funny 'cause then the Rapid Evening showed up and threatened to- y'know. And then when it became clear that what you were going to do was build the Splice, I had a moment of relief. But that relief was replaced by a kind of fury, Our Profit, that you have decided to take this position in our sky, and then to take our sky. You ask how our position best serves the neglected interests of the underprivileged. Fine, the Splice gives people time to think, it gives people time to live- but we have time to think and we have time to build with the Mirage. We have farms to plant. We have hospitals to run. We have parks to play in. we have a new *sun!* We never thought we'd see that! The thing that we thought would destroy us has become a sun! The Mirage is a wonderful place, and your machine is wonderful. But we *did not* ask for it.

AUSTIN (as Our Profit): May I respond?

JACK (as Fourteen): Yes

AUSTIN (as Our Profit): When I was very young, they told me that I would be the Hegemon, and on that day they showed me a statue that was being built to capture my likeness. It was... as tall as the tallest tower. I was a child. Thirteen. And in fury, I had them tear it down. And when they asked me what I would build instead with it, I did not have an answer because I moved with fury. Now, I am older. And so I see in the Mirage a statue, to things great. To things beautiful. To Empyrean, who protected their people and built the Mirage in the first place. To Quire, which allowed- brought about the miracle that first drew my attention here- and has since retired, like Empyrean before it. But I *cannot* let statues stand, and neither must I just tear them apart. To serve those underserved I must radically change what the new Earth

Hegemony is. You say in one moment that you understand that the real and virtual are equal, and then the next tell me that your new physical sun is somehow more appealing than the one enjoyed by many in what they thought might be their last gasps of breath before Volition killed them. You tell me that the virtual and the physical are equal and then appeal to your long green lawns. And I like them, they're beautiful! But they can only fit *so many people*, that is the nature of the physical. We spent millennia caring only for ourselves. We moved our planet to the center of the *galaxy*, so narcissistic were we. and it came from a good place, it came from the belief that you could only help your own, and that you should draw a bold black circle around who counted and who didn't. No more. We care about everyone. We care about *everyone*. And this offer must be made. You have seen it, Fourteen. You know what it is and what it will mean to those who have *nothing* else. Not just to the Fourteen Fifteens and the Our Profits, to the Kitcha Kannas who grew from nothing, who were children doing labor. To- [sighs] to the Keen Forster Gloaming's, who could not because they had not the time, imagine a world where they did not walk in step with a demonic machine who would see us all burn. I want to give both the great and the humble *time*. And I do not impose it on top of this world, I do not say "What is mine is better", but it is a place to come together with those you care about, to retreat from those you fear. To figure out what comes next. To dream the impossible. And then, if you wish, to return here and do the same. I thank you so much for this conversation, it has made me think deeply.

SYLVIA: Okay, I gotta pick who wins that huh! Oof! [KEITH giggles] Aghhh. Oh boy, that's hard, that was very good!. Um.... I don't know- I'm gonna go with the one that made the most sense to me, and that was Fourteen?

AUSTIN: Okay. So, as the rules say, it becomes clear that two thirds to one third believe what Fourteen wants, and Our Profit accedes to that. That like- y'know. The Mirage, the Quire system, at seeing this debate, holds on to the Mirage. And she will not take it. She thought she'd convinced people by showing what the Splice was, but she has not. And so she stops the machines yet again, and continues pumping slowly, very slowly. And fears for the time when someone would take this miracle away, because she's certain that soon enough the Rapid Evening will.

JACK: [long relieved sigh]

AUSTIN: Alright! Let me tick some clocks! Uh... one turn left on this Gumption repair! And the lawn games succeed- presumably immediately after that conversation, right?

KEITH: Yeah! Yeah, good timing.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Everyone heads outside-

JACK: [sigh] I got beef with the fucking Splice!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JACK: they are stealing the-!

KEITH: [amused] No no, that's right, that's why you won! [JACK laughs]

JACK: Yeah, but- yeah, people are also like “yeah the Splice is great.”

AUSTIN: Right. Right. People still like it. We'll come around it in the epilogue I think.
Tender Sky

ALI: Hi...

AUSTIN: How's it going?

ALI: I- I guess the only clock that's remaining that we have to like, deal with is
Gumption getting stolen?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

ALI: But, um... I don't know the best way to like, resolve that, that isn't just “hey don't
do that”. Um...

AUSTIN: Right. I mean, for what it's worth, you pitched me a thing before- I still think
that's good.

ALI: Okay

AUSTIN: But I don't know if that's a thing that you're still interested- I still think that's
good, I do think that there's something interesting here that could show up in the
epilogue, if you go that direction? [ALI laughs]

ALI: Um... yeah. I'm just trying to see if there's a way to like edit the idea that I had
that was not like, so... offensive, I guess? Um... yeah, so- so the thing I wanted to
do was like, synthesize with the Splice, I guess? Originally to just push Our Profit out
of it and have it in Seneschal's Brace's control, so like... we could just have it, and
be able to be safe there? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JACK: Damn!

ALI: In case we couldn't stop the solar combustor... and also-

JACK: Holy lord

ALI: Yeah. Um... it's- I feel like the real issue here is like, [amused] how people are
sending their DNA to a company that is now selling it to medicine programs? Like,
that is still a thing that Tender is afraid of.

AUSTIN: Sure, yes

ALI: -and would like to stop, right?

AUSTIN: And again, out profit- what happens when Our Profit dies. And- and the Rapid Evening takes over. Or the DFS takes over... like what happens if Palatine gets into... the Splice, y'know? And...

ALI: Yeah

AUSTIN: Um... so is Tender gonna like, blend with the internet? I like the little heart that someone drew on Volition, that's sweet [ALI laughs]

JANINE: It took me like eight tries to get the second half...

AUSTIN: It's right!

Alu: [chuckles] Um... but yeah, basically- I guess that the thing that she's doing is like... Fourteen says that you can't take the Mirage and you *can't*, 'cause that is-

AUSTIN: That is us.

ALI: [laughing] That is our solar system, but like, you can have Anticipation, which is a *Divine*. Um... the Mirage was created by a Divine, it's the same type of power. But like, within that power is like...

AUSTIN: *Oh*, you making a fucking deal?

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Is this like, on the table instead of under it now? Is this like "hey, Anticipation can help spread this everywhere".

ALI: Right. But it's like-what was the season we had where it's like- oh, it was the node thing, where it's like "Hey, you can have our internet but like-"

AUSTIN: [amused] This season, you're talking about this season! [ALI laughs] that was *so far ago* 'cause it was the first arc on the ground game [JACK and JANINE chuckle] that you thought it was a different season! Welcome to Friends at the Table, and actual play podcast that records for 30 hours an episode. [KEITH cackles in the background]

ALI: Anyway where it's like you *have* to get GeoCities. You *have* to.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right, yes! And so it's like "I'll help you spread this with Anticipation, but-"

ALI: Right

AUSTIN: And I could've just done this, by the way? I already had this backdoor

ALI: [giggles] Right, it's like- I think it's still under the table 'cause- I could be a threat, or... you can-

AUSTIN: *Oof*

ALI: - you can like- I think that she's like, calling her bluff that isn't a bluff, right?

AUSTIN: Right

ALI: And being like "hey, if you want this..." [AUSTIN overlaps] make some compromises.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Right. And Our Profit's bluff has always been "I'm the last Hegemon" right? "I'm the final Hegemon, I'm gonna step down, the Hegemony is going to end and we're going to move into this next phase of life" which is, now we know, being on the Splice.

ALI: Yeah

JACK: I love this *so much* [ALI laughs], because- I was just thinking about how- that really great argument that is fairly ubiquitous but still fantastic, which is that- y'know, Civilization games just replicate western imperialist colonialism in a lot of ways?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JACK: And in a lot of ways the 'Animated Disagreement' game is kind of this very civil... like, let's hear both sides thing?

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh, 100%

JACK: And i- like, one of the questions is 'Please explain-' like, y'know fucking tell me why their side is good. Um... and I *really* love that!

AUSTIN: Which you would have to have- imagine if you'd done that with the- with *Advent*, and someone- 'Explain why Advent's right'

JACK: Right, right!

AUSTIN: Like *fuck that*, no!

JACK: And I love that Fourteen like, gritted their teeth through this fucking animated disagreement with, uh...- [laughing] and then kinds just like "Yo, *Open Profit *sucks!*" which is like... sorry, Our Profit *sucks*. I'm just gonna like- "I'm gonna put my monster in your machine, and I'm gonna call your bluff, and it's gonna be-" [laughs]

AUSTIN: I don't think- I think this is a clock! Like, there isn't a disagreement here. If you're calling her bluff- her bluff is called, like- there isn't a bluff. If you can help spread the Splice she's going to let you, and that means not being the Hegemon anymore and not being in control of it. As long as she can trust you with it. [ALI laughs] And that's the hard part, maybe!

ALI: I guess she's just like, recreating Seneschal's Brace but like, in the internet?

AUSTIN: Yeah! Well you already have the temple, right?

ALI: Yeah

AUSTIN: And we saw the city from the temple, forever ago

JACK: Ohhhh

ALI: Right- I meant like, the government system- [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh- oh! So it's like Seneschal's Brace except, one the outside it's the Cadent Under Mirage and Pure Cascara, and on the inside it's Our Profit and Tenderness? [ALI and JACK laugh]

ALI: [amused] Sure... that works. That works, right?

AUSTIN: It's- do you *join* the Restitution of All Things? Like- what do you do? 'Cause they're gonna leave!

ALI: *Ohhhh*, okay...

JACK: Oh I thought they weren't- I thought they were like "we're not gonna stract because- [AUSTIN overlaps] we're not gonna stract because the stellar combustor is gone"

AUSTIN: Nono- no, but they wanna spread the Splice to the galaxy!

JACK: Oh.

AUSTIN: That's still their goal! So if Anticipation can help them do that, they'll leave! And go do that!

ALI: [laughs] Oh, boy howdy....

AUSTIN: But it means like- Tender becomes the weird... internet goddess of the galaxy [ALI cackles, JACK chuckles]

JANINE: You can't say that like it's- like it's a hard choice now, 'cause you just said that

AUSTIN: I do think it's a hard cho- I don't think it's a hard choice but like- alright, I hope you- I guess Morning's Observation could hang out in the Splice with you still, right? And then this is it [ALI overlaps] do you really believe that it's equal.

ALI: [overlapping] Yeah that's the thing! It's not like-

AUSTIN: 'Cause if it is, then Morning's Observation could meet you in the Splice, Fourteen Fifteen could meet you in the Splice! *Whenever* they wanna see you

ALI: Yeah, I mean... Tender has no reason to believe that digital versions of things are not right. And I think it's the same exact thing- relationship that she had with Declan, which is- okay, if you're gonna repent, I'm gonna sit here and watch you

AUSTIN: Right

ALI: Like- [laughs] that is the thing!

AUSTIN: "And my weird brain worm is gonna keep running the simulation! And *in here*, it will never run out of time"

ALI: Yeah. We might get to the solution of slaves by the end of this

AUSTIN: Right, it might take another season, but!

ALI: [laughs]

KEITH: Sorry, another what?

AUSTIN: Uh- don't worry about it! Don't even worry about it yet. Um... I think that's a clock?

ALI: Yeah

AUSTIN: I think- it's gonna happen, right? Like- uh- [sigh] after the last- that last argument was "okay, I can't do the thing I wanna do without being a war criminal". And she's not ready to do that. 'Cause she'd lose, partially. [ALI laughs] Guns work now, she doesn't have the only guns. And... and she is- she does wanna be the final hegemon, and you're like "yeah, I'm a Divine, I'm an Excerpt, we're gonna do this"

ALI: Yeah

AUSTIN: I think start a clock

ALI: Sure

AUSTIN: Just add it- I'll add it to the thing, but like-

ALI: Okay...

KEITH: What's the name of the clock?

AUSTIN: Y'know, good question! What's the name of the clock?

ALI: Um...

JANINE: Can the world 'cyber' in it? [ALI laughs] like 'cyber goddess', or like 'cyber...'

KEITH: 'E-god'

JANINE: [sceptical] Umm...

ALI: 'Tender's webbering' [ALI and JANINE cackle]

AUSTIN: Okay, Tender's webbering, got it. Oh is that your- [JANINE overlaps] NEH name? Tender's Webbering?

JANINE: [overlapping] Tender anime [unintelligible, everyone cackles]

AUSTIN (as Our Profit): [mocking] There- you can do it on one condition. You take a new, third name. Tender's Webbering [laughs]

JACK: Wait, so- hang on-

AUSTIN: [laughing] -no hentai here

JACK: Okay, so- now we've got this clock in place, can you sum up what it is that you've done? [laughs]

KEITH: Yeah, what are you doing?

ALI: Um, Our Profit needs a resource... to bring this thing to everybody-

JACK: [laughs] It *is* what I thought it was.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

ALI: [laughing] The Mirage is not a renewable resource... and is also like, the- y'know, what's the thing- the solar thing that we have that's broken because of pollution?

JACK: The ozone layer?

ALI: Yeah, it's that [KEITH cackles] and they [laughing] can't just take that...

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's true...

JACK: God, I should've used that. [laughs, ALI giggles]

AUSTIN: You won, hey!

ALI: But like- getting the internet to everybody is a really good idea, um... it would've saved us if Volition came, it would've saved us if the stellar combustor went off... if the DFS wants to have a cop Divine, there's more than one of those.

AUSTIN: Great, so we've finally figured out that you *are* cops.

ALI: [laughing] Tender's always been a cop.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's true...

ALI: Tender's like- Tender committed a crime, and people were like "Oh shit, that was so cop-like, you should be a cop now" Like, [everyone cackles] "Okay, I'll be that for the rest of my life" um... and she is. I mean- I think the real thing here is that like, Tender is a Candidate that took an Excerpt name 'cause she read the Bible [laughs]

AUSTIN: Damn! God *damn* that's a sentence! [ALI and JANINE laugh]

ALI: Like- she's gonna die in 20 years, or she's gonna be in the internet.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

ALI: - and run the bar that she wants to run. And like, as callous as it is to sort of like, pitch into Anticipation as a resource to Our Profit, Tender thinks of *herself* as a resource for Anticipation, so like- when I give Anticipation this thing that like, benefits both of them...

AUSTIN: What- I guess we'll get there in the epilogue!

ALI: Yep!

AUSTIN: Let's get there in the epilogue, okay.

JACK: Amazing. A power move.

AUSTIN: Is this even a thing? Do even say it like- "alright everybody I'm going in the internet now!"

JACK: Well, you can leave the Splice, right?

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: You can! Yeah!

JACK: But Tender just wants to be queen- y'know it's a- I don't want to say 'better to rule in hell than serve in heaven,' but-

AUSTIN: *But-*

JACK: [amused] - I am kind of thinking 'better to rule in hell than serve in heaven' here.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

ALI: Um... I mean, I think that she is in conversation with the Cadent, which is like...

AUSTIN: Hmm

ALI: ... you've come a really long way, um... you're capable of doing whatever needs doing here, and you have Cascara to help you, who's- y'know.

AUSTIN: More than capable.

ALI: Yeah. And at better position to ever... help than even Declan's was.

AUSTIN (as Cascara): I wouldn't have gotten here without you. I hope you know that. I-

ALI (as Tender): Yeah, I... sorry.

AUSTIN (as Cascara): No, go ahead

ALI (as Tender): I... had always meant to thank you for letting me see you in your weakest moments. Um... 'cause it would've been so much easier to pretend. And you've become so much better, being honest.

AUSTIN (as Cascara): I appreciate it, and I'm glad I showed you that too. I do worry, Tender. I look at you, and- I once asked a great deal from you. Again and again you served the Divine fleet and now Seneschal's Brace with vibrant energy. And yet I can tell something now asks even more of you. Are you... okay?

ALI (as Tender): When you asked things of me, I was your agent, and I... am now an Excerpt. The responsibility increases tenfold. So yeah, I'm okay

AUSTIN (as Cascara): I see. Be well. And know that if you ever need anything, you need only ask. *Anything*.

ALI (as Tender): I'll remember that.

AUSTIN: She's gonna have to find a new fucking right hand. [ALI laughs] I wonder what Waltz is doing, I wonder if Waltz could be... [laughs]

ALI: Ohhh yeah...

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Waltz Tango-

KEITH: [overlapping] Waltz is in a supergroup, so...

AUSTIN: Right, I forgot- sorry, can't do it. Y'know, they need a new Notion, they got that supergroup. Alright, um... always gonna come down to this, right? Grand Magnificent, what are you doing?

ART: Um... [AUSTIN overlaps] you need to write that clock-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Oh wait, I need to finish advancing clocks. Hey! They got Gumption back. And- oh, that's just a mouth, I gotta fucking drag Gumption back- [ART laughs] to Gift-3. Alright! They get- they get Gumption back. And I don't know out of my head who the- who the pilot is, who the Excerpt is. I'll look at a list, at some point, and- it'll be here, it'll be the narration at the end prob- maybe they don't know either. They rebuilt Gumption and-

JACK: [overlapping] Yeah like-

AUSTIN: -they don't know who goes in it. Yeah I'll- I'll sleep on it. I- I have some ideas, I'll sleep on it. Alright. Grand Magnificent

ART: Hey, hi.

AUSTIN: How you doing over there?

ART: Um... there's nothing for me to do, literally?

AUSTIN: That's not true

ART: All the big clocks got ticked off early, and the little clocks completed...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

ART: Um... I can't mount a large offensive because my one trait would be cancelled out by my negative trait, and I don't have any faction resources?

AUSTIN: Correct- you'd have to ask for help

ART: [overlapping] So... um-

KEITH: Or you could start a project, or hold a discussion...

AUSTIN: [overlapping] You could start a project, a discussion-

JANINE: [overlapping] Also, what happens if you end the game not in a faction and have no faction resources whatsoever when we do that epilogue?

AUSTIN: [laughs] It's a good question.

ART: Um- I'll figure it out

JANINE: [laughs] Okay...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh? I'm curious about that.

ART: I mean- here's the thing. I think my action should be a light attack, which I can do for just the contempt token?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

ART: Uh... but there's no scene attached to a light attack.

AUSTIN: There doesn't ha- there can be, there doesn't have to be.

ART: Sure...

KEITH: Whats your light attack on?

ART: I was thinking of just reducing the abundance of prophecy in the Rapid Evening?

AUSTIN: *Huh.*

ALI: Ooh

AUSTIN: That's interesting.

JACK: Oh damn, that's an-

JANINE: [overlapping] Wait, they're supposed to be at neutral prophecy, aren't they?

KEITH: They *are* supposed to be at-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, it came back when Crystal Palace got here

JANINE: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: The thing that can prophesy everything...

ART: I think that's the worst [KEITH overlaps] abundance among the-

KEITH: [overlapping] It *is* the worst. Oh, there's more.

ART: - among the, uh...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. What's that look like?

ART: -antagonistic factions? That's a *great* question

AUSTIN: [overlapping] I don't know there's a scene here in the play? But like- I have an idea, but I'm curious what you come up with

ART: Well my idea was to- to cheat, uh... [laughs] My idea was that-

AUSTIN: [amused] Oh, Grand Mag?

ART: -use a scene to try to like, close some doors, y'know- end some chapters.

AUSTIN: [amused] I don't know what that means, what are you talking about. Are you talking about killing someone?

ART: [overlapping] I don't know- what?

AUSTIN: You talking about killing someone? What are you talking about??

ART: I was *not* talking about killing someone!

AUSTIN: What chapters you tryna close?

ART: I was just- y'know, maybe... maybe some folks wanted to talk it out. Um...

KEITH: Who?

ART: Hm. Don't worry about it. Um...

AUSTIN: [amused] I have *no idea* what Art is insinuating, just to be clear. [JACK chuckles]

ART: I thought maybe- y'know, Grand could talk to Fourteen one more time, or...

AUSTIN: *Aah*, yes.

ART: - Y'know, [JACK: [long sigh]] try to settle that? But like-

AUSTIN: That's not a bad one. I'd like to see that. I'd like to see Grand pitch Fourteen the idea of how to remove the abundant prophecy.

KEITH: Um... if you could get someone to help you, you could even do a medium attack and destroy it- the prophecy.

ART: Wouldn't it- is that how that works?

KEITH: [overlapping] It'd go- yeah, it'd go-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah, it'd go down

KEITH: - to scarcity.

AUSTIN: To scarcity, yeah

ART: But then that would be my scene.

AUSTIN: But that scene could still be the conversation.

ART: Well it can't be with Fourteen, Fourteen doesn't have any resources.

AUSTIN: Oh, true

KEITH: They can still be there.

AUSTIN: They could still be there. Or it could be the [ALI overlaps] reduction- go ahead

ALI: [overlapping] Also- uh, Fourteen has Seneschal's Brace's resources

AUSTIN: True, yeah

JACK: [distressed sigh]

AUSTIN: Just crash those Independence Mark 2s in there- fuck 'em up, who cares. Um...

ALI: Those are mine anyway.

AUSTIN: [amused] True [ALI and JACK laugh]

JACK: "I'm in the internet, I can make any robots I want!" [AUSTIN laughs]

KEITH: Unfortunately, they are internet robots.

AUSTIN: God, I have a good idea for this, and I'm trying not to pitch it

ART: Why are you trying not to pitch it

AUSTIN: 'Cause I wanna hear what *you* come up with.

ART: For how to do this?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Fictionally, forget about the rules.

ART: I mean, am I supposed to be- who- I mean, I can't get anything that's more- I- should Grand just go to Crystal Palace? I mean... is that a place- can I just be here?

AUSTIN: I mean, yeah, you can totally just be there, what's-

KEITH: [overlapping] Where *have* you been?

AUSTIN: Good question!

ART: Where have I been? Grand was last on screen at that conversation, which was...

AUSTIN: On Alter

ART: On Alter.

AUSTIN: You've been on Alter, yeah.

ART: Ao I guess Grand has just been hanging out on Alter?

AUSTIN: That makes sense. Janey and Surge are there, Sho sloan is there... um... the- y'know, the cool- Sculpture City is there, uh... - oh no, Sculpture City is not there, Sculpture City is on Crown. Alter has the, uh... is basically Seance, Seance City is there- the city that we- that the came started on is there. Um... so it's like, y'know, a bunch of- like, Grand, you've spent the last month or whatever walking around a town devoted to the history of cool Divines.

ART: Yeah, that sounds about right

AUSTIN: Looking at statues, looking at old- y'know, the kneecap of some ol Divine that died well before you were born.

ART: Um... are you telling me that I should like... no that's-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, amused] I've not socratic-method'ed you here, I promise.

ART: [laughs] You're not telling me that I should try to piece together a sort of hodgepodge Divine to...

AUSTIN: I'm- sort of? But not re- well? What counts as a Divine anyway [laughs]
The- here's why-

ART: [overlapping] I mean, without- without the spark of divinity, what- [AUSTIN overlaps] what is it?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] What is it? What if Grand Magnificent built a machine... that introduced enough probability that it made it impossible for Crystal Palace to be sure of anything.

ART: Because the machine is so erratic, or because it does something to Crystal Palace?

AUSTIN: It's so erratic, it's so erratic, it's so- it's like the inverse of the smoothness of Crystal Palace.

JACK: Oh, it's like the double pendulum.

AUSTIN: Yeah

KEITH: What is the double pendulum?

JACK: The double pendulum is a-

KEITH: Wait, double or devil?

AUSTIN: Double [laughs]

JACK: [overlapping] Double pendulum, is the real life, buildable, mechanical object that is essentially one pendulum attached to a second pendulum at the base? [laughing] and it turns out that a double pendulum goes *wild* [AUSTIN laughs] if you swing it, in ways that is like- I mean, probably there are thousands of pages of academic papers predicting how the double pendulum moves, but it is like...

KEITH: *Ohhh*, I've seen this, yeah, this is nuts.

ART: Oh, this is *wild*.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: So what if you built a temple. What if Grand Magnificent built a mech that no one could ever pilot, a Divine that was like... just *impossible* to do anything with. Except that- who knows what it could do? It could do anything?

ART: Sure, it's just so many mathematical probabilities on top of itself that it can't-

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: There's that really great dumb joke in one of the Portal games about Glados and her gaining sentience immediately and shutting the scientists out before they even realize that they've turned her on?

AUSTIN: [laughing] Right

JACK: And like, I wonder if- like, part of the process of building this mech is that you know there's this point at which you're just not gonna be able to build it anymore, because like- it can't be in your workshop

ART: I'm inviting people to pitch names in the...

JACK: Oh, let me open up my-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] The Devil Pendulum!

JACK: -document for, um... I mean the Devil's Pendulum is good but the devil doesn't exist in the Twilight Mirage [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I used the word devil before, and I was like "wait, does this person even know- does this person even say the word devil?" which- whatever, it's fine.

JACK: Devils exist in the Twilight Mirage

AUSTIN: Yeah, true. [amused] Devil's Pendulum is Grand Magnificent's NEH name. Is there like a prettier word than chaos that means something similar?

JANINE: I suggested Arbit

AUSTIN: *Oohhh*.

JACK: *Oooh*.

JANINE: Strange, random or weird. "Although he seemed arbit at first, a few minutes of talking exposed a decent and well mannered human being." But also sort of a root of like, arbitrary, um...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

JANINE: - all that.

AUSTIN: *Yeah*

ART: Although- there are fun chaos synonyms

AUSTIN: Like?

JANINE: [overlapping] It's true.

ART: Um... disarray has some nice sounds in it.

AUSTIN: It does have some nice sounds in it

ART: Entropy?

AUSTIN: That feels like- it's a little too... halting.

ART: Mobocracy?

[KEITH cackles]

AUSTIN: I'm not- you're not making the Divine *Mobocracy*.

JACK: It feels like-

ART: [laughs, overlapping] How bout the Divine Holy Mess?

AUSTIN: [laughing] That is-

JACK: [overlapping] I'd say that'd be a temple

KEITH: Wait, what about-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, amused] That's true about what this recording has been.

KEITH: Are- are you looking in the dictionary, or the- [thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com), 'cause the last one is topsy-turviness!

AUSTIN: [amused] Uh-huh...

JACK: I mean- my vote is- in the wake of this bullshit, my vote is with Arbit, but it's Art's... Art is building this- this isn't a Divine either, it's like- it's a mech temple to chaos.

AUSTIN: I'm actually not sure! Is it a Divine or no- it's up to- it's up to Grand.

ART: Oh. Related words has riot, and I just love the idea of the Divine Riot, but...

AUSTIN: Oh, that's- Y'know who the fucking space cops hate

KEITH: The Divine Riot? [ALI and JACK chuckle]

ART: The Divine Riot?

AUSTIN: That's actually- that's the superman name- [laughing] the supergroup name that Lily Lysander [ART laughs] and Waltz Tango Cache perform as *The Divine Riot*...

ART: Alright, they have to send me a nickel every time. [JACK and AUSTIN laugh]

JANINE: Stray?

AUSTIN: Ooh, stray is good

ART: [overlapping] Arbit might be it, we might just be- we might have hit it early and decided to keep going because that how that goes

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JANINE: It's also like- obviously I'm biased, but I also like it because you're building it for the purpose of sort of... a kinda forced arbitration of the- the Rapid Evening, like you're kinda- you're forcing them to compromise in like, a mechanical way, one of their big things? Um...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

ART: What keeps it safe?

AUSTIN: Good question. I- it's probably real dangerous to be around.

ART: Hm... I don't even like having the video of that double pendulum on my computer, that's... [AUSTIN laughs]

JANINE: The light makes it very stressful, somehow.

AUSTIN: Um- I like it because Arbit is... sounds like orbit, and that brings us full circle.

ART: Sure. Um... but that does mean I need help, I can only- I can only spend contempt.

JACK: I'll help

AUSTIN: What do you spend?

KEITH: Yeah, what *do* you spend?

ALI: Um- I have a contempt if you want it. [laughs] Y'know, come into the Splice and talk it out... [laughs]

JACK: Yeah... yeah, that is- this is- this is interesting because the one that i... [laughs] it would be really interesting if after Tender- y'know, ascending inside the Splice we lost Splice vulnerability [laughs]

AUSTIN: That would be ironic, losing the Splice vulnerability, or reducing it to neutral, right? I also don't know how you would spend that for this, is the other thing. You need to spend three things here, right?

ART: No, I just need two, medium attack.

AUSTIN: Oh, you're only bringing it down to- [KEITH, ART and AUSTIN overlap, unintelligible]

ART: If we wanna spend a third thing-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] What about stealing?

ART: - we can steal prophecy, but I don't know how that works fictionally?

KEITH: Do we- do we want prophecy?

ART: [overlapping] I don't have a faction, so [amused] Grand would just have prophecy...

KEITH: I think the problem-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, laughs] Woah, were not doing that!

KEITH: No- the- yeah. I mean I think the conceit of Crystal Palace is that the prophecy is kinda gross and bad no matter who has it.

AUSTIN: That's what Dostoyevsky would say.

JACK: Um... Ali. Is this a case where you use that contempt or do you actually not have that contempt?

ALI: I- I put it forward already.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so it's one, we just need one more.

ART: [overlapping] Tender can use- it was my contempt, too.

AUSTIN: Oh! Then you're good

ALI: Yeah

AUSTIN: Yeah!

ALI: Oh, okay

AUSTIN: That's two, that's it! So, can you frame this scene? Can we get Grand and Fourteen in the steady with Tender? [laughs]

JACK: [eager humm]

AUSTIN: - as the meeting place here?

ART: I mean, yes? But I think the real question it- is this a conversation over food? Is this-

AUSTIN: Yeah

ART: -meeting sword to sword?

AUSTIN: No, this is- I don't think so, I think this is a conversation over food.

ALI: Yeah

ART: Alright, what *does* this look like?

AUSTIN: Good question

ALI: Um...

ART: You're the internet god. [ALI and JACK chuckles]

ALI: Lord- um... it's the steady, it's Tender behind the bar like, cleaning a glass- I guess it's the Steady that we saw from the milk arc, which was the throwback of the Steady that existed in real life?

AUSTIN: Oh right, sure. Okay

ART: I was kinda hoping for the roller-disco

AUSTIN: Oh my god

ALI: Oh! [laughs]

AUSTIN: There's like a photo of it on a wall or something, right?

ALI: You want me to bring those two kids back, Grand? [AUSTIN and ART laugh]

AUSTIN: Person of the lowest social standing takes the first turn. Grand Magnificent, you don't even have a faction. [ALI giggles]

Ar: Uh- yeah, fair. And I haven't built this thing yet, this thing is still being built? Where are we, chronologically?

AUSTIN: This thing is being built- I think you're pitching it, right? To Fourteen Fifteen. Or that's part of this conversation. It's being built, I think it's- y'know. Outside in the distance there's a thing like an oil well? Instead it's not digging for anything and it's just [laughing] swinging around in random directions!

ART: [amused] God, that's the worst that could possibly look like you're doing a really good job with the horror of this machine

AUSTIN: [cackles] It's goofy!

ART: Yeah, um... if I saw something like that in real life I would just turn around and get as far away from that thing as fast as possible... [pause]

ART (as Grand): Hey.

JACK (as Fourteen): Hi.

ALI (as Tender): Hey.

ART (as Grand): I hope you know that I was rude to you at the Catapult because I thought it would help both of our covers

JACK (as Fourteen): Well it did, it did. The guy- Kitcha Kanna just like- he was so mad, but, um... [ART laughs] You sorted him out, right?

ART (as Grand): I did

JACK (as Fourteen): Which was- thanks for that, that- the last few days have been... things have gone our way, and it feels like they started going our way when Kitcha Kanna went...

ART (as Grand): Yeah, um... Kitcha Kanna was bad- was always bad. And I was 100% wrong to put my trust there

ALI (as Tender): These things can be fixed, Grand. How many times did I try to tell you.

ART (as Grand): I mean...

ALI: [amused] I guess the one- just the one, the one time. [AUSTIN laughs]

JACK: It made an impression

AUSTIN: [laughing] That's not- you told him that many times, when you made mistakes! [ALI and ART laugh, JACK chuckles]

ALI: Living proof!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh...

ART (as Grand): I hope I've... I hope I've made a good effort to fix it, I'm hoping to make many more...

JACK (as Fourteen): Why are you telling us this?

ART (as Grand): I... I might be building the most terrible thing I've ever built.

ALI (as Tender): [DEEP SIGH]

JACK (as Fourteen): [overlapping] Okay, Tender? It this- are we safe? Is this- did you pick anything up in the way in? You scanned him, right? [AUSTIN cackles]

ART (as Grand): It's not like that, it's...

ALI (as Tender): I just got here, you *better* not be a bomb. I don't know how that works. [laughs]

ART (as Grand): I don't think that works...

ALI (as Tender): [amused] I'm new here, I don't know if it does. [JACK laughs]

ART (as Grand): Uh... alright- in the outskirts of Seance City I'm building... [sigh] It's-

ART: [laughs] I was gonna say "it's arrogant to call it that" Grand Magnificent is arrogant. Um...

ART (as Grand): In the outskirts of Seance City, I'm building a new Divine. It's not gonna exert influence, it doesn't *do* anything, it can't move... well it can move, but it can't *move* move. Y'know. You don't know, you should come see it sometime maybe. It's-

AUSTIN: Can you show them a design of it? Can you show them it in motion with light?

ART: Oh yeah, I guess so! I guess I can just call out the light blueprints.

JACK (as Fourteen): Oh my god [AUSTIN laughs]

ART (as Grand): Okay but wait. I think it- I think it'll break Crystal Palace.

JACK (as Fourteen) Wait. Break it how?

ART (as Grand): [overlapping] I think it makes- I think it makes all of the calculations too hard. Because Crystal Palace can become focused on the position of Arbit, which it can't predict.

JACK (as Fourteen): But like- is Crystal Palace- surely Crystal Palace is predicting complicated things all the time, right?

ART (as Grand) I think this is more complicated than anything.

AUSTIN: [amused] Grand Magnificent everybody! [KEITH cackles]

JACK (Fourteen): Wait- yeah actually- let me get this straight. You apologized to me and Tender. And it was a good apology, it was a sincere apology. And now you're telling me you've built the most complicated machine in the world, to destroy the predictive engine of the Rapid Evening

ART (as Grand): The most complicated machine in *several* worlds. Any world, really [JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: [amused, quietly] This motherfucker....

ART (as Grand): I think it's worth it? I- I tried to destroy Advent, destroy the Rapid Evening, and... I did one a little better than the other. But this is their biggest card, and I think that I can take that off the table, and maybe it evens the score a little. Between the Rapid Evening and everyone else.

ALI (as Tender): [sigh] Grand, the only thing with this is... I mean... I don't take unpredictability well. But... the thing about it is, whatever move that you take, you have to be sure that either the best or the worst outcome could happen. Have you considered the flipside, if it goes badly?

ART (as Grand): I don't think there *is* a badly, I mean...

ALI (as Tender): There's *a/ways* a badly

JACK (as Fourteen): [overlapping] Oh there's *definitely* a badly.

ART (as Grand): Hm ... no, think I'm smarter than that

[KEITH, ALI and AUSTIN cackle for a *long* time]

JACK (as Fourteen): [overlapping] No- Grand-

ART (as Grand): I hear you!

JACK (as Fourteen): No you don't.

AUSTIN: [breathless, amused] Oh, no... [ART laughs]

ART (as Grand): I feel like the only bad thing is someone showing up- the Rapid Evening showing up to blow it up!

JACK (as Fourteen): Grand.

ART (as Grand): Yeah

JACK (as Fourteen): We're giving you an opportunity here.

ART (as Grand): Uh-huh

JACK (as Fourteen): What's the worst thing that could happen with this *fucking* machine?

ALI (as Tender): Hey hey hey- be nice tonight.

ART (as Grand): [quietly, overlapping] I mean... you can't ask a fish not to swim.
[AUSTIN laughs] um...

JACK (as Fourteen): Grand?

ART (as Grand): It's tricky because capturing it wouldn't do anything, y'know? I mean, the worst thing that could happen is that somehow Arbit gained some degree of sentience [JACK overlaps] and decides to...

JACK (as Fourteen): [overlapping] Alright, here we go, okay. So now we're getting somewhere [AUSTIN giggles]. And decides to...?

ART (as Grand): I mean- any of the things that sentient people decide to do. I guess if Arbit decided that it didn't want to be arbit anymore, and stopped, the Rapid Evening would suddenly get their advantage back, *probably* faster than we would know they have it, not only giving them prophecy back but an *incredible* element of surprise.

JACK (as Fourteen): [laughs] Okay!

ALI (as Tender): Do you hear yourself?

ART (as Grand): There's also like, just- y'know, through long enough use or misuse or poor maintenance it could stop working, or- something will have- I mean, the power system is really good, but *anything* can explode. [ALI laughs]

JACK (as Fourteen): Y'know, I think I'll take "anything can explode", I think that preferable to... "I'm cleverer than it going wrong"?

ART (as Grand): I mean, I want you to think- I want you to know that the 99% chance here is that I'm more clever than the bad things.

ALI (as Tender): Grand, you're creating a Divine.

ART (as Grand): Well- I mean. I'm calling it a Divine, it's not a Divine. It's just branding. You tell someone you're building a Divine and they leave you alone, you tell someone you're building a giant random number generator and they don't. [AUSTIN and JACK laugh] I mean, in a lot of ways I'm building the world's worst slot machine. [ALI laughs]

ALI (as Tender): I guess you're selling vacation packages for show... [sigh] Oh, god...

ART (as Grand): I mean, ideally- that's what I would like it to be, similar to that- I would like a little society so grow up around it 'cause protecting it is very important. If you could tell people it's a Divine it would help me a lot.

ALI (as Tender): *That's* what you're here for? [laughs]

ART (as Grand): No, I came here to make things right, but- y'know. Also, here's my pamphlet about the giant thing I'm building [ALI and KEITH cackle] If you Instagram it, hashtag Divine [JACK cuckles]

AUSTIN: [amused] Hashtag new Divine, yeah!

ART: Hashtag new Divine! [laughs]

ALI: [laughing] Oh my god there's not just one hashtag on this pamphlet, are you kidding me? Have you been on instagram? [cackles]

AUSTIN: Hashtag Divine, hashtag new Divine-

JACK: Hashtag Arbit, hashtag The Arbit [laughs]

KEITH: Hashtag the arbiter.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Ohhhh....

ALI: God...

SYLVIA: Hashtag mech builders of Instagram [ALI and AUSTIN laugh]

ART: Hashtag blessed, hashtag blessed by Arbit. [KEITH laughs] Hashtag squad goals.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Oh... hashtag summer looks.

JACK (as Fourteen): Alright... I can work with this. I can- I can work with you on this. This is bullshit, but I think it might be the right kind of bullshit?

ART (as Grand): Yeah! That's all I've ever been after.

ALI (as Tender): [laughs] It's a noble cause, Grand, and I mean that sincerely. [sigh] I mean, fuck the Rapid Evening, right?

ART (as Grand): I'm saying! [AUSTIN snorts]

JACK (as Fourteen): Right, fuck the Rapid Evening!

ALI: I think Tender [laughing] pours three shots [cackles]

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh!

JACK: Just like "clink", fuck the Rapid Evening!

AUSTIN: Cheers to that. [ALI chuckles] I think that's the turn, I think that's the turn. I'll reduce their thing. Is there a- there's no Excerpt, right? No one has to walk through that thing? There's no image of Grand walking through the nonsense to make sure it works everyday?

ART: I mean, that's- we can talk about that when we get the epilogues? Like, that's- that's a Grand epilogue I'm willing to accept.

JACK: I do love the idea of- as we clink the shot glasses we just cut outside to the machine and it's- it's just-[amused] it's really going for it!

AUSTIN: [laughing] It's just going for it, yeah! 100%! [JANINE overlaps] and it'll only get more-

JANINE: [overlapping] I linked a good video on the Discord, that is relevant.

AUSTIN: You did.

KEITH: [overlapping] It's so good.

JACK: [overlapping] It is *exactly* what it is.

AUSTIN: [laughing] You wanna say what the name of this is?

JANINE: "Washing machine brick bouncing on trampoline".

ALI: *God....*

JACK: It's so good...

AUSTIN: Oh my god.... It's terrifying!

JACK: I can't believe- it took us four years, but we managed to make the worst Divine.

AUSTIN: But no- I think this is so important! Right? Because I think people do call it a Divine, and this is a sea change. This is like- Sho and Signet have both come at this from different angles? Of like, what a Divine is as society is changing. And... partially it's the Divine- a Divine can't be thought of as a tool anymore, because they're people, and we're people, and we need to be- we need to think of that as a partnership first and foremost fully, and partly is- the world will continue after Divines don't. And... this is a weird bridge forward for this part of society, that says "we worship Arbit, because, one, [amused] it does do a thing for us. It keeps the Rapid Evening at bay. And two- it's magnificent!"

ART: Sure is

AUSTIN: "How could we not? it makes us ponder something." right? It's a parable in motion. How could you build something that does *this* and doesn't fall apart? And that's something. That's something to think on, and meditate on, and pray about. And... I think for Sho specifically, who has called together a community of people who worship long dead Divines, this has some new resonance. Just two years ago the Divine fleet had a single way of thinking about Divines. Now, between all the different cultures, there's four.

AUSTIN: Over the following centuries, for those on Altar and for some across the Divine Free States and Seneschal's Brace, even the Qui Err Coalition, this already broad category of Divine becomes even more eclectic. In the wake of Arbit, Divines no longer need to be sapient. They may not even need to be tied to infrastructure, or war, or anything like that. Instead, they serve a different public function. For those who believe, they are like living poems: prayers you can visit.

And the opposite is true for those in the Waking Cadent's new Divine Fleet. Once, because of her desire to keep these beings alive, the Cadent convinced the fleet that there were two types of beings: mortals and Divines. Now we know better. And now, because of Signet's presence, and because of the time Kamala spent with Polyphony, the selfhood and autonomy of Divines becomes that much more recognised, that much more sacred.

And strangely, the Waking Cadent's isn't the only Divine Fleet now. In its own roundabout way, the Argosy, Spliced, Our Profit's fleet of networked ships, which travels across the galaxy, "offering" new people access to the network, has become home to its own collection of Divines. While Tenderness watches over the interiority of the Splice, ensuring its freedom, inside of the physical ships of the fleet itself, Open Metal and Sui Juris, once pawns of the Hegemony, serve as watchdogs for

this supposedly newly-egalitarian society. As Tenderness would do in the Splice, Open Metal does in the flesh. partners at distance, yet close as can be.

With the risks of corruption addressed, and with the time-bending properties of the Splice on her side, the Divine Anticipation finally answers the question that has long gnawed at her. And regardless of her satisfaction with what she discovered, the experience of searching here, in the Splice, led her to something novel: a new reason to live. She commits herself to this place, running through the virtual veins of every network and node, and she decides to help eradicate the very notion of the so-called virtual. Nothing here is artificial, nothing is simulation, there are no digital imitations. There is only pure being, an endless stream of actions, creative and destructive and everything in between, the limits of ideas built, broken, and reconstructed endlessly by the Splice's inhabitants, many of whom were created inside of the digital. It is an irony that is not missed by Volition, who sees its goal met by the very people it spent so long despising. And so, over time, Anticipation becomes one of many beings like herself, deep in the Splice. Spirits, ghosts, living ephemera, whispers in the code. Here and there, a touch of blue.

[SONG "Secure" STARTS PLAYING]

Of course, these new visions of the Divine were destined to generate a reactionary response. And where better than in the place so lacking in the very thing it claims to protect? Which is why deep in the tangled administrative organs of the Free States, an orthodoxy begins to play in counterpoint. These so-called reformist movements were heretical, said High Clef Nideo. They made vulgar the sanctity of the holy relationship between Divines and Excerpt. And so the Free States became more and more obsessed with the creation of new Divines.

Unity. Valour. Strength.

And while Acre Seven made sure that Potency was allowed to rest, death, she decided, was a thing sometimes something earned in sacrifice. The Free States did find uses for the Divines of the past, too. Some, like Emphyrean, were recreated entirely, which was why her wings spread wide on the DFS banner. Others, like Gumption, were hypocritically rebuilt into something altogether different. Nideo's argument was hard to ignore. They had lost so many Divines already. And what made Gumption special was that he could rebuild himself, always. What if, Nideo asked his people, Gumption could be distributed throughout each of their all-too-few Divines? What if they simply couldn't die? What if their service could be secured, forever? And so a promise snapped, of life and death: the DFS brought into fruition Independence's old prophecy, a world where the Divines would be eternal servants.

[SONG "Secure" STOPS PLAYING]

Perhaps it was due to this focus on everlasting existence, or perhaps it was due to a familiar devotion to structure and good intentions that, in time, the Divine Free States found themselves drawing closer and closer to the humbled remnants of the Rapid Evening. Or, maybe, it was because a shrewd statesman like Aram Nideo recognises a power vacuum when he sees one. After all, the holdings of the Principality of Kesh were vast. And with the authority and efficacy of Crystal Palace shaken, there was a sudden need for external validation. And such a need is an opportunity for those who can recognise it. Which is why, over the century that followed, as both powers fled the Mirage, the two forces grew closer, and closer, until eventually they were as one. From truce to defensive pact, from trading partners to sister nation. From federation to single state, to eventually, empire.

On the day that the so-called Divine Principality came into being, Aram Nideo, the newly crowned Resolute Regent, officially recognised the divinity of Crystal Palace, granting it a new noble Excerpt, who would use what remained of its power to look backwards, instead of forward. But of course, it was only the empire that was truly considered holy. In the millennia that followed, the once-protectors of the galaxy turned to tyranny. And across the breadth of their territory, the broad reach of stars they referred to simply as Divinity, countless suffered. But this is not a place for that story. This is the Twilight Mirage, a nebula of solidarity and hope, which the Principality, even at their height, knew would halt them if they dare ever return. A wise lesson, and one that those in the Advent Discovery and Salvage Society would learn the hard way.

In the years after Kitcha Kana and his ilk failed to pillage the system, Advent's home office, far from Quire, ordered more explorers to the Mirage, but again and again, they were defeated as soon as they pierced the fog. And because their raiders never touched the soil in the sector again, no one ever came to save the spymaster Miss's Castlerose who, from her cell, well fed and well rested, could have lived the remains of her life in quiet peace. Instead, she boiled herself in obsession with escape, looking constantly for daggers she'd placed in old backs, hoping to twist them into rungs leading her up and out of captivity. But now the world had turned on her, and her ledger of agents, victims, and the many who counted themselves as both, had been made obsolete by time and by change. And so each ploy, each attempt to extort or blackmail or threaten, only made her walls more concrete. Only made the light of the system's new sun warmer, and further away.

For others, though, Volition's light brought prosperity. At the individual level, people found fulfilment in new, small things. Janey and Surge Erannia spent their lives developing new, reliable ways to move from world to world, for the average person. And the found family of Demani Dusk, Grey Gloaming, and Morning's Observation built the Brink into a home for all of those more interested in the journey than the

destination: folks like Waltz Tango Cache and Tannoy Kajj and Lily Lysander, who would continue to seek and to find Adventure. In fact, one day, long after the Notion went their separate ways, the three find a familiar key with no message attached. The World Without End had come into new ownership.

But it was not and could never be individuals who gained the most from this new Mirage. It was the masses as one. Nowhere was that more obvious than in the Qui Err Coalition. Like the words on the old palace read, "No Apokine. No Demarch. Only us." In the years that followed, through a combination of political manoeuvring, military victory, and most importantly, the group's commitment to self-determination, the Coalition only grew in strength and size. In those early years the group was led by a council: the Annex Iota Pretense, the Princess of the Qui Err, who once suffered under Independence; Solemn Scale, principal representative of Parhelia, the planet Quire's dream for a better world; Vanya De La Vega, whose Sailors of the Ark proved the viability of a decentralized community in the Mirage; Gig Kephart, whose insight, congeniality and connections proved invaluable as the group spread throughout the system; and Echo Reverie, who knew well both the value and the cost of violence, and who dreamt powerfully of peace.

But more than the quality of their collective leadership, the Coalition perhaps owes its stability and longevity to something else common to each of these councillors: their willingness to *step aside*. Iota Pretense was born into royalty, the last Princess of the Qui Err before Independence all but destroyed her culture thousands of years prior. Now she would assure that she would once again be the last Princess of her people, but this time because she knew that the only way to move into the future was to do so arm in arm alongside them. And so she resigned, and soon the others followed suit. And it was in this moment that the Coalition, a collection of minor states, was replaced with a free association of communities and minds, tied together in cooperation, instead of rigorous competition.

AUSTIN: Which I think wraps us back around to you, Echo and Gig, because while I have the big picture of the Qui Err sketched, there are still some specifics that I want you to fill in your epilogues. So. Choose one resource on your faction to map it off for one to three sentences of narrative epilogue. If the resource is abundant, explain how its abundance helps people. If it's scarce, explain how its scarcity has caused harm, or explain how sacrifice- or explain the sacrifice that someone made in the future to address the scarcity. Repeat in-turn order until complete. So, Echo.

SYLVIA: Um, I think- we had an abundance of communication?

AUSTIN: Yeah

SYLVIA: I think that following everything that happened with the Rapid Evening and stuff, that sorta helps rebuild on Skein and on the other Qui Err collective affiliated regions

AUSTIN: Cool. And is that just like- everyone is still able to-

SYLVIA: It's- it's like you're able to find- it's like, y'know when after a disaster happens, on Facebook- it's a dark thing to say but-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] No, no, no.

SYLVIA: - everyone checks in on Facebook, right? It lets people know who's safe, it lets people organize after what is ostensibly the end of a war, a system-wide war.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Cool. Gig.

KEITH: Uh, yeah, I wanna- quick point out, Qui Err Coalition, no scarcities at the end of the game.

AUSTIN: No scarcities! Four pluses!

KEITH: Four pluses, yeah

AUSTIN: Four abundances, yeah.

KEITH: And I think that... I'm gonna do- I guess I'm gonna do the one that's mine, the DIY knowledge?

AUSTIN: [amused] Yeah, right? Yeah!

KEITH: That feels right, that's the thing that I did all season, um... and, um... I think that we've seen a lot of ways that it's been a good thing that has helped people? And I think that the thing that it keeps doing is that it- I think that it keeps the like "hey, we're- look at us, we've got the food and the super cops!" I think it makes that a little bit less appealing to people. Like, there's no- we don't need them, we're good on our own for now

AUSTIN: Right, because DIY knowledge isn't just how to fix sinks.

KEITH: No

AUSTIN: Like, it starts at how to fix sinks, but it expands into like- how do you decide which sinks to fix first.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: Right? It's about having a sort of communal understanding of what society is and how to prioritize stuff. We don't need super space cops, we have our neighbors, which is corny but true, right? Signet!

JANINE: I guess I'll start with the minus of- the lack of Splice, then. I think that the whole 'everyone getting really into the Splice' thing like, probably scared this group?

AUSTIN: Yeah

JANINE: Because... [laughs] there's not a lot of people, and they have a lot of work to do. Like, they have a lot of stuff ahead of them. And the idea of losing people to the Splice, even if they're doing things, even if they're completing things, they're not- they're indisposed for completing things tangibly.

AUSTIN: Yeah

JANINE: So I think that becomes- that manifests probably as like- they just don't particularly like virtual environments.

AUSTIN: Right. Like, going into the deep future, effectively.

JANINE: Yeah

AUSTIN: It's a distinction from the original Divine Fleet

JANINE: It's- I don't know if they like, hate it and forbid it completely but it's probably one of those things where like- if you are really into that, they're probably watching you closely- like, that sounds reall- watching you closely is a bit much.

AUSTIN: *Damn!*

JANINE: But like- it's probably one of those things that is- at the very least like, rationed.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that makes sense. Okay. Even.

DRE: Um... do we have to do an abundance [AUSTIN overlaps] or can we also do a scarcity

AUSTIN: [overlapping] It's an abundance or- you can do a scarcity. And again, what a scarcity-

KEITH: [overlapping] Or you could do a scarcity into an abundance?

AUSTIN: Not into an abundance, it's how you address it until it's not a scarcity, yeah. What sacrifice that someone made in the future to address the scarcity, or show how it has caused some sort of harm or activity, y'know?

DRE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Which is what Signet just did

DRE: Um... so I think the scarcity I wanna look into is diversity?

AUSTIN: Mh-hm

DRE: Within Seneschal's Brace? Because I think... like, I think the way that plays out is that like, even though Seneschal's Brace has some good ideas, or some good morality? At some point it comes to a point where like- y'know, people are just like "yeah, your ideas are good, but if you're so good why the hell does nobody who is like me also in your group?"

AUSTIN: Right

DRE: um... and so I think the way to address that- I think at some point there has to be a huge overhaul of who is like, considered the leader of Seneschal's Brace. Or who is the co-leader.

AUSTIN: right. Does the cadent step down?

DRE: I think so. Or at least like- if the cadent is still there, it's in a- not a figurehead position, but it's like, instead of being a co-leadership it becomes more of- closer a representative body or something like that

AUSTIN: Right, right. It stops being these two people who do stuff and it starts being like "no, actually, there's a representative like- thing here" people are voting, people are deciding on stuff, it is not just Cascara and the Cadent who decide shit.

DRE: Yeah

AUSTIN: Cool. Fourteen.

JACK: Hm... [laughs] so it's- it's-

AUSTIN: [overlaps] Anything with a plus or a minus.

JACK: [sigh] And that was trust?

AUSTIN: Trust isn't- that was diversity.

JACK: [overlapping] That was diversity.

AUSTIN: [amused] Still gotta fix trust and population! Or- don't fix them and show me in a few sentences how they hurt. And we can think of them sequentially through time, y'know?

JACK: Yeah

Asu: We're not just looking into single snapshots of society. again , think about Fiasco, each one of these is the turning of a page in someone's life or in the factions life in a sense.

JACK: [sigh] Yeah... I think there is a period where that scarcity of trust is felt, and I think that is represented in- that is represented in the large scale ways, when figures- political figures appear on broadcasts, and people sitting at home go "ah, that's bullshit though".

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right.

JACK: [amused] Like- like, both the broadest and smallest level of distrust in a faction? But I think the way that Seneschal works to- works to regain that trust is through a recommitment to the fact that, in the wake of- y'know, in the wake of a system-wide war, the work is not done. And it's not even the case that we can say "Well the work is always governance, and the work will never finish"- which is true- but in a broader- in a more immediate sense, the war has passed but there's work to be done, there is care to be taken for people who are unemployed- there's looking at who the war hit hardest that Fourteen and members of Seneschal's Brace were just unable to see, or didn't want to see during the war- there's recommitment to "alright, fine, we did that. We're still fighting this in a lot of ways, what do those ways look like?

AUSTIN: Right. So there's like a long-term commitment, a life-long commitment

JACK: Yeah

AUSTIN: Cool. Tender.

ALI: Hi, um.... I can go for the Splice ones but I have a good idea for stitch, if you don't mind me grabbing it...?

AUSTIN: Sure!

ALI: Okay [laughs] Because I think that like, with the two that we just did, the question of like, space and land comes up?

AUSTIN: Yes

ALI: And like, because they- y'know, people know what those things are, they've like, learned the opposite lesson of the like, Advent group? Which is like, okay if we do have to decolonize, if we do have to start giving up these areas, it should be these areas that like- that people can move through?

AUSTIN: Ohh, that's a *really* good point, so that- you literally give up the stitch points to the Qui Err and let them connect with their populations on other planets. Love it. Grand. You don't have a faction.

ART: I do not have a faction...

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Or- you do now! Are you with Seneschal's Brace?
Seneschal's- is Grand Seneschal's Brace? Grand, are you Seneschal's Brace?

KEITH: Technically Echo extended the invitation back when he first left Advent.

AUSTIN: True.

ART: Hm....

ALI: Is Sho Seneschal's Brace? No.

AUSTIN: Sho-

JANINE: Grand made a Divine, and if people like that Divine it feels kinda shitty for them to be like "yeah, but we don't like you still so..."

JACK: [laughing] Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think- I think Sho is Seneschal's Brace at this point. Or is- [sigh] Sho is Sho, Sho is- Sho is a free agent still. Y'know?

JANINE: [quietly] Sho is the best... Sho is the best thing we ever did.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Sho is the best! Yeah, Sho is the best.

JACK: I think- I think Seneschal's Brace would both definitely take Grand and also Grand would be represented in a big way by people there saying "that's bullshit though" when they see his face on television. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: [amused] Uh-huh, yeah.

ART: So you're saying I should take minus trust? [ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: No, we already did that one. We did that one, but-

JACK: You should personally take my mistrust.

AUSTIN: Remaining for Seneschal's Brace: DIY knowledge, Splice vulnerability, food. All pluses. Oh and minus- no, we did population already? No, we did not do population

JACK: [overlapping] No, we did not do population

ART: ... food?

AUSTIN: Cool, good, [ALI giggles] tell me what food- tell me what the abundance of food looks like in the future for Seneschal's Brace.

ART: I mean, I think it looks like everyone being really into Calci-yummm.

[KEITH giggles]

AUSTIN: Yes, thank fucking god! Ohhh!

ART: Finally, the people who are responsible for pitching that product [AUSTIN cackles] so long ago... um- get to really read through awards of that-

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Let me pitch you something real quick, Grand Magnificent.

ART (as Grand): Yeah

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Calci-yummm 2. It's the sequel.

ART (as Grand): I love it.

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Calci-diem.

ART (as Grand): Calci-yummier?

AUSTIN (as Morning's): Calci-yummiest, we skip yummier.

ART (as Grand): Whaaaat?

AUSTIN (as Morning's): That way no one can get around on us. [ALI giggles]

KEITH: And then if you need to do a new one you can just do Calci-yummm One.

AUSTIN: Right! [laughing] That way it's the first- right, it's like the Xbox One! Thank you, Gig. Alright, lets wrap back around to Echo. Y'all have food and stitch.

SYLVIA: Oh, I have one for the stitch, i- I really like the idea of- because now people are like a known quantity, people now get- 'cause one of the things with Echo is that they were into studying them, and I would love it there was a- a sort of a thing popped up around that now, trying to figure out how to use these weird holes in space and time.

AUSTIN: Does this become a new thing that the Reverie School teaches? Can Echo start this small part of the school?

SYLVIA: Yes! Echo can!

AUSTIN: That's like "hey, we teach martial arts, but also we teach-" like, the Reverie school is becoming more and more like a cool scouts programme? [laughs] Where it's like "and also, we go out and go exploring and go camping and chack out these cool things that teleport you across the- the fucking galaxy??"

KEITH: I love it- I bet you can make a bunch of cool games out of playing with stitches

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, definitely. Love it

SYLVIA: Just gotta have a supervisor on each end-

AUSTIN: Exactly

SYLVIA: - to make sure everyone gets through okay.

AUSTIN: Exactly. Gig. Food. Tell me about food.

KEITH: Food, um.....

AUSTIN: [amused] There's really only one thing it could be, honestly, but you tell me.

KEITH: What is the one thing you think it is? Are you thinking more Calci-yumm?

AUSTIN: No, no.

KEITH: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: I think there's a food that Gig Kephart has loved since the very beginning of this season....

JANINE: [overlapping] Beans!

KEITH: [overlapping] Oh, is it jelly juice?

AUSTIN: It *has* to be jelly juice! [DRE giggles]

KEITH: You think everyone is on jelly juice...

AUSTIN: [laughing] No, but I think maybe cool stuff happens- you tell me! What's the future of jelly juice?

KEITH: Oh, maybe it's a- maybe it's like a gastro- what's that thing? Gastro, uh...

AUSTIN: What, like a gastropub?

KEITH: Molecular gastronomy!

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

KEITH: And it's uh- [laughing] turning all sorts of foods into jellies.

AUSTIN: *Oh my g-*[cuts off laughing] [KEITH cackles]

SYLVIA: [laughing] Oh, shit...

AUSTIN: [laughing] So you keep the jelly juice structure, you keep the format, the-ughhhh!

KEITH: Yeah, the form! Well, that's what it is, it's- y'know-

AUSTIN: I can't believe we started this recording by looking at pies [KEITH and DRE laugh] that make me hurt and ended with 'what if all foods could be jelly juice?'.

KEITH: You don't want your food to be thick? Like-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, unintelligible] -thick??

JANINE: [overlapping] / can't believe that Keith beat *me* to 1970s gelatin in this fucking show! [everyone cackles] What the fuck!

KEITH: Okay- so imagine this, you've got a cake, but the cake is a Jell-o, and suspended in that cake is a carrot, and the carrot is jell-o.

AUSTIN: [laughs] I hate this, thanks.

ART: I refuse to imagine that. I'm just gonna let those words crash over me with no engagement.

KEITH: [overlapping] No, I- I wanna emphasise- I wanna deemphasize jelly juice and I wanna- and I *do* want to emphasise- cooking is fun! I think people have cooking and they have the free time to be able to be cooking. And so- there's, y'know, people growing food, and making their own food, and it's fun and good.

AUSTIN: right

KEITH: And sometimes it's jelly, it's made of jelly. It's like this chicken and then the chicken is jelly.

AUSTIN: Ah- hmmm. We're moving. Uh, Signet.

JANINE: It occurs to me stitch makes no fucking sense on anyone that's left.

AUSTIN: Umm...

JANINE: Like, what does that mean?

AUSTIN: What if- what if people could use it from planets that are not pro-Waking Cadent, to get to a planet that could send people to you? Like- there are people on Gift-3-

JANINE: [overlapping] That's true...

AUSTIN: -in the DFS now *specially*, who are like “yeah we should just fucking go-” like, the Divine Free States and the Rapid Evening team up and you *know* people on Gift-3 are like “yo, *what?* I gotta *go!* Where’d the Waking Cadent go?” [ART and ALI chuckle] And so it's like, easier to go through the stitch to get to Seneschal or Brighton and then from there take a shuttle to go catch up with the Waking Cadent’s group. Not to do this answer for you, sorry.

JANINE: No, that does make sense, I was- I legitimately had no idea how to use that. So I guess that is what happens, is- people are able to use the stitches to kinda get to that opening and then get- y'know, try and follow the trail of breadcrumbs.

AUSTIN: Right. Sounds good! Even.

DRE: Uhhhh... so this population scarcity.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Even and Cascabel have *so many babies*... [SYLVIA and KEITH cackle, ALI chuckles]

AUSTIN: Damn! That's a lot of babies!

DRE: Yeah

ALI: [quietly] Yikes...

DRE: Shoutout to AO3! Um...

KEITH: [overlapping] Seneschal’s babies...

AUSTIN: Damn....

SYLVIA: [overlapping] Jesus... [DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: What is it though? What is the solution to population?

KEITH: Or is there one?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Or isn't there one?

DRE: [overlapping] I mean, I wonder- yeah, I don't know! I think, because- I mean these ideas of like- a scarcity of diversity and trust and population, the way that we used to describe them are so tied up together.

AUSTIN: Yeah- and like- here's my real question: how long until there's no Seneschal's Brace and there's just the Qui Err Coalition?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, how long until Seneschal's Brace is like... listen, this is- people are at the Qui Err Coalition at this point. Like, the DFS- think about this too, which is, the DFS left? Which means the Qui Err Coalition runs Skein and Moonlock effectively.

DRE: One- I mean, I also go back to our- like, one of the first things we did in this game fifteen years ago, where...

AUSTIN: Yeah. We were so young. [laughs]

DRE: Where [laughing] the Qui Err Coalition and Seneschal's Brace got together, and Seneschal's Brace was like "yeah, you *do* have the rights to this fucking land".

AUSTIN: Right

DRE: And so I wonder if at some point they're just like "Alright. It's time to own that" and we just aren't a thing anymore.

AUSTIN: Right. There's no more- Seneschal's Brace is like, a territory inside the Qui Err Coalition space.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right? Which is not a thing anyone feels- like- that's not true. Some people would probably take serious umbrage at that, 'cause people fucking suck, and decolonisation does disempower, de-empower some people. But also, those people should get the fuck out and go join up with the Divine Free States and the Rapid Evening now! Or go catch up with Our Profit, if you wanna be with her, y'know? Um... I bet you that's a hard process, I don't think that's an easy process, I don't think we can play another game about that tonight though... so, we're not gonna xoom in on that, but I think that people leave. But many stay, and it's the right thing to do, right? Um... and we still have other pluses there, so we'll get there, y'know? Fourteen

JACK: Okay, um... how does DIY knowledge help Seneschal's Brace?

DRE: [stage whispering] That's why I didn't pick it, Jack! [ALI giggles]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

JACK: You came up with a much better answer than what ill definitely be able to come up with, so yeah, I think you got a good one out of that. Um... so- oh. Art, if you're okay with this, can I describe something with the Arbit?

ART: Absolutely

JACK: Um... I think it's not just Grand Magnificent that tends to the Arbit. And just as Grand Mag talked about like, "I want people to think it's a Divine", I think people work on the Arbit, they make sure that it can keep doing what it's doing? And I think it takes a long time to even begin to know how to like... do that. 'What does the Arbit want' and 'how do we give it to it' are questions that are not easy to answer, and I think for like, maybe decades, we don't super know. But. I think what's really important is that this isn't the honey-bee work of the Rapid Evening on the body of Crystal Palace. This isn't the Rapid Evening- this isn't agents of the Rapid Evening going-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Did you steal that from me? That- a thing- you haven't- [pause] I wrote that *today*. [ALI cackles] Great... [JACK chuckles]

KEITH: [overlapping] Wait, what was the thing that you wrote? What was the thing?

AUSTIN: So, I'm doing a fiction episode for this Thursday so we have extra time to- [JACK laughs] to do... production on this? And the exact phrase that I wrote was "Crystal Palace, in all its endless worker-bee wonder" [laughing] and Jack just said "it's not the honey-bee work of Crystal Palace", so... [JACK laughs] Sometimes it's like- sometimes it be like that!

JACK: Sometimes it be like that. Um... I think it's- it's not that. People do not devote their lives to this. Um.. or people devote their lives to this the same way I devote my life to recording a podcast. [AUSTIN chuckles] y'know-

ART: Completely and absolutely over the last several weeks? [AUSTIN cackles, JACK and SYLVIA laugh]

JACK: Well, maybe sometimes. But people come and go! Someone has a knack with it and they tell their friends what it is. And then those people work on it when they're passing by- someday someone rolls into town and is like "oh, I think I know what the Arbit needs". And then they fix it, and then they leave! And this is the DIY knowledge across Seneschal's Brace, keeping this fucking weird machine functioning for as long as they can.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, I love it.

JACK: Keith in the chat says "it's sesame oil". Sometimes it's sesame oil. [AUSTIN and ALI laugh]

AUSTIN: Great... uh, let's go back to Signet real quick, otherwise we're just gonna have Signet at the end doing four or something? [JACK and JANINE chuckle] So Signet, do one

JANINE: Um.... Uh...

AUSTIN: Easy, right?

JANINE: Population. Um... there's a lack of population because, as I mentioned earlier, there was the whole thing with them getting barricaded and.. That- removing that barricade to correct that deficit was not a priority. All of the other things were the priority.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: At least so far as Signet was pushing. And I think the thing that that sort of- the thing that that causes is like- the fleet that they want to recreate had so many ships, and so many people in those ships, and... to recreate those things you can't just build a bunch of empty ships and be like "well, we're the fleet now!". You need to make sure that the ships all have the crew- like, not just the staffing that they need, but the populations, they need to be sustainable, have a semblance of unity, and... I think the thing is that it takes a long time to get there.

AUSTIN: Yeah

JANINE: Like, I don't wanna go full, creepy... "breeding is encouraged!" like, that's *awful*. But I think there's probably an attitude of like, if people are having kids, it's great. If people join up from the fleet- if people make their way to the Waking Cadent, that's also great- like, they are welcome regardless of their background as long as- y'know, certain conditions apply, but other than that

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. Is there a lot of focus on- two questions, is there a lot of focus on medical technology to keep people alive long? And like, healthy longer? And also, what sort of synthetic robotic people are here? Like, is there a lot of like "hey, actually-" not just like, "we have people now", but like "hey, we can explore this, in a way that would help that".

JANINE: I think in terms of the long-life thing, Signet and the Waking Cadent are good people- well, good in some ways, bad in other ways, in terms of building a project like that- like they- at the very least they aren't just curious scientists who are dabbling with the idea? Like, they're people who understand the ramifications of living a very long time.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JANINE: So they understand the responsibility, and that it's not a thing that everyone can do or should do. Um... as for synthetic life, I think that's... I think it continues in the way we've seen it continue- we've seen it in the game so far, in a way that will tie in with later things that we'll talk about.

AUSTIN: Okay. Uhhhh... Tender.

ALI: Yeah. Um... I'm only left with Splice vulnerability?

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah? Cool

ALI: Which I guess was just the- the way that we set it was just like, it's not only Our Profit's message that's in here?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And like- y'know, Tender was a priestess, but like- Tender went to a church after school and became a designer, [laughing] is *really* what happened there. So like, I think the church of Anticipation that she built is there, and I think that like [laughs]- the- the idea of the Divine fleet was not the problem with the Divine fleet? And I think that the thing that made characters like Morning's Observation or like, Fourteen to a point, was like- people who are hurt by the systems they're in should have a third option. So like, Our Profit is running around the galaxy spreading this thing, and making them come here, and... if they wanna know what Divines are they can, or if they just wanna hang out on this cool bar they can, or if they wanna do literally anything they can.

AUSTIN: Right

ALI: And like [laughs]- it is a better solution than the one that she really thought was the best idea, which was like "oh we'll just work it out with the Qui Err!" Like- [laughs]

AUSTIN: Right, which turned out- I mean, they're also doing that back home, I guess, right? They're trying to. Um... okay. Signet you have still three, so let's go back to you [laughs] You're the only character in that faction, that's why this is happening...

JANINE: [laughing] Yeah, I know... um- and we also have pluses and minuses and no neutrals.

AUSTIN: And no neutrals, yeah

JANINE: Yeah- um, okay, I'll do the one that people would expect me to save for last, but is actually not the most interesting thing. So... there are a lot of fucking Divines in the Waking Cadent's group- specially relative to the population-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, laughing] Right, there's no people! There's a lot of Divines!

JANINE: - especially compared to the ratio at the end of the fleet's life. It's- it's really heavily skewed in the other direction, and I think- [sigh] I wanna just say that I think Signet uses this as a way to push for- not just for- the way that it always was, which

is the... the Excerpts were the voice of the Divines at the table. Now it is the Excerpts *and* the Divines at the table

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: She wants both there. Everyone has a say, it's not that you are a representative of this being anymore, because they are such a large and such a significant portion of, not just the power, but the population at this point- they are very... present.

AUSTIN: There's almost something demystifying about it, right? Where like- when there were a million people- when there's a hundred thousand people to every Divine, that Divine cannot meet every one of those people. But now- yeah, that's Belgard. That's Compulsion. Like, yeah. What's good, Greg. Hey, how's it going. [ALI giggles] There are only a few thousand people in the fleet, right?

JANINE: Yeah... and this sort of goes in with the idea of like, how is synthetic life treated here, and it's- Divines, I think, move to become... y'know, they are synthetic life, they are on that level, they are just very very powerful. Um... I have a lot of things in my head that Signet could say to the Waking Cadent to convince her about this stuff. About like- y'know, a lot of people can be as powerful as one giant robot or whatever, and like [AUSTIN laughs]- it is- a Divine isn't an individual, they're kind of like a faction, but they're still... they are still worthy of that representation.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. They don't need someone to speak for them.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: In that way. I mean, you are also speaking for them, in another way, right?

JANINE: [overlapping] Yeah, the answers are still there, but I think it is like that relationship that Signet explained with Volition and Polyphony of like- it's not a creature and a handler, it's two people who work in tandem, to temper each other.

AUSTIN: Right. Grand, tell me about how the Splice works in Seneschal's Brace.

ART: I don't- it's like, almost hard to imagine what it's like to, y'know, live with the god of the internet.

AUSTIN: Well one thing that I'll say is, I suspect Anticipation and Tender keep the Rapid Evening's fucking hands out of the Splice.

ALI: Yeah.

ART: Sure!

AUSTIN: Like, yeah, you're here to make sure Our Profit doesn't do some bad shit, but I *promise* the Rapid Evening and the DFS plan on doing it. And so I can imagine

that's something, that you- that Seneschal's Brace having access there can really do, y'know?

ART: Yeah, and I think- I think, to just narrate something good and pure and hopeful, is that like- for a good long while, and nothing like this would ever last forever, but for a good long while the Splice is kind of like what the internet was on children's programming in the mid 1990s.

AUSTIN: It's- definitely still the NEH then, huh! [amused] So like- it's like that episode of Ghost Writer?

ART: No, it's not like that, 'cause there were *bad* people on that internet.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay, true.

ART: It's like-

KEITH: [overlapping] Ghost Writer's sick.

ART: What if the internet was like, good, and Julia Stiles wasn't there.

AUSTIN: Wait, what's wrong with Julia- what?

DRE: [overlapping] Oh, yeah, damn.

ART: She played the bad guy on that episode of Ghostwriter!

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Ohhh, I didn't- I never realized she was the-

ART: [overlapping] You gotta follow the whole thing to the end with me!

AUSTIN: I- listen, [laughs] it's the end of the fucking recording, Grand... y'know.

KEITH: Is that- can I ask, is that like, monster made of gum there?

ART: No

KEITH: Oh okay. Then we're cool. 'Cause I still-

ART: This place... is just like, tranquil, and maintained, and good, and people like it-

AUSTIN: Well moderated...

ART: -It's well moderated, curated-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] They fucking ban nazis on it...

ART: Yeah. The Splice is a good and decent place.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Wait a sec- so when everyone on the internet says 'mods', they're talking about Tender?? [laughs]

ART: Yeah! [ALI giggles]

JACK: Just like a- a blue thread, a little blue thread?

AUSTIN: Yeah! The word mod originated as a prayer to Tenderness, and Anticipation. Perfect, good, okay.

ART: Ohh, I wish that that syllable was in the Excerpt-

AUSTIN: Me too, me too. Maybe the next one who- maybe the next person who Anticipation eats alive can have mods in their name. Signet, you have two more.

JANINE: [laughing] I do. Well, it'd be-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Food and DIY knowledge

JANINE: We have a lot of food and not a lotta people, I imagine a lot of this is like- we learned how to do the fucking- we have a lot of access to like "here's food you can make" and stuff like that, there's an emphasis on that because we're on our own and don't have planets to farm or whatever- there's hydroponics I guess, I don't know- we don't- it doesn't matter.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's there! Hydroponics, yeah.

JANINE: The point is- the point is there's a lotta food and not a lot of people, and like- one of the- I think this is a thing that a lot of people can just agree on, a thing that causes a long of suffering in general- and suffering manifests in a lot of ways- is hunger. And like, having a lack of access to basic sustenance. So I think a thing that happens is that excess food makes its way to- who are not in this sort of new fleet. Um.. that food travels. It gets places.

AUSTIN: Yeah

JANINE: Um....

AUSTIN: And it gets to places that aren't even just in the fleet, right? Like-

JANINE: No it's- it's absolutely not limited to even people that we've seen in play. It's is just I there in space, and... that brings me to DIY knowledge [laughs], which might seem like a weird one to save till the end! Um... [laughs] I think Signet thought that the Rapid Evening was very interesting.

AUSTIN: Oh, fuck.

JANINE: [laughs] I think... they're bad. She knows they're bad.

AUSTIN: Oh, you fucking cop, I can't believe how many police are on this show.
[KEITH and DRE cackle]

JANINE: The Rapid Evening are very, very bad, and she understands that, but- because they are- y'know, they're cops. They show up at your door when they think you're doing something wrong and they break in, and they throw a fucking smoke grenade or whatever, and like- tear gas-

AUSTIN: [laughing] Wait- okay, yeah, uh-huh.

JANINE: It sucks! Um... so Signet looks at the Rapid Evening and she thinks... what if that, but a doctor making house calls. What if that but a benevolent force [AUSTIN scoffs] that can do good, and then leave. [AUSTIN laughs] That can, instead of sitting around and trying to do whatever-

AUSTIN: Alright, that last bit's interesting, right

JANINE: You- you see a planet where everyone is starving and you teach them how to make Calci-yummm?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: Or you see a planet where-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] And paying a licence, I'm sure, to Morning's Observation.

JANINE: [laughs] Yeah, we'll see.

AUSTIN: You shouldn't fucking do that, don't do that, just teach them how to make it, it's fine. We like Calci-yummm.

JANINE: Or, y'know, you see a planet where there's like a radiation problem- y'know, stuff like that. Stuff-

AUSTIN: [overlapping, amused] uh-huh. Sorry, did you-

JANINE: Sorry, what?

AUSTIN: I- hm. No, you go ahead. You go ahead, I'll save it

JANINE: [laughing] Stuff- stuff that, I'm gonna say, absolutely still has problems, 100,000%! I do wanna be clear, it's not like missionary thing, it's not like contingent- it's not help that's contingent in like, read our book, it's just like- they put energy into producing excess resources and skills and can disperse those when needed. But the DIY knowledge I think is very much like... what is Crystal Palace if Crystal Palace is a hospital.

AUSTIN: Sure. Dre in the chat says "I cannot believe the ending for Signet is disrupting cops" [Keith laughs] and Art says "Doctor Cop is my favorite CBS show"! [JANINE chuckles] Great. Okay, we have characters left. There's two ways to do this,

we can go around the table and do one at a time, or we can go through all of them? I think that might be the more time efficient way to maybe do this, if y'all are good with that

DRE: Sure.

KEITH: Sorry, which one?

AUSTIN: Just go through character traits, we'll go through them all at once.

KEITH: [overlapping] Oh yeah yeah yeah, sure.

ART: Yeah, I think that's definitely more time efficient.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so let's do it in a sentence each. Tell me how... Echo. Are you still courageous, fiery, and mighty? And if not, how have those things changed?

SYLVIA: I think that...[AUSTIN overlaps] Echo's still-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] And kinda use them to pave a future for Echo, sorry.

SYLVIA: Yeah, Echo's still courageous and mighty, fiery kinda... went away just in the sort of sense where it's like- Echo matured in a way that is kinda like "I'm focused on the school now, I don't need to constantly prove myself"? so I'd say fiery is the "no" there, but otherwise- yeah, I think Echo just sorta focuses on taking care of their family at this point.

AUSTIN: Yeah

SYLVIA: Taking care of the people on Skein and the such.

AUSTIN: And Ballad helps. And Ballad is right there with you.

JANINE: I'm so glad Ballad didn't die.

AUSTIN: Me fucking too! Are you haunt- are you still haunted, or has that part of you- have you worked through that?

SYLVIA: Uh...

AUSTIN: Or has it changed into something that's like- peaceful or something.

SYLVIA: It gets easier, but it's one of those things where it's like, when you've gone one, [amused] when you've seen like, the original annihilation of the people on Quire!

AUSTIN: Yeah

SYLVIA: And then also when you go through all the shit you go through, it doesn't really go away completely. It just gets manageable.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Cool. Gig Kephart. Are you still resourceful, [amused] and tell me how your kindness and handsomeness and recklessness- if that has not changed- come into being in the future.

KEITH: Yeah, I... I definitely think Gig is still resourceful. I think the end of like, imminent danger? Like, we're in like- we're all the way in in sort-of wars in like four different ways?

AUSTIN: Yeah

KEITH: When that's over, there's like- Gig's like "ugh I spent all that time like, building stuff, 'cause I needed to help people, now I get to relax" but then also, relaxing is kinda just doing the same thing but with lower stakes and you can focus on having fun and doing fun stuff and, uh... and I think that's why Gig is still reckless, 'cause it the same sort of thing. What does reckless mean when you're in a war versus like, when you're testing out this big ski slope you made. [laughs] Like- "no that's way too steep of a hill, you can't do that!" and like "nah I'm gonna try it out, I can do it, we have- we have to see if it works!". And then I try it, and maybe I break an arm or maybe it works, and it's awesome. It's super cool.

AUSTIN: Great, good. Still kind and handsome?

KEITH: Yep, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Where do you live? Are you on Brighton, on Seneschal, do you live in Skein, do you live in Moonlock? You bounce around?

KEITH: Uhhhh, I spent so much time on Skein, I think I- I mean, [AUSTIN overlaps] yeah, I think I live mostly on Skein. Yeah.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] You stay with the Ark kids?

KEITH: Um...

AUSTIN: [laughing] Art says "Gig retired to be Logan Paul", rude! [SYLVIA laughs]

KEITH: That is rude...

DRE: Jesus christ!

KEITH: That's awful!

JANINE: That's fucked up.

KEITH: That's so fucked up!

SYLVIA: [overlapping] It's meaner than calling Signet a cop!

DRE: [overlapping] That's the meanest thing anyone's ever said on this show!

AUSTIN: It's worse than being a cop, it's worse than being a cop- hmmm.

JANINE: [overlapping] I don't know it's like that...

KEITH: That is- not worse than being a cop, but it's in the same sphere, 'cause I bet if you gave- if you gave Logan Paul a chance to be a cop, he would be one.

JANINE: Oh yeah- I was just gonna say, yeah. If he wasn't a video man, he seems like a dude who'd probably be a cop.

KEITH: Which is the third kind of cop, regular people that wanna be cops is the third- it's cop type number three. [DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: I searched for 'Logan Paul blue lives matter' and I didn't get as many as I thought I'd get...

SYLVIA: We can't-

AUSTIN: Alright!

ALI: [overlapping] Moving on...

DRE: Why are you doing this...

AUSTIN: Signet. Are you still good-hearted, resolute, strong, and cold?

JANINE: Um... I think Signet is- I'll take the easy ones first, Signet is definitely still resolute and strong? Because she has to be. I think even though she sorta won the Waking Cadent's ear, and has kind of, especially in Polyphony's absence, probably inserted herself into that position to a degree, I don't think- it's hard to imagine her ever completely trusting the Waking Cadent.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: And I think she is- basically always has to have her guard up, and always has to be looking for opportunities where the Waking Cadent might be moving in a direction that is dangerous? Towards- y'know, Signet being there is *such* a conditional thing, she's not there because she likes or agrees with the Waking Cadent entirely. It is very much a 'if this thing is going to exist, I want to change it from the inside, because I don't want these Divines who are here to end up- y'know.

AUSTIN: Enslaved, yeah.

JANINE: Enslaved. So she- she's still those things because she doesn't see a way to not be- but I think the tradeoff there is- I don't want to say that she's not good-hearted, I think she still cares? Um... I think she still- y'know, is as invested in

the well being of... beings, as she ever was? But I think the tiredness kinda end- y'know, the coldness is the tiredness really, it kind of... puts an edge on that in a way where I think... it's weird to say offload, but I think her good-heartedness is kind of offloaded into Belgard. Like, Belgard is-

AUSTIN: Hmmm. Has to make that stuff-

JANINE: - Belgard is the one who kinda recenters her in like- in terms of... humanity? In terms of empathy and softness? Belgard is her softness. Without Belgard, Signet probably goes down a really bad path.

AUSTIN: Sure

JANINE: So yeah, as long as these two are together, then it's- that's perfect!

AUSTIN: That's great! And they do, they stay that way until Signet one day dies? I'm guessing? Like, you don't see a vision of Signet leaving as long as the Waking Cadent doesn't do some terrible shit.

JANINE: The weird- it's- [laughs] I feel like I originally went into this finale thinking "Signet is probably gonna die at the end of this" like, she's- I've been- y'know, intentionally or otherwise, gearing into her dying. Or like, choosing to die or whatever. I don't think she would let herself die before the Waking Cadent, [AUSTIN laughs] which is a weird thing.

AUSTIN: Ohh, that's good...

JANINE: I think they're in like a weird fucking, taunt stand off of like, trying to hold the reins while- [AUSTIN overlaps] y'know, be the last one to hold the reins?

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Before the other one- yeah, uh-huh- perfect. Even. Are you still a daredevil, desperate, weird, and obsessed?

DRE: Alright, I'm definitely still weird.

AUSTIN: [amused] Love it, good.

DRE: Because... Even and Cascabel buy the diner.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: And Cascabel figures out he can build a machine that, when Even connects to it, he can taste again.

AUSTIN: *Hell yeah.*

DRE: And Even becomes, just a fucking incredible diner chef.

AUSTIN: That's the *best*... [laughing] that's extremely good!

JANINE: [quietly] That's so good... [laughs]

KEITH: You have to be like, tethered.

AUSTIN: Yeah, or whatever, you gotta be-

DRE: [overlapping] I mean I got- I have lots of long hair.

KEITH: No, I'm just saying, you're like- now you're tethered- be careful in the kitchen, is what I'm saying.

JANINE: Some people are into that.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

KEITH: [laughing] I'm just saying- [DRE cackles] I'm just saying be careful in the kitchen being tethered.

DRE: Yeah, sure, fair. Um... I think he's still a daredevil.

AUSTIN: Does he still fly every once in a while?

DRE: Yeah, yeah. Or- if it's not flying then he's now doing the thing where he's like, collecting like, motorcycles and cars... [AUSTIN overlaps] stuff like that.

AUSTIN: Oh my *god* [laughs] How long until Even and Cascabel are in Old Dogs?
[KEITH cackles]

DRE: Um... fucking-

KEITH: Ten minutes.

DRE: - I take it back, that's- uh, no, that's the second most mean thing that's been said on this podcast. [AUSTIN laughs] The Logan Paul thing still wins. [cackles]

KEITH: [overlapping] Yeah, it's way meaner than-

ART: It's really late, how many-

AUSTIN: I'm sorry, I didn't mean Old Dogs, I meant Wild Hogs, I'm sorry.

DRE: [overlapping] I knew what you meant.

KEITH: [overlapping] Oh that's- I knew what you meant too, I forg- okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah, my brain just- um... he's not desperate.

AUSTIN: Good.

DRE: He's content.

AUSTIN: Aw. Aww, we got a good one! Fourteen.

JACK: Hello.

AUSTIN: Are you still passionate, are you still determined, are you still sturdy- and I guess most important- not most important, but I'm curious, are you still dying?

JACK: Um... yes, absolutely. Um... when we chose this character- Fourteen has had the dying trait attached to them, and that is not something that we can just explain away?

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: Y'know, if Fourteen's dying trait was just like "well, they're just gonna keep going and they're gonna live a natural life and then they're gonna die at the end of it" then we all have the dying trait, all the time?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: That's not what this is. Um... [quietly] it's always fun at the de Quidt house. [DRE giggles] But let's do the other ones first.

AUSTIN: Sure

JACK: Um... I think Fourteen, if anything- Fourteen is someone who discovered what they wanted to do late in life, and as is the way of these things, their passion for it grows with the experience that one has later in life? To go like- I chose to do this job, it isn't something that I came into suddenly, as a young person. And I think that they... they look for new avenues, I think that they- while they think to themselves "damn, I'd really like to double down on the law", it ends up being that what they're doing is the community work of working in Seneschal's Brace, or whatever that becomes.

AUSTIN: Hmm, uh-huh.

JACK: They're determined, they're determined to do that, they're determined to fix their eyes on what the Mirage can be, but also what the Mirage is *right now*, and tomorrow, um... and what that looks like. I don't know if they're sturdy, 'cause I think- I mean, there's lots of sorts of sturdiness. I think they're still a very large robot. But I think that there's a strange fragility that comes with a very large robot trying to do... work that isn't being a bodyguard? They have to be careful around doors, they have to be careful descending stairs, um...

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right.

JACK: The robot body was not built to do what Fourteen does, which is- y'know, work in cities, and work in- it was designed to be in the Restitution of All Things. And I think that Fourteen's time comes, eventually. And I think, as it's the way of these things, it comes sooner than they think. I think Fourteen has always thought to themselves "well, maybe-" y'know. "Maybe I'll get next year." And I think a year comes where they don't. Um. and I think that Seneschal's Brace is fine. I think it's just sort of like- Fourteen rests? And Seneschal's Brace and the Twilight Mirage doesn't. And I think that's pretty good.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Tender.

ALI: Hi...

AUSTIN: Are you still bold and charming? Anxious? And tell me how you remain devoted.

ALI: [giggles] Um, I don't think Tender is bold anymore, I had chosen bold because I was like "how do I describe the kinda rude that Tender is?"

AUSTIN: [amused] There it is, yeah! [DRE laughs]

ALI: And I don't think- she doesn't have to be that person anymore, she does not need to be the person who is going to lift the sword for a stranger.

AUSTIN: Right, right....

ALI: She's not like, desperate to justify her actions because... she needs to keep making hard choices? So she like, loses that edge. And I think in that way she remains charming, she's still someone who can like, read a room, she was a priestess. Um... she's retired, essentially.

AUSTIN: But also is sorta hosting the biggest bar possible, right?

ALI: [laughing] Yes, yeah. Um... yeah. And I think... y'know, she is devoted, and she is still anxious, 'cause they're one and the same? Um... like- y'know, we've written Anticipation as this sort of like, really dangerous thing, and she *is*, if it's like, for one person, but when it's diluted across a ship... like, y'know. It was a thing that could course ships, and help people deal with things.

AUSTIN: Yeah

ALI: I think that- Anticipation is just as much the hair standing on the back of your neck, as it is your mouth watering when you're walking to your favorite restaurant.

AUSTIN: Right

ALI: And like, people in the Splice get to experience that emotion every day, and it's great.

AUSTIN: Do you think people in the Splice find, unintentionally or not- maybe intentionally since you're there- that old ritual of doing things in certain orders, or... riding the elevator all the way through and stepping out on each floor, getting something from each level, so to speak- is there still a degree of that? That's like, "I'm here to see as much as I can see, I'm here to take it all in". Do you think that carries through?

ALI: Yeah, absolutely- I think that's the point of the Splice, right? People come here to find time for themselves, and in doing that they're able to look forward to things, and to fear things, and to process things, and... to think about them, to consider them from every angle. Um... it's- y'know, it is what it is, it's a good match.

AUSTIN: That is a good match. Grand Magnificent! [laughs] [ALI chuckles]

ART: Hey, hi.

AUSTIN: [laughing] You're gonna have to tell me what being rich is like, 'cause you still have that one somehow, you *fucking asshole!* Are you still brilliant-

ART: [overlapping] You literally wouldn't let me lose it in the last round!

AUSTIN: You could've tried to spend it and didn't! Uh... do you- are you still brilliant and conflicted, and tell me how- and cowardly, are you still cowardly, and tell me how you are rich- god *dammit*, I can't believe it!

ART: Um... Grand is still brilliant, um... [AUSTIN scoffs] I think that this is- that Arbit is the clear defining proof of that. [KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN: A mech with no pilot, you've truly passed into your- your most abstract stage, your most abstract phase of being an artist.

ART: Hey, people like Picasso.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Um... yeah, Picasso is the mech with no pilot of art.

AUSTIN: God...

ART: -of painting. [laughs] And- but y'know, Grand is more or less stuck on Altar. I don't think Grand wants to leave- I don't know what being rich looks like if what you do is essentially live in the- I mean, I don't know if it's the *woods*, but it's like the outskirts, right? We decided-

AUSTIN: It's like, sandy, it's a desert planet.

ART: Yeah but like, the woods of the desert. Um.. [laughs] the parts that people don't go to so much.

AUSTIN: What do you do with that money? Do you like, give it to people? Do you become a patron of the arts, do you become the new Marquis? Like, not shitty?

ART: Um... yeah, I think to an extent? But it all has to come here, Grand doesn't- isn't willing to be away from Arbit for very long.

AUSTIN: So then- is it like there's a- bit by bit a city grows around Arbit of other people who build their own Divines.

ART: Yeah, that sounds fun. Janine says "so Arbit does have an Excerpt?"-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah!

ART: And like... sort of. And I think that's when we get back to conflicted?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Because that's I think what- what keeps Grand up at night now, is what happens to Arbit when Grand's not here anymore.

AUSTIN: Right. [ART overlaps] What does happen?

ART: [overlapping] and I think that is- that's- it's not how we said it originally, it's- that's a little cowardly, Grand doesn't trust... enough, that this works. He needs to like, keep his hand on the...

AUSTIN: [amused] The wildly rotating rudder? The unpredictable wheel? Like-

ART: Not- not literally keep his hand on anything because it's all moving very unpredictably [AUSTIN laughs], it's- it's very scary to touch.

AUSTIN: But. I get it, yeah.

ART: And that's- yeah, that's what Grand does for... ever. For as long as there's a Grand.

AUSTIN: Does Grand take an Excerpt name? And also, does he refuse to let people use just a single word of it and insist that everyone use the whole thing 'cause it's not a- [laughing] 'cause it's a mononym, godammit!

ART: Yeah, absolutely. And if you give me a little bit, I'll come up with that- it's certainly not gonna be tonight [laughs]

AUSTIN: No, no, it sure won't.

ART: I'll record me reading it if you wanna, just put me right here.

ART: [recording] Peace Returned to the Valley, The Rivers Flowed Clear and Blue, The Mountains Resplendent, Grand. Magnificent Light Shone on the Diligent and the Penitent Alike.

AUSTIN: Per- oh that's great, Art. Good one, I like it. I definitely didn't say this three weeks ago. [laughs] Alright, that's just about it! There's one thing, which is- there's one abundant resource no one talked about. Which is the system-wide resource if the Mirage itself. And so I guess I'll leave on this.

AUSTIN: I think, over time, the combined forces of the NEH and the Rapid Evening are, maybe long after all of your deaths, pushed out of the system. And they return to the vast empire of Kesh. And Crystal Palace continues as an ineffective predictor of the future, and... [sigh] evil people can do a lot, when they have something that they can point to that is telling them what to do.

[SONG "An Anchor" STARTS PLAYING]

[pause]

AUSTIN: But the Mirage is safe from that, and I think it continues to spin, and continues to change color, and- though it has its own sun now- it brings its own light to things. [laughing] And it's messy, and ugly, and there is a hole in it now. And people go missing, and it's never quite settled. And all of that is why Our Profit was wrong, about it just being a statue. Because... it is an anchor. It is the same thing that people on Gift-3, and Crown, and Moonlock and Skein, and Seneschal and Brighton, and Altar and Thyrsus, and those in the orbit of the sun Volition, can look out and agree upon it. We are here. We are in the *Twilight Mirage*, there's *nowhere* like this. And it is beautiful, and terrifying, and overwhelming, and there is too much of it. But it is ours, and we are its. And that is the Twilight Mirage.

[SONG "An Anchor" STOPS PLAYING]

[SONG "Falling Asleep, Waking Up" STARTS PLAYING]

KEITH (as Gig): Hello, my very good friends! This is Gig here at the new big ship we all live in! We're doing a tour of the big ship and talking to our friends that live inside of it. Uh- what's our ship called, again? Grand Mag- Grand Magnificent, what's our ship called?

ART (as Grand): Oh- I didn't know you were actually asking.

KEITH (as Gig): I was- I wasn't *actually* asking. [laughs]

ART (as Grand): It was- The World Without End.

KEITH (as Gig): Do you like falling asleep or waking up better?

ART (as Grand): Oh, definitely falling asleep. Um... I- I really just- I love that feeling of drifting off, I like the way that your mind can wander at those last moments? Waking up is just like, a reminder that you have stuff to do

[pause]

KEITH (as Gig): What's your perfect weekend?

ALI (as Tender): Y'know, I'm currently running the Steady, and um... it's nice to have a busy weekend, to have people come in... to see other people enjoying their time off? Is that weird? But it's like- y'know, we're all relaxing together!

KEITH (as Gig): That's not weird, that's nice.

ALI (as Tender): [laughing] Yeah, right? Yeah! [cackles]

KEITH (as Gig): Hi, we haven't talked much, can I ask you some questions?

JANINE (as Signet): Oh, you can always ask me questions, Gig.

KEITH (as Gig): Oh great, I have twelve.

SYLVIA (as Echo): Oh, you're still filming everything, huh? Hey-

KEITH (as Gig): I'm still- yeah, I never stopped. I never stopped and also I never stop

KEITH (as Gig): What's your best color?

JANINE (as Signet): Y'know, I wear a lot of black, I wear a lot of white, I wear a lot of gold... I like jewel tones? I don't wear them as much as I should, but, um... they're- they look great on everyone, that's what's good about jewel tones.

KEITH (as Gig): What jewel tone?

JANINE (as Signet): Oh- shit. Um... [KEITH cackles] emerald? [laughs]

KEITH (as Gig): [laughing] No, that's good.

KEITH (as Gig): Who's someone you really admire?

JACK (as Fourteen): Um... I like- a while ago I did a couple of jobs with Signet? Who I haven't *really* been- I really haven't seen in a while. Also Morning's Observation, 'cause he's really funny and cool, and we apprehended him in a sort of weird version of the Olympics? Uhhh [laughs, KEITH cackles] But he turned out to be great!

[pause]

JANINE (as Signet): Grand Magnificent. I admire anyone who can... y'know, who can find their way in one direction and then find their way back.

[pause]

KEITH (as Gig): Who's your favorite horse on this ship?

DRE (as Even): Uh- is this like a thing where I'm just supposed to say your horse?

KEITH (as Gig): [amused] Who's your favorite horse on this ship?

DRE (as Even): Listen, Duck's a pretty good horse, I can't lie.

KEITH (as Gig): And who's your favorite one on this ship though?

DRE (as Even): I- Duck.

[pause]

KEITH (as Gig): Hey Grand, you wanna shout-out someone who's had your back?

ART (as Grand): I- yeah, Echo... saved my life in a really rough situation down on Quire and I've never forgotten that, and I- it was a really important, transitive moment for me, yeah.

DRE (as Even): Cascabel! As I've been going through all these kinda changes this past year he's been a pretty- uhh, a pretty good presence to kinda help me figure all this stuff out.

KEITH (as Gig): What's the most fun you've had this year?

JANINE (as Signet): Gig, I don't think you should keep a horse on this ship, it's- we don't have- you sleep under the pool table, don't you?

KEITH (as Gig): What's one goal you have for the next year?

SYLVIA (as Echo): Uh- one is to get my weird friend to stop filming me all the time.
[KEITH laughs]

KEITH (as Gig): What's your most prized possession?

ART (as Grand): [scoffs] - you're gonna think this is silly.

KEITH (as Gig): I promise that I will not.

ART (as Grand): Alright- I got this... I got this thing made, it's a picture of all of us on Quire, on the first day, you remember- you remember posing for that picture?

KEITH (as Gig): I remember!

ART (as Grand): Yeah. Thanks for not making fun of me.

KEITH (as Gig): Of course, no, I wouldn't.

[pause]

ALI (as Tender): Honey butter oats.

KEITH (as Gig): What is that?

ALI (as Tender): [laughing] It's- okay, so you take oatmeal, and then you like, toast it a little? And then you melt butter and you mix it with honey and you cover it with the oats?

SYLVIA (as Echo): I'm hoping that we can make things quiet down a little?

JANINE (as Signet): I have a yellow dress I like a lot.

JACK (as Fourteen): I have, uh- I've been trying to- [laughs] I've been trying to plant a garden? But it's really- there's nothing coming up?

DRE (as Even): I think I'd like my next job to be like, just sitting back, lighting one of those old cigars and just, being able to look at all the good stuff that we got done together.

ART (as Grand): That first day at work when I looked around and realized that I was like, surrounded by people I could count on. That we had- we had built something good.

[pause]

KEITH (as Gig): Ohhh, my god, I remember that jelly juice, that was *so good*. I can have, and did have, like nine or ten- like eleven, twelve, thirt- I could just drown it over and over. They're good.

[pause]

ALI (as Tender): Y'know, I think I prefer waking up. It's tough, I- y'know I like to party, so sometimes I fall asleep and I'm like "hell yeah, it's my bed". But the experience of waking up, and really... not knowing what the day is gonna have. Being able to experience that is something that's so joyful. [pause] So that's my answer.

[SONG "Falling Asleep, Waking Up" STOPS PLAYING]