

PALISADE 10: The Wheels Turning Pt.

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Transcriber: Iris (@sacredwhim)

AUSTIN: PALISADE is a show about empire, revolution, settler colonialism, politics, religion, war, and the many consequences thereof. For a full list of content warnings, please check the episode description.

[MUSIC INTRO - "[Nothing is Stationary](#)" by Jack de Quidt]

AUSTIN (as BLACK SCREEN): Here we go again. Baldwin Home, aka Black Screen, aka Mr. I Wish You Would, aka Sovereign Community, aka Crysanth Kush, aka all the news that's fit to sprint up to you in the streets and tell you what's really real, delivering another message to the masses. You already know what it is, and I don't mean that rhetorically. You ain't heard the news, you *lived* it.

[SHOUTING FROM AFAR] *'Hey Black, why do they call it the Bontive Valley?'* They call it the Bontive Valley 'cause the harvests are high-yielding, and bit by bit, they're coming back into hand. We're talking more crops, we're talking our land. After all, we worked it for how many thousand years? For how many glass dukes? We cried how many midnight tears? It ain't worth it to do the damn calculus. They'll just tell us we needed to use trigonometry instead. 'Your numbers aren't right, it wasn't really exploitation,' so let me do some simple subtraction. Three minus three is dead.

Y'all sent out your shooters from your crystalline castle, from your beige-colored campus, from your jewel-encrusted church. Well, I got news. I'm the paper boy, open up, front page story. Your shooters was flawed, your duchess a fraud, and we're really, really them. And I know what you're thinking. I know where your mind's at. You're ready to punch back. You're gonna find out who caused you all of this pain. Poor Stargrave, finger on the trigger. Poor prophet, dig a little deeper. Poor mister entrepreneur, we've opened a door, and you're facing it for the first time, ever.

We made you imagine a whole world without you. Now, get this—we do that *every single day*. And it ain't just a vision, it ain't pipe dreams and conversation, it ain't blue sky hypothetical—it's really, really real. All that talk, all that violence, yet our energy remains. We're vibrant while you piss-poor tyrants got tired just holding our chains.

[MUSIC INTRO ENDS]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker. Joining me today, Art Martinez-Tebbel.

ART: Hi, you can find me on Cohost at [@amtebbel](#), where this very day I put up a new post.

AUSTIN: Wow.

JACK: Woah, congratulations. I haven't seen it.

ART: Thank you.

JACK: That's—that's exciting.

AUSTIN: I'd love to hear it.

ART: It was—I mean, I'm gonna be honest with you, it was gonna be a tweet, and I was like, you know what? Forget about Twitter, I'm putting this on Cohost. So it's not like a—it's not like a Cohost post, but it's a post on Cohost.

AUSTIN: It's—right. But it's a post on Cohost, yeah. They just rolled out—

ART: Or a chost, or whatever they say.

AUSTIN: It's a chost, yeah. They just rolled out two-factor today, also. So if you haven't set that up, go set that up.

ART: Great.

AUSTIN: It's in your settings. It's good to have two-factor. Also joining us, Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hello there, I'm Jack. I don't know why I said "hello there" like I'm a character in *The Hobbit*. [CHUCKLING] 'Hello there, Bilbo. Welcome.'

[AUSTIN AND ART CHUCKLE]

ART: [CHUCKLING] I do not associate this as strongly as you do with—

AUSTIN: No.

ART: Bilbo Baggins and the Shire, but like—

AUSTIN: "Hello there" to me is—again, and this is my own brain-damaged, like, nightmare fandom slash 'I do another podcast—' that's a thing Obi-Wan Kenobi says.

JACK: Hello there.

AUSTIN: Obi-Wan Kenobi says "hello there."

ART: Yeah, you're right, that is—

JACK: 'Hello there. I'm about to [CHUCKLING] make your life miserable just by my actual presence. My intentions are good, but things are going to be bad for you from now on.'

AUSTIN: [LAUGHS] Yeah, that's accurate. Uh-huh.

ART: Yeah, that's—wow, Obi-Wan's here.

[AUSTIN AND JACK LAUGH]

JACK: You can find me—no, you can buy any of the music featured on the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com, and you can find me on Cohost at [@jdg](#). I nearly made a Cohost today about the electric guitar tone in Palisade.

[AUSTIN HUMS]

JACK: And then in that way that you sometimes get midway through a social media post, which I think is always a good impulse to follow, I thought, 'I don't need to say this,' and closed the tab. [CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: If it comes up again, you can say it then if you feel like it's right to say it, but if it isn't, you don't have to.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'm Austin Walker. You can follow me on Cohost at [@austin](#), cohost.org/austin, I guess. You can also follow the show all over the place these days. Twitch.tv/friendsatthetable, youtube.com/FriendsattheTable? Is that right?

ART: No one else—

JACK: YouTube.com—

AUSTIN: Friends at the Table, correct. We are on Cohost, cohost.org/friends-table, I believe. Or maybe that's Friends at the Table also. We'll never get this right.

JACK: We are on Cohost at [@friends-table](#).

AUSTIN: That was right. I was right. I should have just trusted myself.

ART: Yeah, Cohost is the one that doesn't have underscores. That's why you're Austin there.

AUSTIN: Yes. That's why I'm Austin there. That's what I always say. And we're on TikTok, also. And at TikTok, we are, of course, [@friends_table](#).

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Go follow us on those various places.

JACK: We are.

ART: If you go to TikTok right now, you can hear what we think was the best clip from this episode. That's probably not smart, because—

AUSTIN: [OVERLAPPING] That's probably true—I mean, yeah, you'll spoil yourself a little bit, huh?

ART: You'll spoil it for yourself.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh—oh, hey, that *King of the Castle* TikTok blew up. That's fun.

ART: Oh, did it?

AUSTIN: Yeah, 20, 28,000.

JACK: That game's great. It's a good game.

ART: Great.

AUSTIN: People should watch us go play *King of the Castle*. If you have not watched us play any video game ever, *King of the Castle* is the one to watch us do. It is a joy. If you want to hear us bicker and politic and play along with many fans in the chat, *King of the Castle* is the one to do. That's all I'm gonna say about it. Today, we are not playing *King of the Castle*. Today we are playing *Armour Astir: Advent* by Briar Sovereign, which, by the way, I have to send you all the most recent edition of this game—

ART: Oh.

AUSTIN: So that we're all working from the same—I may have already done it.

JACK: They nerfed the Discourse. They nerfed the Discourse.

AUSTIN: They did do—that did happen. Briar did do that. Do you want to explain what that means?

JACK: One of the—over the course of this game, this session, much like last time, we're going to play a series of mini games, sort of like partially inspired by *Firebrands*, the Vincent and Meguey Baker, that sort of style of game design. One of the games is the Discourse, in which people—you know, it's a sort of exhausting conversation in which power dynamics are played out. But I don't remember exactly how the Discourse is being nerfed.

AUSTIN: So, previously—so the thing is that that specific scene does not have an outcome in terms of the Authority achieving something. And so, because of that, we said 'well then, why would the Cause stand to interfere with it? Why would they waste—why would they tap a resource to deal with it, or tap a faction to deal with it, if there's no outcome worth blocking?' You know, because the other mini games, the other things that the Authority can do during their turn have outcomes that are—that risk putting the Cause on their back foot. And so we didn't tap one of our Cause factions to try to interfere with the division that was doing the Discourse. However, there is new text amended to this here on the conflict turn. And that is—and I will read from it, da-da-da-da-da—and this might not even be public yet. This might be—this might be a hot sclusie from Briar sending us a yet unreleased version of this.

ART: Secret.

AUSTIN: Ba-ba-ba. Is this right?

ART: I have it, if you just want me to—

AUSTIN: Yeah, go ahead, you read it, Art.

ART: "Anyone may be present, but a faction must still be tapped, if you can do so without destroying it. The discourse is exhausting."

[AUSTIN CHUCKLES]

JACK: Interesting. So it doesn't matter whether—

AUSTIN: [OVERLAPPING] In other words, like—

JACK: It's gonna get tapped anyway.

AUSTIN: And—well, and I think, fictionally, the thing that we're thinking about this is like, you know, we don't have to go back and retroactively apply it to the last Discourse, which was when Gentian and the Divine Crusade and the attendants thereof kind of bickered and flirted during that picnic sequence out in the Bontive Valley.

[10:00]

But, you know, no one—the Cause didn't need to be there, but that con—the conversations that were happening there, the sort of ongoing debate about whether—should we, you know, 'shouldn't we be going to crush the rebels instead of hanging out in this field,' et cetera, et cetera. That style of debate is happening everywhere, right?

JACK: Mm, right.

AUSTIN: The sort of like, pragmatism versus 'attending to your community' type stuff, the specific fear that they may come crashing through into Sinder Karst and where all of Grey Pond is, all of that stuff is constantly hanging over the head. In a way, you do the Discourse as the Authority to tap a Cause faction by, you know, [CHUCKLING] drowning them in the discourse a little bit.

[JACK CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: That's my interpretation of it to some degree, you know?

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: So, something to think about as we go forward. We are gonna continue playing the conflict turn here. As a reminder, we are each taking the lead on one of the Authority—which is to say, the Bilateral Intercession's—three major divisions. Each of those divisions has some pillars that they are—I guess, actually, the pillars are kind of just universal, right? The—or are those assigned? I'm trying to remember. Oh, those are assigned.

JACK: They are assigned, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So they have different pillars. They also have different strength levels. They also have different schemes running now, and different abilities and stuff. Before we get to our scenes, we need to kind of interpret what happened during the last Sortie to see kind of how have things changed around. As a reminder, last time, for instance, we reduced the Grip of the Authority on the grav train, the Diadem grav train, because of the successful operation in the Diadem that briefly gave the Cause control over the Diadem. And I'm curious here—I mean, most clearly, and I'll move us over the map—or we're already on the map over on the Roll20. I'm the only one on the Roll20.

[JACK LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: But if you all jumped over to the Roll20—

JACK: Jumping into the Roll20.

AUSTIN: You would see that I have extended the control of the—of Jade Kill and Grey Pool.

Nope, Grey Pond. I always get it—I always say Grey Pool, but that feels like a town.

JACK: Ooh.

AUSTIN: But they've expanded into the Bontive Valley, right? In fact, maybe this line's like, not enough. Maybe the line, the gray line, should be lower. One second. Let me draw that better. Maybe that's all the way down to like, here. That's kind of fun.

JACK: As part of this joint operation with the Shale Belt.

AUSTIN: Correct. These two groups—again, Jade Kill, which is like Reunion and Kalar's Giantkillers, and then the group in Sinder Karst, which is a combination of the Concrete Front from people in the Shale Belt, plus Oxblood Clan and Company of the Spade type folks. Having—the Blue Channel having successfully distracted and drawn away the people of the Bontive Valley, the armies of the Bontive Valley south, opened up for this, like, hard hit to the north of the Bontive Valley, letting these two Cause groups claim it together. Now, obviously, most of the Bontive Valley is still in Nideo hands, but to me, this is a check on the Grip, right?

ART: Yeah, probably.

AUSTIN: I think that counts.

JACK: You love to see it.

AUSTIN: Uh—

JACK: Depending on how your allegiances work.

AUSTIN: [SCOFFS] Exactly. The other thing that comes to mind for me, is it feels like the Crown of Glass should probably start some sort of clock—

[JACK CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: —related to the thing that the Witch in Glass obtained at the end of that story.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: What is that clock, Art? What's the—I guess we should restate it a little bit. The Witch in Glass seems to have obtained the body of an Iconoclast, which, for people who've only listened to this season and PARTIZAN, is a sort of post—you know, I was thinking about this after we recorded, and the Iconoclasts are such an interesting mirror of the Branched—

JACK: Yeah.

ART: Because they're both post-humans who are chasing an idealized thing. The Branched chased idealized versions of themselves, which are always in flux and are never tied down to anything historical or ahistorical or otherwise. And the Iconoclasts are kind of post-humans that wish the world was purer, and more like the kind of Platonic ideals that they believe exist.

JACK: They're trying to find an objective version of everything, right?

AUSTIN: Of everything, correct.

JACK: They believe that it exists—

AUSTIN: They're trying to eradicate subjectivity, yeah.

JACK: And they can get to it. And, you know, again, Twilight Mirage is a really interesting season, if you've only heard PARTIZAN—

AUSTIN: Yeah, if you've heard us just say that and you're like, 'that sounds sick,' you should listen to Twilight Mirage.

JACK: They are—we spent a lot of time thinking through the Iconoclasts, and if you enjoyed seeing what one of them does on a train, how would you feel about seeing a countless number of them?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: Yeah, just go watch Twilight Mir—pause this episode, go listen to Twilight Mirage real quick. We'll be here when you get back in five months—

AUSTIN: We'll be right here.

[AUSTIN AND JACK CHUCKLE]

ART: And, you know, it'll be Halloween time. It'll be spooky here.

AUSTIN: [CHUCKLING] It will be. I will say I'm not sure that was one Iconoclast, so much as it was, in the moment—

JACK: Oh, that's really interesting.

AUSTIN: Iconoclastic—you know, an Iconoclastic form that was presenting itself as one being.

JACK: Yeah, that's really interesting.

AUSTIN: When she was Gem, she was one person. But as she grew and changed—I mean, I will say that part of what she was doing when she was like, opening things, was getting more Iconoclasts out. She has a power, or this being has a power, which is anytime it opens something, Iconoclasts can leave that thing and join her, even if there weren't any Iconoclasts there to begin with.

[JACK LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: It's like she can—as long as she's opening a door of some sort, or opening a gate or opening anything, again, a trash can lid. She was originally trying to get the trunk because she had the Iconoclast form in there that, like, for sure that was in there, but then like, anywhere she can open, she can let them in, you know? Or let them out, I guess.

JACK: She's got the magic porridge pot for Iconoclasts.

AUSTIN: But for Iconoclasts. Or it's really not—it's not the pot. It's her touch. It's like—yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

ART: But is—but is dead?

AUSTIN: No.

ART AND JACK: [SIMULTANEOUS] No.

AUSTIN: Mm-mm. Is stuck in a coffin. Not dead.

ART: See, that's where we keep dead things, Austin.

AUSTIN: Uh, the coffin is really just to keep her—think of it more like a vampire in a coffin.

ART: Vampires are dead.

JACK: Ah.

AUSTIN: They're undead, aren't they?

ART: Hmm.

AUSTIN: What if an idea could be undead and then you put it in a coffin and then you shipped it across the world to another person who's undead, the Witch in Glass? I guess the Witch in Glass isn't technically undead, but she kind of is. Perennial did just bring her back, right?

JACK: Right, they—

ART: Yeah. Everyone died. Everyone died in that scene.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh-huh. So—

ART: I don't know why I'm like, talking like spoilers.

[AUSTIN LAUGHS]

ART: If you haven't listened to PARTIZAN and you don't know what I was just alluding to, I don't think this is for you right now. [CHUCKLING] I think you should stop.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you got some—yeah. That one's less of a suggestion. You should definitely go learn about who the Witch in Glass is. 'Person listening to this who has no idea who Clementine Kesh is' is such a funny hypothetical listener. [CHUCKLES]

ART: Yeah. I want to hear—I want to know everything about you if that's—

[AUSTIN AND JACK CHUCKLE]

JACK: But yeah, Clementine received—the Witch received a package across the water, right?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: And we want to start a clock to reflect that?

AUSTIN: That's my instinct. But I don't know what that is.

JACK: Art has the Witch.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Art—Art has the Witch.

ART: What can you do with this that's a wayward faction thing and not an opposition faction thing? [CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Does that require us to talk a little bit about what the Witch is doing here, or like, working towards?

ART: Yeah, which I would love to just talk out a little bit, because—

AUSTIN: Please.

ART: I'll tell you, I'm feeling a lot of—hm. It's given me a lot of feelings, the idea of picking up a character like Clem, or the Witch in Glass.

AUSTIN: Yeah, fair. Fair.

JACK: Yeah.

ART: And sort of like, trying to figure out like, well—I mean, one, I didn't have a ton of interaction with the Witch in Glass last season.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: And like, how much is the—how much Clem is in there, and—

AUSTIN: Still a lot of Clem, I think. I think a different—

ART: A lot of Clem in there.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think a different version of the story would have had us eject ever saying Clem with relation to the Witch in Glass. 'Ah, she's no longer Clementine Kesh. Now she is but the Witch in Glass.'

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But like all things, Clementine Kesh is using the Witch in Glass as a persona, and a weapon, and an alias, even as she may be getting caught into its own gravity, you know?

ART: Yeah, I love that.

AUSTIN: [OVERLAPPING] That's my read. Jack, is that—

ART: I love when people use a thing, and the thing is also using them, you know.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Yeah.

ART: When you gaze in the abyss, the abyss gazes also into you.

AUSTIN: Mhm, mhm.

ART: And in—weirdly, when Perennial and Clementine both are the abyss.

[20:00]

AUSTIN: [LAUGHS] Uh-huh.

JACK: [LAUGHS] That's such a good way of thinking about it, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, and it's been five years since we last saw the Witch in Glass and did a scene—I mean, that's not true, because we did the brief—she briefly showed up in the final Road to PALISADE game, but she was not a character. And so we didn't really get like, into her head at all, you know?

JACK: Yeah, something I think a lot about with—so, firstly, I think it's notable that we did kind of do that move about ejecting a name, but in a very different context, you know.

AUSTIN: Mm. Mhm.

JACK: Clementine, as soon as it becomes clear she is associating with the sort of nascent Millennium Break, the state removes her surname. It functionally disowns her.

AUSTIN: [OVERLAPPING] Right. She is no longer a Kesh. Yeah.

JACK: And at that point, we did stop referring to her as Clementine Kesh, and she just became Clementine, and I think that that is notable because that is the result of a state apparatus denying—[CHUCKLES] 'wow, this war criminal has had her personhood denied,' but you know what I mean.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Denying Clem's place as part of the state. And I think that's a very different thing than, for example, saying, 'oh, Clementine is gone, speak no more that name. She is the Witch in Glass now,' you know. The moment that her name was removed was when the state said 'that is not a Kesh,' [CHUCKLES] you know. But I think the—the vibe that I thought about a lot—and I think I talked about it on the show, I know you and I talked about it a lot, Austin—is that, you know, you see these stories of people going out into the world—in fiction—going out into the world and having transformative magical experiences and learning good lessons from them, or learning virtue or strength or overcoming things in a way that feels good and right.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: And I think that something we were thinking a lot about with Perennial was it's not just that Clem is learning all the wrong lessons, quote unquote 'wrong.' It's that the entity giving out these lessons, perceived or not, is—who knows what Perennial is thinking? Perennial is not some clockwork force for good or beneficence in the universe, being like, 'I will show Clementine the way to be.'

AUSTIN: Correct, yeah.

JACK: You know, it is someone who has come out of the art class, not just learning all the wrong lessons, but also being like, 'hold on a second, was my teacher any good?'

[CHUCKLES] You know, like—

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JACK: 'What was my teacher's goal in this?' But in that sense, it's very much Clem, but it's very much Clem equipped with this kind of transformative experience that might not necessarily have been for capital G good.

AUSTIN: Mhm. So given all of that, how are you feeling about what Clem's desires are here, or what her relationship is to Perennial five years on? Do you think she's learned more about Perennial? Do you think she's continued to be disinterested, and, like—

ART: I mean, I think you can't—in five years, you can't not learn anything.

AUSTIN: Mm. Mhm.

ART: That's just impossible. That's—

AUSTIN: Yeah. She's put together something about what Perennial wants from her, or—what do you think—what do you—what type of thing do you think she's learned? And if I can fill in details, you know, based on what my prep had been, or has been, I'm happy to do that, but I would love for you to take the lead in terms of question-asking, at least. At the very least, you know. There's some stuff that's true about Perennial that I'm happy to answer for you. I'm also happy for you to pitch stuff. I'm also happy for you to say, 'I think this is an interesting change for Perennial and and, you know, Clem, to have had their relationship change in way XYZ.'

ART: Mhm. Um... I guess it's like, does Perennial see Palisade and the Mirage as like—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: You know, what kind of project is this? Is this—

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Is this a return to like, you know, 'this is what things should be?' Is this just another, you know—is this a revival movement for Perennial? Is this—

AUSTIN: Right. I think the two things from that that Clem would have gotten are the sense that Perennial, who is a goddess who's all about eternal return, you know, everything that's happened will happen again—

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: All that shit, also has, at her heart, the knowledge that she can never go home again. There is no fin—

ART: Perennial.

AUSTIN: Perennial can never final—can never—the kind of cost of eternal return is no final return. Do you know what I mean?

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: The cost of it being a circle and not a line is you can't—you can't ever stop rolling. And I don't want to dance around it. There is another second thing there, which is very much like, and wherever Perennial—whatever Perennial sees or perceives as being home, and this was not told—I don't think this was told in like, a clean and simple way. [CHUCKLES] You know what I mean? To Clem, but Clem would have pieced together that there is a place that Perennial feels like she is from, and she cannot go back to that place, whatever it is.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: I mean, that's how it feels. The second thing there is—is that why she's potentially here? Is there something here, either on Palisade or in the Mirage, that she thinks could break eternal return, or uphold it because it's being targeted, or get her a thing she needs? Whatever that is. That, I think, is the other half of this. This is a—Perennial is self-interested here, and is self-interested in a—in an existential way. Not in like a 'there's lots of power here, and I can become queen of the cosmos.' You know what I mean?

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: In a—you know, in a way that's not, you know, I'm not saying that what she wants is what the Iconoclasts want, necessarily. But in that style of like, 'I would like to shift the way things work' way. You know, everybody else is playing—most people playing checkers, some people playing chess. Some people are like Dr. Manhattan tinkering with the way the world works. And Perennial has been key to that happening twice now, if you count both the original Perennial wave and then her, you know, the Perennial wave's part in Kalmeria spreading through the world and bringing a thing like magic back. That's twice now that Perennial has been about that style of galactic metaphysical change. And I think it's something similar to that, is the vibe that Clem would get. Now, Clem—I'm curious what Clem wants here.

ART: Um—

AUSTIN: What's Clem want from establishing the Crown of Glass on Palisade?

ART: I sort of refuse to see it as a coincidence that Clem is here.

AUSTIN: Say more. What do you mean by you refuse to see it as a coincidence?

ART: That Clem is here, and Millennium Break is here, and Gucci is here. The, like—this doesn't feel like a coincidence to me.

AUSTIN: Everything that's happened has happened—or, will happen again.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or do you mean it as a scheme? Or is it both?

ART: Scheme is too much, but like, I think Clem turns over in her head those ideas of like, 'well, this time, they'll see.'

[AUSTIN HUMS]

ART: 'Millennium Break will beg me to come back.'

[AUSTIN CHUCKLES] [AUSTIN GROANS]

ART: The, like—

JACK: 'Because now—you know, maybe last time, I didn't have the things that I do now.'

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: 'Now I'm the prettiest one at the dance.'

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Is she able to s—hm. Is she able to be like, 'well, so maybe I got some stuff wrong before, and that can inform my next maneuver,' or—

ART: Doesn't sound like Clem to me.

[JACK AND AUSTIN LAUGH]

AUSTIN: Clem's back, everybody.

JACK: So she's not like, 'well, look. We—I made some moves, they made some moves that went down that way, but ultimately I'm going to come out on top.' It's—[CHUCKLES] 'they didn't listen to me before, and now I'm really gonna show them what I'm made of.'

ART: Right. 'Now—now I'm even more right.'

AUSTIN: And to her power, you know, the Crown of Glass is the biggest non-Bilateral Intercession place on this map. Right?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like New Oath is a couple of little islands. Rifle Island is tiny. The Isle of the Broken Key is tiny. Sinder Karst is a bunch of caves, that's not like a destination for other people in a real way. That's a place that soldiers are, you know, hiding out. Joyous Guard is a desert city in the middle of a—the inside of a gigantic [CHUCKLES] collapsed volcano that is probably dormant, but also, we did put the caldera of a giant volcano on this map, so like, you know. And then the Crown of Glass is a huge, substantial amount of territory.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And people go there. Blue Channel goes there.

ART: [OVERLAPPING] It's sort of weird that no one's come—yeah, and been like 'hey, we'd love to have your territory, come back, you can lead Millennium Break.'

AUSTIN: Right. This is how she feels. Of course.

ART: Because as the great poet once said, you can try to change, but that's just the top layer.

AUSTIN: That's just the top layer, yeah. Mhm. Right. Of course.

JACK: Do you—this is also great, right, because it's like, I feel like a lot of the time when

Clem hears the wheel turns, and heard the wheel turned, the phrase 'the wheel turning' for the first time, the thing she thought was 'and the wheel will turn, and I'll be on the throne.'

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JACK: You know, like, 'I am at the low point of the wheel, and I will be at the high point of the wheel,' and we have this great tension between what you were describing, right, with Perennial being like, 'it's a wheel, it's not a line, there is no—there is no place for me to—there is no top of the wheel, permanently.'

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: And also that that is rankling Perennial somehow.

[30:00]

JACK: Perennial is feeling a—Perennial knows that they can't get here, and is seeking out a way for that to be possible, and Clementine is also like 'well, okay, but I'm gonna be on the throne at some point,' you know, 'wheel's coming round the top again, [CHUCKLING] looking good for Clementine!'

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, 'looking good for me.' Uh-huh.

ART: Yeah, I also don't think that's out of consideration, either, that Kesh would come to Clementine.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

ART: And be like, 'okay, you did it.'

AUSTIN: Sure. Happily—

ART: 'You proved yourself.'

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: 'You should be in charge.'

[JACK SIGHS]

AUSTIN: [CHUCKLES] That would—

JACK: What is the height of Clem's ambition? I mean, like, originally her goal was, uh—like, I don't think we said it at the time, but we would probably say it now, is like, 'be the Princept,' right?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Of course.

ART: I think that like, why not the Queen in Glass?

[JACK CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JACK: Sure.

AUSTIN: Right. Queen of Palisade? Queen of the galaxy.

JACK: Yeah, this is my question.

ART: Queen of, you know.

AUSTIN: Queen of the universe. Queen of all of time and space.

ART: Why not be—yeah.

AUSTIN: You're Perennial's chosen one.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Queen of—queen of everything Perennial touches.

[AUSTIN CHUCKLES]

JACK: And maybe right now—

ART: [OVERLAPPING] 'I'm gonna put this sword into space, and everything it touches is mine.'

[AUSTIN AND JACK CHUCKLE]

JACK: Yeah, maybe right now that starts with Palisade, but that, you know, from Palisade to Ke—this is so interesting, because this is a lot of ways how the Bilats are thinking about their project, right? Where it's like, well, we—our goal is the Mirage, but step one is we want to take Palisade, and we want to exert our control so utterly over this planet that we feel we can use it as our sort of vanguard into the Mirage. [CHUCKLES] And we have Perennial going, 'can I—is it—would it be possible for me to stop?' And we have Clementine going 'would it be possible for me to be the queen?'

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Yeah, like—

AUSTIN: This raises—okay, Art.

ART: Why—if Clem can take Palisade, why could she not trade that for more?

AUSTIN: Speaking of trading things, this is what I now raised in my mind—I had assumed that Clementine Kesh—sorry, that Clementine, the Witch in Glass—would want the body of the Iconoclast known as Gem to do some dark magic ritual, to do some, you know, to place on the altar of Perennial that has—that was built in the mountains during our *City Planning* game, but also, [CHUCKLES] it could just be a really expensive trading chit. She could have it so she could sell it. She could have it so that she could give it back [CHUCKLES] to the Bilats, or even to a different part of the Bilats in exchange for something. And I'm not saying

she does this, I'm just putting that on the table as an option that I had never considered when I thought 'well, Clem will find a use for this thing.'

ART: Yeah, I mean—I mean—not even the Bilats, why not have—why not have an auction? Why not have—

AUSTIN: God.

JACK: [LAUGHING] Oh my god.

ART: Why doesn't everyone send in their offer?

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

JACK: [LAUGHING] Oh my god.

ART: But also, like—

JACK: [LAUGHING] The Stargrave is just gonna bomb the Crown of Glass.

AUSTIN: Oh my god.

ART: But like, furthermore, why can't Clem have this power? Why can't—

AUSTIN: [CHUCKLES] Alright, well now we're talking.

ART: Why can't the Witch in Glass draw Iconoclasts out of any door?

AUSTIN: Now, this to me sounds like—this sounds like the Witch in Glass to me. Sure. You know?

ART: Yeah. And maybe that's it. It's like—

AUSTIN: This is—yeah, you know what? And in fact, I'm thinking about it now, I need to pull up—I need to, of course, pull up our actual—what's the name of the island, Jack? What was the name of the—

JACK: Chorus Island.

AUSTIN: Chorus Island, of course. Chorus Island—

JACK: Yeah, I was thinking about Clem's sort of precepts.

AUSTIN: I'm thinking of the laws, and there's a specific one in mind for me here, which is, um—uh—I guess it's actually not that great. It's "Emaline Eccles is a gift," but this idea that 'Perennial gives gifts to me.' 'This too is a gift,' right?

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: 'Code name Gem is a gift to me.' The—I actually had a name for this character, didn't I? I had like a—

JACK: The Usher of Truth.

AUSTIN: The Usher of Truth. Of course Clementine would be like, and the truth is [LAUGHS]

I should be queen.

[JACK LAUGHS]

JACK: Well, but this is interesting, right? Because it's like, something that, um—uh—sideways Clem defender logging on now.

AUSTIN: Ooh.

JACK: Something that Clem is actually pretty good at is—or is pretty ready to do is the modification and destruction of how she considers not just herself, but other people's selves.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: This isn't necessarily a good thing, but it is something that Clem is confident about, or has worked through in the past. You know, Clementine saw her own body transformed, you know, sometimes violently, by Perennial, and went 'oh, this is a way of existing that gets me towards power, and this is how it is.' You know, the last image in *The Witch in Glass* is her comfort. Feeling the stuff growing over her eyes, you know? She thought it was something bigger and more dangerous, but she was like, 'oh, it's just the Russian sage, you know, growing over my eyes.' And so, I think, you know, out of all the weird nightmares to have gotten this gift, Clementine would see the, uh—the physical body of an Iconoclast as like, 'oh, this is—this is potentially consistent with how I understand power to function.'

AUSTIN: Right, right. So is this a clock—is this a project—is Clem trying to unlock the powers of the Iconoclasts for herself?

ART: Yes. I think that's exactly what the project is. Unlock the power of the Iconoclasts for herself.

AUSTIN: For herself. Do you want to add that to the project clock list?

JACK: When we say the powers of the Iconoclasts—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: I mean, it's interesting, because, you know, that might mean something different to Clem as it does to us—can we run through quickly what we, the writers—

AUSTIN: I think we don't—

JACK: —understand the powers of the Iconoclasts to be?

AUSTIN: [OVERLAPPING] No. I don't want to do this yet.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: I want to do this if it succeeds.

JACK: Okay, fair enough.

AUSTIN: And then I want to do it in the biggest and most gut-checky way that we can without any forethought. Like, truly, I want—I don't want us to overthink it. I want to find what will be the most resonant and powerful version of it in the moment that it happens, and

answer it then. Because if right now what we talk about is opening doors to other things, then that will be what we're stuck with in three months when it happens, and at that moment what might be best is that they build Volition 2. And I don't know that that's right. I don't want to do either of those things, necessarily. That's not me putting a pin in either of them and saying that's what we do.

JACK: Right, right.

AUSTIN: But what is right, for what that means, we will know when the clock fills up, if it fills up.

JACK: Right, right, right.

AUSTIN: Because it might, because—

ART: Hold on, I just took the top clock, I don't know how many steps we want for this.

AUSTIN: I think it's not that long, because of just, the shape of this campaign. I'm really feeling like we go short on clocks for faction turn stuff.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: So I think four is probably fine. Because imagine that that's a handful of missions, do you know what I mean? I mean, I guess, actually, that's not true, because the Crown of Glass specifically does have [LAUGHS] an outcome that could help advance that clock quicker, uh-huh.

JACK: [LAUGHS] It does.

AUSTIN: The Crown of Glass is a banded type of faction. It opposes with robbery and sabotage, and it can reduce a scheme clock by one step, and increase a beneficial clock by one step. The interesting thing here for me being, this actually gives us a reason why Clem would interfere on the side of the Cause, because if—

ART: And will.

AUSTIN: And that will help, you know, could succeed in that way. Also, tick that clock once. It's a new clock, you tick it, I believe. I believe when you start a clock.

JACK: That is consistent with the other ones that we have down there, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, start a clock.

JACK: Uh, wait. I haven't s—where have you put this, Art?

AUSTIN: It's under the wayward factions.

JACK: Oh, I see, under the wayward factions. Right, right, right.

ART: Wayward factions, project clocks. Yeah, and that's great, right? Clem is opposing the Authority just like her friends in Millennium Break.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Art, do you want to say anything at all about the Witch in Glass—Figure in Bismuth dynamic while we have you on the line talking about the Witch in Glass? Is there

anything that you want me to carry forward into that play? Or that relationship? Because I know that when we get to downtime, we will be back there again with Figure.

ART: It's very hard, because I can—I see—I know what way the wind is blowing.
[CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Right. Sure.

ART: I know that—but, you know. She cares deeply for Figure, Figure is the person who talks to her old friends.

AUSTIN: Right, sure. Uh-huh.

ART: 'You do go on, Figure.'

AUSTIN: Ahh. And on that note, another question here is the—as you're doing all this Iconoclast stuff, speaking of old friends, the voice of Gur Sevraq telling you not to fuck with this not really dissuading you?

ART: Oh, no.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Why would it?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Is Gur Sevraq's argument here pretty straightforward? Like, 'this is a deeply malicious destructive entity that will bring nothing but suffering, don't mess with what you don't understand, Clementine?'

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think it's that—yeah. I think that that's my guess. Art, what were you gonna say?

ART: And that sign can't—that sign can't stop Clem because she can't read.

[AUSTIN AND JACK CHUCKLE]

AUSTIN: I think the other half of it is also a like, you would use this for your good when the thing we have in common, Perennial, like—you know that there's a more Perennial-focused version of of using this than trying to capture the power and ascend to the throne.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know that there is like, you should be integrating whatever you find here into the altar for Perennial's sake, or you should be destroying this thing because Perennial achieved it for us so we could take a weapon off the board for the Principality, or whatever it is. And I don't think that Gur Sevraq actually has access to... I don't—hmm.

[40:12]

ART: If Perennial wants something different from this, all she has to do is ask.

AUSTIN: I think the thing with Perennial is you are a tool best used when you think you're acting on your own behalf. Right? And I think this might be a situation where Gur—who does know more than he has let on, I've realized, thinking about things I've had Gur Sevraq say in the last year—Gur—it's not Gur's place to do what you just said, which is to have Perennial—Gur isn't going to say the words Perennial needs to say, and Perennial doesn't seem to say them, because she doesn't know that it's effective to actually ask you for things. It's effective to lead you to things. So maybe you getting this is actually part of the the Perennial plan, right?

ART: Maybe.

AUSTIN: That tends to be the way Perennial works.

ART: Who could say?

AUSTIN: Maybe there will be an ask of you later, maybe closer to when the clock is filled. Let's see if you can get there first, right?

ART: Yeah.

JACK: I have a quick—this is something that we can, you know, explore more as and when it comes up, but like, we talked about five years, has Clementine learned anything in five years? Has Clem—the answer is kind of?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Has Clem's relationsh—what is Clem's relationship with Gur like five years after the events of, you know, Chorus Island? We saw them have a sort of antagonistic comradery on the island itself, and then, you know, laterally in the Crown of Gla—or in, at that point we called it the Reflecting Pool, we saw Gur as a sort of erstwhile advisor [CHUCKLES] who wasn't always being attended to. What does that relationship look like after five years?

ART: After five years, how would you even know if it was really Gur Sevraq in your head?

[AUSTIN CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Great question.

JACK: In the sense that you're like, well, this might not actually really be Gur?

ART: Yeah, what if this is just what I think Gur Sevraq sounds like?

JACK: Because I spent so much time with them, [CHUCKLING] and they were always nagging me about stuff?

ART: Well, and this is clearly a manifestation of Clem's guilt.

AUSTIN: Does Clem ever think in those terms?

ART: Yeah, I think so.

AUSTIN: Hm, interesting. The guilt over—

ART: I think Clem is really capable of a wide array of introspective thought when it comes

down to 'maybe the person telling me I'm wrong isn't real.'

[AUSTIN AND JACK LAUGH] [AUSTIN GROANS]

AUSTIN: 'I feel guilty, but I shouldn't, because it's just a small part of my mind telling me I should feel guilty.'

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: 'I need to stay committed to the vision.'

ART: Honestly, I'm shocked that it's not—that it hasn't taken the face of Sovereign Immunity yet.

AUSTIN: Right, right, right.

[JACK CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: But it hasn't.

ART: [LAUGHING] No, because it's really Gur Sevraq.

AUSTIN: Just making that clear. [LAUGHING] Because it's really Gur Sevraq, uh-huh.

JACK: It's the spider prophet.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Oh, speaking of, does she think of Sovereign Immunity much at all?

ART: No.

AUSTIN: Hm.

ART: Um... Only in this specific justification, I think.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

ART: And I mean, let's be real here. If Gur Sevraq was so right about what Perennial thinks and wants—

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: They would be the Witch in Glass, or whatever term you would use for Gur Sevraq—

AUSTIN: For Gur Sevraq, yeah.

ART: —if they were in glass.

AUSTIN: Mhm. The Spider in Glass.

ART: The Spider, is that right?

AUSTIN: The Prophet in Glass, something like that, who could say.

ART: Yeah, it wouldn't, I mean—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: You don't think Perennial could make that happen? I think Perennial could make it happen. I think Perennial is a wonderful and powerful thing, and if Gur Sevraq really reflected what Perennial wanted, then that's who you'd be talking to right now.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Perfect. Alright, well, that clock's advanced, and so now we can turn towards the rest of—oh, actually, one more big picture set-up thing—do we think anyone has earned any disfavor from the last arc? Any of the three divisions? Do we think the Divine Crusade has earned a point of disfavor for potentially losing one pillar of the Bontive Valley and being tricked into losing parts of it? Or do we think that this is a totally acceptable loss? I guess I should read what disfavor is—

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —for the listeners who have not heard this mechanic quite yet. Divisions—
“Divisions are not entirely a power unto themselves; they are part of the Authority, and to an extent are held accountable for upholding values, its values, however terrible they are. Divisions that cannot toe the line and get results mark themselves apart with disfavor. When a division takes an action that disappoints, dishonors, or disrespects their masters, increase that division's disfavor by one. Alternatively, when a division does something that would make another look incompetent or disloyal, increase that division's disfavor by one. Similarly, when a division takes action that impresses or elevates them in the eyes of their masters, reduce that division's disfavor by one. This should be something of note, more than just succeeding at a move. Trust is easy to lose and hard to regain.

Mechanically speaking, any division with ten or more disfavor can be removed at the start of the conflict turn if the other two divisions desire it. No action or roll is needed, but toss a coin. On heads, the target division is ousted and becomes a tapped wayward faction instead. A replacement division of a different type moves in immediately. Ten disfavor usually doesn't happen overnight, after all. Moves were already being made.” They are moving on us now. [CHUCKLES]

“On tails, the target division is dissolved and absorbed messily back into the rest of the Authority. A replacement division of a different type moves in at the start of the next conflict turn, and until then, any pillars the old one controlled are temporarily considered to have zero grip, meaning they can be felled with a faction outcome or with a Sortie via Plan and Prepare. When playing scenes during the conflict turn, or more broadly depicting Authority characters, they should take the disfavor of divisions into account when showing how they think and feel about them. This may also come into play in Sorties with divisions steeped in disfavor either not being given valuable opportunities to prove themselves, or seizing any they can to try and claw back some worth in the eyes of their masters.”

So, what do we think? Do we think losing the northern—the northeastern part of the Bontive Valley gives, you know, gives us the first mark of disfavor?

ART: Well, I want Crusade to become a wayward faction so bad it hurts.

AUSTIN: [CHUCKLING] So, yes. So, one?

ART: That would be so fun. Oh my god.

AUSTIN: It would be very fun.

JACK: I think a way of thinking about this—

ART: [OVERLAPPING] Crusade face turn? What does that even look like?

[JACK CHUCKLES]

JACK: Well, like a half face turn, right? Because you're not becoming a faction of the Cause?

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Well, you're going from a heel to a tweener.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah, uh-huh.

JACK: They have lost land.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Yeah.

JACK: Which is really—if the Bilateral Intercession cared about one thing, it would be the sanctity of owning land [LAUGHING] that is yours, and having had that taken away...

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: Well, they care about that sanctity as long as they're the ones owning the land, I suppose, is a better way to say it.

AUSTIN: I was gonna say, that's—yeah. Yes. Yes.

JACK: But they're like, you know, 'that was ours, and we lost it because of your inaction, or your foolishness.'

AUSTIN: Right. Absolutely.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I think that like, that's even worth thinking about in relation to the kind of quote unquote "New Asterism" which—which we've talked about a little bit. Gur Sevraq—faux Gur Sevraq's New Asterism that has sort of healed, or attempted to heal, the schism between Progressive and Received Asterism. We've talked a lot about its sort of settler-colonial nature, which I do think is the core of it, right? Like, how do you heal a millennia-old rift in a major religion from an empire? You create a version of it that puts at its core that you are supposed to go take the land of other people, and that it's actually holy to do that. Right? Those two things, you know, like, it isn't—we have a Divine called the Divine Crusade, you think about the way that Christianity was created as a, you know, a vision of Europe, right? A vision of the quote unquote "civilized world" wrapped up in the religious product or project of Christianity along with the kind of proto-imperial projects that come out of the HRE and other parts of, you know, at that point primarily Catholic Europe, but then you look at Christianity in the modern world, and there is still that sort of sense that backs a number of colonial projects, right? The Christian world is the civilized world, or the allies to Christianity are the civilized world.

ART: Sure, but Christianity absorbed, without even hesitation, getting their asses whooped crusade after crusade after crusade.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: [LAUGHS] After crusade, yeah. It was—it was a big deal for them to take those Ls.

JACK: It was as much the practice of the thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. It was that it was holy to go get your ass whooped over and over again.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The—there's another element of the New Asterism that's probably worth saying. A way in which it synthesizes or follows—it doesn't actually synthesize, but it follows on Received and Progressive Asterism's kind of belief systems and models. As a reminder, the big difference between Received Asterism, which is what Aram Nideo first created, was that Divines represent the best aspects of the state, that the Divine Free States, at the time, it would become the Divine Principality, have the Divines as sort of paragons of the various virtues that are seen in the state. So the Divine Courage is a representation of the courage that the Divine Principality itself has.

[50:04]

And Progressive Asterism said 'now, wait a second. Divine—the Divine Courage *is* courage itself.' It's almost an Iconoclastic, you know, vision, right?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: There's a little connection there, right? That like, the Progress—and to be clear, Progressive Asterists did not originally believe this, but once Progressive Aster—like, Logos Kantel the prophet did not believe this, but once it was—once Progressive Asterism was consumed by the state again, it became this thought that like, the Divines are immortal—which is true, they are immortal, right? They can be rebuilt, repaired, indefinitely, they can always come back now—that the Divine Courage is not just a representation of the state's courage, it's a stand-in for courage itself. It reflects—it reflects the Platonic ideal, the ideal courage.

And I think that the thing that New Asterism does and puts at the center of it, is that while either of those things might be true, we as individuals have to embody those traits to a divine degree. We have to—it's like a—it's like a very intense divinity by works, like grace by—or salvation by works style faith that is about embodying divine virtue, and the best way to do that, says Gur Sevraq, is by coming here to Palisade. I don't care if you're Stel Orion or Stel Columnar, I don't care if you're on—what side of the war you're on, drop what you're doing, come here to the Bontive Valley, come here to join the Divine Resonance, come here to the Temple of the Threshold, pick up a spade, join us in changing the world, and making the world a reflection of divine values through yourself, right? You have to make the world reflect the divinity that you see in the state, because otherwise—and like, you can imagine how easily this fits into old Gur Sevraq's materialism, right?

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Where it's like, ah, you have to change the material world to be good, [LAUGHS] like the Divines are.

[JACK LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: I've changed myself to be good like the Divines are. And that is very appealing in this very individualistic way, and again is cover for a settler-colonial project that everyone has been like—I don't know that—there are definitely—there are definitely people in the middle of their feelings about Pal—I think the bulk of people think, 'oh, we have to go home to Palisade,' but there are people who are on the edges, who are like, 'I don't know if we should go to Palisade and the Twilight Mirage, like, shouldn't we not do that?' And this has cleared that shit right up for most of them.

JACK: Because it is holy.

AUSTIN: Most of them are like, 'oh, yeah, it's holy. This whole practice of return is holy,' et cetera. Which again—

JACK: And—

AUSTIN: All of the return language from when Gur Sevraq used to be a Perennial person, like, the current Gur Sevraq has found a way to retroactively make every other belief he's ever had be a step on the road here. You know? There—the scales have fallen from their eyes, but every step they took was a step on the road towards paradise. You know?

JACK: Yeah. Yeah. And, you know, another way of linking this back to, you know, how we were talking about the sort of conception of Christianity and the crusades, is like, people who were, you know, in England or in Europe and who were involving themselves in the crusades sort—not just as a holy mission in the sense of that Gur is calling people to Palisade, but also as a, um... as a holy space in which they can embody, you know, 'this is a place where I can show holy bravery.'

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: 'This is a place where I can show holy virtue, where I can show generosity, where I can show, you know, courage,' and in that way that's very much this New Asterist thing, right? Where it's not just about the cultivation of home, the—what does Gur call it? A field? This is a—

AUSTIN: A garden. It's not a field, it's a garden.

JACK: It's not a field, it's a garden, but it's like a very—a very cultivated garden.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Uh-huh.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And like, I want to be clear, like, I mean as much—if someone out there feels like, 'but gardens are good,' I want you to ask whose fucking land it is you put a garden on.

JACK: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, truly. And there are listeners who are like, my land, and they're right about that, obviously, like we of course have Indigenous listeners, but like, if you are on colonized land and you like your garden, I want you to sit a little bit—and I'm—and I'm not saying I'm above that. Like, this is me—I'm the one who said 'it's not a field, it's a garden' four years ago, and I'm now tangled up in that, because the person who said that was part of a colonial effort to police the fucking garden!

[JACK CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: And then she felt bad about it. You know what I mean? Like, that is not—you cannot—she, again, this is Twilight Mirage stuff, but when Gray Gloaming comes to Palisade, it is as a weapon. [CHUCKLES] And you don't get to free yourself from that because you ended up on the right side. That is what the end of Twilight Mirage is about in so many ways. And so, and so, I do—it is a garden. Twilight—or, Gur Sevraq uses that term and wants you to think of the best garden possible, not just the, like over—you know, not just like the primped and like, excessive—

JACK: Like, British, old British garden.

AUSTIN: British, or French garden that is like incredibly geometric and clearly, you know, man-made, right? That style of like, the hedge mazes and the everything in the exact right place, you know. And whatever the version of a garden is that you think is appealing, but is fundamentally about transforming a wilderness into a cultivated, civilized space. And this is not me saying that gardens are bad, right? Like, again, think about the Twill who are all about permaculture, who are all about this sort of other version of sustainable living, and ecological thinking, and all that stuff, like, I also—there are also places this season that are about that being a positive thing to work through, but I—it's all about complicating that shit, you know? So. I don't know why people don't listen to our podcast. It's weird that we've spent an hour not getting to the first turn of this and instead talking about big picture—

JACK: [LAUGHS] The politics of gardens?

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

ART: [CHUCKLING] Friends at the Table, tune in and we'll yell at you about why your garden is morally suspect.

AUSTIN: Your garden is fine, but it—you know, but it ain't perfect, right?

ART: It ain't perfect.

JACK: No, no.

AUSTIN: And what it's being used to cover—

JACK: Only the perfect garden is perfect, and that is on the Palis—planet of Palisade.
[LAUGHING] Come and help cultivate—

AUSTIN: [LAUGHS] The perfect garden, yes.

JACK: Right, but yeah. It's not just the—it's not just the being bad—

ART: I certainly hope that when this is edited, though, [LAUGHING] that we are not an hour into this episode.

[JACK LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Uh, we might be. I think we might be, Art.

[ART LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: I'm looking at the—I'm looking at where we're at right now, and I know that first 33 minutes was about *DC Universe Online*.

ART: I'm just hoping that some of the first hour is gonna get cut in the edit. Certainly this. I'm saying stuff that won't make it.

[AUSTIN LAUGHS]

JACK: Oh, you're here. Welcome. We're gonna say plot critical stuff now.

AUSTIN: What were you gonna s—

JACK: Clem is 6'1".

[AUSTIN AND ART LAUGH]

AUSTIN: Alright, what were you gonna say, Jack?

JACK: I was gonna say that, yeah, like, you know, beyond it just being like, 'come and cultivate the garden,' and that being the holy—the holy purpose, it is very much like, the garden is the place that you can show these divine virtues to yourself, and to the world, most clearly.

AUSTIN: Yes. God, you know that there are like—this is the, you know, 'we're gonna highlight for the next 30 minutes in today's—in today's mass, we're gonna—' probably wouldn't say mass, what's the word? What's like, the broader version of a—

ART: Service?

AUSTIN: A service, today's service, yeah. 'We're gonna highlight some of the great gardens people have been building, they've been sending in their videos, and this is a garden of dynamism.'

ART: My god, this is a very televangelist—

AUSTIN: I—it's called the Temple of the Threshold—it's a big temple being held up by fuckin'—it's—that's a mega-church. Look at it. [CHUCKLES]

JACK: And it's like, 'we are proud, and—'

ART: [LAUGHING] What's your point?

JACK: '—we are honored to work with the third division of fusiliers whose work clearing the brush outside Carleon demonstrated—'

AUSTIN: Cut to images of flamethrowers going.

JACK: Just fire, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright.

JACK: And I don't want to get—wait, final thing. I don't want to get too close to the—they're not only doing gardening here, you know? [CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: They are—they were—even they would be saying, you know, this is about commerce, this is about—

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: —you know, settling, this is about building houses, this is about, you know, turning this planet to the place that we know it can go.

AUSTIN: The garden is a metaphor.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But the garden is real, and in City City, metaphors are real.

[JACK AND ART LAUGH]

AUSTIN: Ah, alright. Let's take our first action. Who wants to go first? As a reminder, we each get one conflict scene, we'll choose it, we will play the scene, we will resolve it, and then we will get outcomes.

ART: Um—

JACK: I went first last time.

ART: I would like to not go first.

JACK: Oh, it's the March Foundation. [CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Yeah, I went last last time. Yes.

ART: I thought I went last last time.

AUSTIN: No, we ended on that chase, didn't we?

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah, you were in the—

ART: [OVERLAPPING] I thought we ended on the—

JACK: No, because we went down into the Diadem—

AUSTIN: We went—yeah, we went Bilateral Intelligence Service, Divine Crusade, March Institute.

ART: Okay. Here's what I—here's the thing. I want to do a wayward faction thing—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: And I'm not sure how to do that, so I don't want to go first, because I want our first scene to go real smooth.

AUSTIN: Just a regular old thing.

ART: Yeah, just a regular old thing while I figure out what the hell I'm doing.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna reread the conflict turn stuff because of the potential that there's changes here that we don't want to miss, so—

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: So I'm going to reread that as we go forward.

[1:00:02]

“Three conflict scenes are played during each turn, one tied to each division of the Authority. Some conflict scenes will invite everyone to play, taking turns choosing scenes. In this case, some players won't get to issue one, so give priority to those—the ideas that they're excited about—” it's only three of us, we will all get a scene. “When you choose a scene, also choose which faction will be representing the Cause's efforts or interests during it, and tap that faction. If it's already tapped, the faction is destroyed. If you have no factions that aren't tapped, or just don't want to tap when you can skip it, still play the scene out, but the division automatically wins when you get to the resolution.”

So I think a wayward faction can still be tapped there, to answer that question you just had. Then we play the scene, this all looks the same to me. There's challenges in some of them. You have to do some dice rolls, you roll the single d6, Authority's major division, you need a 5 or more, if it's a minor division you need a 3 or more, keep note of how many successes and failures happen, et cetera. Reminder that we can tap a faction to skip a roll and add a success, so that's another place wayward factions could come in, Art, is, you know, a wayward faction could be what gets tapped to add a success somewhere.

ART: Sure, they can also tap to force a failure during a conflict scene.

AUSTIN: Correct. Correct. The other way, yes. So like, maybe—

ART: But I'd have to pass that along to you—you'd have to do that on my behalf.

AUSTIN: During a scene where you are—

ART: Or during—oh—

JACK: No, during a conflict scene.

ART: A conflict scene, not a—

AUSTIN: Yeah, during a conflict scene. Yeah, yeah, not—no, no, correct. There are things that I do get sometimes, like tokens, like—I guess I'll note this for both of y'all in case you missed it—I did add a clock here, an eight-step clock on the "Authority/Divisions" page called "question mark, question mark, question mark, question mark, alert, question mark, question mark, question mark, question mark" and that's at 1 of 8.

ART: A classic.

AUSTIN: In fact, I'm just gonna go ahead and make that 2 of 8. Right, oop, I made that—I made that 1 of 2.

JACK: 1 of 2.

[JACK AND ART CHUCKLE]

AUSTIN: Here we go. No, that's wrong too. I just do it here? Okay, yeah.

ART: There it is.

AUSTIN: 2 of 8. That's going to advance every arc by one, basically. Or every—

JACK: Okay. Unless they actively spend time trying to figure out what the hell that is.

AUSTIN: Trying to figure out—so I guess how—it will advance on—it will advance on, this, here, at this moment, on the faction game, and then I'm going to advance it again on the downtime if they don't try to stop it, so, that's—

JACK: And if they want to figure it out, they gotta—[CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Then that's on them, a hundred percent. I'll start teasing what that is a little bit, because I don't want to just leave it at question mark—you know, this is—there are things moving around. There are strange readings. There are unanswerable questions. I think specifically strange readings makes the most sense, right? Things are moving in the dark, and people are like, it's probably an Affliction.

ART: You know when's a good time for a real strong tease?

AUSTIN: What's that?

ART: Maybe even revealing it?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Step five.

AUSTIN: Step five. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Only three ticks left.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that sounds right. We'll see how that goes.

ART: If they want to investigate, I think you should do it much sooner, but.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I mean, I'll tease them more directly and give them more opportunity to

investigate, you know.

ART: Sometimes our friends in the Cause, they're not—they're not always as curious as we want them to be.

AUSTIN: They've got a lot of other things going on. You know?

ART: Not—yeah, I'm not saying they're bad.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So am I going first? Who's going first? Is it me?

JACK: I think you're going first, yeah.

ART: I think you're going first.

AUSTIN: Okay. I think I am going—as a reminder, I'm playing as the March Institute, the Frontier Syndicate's March Institute, we are a minor division of the Authority. We have one ongoing clock called Harvest the Fundament Nodes. I guess I should note the alert one is not a Frontier Syndicate one, even though it's kind of near here. It's not meant to be that, it's a third party thing.

ART: That's just where the eights where when you were making—

AUSTIN: Cor—yeah, that's just where—yeah, I should actually probably put that on “Wayward Factions,” maybe, or something, but—well, maybe after we're done. Anyway, I have the Harvest the Fundament Nodes clock, and that's at 2 of 6, and I think I want to do an Unfurling Plan: “Everyone plays taking the role of either member—either members of the Authority as you hatch a plan of some nefarious nature, or the Cause as you figure out how to thwart the plan.” I think that's what I want to do. I'm just gonna peek ahead here. Um, maybe I don't want that. Wait, wait, wait. Maybe what I want is a Covert Op. Have we done a Covert Op? No.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: We haven't. Alright. I want to do a Covert Op. “Everyone plays. The Director assumes the role of various Authority or Cause characters, while other players act as agents for the opposite. Discuss—” which doesn't really work for us, exactly, but— “discuss what kind of undercover operation you're leading and what happens should you fail. Who are you? What part of the division or what factions are you tied to? Why were you chosen for this? What do you think about the mission? Playing the scene, players freely roleplay issuing challenges to escalate and complicate the scene. Continue playing until at least three rolls have been made, or the scene reaches what feels like a natural end. Look at the resolutions below for what that might look like.”

And then we have a bunch of challenges, which we'll get to when it's time to do those. I think what this is—again, the Frontier Syndicate's goal is to harvest the Fundament nodes, and the—I think that they've found—they've located where there is another Fundament node somewhere on the planet. I don't know where on the planet. If someone has a cool idea looking at this map of where a Fundament node could be, and it can be anywhere, I think it would be cool to do this sort of like, group of Frontier Syndicate people descending or ascending or breaching into some sort of place, and if you look at sort of what the scene

challenges are, you can see that they are, you know, they're about sneaking into a place.

And specifically the people or the thing that I have in mind, I have—I have two characters—I guess I have three characters in mind who are going on this mission together. One of them is—and they're three characters who I've been hoping to get onscreen, or two of them are characters who have not been onscreen at all yet, for the Frontier Syndicate. First is someone known only as Silverbrick. This is someone who is a Columnar architect, they're considered a visionary, they're a technologist, they're an urban planner, they have kind of a Robert Moses or Le Corbusier or Albert Speer thing going on, you know, the aesthetic mind behind the power, that style of—and they're just known as—

JACK: Yeah. State architecture.

AUSTIN: State architecture, exactly. And they are—or corporate architecture, right, in the case of of the Frontier Syndicate, but very much a corporate state, right? The—or nationalist corporation, maybe, said better. They were not—Silverbrick is their, you know, nom de plume, it is a name that they've taken on. They, you know, used to use a Columnar name of the sort that the rest of our Columnar names are, which is like, somewhere in the UK plus a verb, like Exanceaster March or Exeter Leap. Which, by the way, Exeter and Exanceaster are the same. That's the same place.

JACK: Yeah, it's the old name. It's like a Saxon name, right?

AUSTIN: It's the old name is Exanceaster. Yeah, uh-huh. I would so love Exanceaster March to have to meet Exeter Leap at some point. I truly wish I can will that into existence.

[JACK CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: So Silverbrick is this kind of, you know, high-minded visionary architect and futurist. Then there is a former Concretist hacker, so someone who used to be with the Concrete Front, and Grey Pond. Maybe before Grey—maybe before the revolution, or like, the Cause started up, otherwise that person could just be like, 'hey, yeah, the Cause started up. It's—here are the five—here are the six groups inside of it.' So maybe left before the arrival of like, Millennium Break, is a hacker named Blank Shore, happy that the—quote, 'the future is finally here.' He claims to be apolitical. He is just interested in technology, he's interested in how the Frontier Syndicate is like, making a world that's better for everybody because the technology will eventually like, make everybody's daily life just better. You know? Like, people don't understand what the—the way in which the mind of someone like Exanceaster Leap is actually like, deeply progressive, because it's all about making—

JACK: [CHUCKLES] Exanceaster March. You said Exanceaster Leap.

AUSTIN: Oh, I said Exanceaster Leap. Exanceaster March. Yeah, apologies—is actually like, all about helping other people. You know what I mean? Because it's just like, changing the world one step at a time. And this person just is like—is a hacker, right? Is like a classic—if they were playing—sorry, if he was playing in *The Sprawl*, he would have the hacker playbook, you know?

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: And then I think the third person on this group is Maidstone Cross, the head—the

head of Lock and Cross security services, the one who is still alive after Margate Lock died. And, you know, maybe we have some like, red shirts with us, right? But I think that that is the grouping. So it is the sort of architect and technologist, it is the hacker who can like, open doors and stuff, and also, you know, be a sort of ‘what is a hacker in a fantasy—in a sci-fi fantasy world?’ So maybe that also includes doing weird magic shit. And then, also, this kind of hardened, maybe grieving, um, mercenary. That’s the trio. I’ll drop those names in the chat for us. And we’re trying to get into a—I keep saying “us,” but you know, I don’t know who’s playing who in this, and who’s playing the Director, so to speak.

[1:10:00]

Who is—who is issuing the challenges. I guess this says anybody can issue the challenges, right? Do we think the Cause is—who in the Cause is trying to stop us, and help me make a decision on where this could be happening.

JACK: So—

AUSTIN: What’s the most interesting place another Fundament node could be?

JACK: My gut says that this is Grey Pond.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Because when I think of Fundament nodes, I think of them being deep within the earth, and I think of this being like, a spelunking expedition, almost.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Yeah, yeah.

JACK: And I think the idea of Grey Pond sappers and diggers and, you know, the drilling unit, almost getting wind of this, and either they have gotten their first and are fortifying it, and you know, you’re gonna have to sneak in, or they pick this up, and I think that that might inform where would be an interesting place to—ooh, I’ve got an idea.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: What if it’s like, fully under a city? Like it’s—

AUSTIN: Ah.

JACK: It’s under the—under the—like, you know, under the city is the sewage works and stuff like that, and then underneath that is some various ruins, and then underneath that is the Fundament node that you’re trying to break into.

AUSTIN: So then—so then the actual first image we get here is of this trio of people, the hardened middle-aged divorcee mercenary, the futurist architect, and the so-called apolitical hacker, all at the casino buffet in Braunton preparing to go underneath the—through—they’ve made, you know, they’ve made appropriate, you know, plans with the owner of the casino, that the casino is gonna let them in to—remember that scumbag? What was that scumbag’s name?

JACK: Oh, god.

ART: Oh, fuck. Um...

AUSTIN: Who ran that town. Was it Ol'D'Cassino? is that who it was?

JACK: It was. It was the D'Cassino Casino, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

JACK: There was that all that business with the watch, the like, 'you scammed me with my watch.'

AUSTIN: God. 'With my watch,' yeah. Very weird. You know, made the appropriate arrangements to get access to like, the sub basement here, as a place to begin, or, you know, drop down into the basements below, but we know that actually, the Concrete Front and the rest of Grey Pond actually has a base set up not too far out of the town, because that's what Millennium Break helped them set up during that game. Remember?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: They like, helped dig out all the caves and stuff.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: So how do we want to—how do we actually want to do this? Do we all—we could all take one of these characters and still issue challenges to one another, or one person could basically play as Grey Pond offering us challenges. Curious what people feel. I'm good with any of that.

JACK: It seems like we can all—like, these read well for either party, right? You know, like, someone will have to split off as a decoy, our plans are changed suddenly, stuff like that works well whether it's either.

AUSTIN: [OVERLAPPING] Right. Yes, you're right. We can bounce back and forth. Right, because the thing I didn't read before was that that both players should—or both sides of a conflict should be rolling—I guess—"Each also has its own list of challenges for players, including the Director, to make at each other. Some of these call for you to roll. When you do so, roll a single d6. If the scene is tied to the Authority's major division—" which it is not—"a 5+ is successful. If it's tied to one of the two minor divisions, a 3+ is success. Keep note of how many successes and fails are scored during the scene. If the players wish, they may tap a faction to skip and roll, and add a success. Remember if you're playing a division character during a scene, and you have to roll, a failure is a good outcome for the division, and you make sure to play out the challenge appropriately." So—

JACK: Right, so we should both be rolling.

AUSTIN: I think so, yes.

JACK: Or both sides should be rolling.

AUSTIN: Both sides. I think it's fine if only one side does, because it's still like, how many wins did you get versus failures, but yes.

ART: Right, the—

AUSTIN: Because you can just count failures versus wins, you know?

JACK: Huh.

ART: I think it's sort of fun if the three of us each play one of these—

AUSTIN: Me too.

ART: And just sort of like, we throw out challenges as appropriate.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I kind of like that idea. What's the first image we get after the image of the—we get the close-up shot of that—not the close-up shot—we actually get like, a mid shot of them, but they're filling the frame at the casino buffet, and then we just hard cut to them in the same positions taking up—like, the match cut to the same exact shot, but like in basement lighting. Who is playing who? Who wants to pick up one of these characters?

ART: I think I'll take Blank Shore, and I would like to just paint the like, in the casino buffet with a plate—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: Like, the only one with a plate, and then in the mirrored shot, it's like, they have like, a takeaway container.

[AUSTIN LAUGHS]

JACK: I will—

ART: With like, a roll, and like, a scoop of mashed potatoes.

JACK: I will take Silverbrick, who is doing the inverse. You know upstairs, they are like, absent-mindedly eating pistachio nuts, but what they're actually doing is looking at a—like, a blueprint of the building, and then we cut back down and they are still eating pistachio nuts, but are like, much more focused on like, 'alright, well, you know, I've been prepping for this. I can look at how this basement's gonna connect.'

AUSTIN: I guess I will be playing Maidstone Cross, who, you know, Margate Lock I described as having this kind of like—these kind of like, white ceramic plate, you know, plates on her body as like armor, but also just like as her Columnar body. I think Maidstone Cross is the opposite in some ways. You have to look close to find the joints. You have to look cl—it—looking at her is almost being like, 'are you a robot, or are you a person made of metal?' And, you know, helping that effect is that she wears glasses. She wears glasses over her face, despite being a Columnar who could get like, different robot eyes. She just has long thin rectangular glasses on. And in this case, she is wearing kind of light military gear that is, you know, I think she tends to be—tended to be more of the operations person, and, you know, maybe behind her she has some people running back and forth, you know, some other, you know, mercenary-type folks setting up shop appear, setting up like, a base camp or whatever, and, you know, in this sub basement, and I think she probably is holding a gun of some sort, maybe just a pistol, with like a—it's not a flashlight, it's a—it is a—it doesn't—it's like if a flashlight could be more rectangular, almost like, you know like, the thin hose attachment on a vacuum cleaner? On like, a vacuum cleaner's tube? Or a vacuum cleaner's like, hose? You know what I'm talking about?

JACK: Yes, mhm.

AUSTIN: There's like a thin one? Imagine that, and like, it's hollow in that way, but then the place you point it gets lit up, but there's no light on the actual attachment—

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: —so it's producing light somewhere, but it doesn't give you away. You get to be in the dark still.

JACK: Oh, that's great.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And so, she is she is adjusting her glasses, and then—and then being like—

AUSTIN (as MAIDSTONE CROSS): Alright, I guess we go in.

AUSTIN: And then we get the reverse shot of a [CHUCKLES] huge hole that has been bored into the side of this sub-basement.

[JACK AND ART CHUCKLE]

JACK: Yeah. God, little, you know, tiny lamps that helped with the digging, but only extending so far. I am imagining Silverbrick looking like character actor Eugene Levy.

AUSTIN: Oh, perfect. Ideal.

JACK: You know, glasses. Dark hair. Holding the—an older fellow, holding the blueprint. Does he also have one of these torches, or is this torch kind of, you think, your deal?

AUSTIN: I think this is—this is my deal, I think.

JACK: This is like, special tech, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean, yeah, I think it—for the first debut of it. I think it would be great if Silverbrick kept looking at it and being like, 'I want one of those.' You know what I mean? Like, 'how do I get one of those?'

JACK: [CHUCKLES] Yeah. And I think Silverbrick says—

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): Alright, everybody. Maidstone, you want to be taking the lead here?

AUSTIN (as MAIDSTONE CROSS): Yeah, yeah.

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): So, uh—

AUSTIN: Steps forward.

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): As I said before, we're looking for the Fundament node. These things were usually marked, so I think once we get close, it shouldn't be too difficult.

ART (as BLANK SHORE): Mhm.

ART: Blank Shore is not impressed with this.

AUSTIN: [LAUGHS] This is Eugene Levy in the most serious role of his life.

JACK: This is Eugene Levy being like, 'I've got to take this very seriously.' [CHUCKLES]

[AUSTIN CHUCKLES]

ART: Eugene Levy is gonna win an Oscar this year.

AUSTIN: [LAUGHING] Yeah.

JACK: [CHUCKLING] It's gonna be fucking incredible.

ART: Gonna make everyone forget about the pie fucking movie.

[AUSTIN AND JACK LAUGH]

JACK: Look, sometimes you facecast someone for their—for their face, rather than their demeanor.

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah. Mhm.

ART: And you just forget about their 30 years of playing goofy—

[AUSTIN LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: I think—

JACK: That's theater.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think we do not follow this kind of natural cave system for too long before we finally find the very first—like, there's a—there is a line drawn, you know, on the cave wall, like a 'in white chalk' type situation. It's not actually white chalk, it's—because it's permanent, and it's like etched in the side, but it has that feeling of looking at white chalk drawn somewhere. Very sharp lines, right? And I go—

AUSTIN (as MAIDSTONE CROSS): This is the door. Should get us into the facility, not to the node. I think this is you?

ART: Well, I think—oh.

AUSTIN: What were you gonna say?

[1:20:00]

ART: No, I think you should go.

AUSTIN: Oh, I was just gonna say, I think this is "a magical trap bars the way—do you take a slow route around or roll to disarm it?"

ART: Sure. And I would like take a moment to describe that I'm facecasting Blank Shore as Jason Biggs now. That's, um—

AUSTIN: Great. Good. [LAUGHS]

JACK: Who's Jason Biggs, is this another—oh, yeah. [CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Sorry, one second. You cannot face cast Silverbrick as Eugene Levy, because I did establish—

JACK: Because—

AUSTIN: —that they are Columnar.

JACK: That they are Columnar. That's absolutely right.

AUSTIN: They could be 'what if Eugene Levy is a Columnar?'

ART: [OVERLAPPING] Which is super exciting.

JACK: No, instead I am going to facecast them as the vibe that you get from—hold on a second, I just need to find the exact thing that I'm looking for here.

AUSTIN: I'm so curious where you're going.

ART: I'm not giving up on Jason Biggs even though it's not a connection anymore.

JACK: [CHUCKLES] Okay.

AUSTIN: You're staying Jason Biggs. Yeah, yeah.

ART: Yeah. Standing pat with Jason Biggs.

AUSTIN: But Jason Biggs with some sort of like—because, again, the Concretists have like, cybernetics to help them breathe, in the concrete—

ART: Yeah. Darth Biggs.

AUSTIN: So like cybernetic—Darth Biggs, got it. Yeah. Uh-huh.

JACK: [CHUCKLES] Darth Biggs. I'm looking for a very specific kind of elevator.

AUSTIN: [LAUGHS] Describe it.

JACK: So, this is a rare sort of elevator, especially in the US, and it came up on my TikTok the other day because someone was like, 'oh, wait, shit, this is an Adolfo broad elevator' or whatever, it's like a manufacturing style of making from an elevator company. There's these very distinctive textured buttons, instead of the like, metal of usual elevator buttons, it has these big, very tactile plastic buttons. It feels like a relic in a kind of cool way. I'm not gonna be able to find this.

AUSTIN: Interesting.

JACK: But yes.

AUSTIN: Yeah, and this sounds like a hard thing to find, Jack. Someone is listening and is like, 'I know exactly what you're talking about.'

JACK: But yes, the—

AUSTIN: Do you find them more in Europe or something? Where do you find them?

JACK: No, I have never seen one of these. They're very rare.

AUSTIN: Oh, they're fundamentally very rare.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: They're not very rare for the United States.

JACK: No, I believe that they are—they may have been around—and I think this is also speaks to Silverbrick—they may have been ubiquitous at a point, but now they are notable in that they are, you know, this very tactile, very blocky plastic heavy elevator.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. And that is what you look like.

JACK: Yes. Or, from the vibe of that elevator.

AUSTIN: Right, right, yes. Anyway, I think that this is a magical ward. "A magical trap bars the way. Do you take a slow route around or roll to disarm it?" And Maidstone Cross kind of like, gestures to let you go forward, Blank Shore, to see if maybe you could get the door open?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So roll. That's 1d6, and we want—

ART: Low numbers.

AUSTIN: We want low numbers. We want 1 or 2, right?

ART: Oof.

AUSTIN: That's tough.

ART: Sure is.

JACK: Oh!

AUSTIN: Well, there's a success.

ART: Not for Darth Biggs.

[AUSTIN AND JACK CHUCKLE]

AUSTIN: It's very confusing because there is a Star Wars character already named Biggs.

ART: Um—oh, right, yeah.

AUSTIN: So now it's like, 'did that Biggs has become a Darth,' and that's fucked up.

ART: Well, it would mean a lot to the story, honestly.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I guess so. I guess so. I just remembered, also, we have over here on the conflict turn page of the thing, we actually have—remember we can track this stuff. We can track the successes and failures.

JACK: Yes, yes.

AUSTIN: So we've gone ahead here in conflict turn, success, one, boom, got it. Alright. What happens, Art? You succeeded.

ART: How do you hack magic?

AUSTIN: I would love to know.

ART: I think it's like—I don't want to just—forgive me for doing two 80s pop culture pulls in a row with Darth Vader and now *Ghostbusters*, but you remember like, what the Ghostbuster, like, ghost detector looked like?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Like the handheld thing, and it's got like the two, like, old-style looking antennas?

AUSTIN: A ECG meter? EKG meter? PKE meter. A PKE meter.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: Sort of like that, and sort of like, you make contact with the magic with the antennae—

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: And then you sort of like, adjust the knobs, like a hacking mini game in a—

[AUSTIN LAUGHS]

ART: You know, like in a Ubisoft game.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, yeah.

ART: And like, once you get the wave to line up properly—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: The magic goes away.

AUSTIN: And there—what's that look like? In—what's the magic going away here? Is it that the the lines reveal that it is actually literally a door there, is there like a—is there a flash of light or the opposite as things dim? What's it look like?

ART: I think as the device becomes in tune with the magic, you sort of like, when you pull the device back, it like, causes the magic to like, stretch, and then break.

AUSTIN: Ooh. That's fun.

JACK: Hm.

AUSTIN: And seeing that, I think Maidstone, still taking the lead, just like goes 'alright' and then like, pushes forward, a hand on the—just like, the wall of the cave and pushes it, and it opens like a door. And we are instantly now inside of a much smoother cave system. And I suspect that this is where our troublemakers have set up to stop us from getting any deeper.

[JACK LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: That you suggested, Jack. Right?

JACK: Yeah. God.

AUSTIN: What happens?

JACK: You—let's see. Let me just, um—

AUSTIN: Yeah, describe what I see, since I'm taking the lead at this point.

JACK: Yeah. Oh, man. It's like—it's like perfect, perfect timing. As you move through the door on the other side of the sort of—the cave opens into the smoother caves like you described, and a sort of an antechamber, almost, like the walls have been smoothed out and you can see that there's a sort of a rock door on the other side descending further in, and as you pass through the door, a figure on the other side of the room has just completed turning away to look down that hallway.

[AUSTIN AND ART HUM]

JACK: If you'd been one second earlier, you'd have come through the door and looked dead into their eyes. Or if—

AUSTIN: Right, if I had not rolled my eyes when pushing the door open and been kind of lackadaisical, I would have seen this person, yeah.

JACK: Yeah. And as—it's Lock and Cross, right?

AUSTIN: I am Maidstone Cross, correct.

JACK: Yes, as fifty percent—

AUSTIN: If I'm getting this wrong, then that would be a problem, because the other one is dead.

JACK: No. What I mean to say is, you are smart enough, even rolling your eyes, to open a door quietly.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: So this person doesn't even know that you're here. Even if you had looked into their face, you wouldn't have—well, you'd have seen eyes. This person is wearing a hood, but it's a hood of a heavy, almost tarpaulin fabric, to keep dust off from being stationed down—

AUSTIN: Very expensive.

JACK: [CHUCKLING] Very expensive.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah.

JACK: Being stationed down here. And their whole vibe is very thick, heavy clothing. It's probably very warm for them down here, but it's safe, and it helps protect them against rockfalls as well, where, you know, the clothing is almost armored in some level against rockfalls.

[AUSTIN HUMS]

JACK: Underneath their hood, they are wearing a pair of goggles that have like, little orange circles on them, so had you been looking into their eyes, you'd have seen two orange circles where their eyes are, and they are wearing breathing apparatus down in this cave. But right now they are facing directly away from you. You must quickly and quietly take out a watchman. Who will roll to do the job?

AUSTIN: Oh, it has to be Maidstone. Right? This is why I'm here. Right?

ART: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Alright. This is d6, looking for a 1 or 2. That's brutal.

ART: It's really—

JACK: Woah!

AUSTIN: However, however, here is what happens. I go 'shh.' I put my my mouth, my finger up to my mouth, as if to say 'don't make any any noise.' And I turn the vacuum cleaner flashlight attachment sideways, so that when I point it, instead of being a big circular or square, or kind of rectangular light that would give us away, it turns into a tiny, like, the size of a quarter on its side, a very thin little light, and I lift it up and point it at the back of this person's hooded, you know, cloak or whatever it is, a cape.

JACK: It's like a cowl, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. And I don't—there's no trigger on this gun. The thing that you thought was an attachment is in fact the barrel itself, and I just hold it there for a few seconds. And then the person drops. As if they have been pierced through. There's no noise, there is no explosion of light or sound. I have simply lasered them.

ART: Wow, lasered.

AUSTIN: And then I switch it back the other way, and hold it low so that it's not projecting too far in front of us in a way that would give us away, and I say—

AUSTIN (as MAIDSTONE CROSS): Let's keep moving.

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): Well, they—are they dead?

JACK: Says Silverbrick.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN (as MAIDSTONE CROSS): I say check.

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): Huh. Well, uh...

ART (as BLANK SHORE): Can't come back from that.

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): Doesn't look like it. Alright, well, I suppose we better hustle.

AUSTIN: Um—

ART: Um—

AUSTIN: Go ahead, Art.

ART: Alright, I think we get down—this isn't a roll, but I think we go a little further, and we find this like, outcropping, and we—we “find a position that overlooks something secret. Describe it.”

[1:30:07]

AUSTIN: Mm.

ART: What is the secret beneath—

AUSTIN: Braunton, the casino city.

ART: Braunton. And this is a question for all of us, really.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: I don't really think we have to build this together, but.

AUSTIN: Great question. I mean, the first thing that comes to mind for me is like, the classic ‘there's a city down here.’

ART: Oh, that's interesting.

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean?

ART: Old Braunton.

AUSTIN: I don't know that it's lived in anymore. Wait, what'd you say?

ART: Old Braunton.

AUSTIN: Old Braunton is down here, yeah. Two things—two things in my mind here. One is, of course, *Neon Genesis Evangelion* where they have an entire city underneath a sort of like, plated armor top place. The second thing is a thing I was just reading about called Derinkuyu underground city. Are you all familiar with this?

JACK: No.

ART: No.

AUSTIN: I will link it to you. Derinkuyu underground city is an ancient city, multi-level underground city, of the Median Empire in the Derinkuyu district of Nevşehir Province,

Turkey, extending to a depth of approximately 85 meters, 280 feet. It's large enough to have sheltered as many as 20,000 people together with their livestock and food stores. It is the largest evacuated—or, sorry, excavated—underground city in Turkey, and is one of several underground complexes found throughout Cappadocia. 20,000 people used to come here to, like, hide, basically, for some amount of time during wars and persecutions, over—effectively, over thousands of years, I want to say? Or hundreds of years? During the Achaemenid Empire which is 500 BC, so since then. You know, whenever a war was rolling through, people would come here to hide out and let it roll past them, basically. In fact, it seems as if the caves may have been built initially by the soft rock—in the soft volcanic rock of the Cappadocian region by the Phrygians [CHUCKLES]—

JACK: Ohoho!

ART: Woah!

AUSTIN: —an ancient Indo-European speaking people who inhabited central-western Anatolia in antiquity.

JACK: That's incredible.

AUSTIN: But this continued to get used over the centuries, to the degree that apparently Cappadocian Greeks and Armenians were using it in the 1900s to escape persec—periodic persecutions. A Cambridge linguist who was conducting research in 1909 to 1911 on the Cappadocian Greek-speaking natives in the area recorded that in 1909 when there was news of nearby massacres, a great part of the population took refuge in the chambers, and for some nights did not venture to sleep above ground.

JACK: That's extraordinary.

AUSTIN: Mhm. So I think this is that, and I think it—

JACK: This is—

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

JACK: This is especially funny, because Millennium—this is very Millennium Break, also, on some level.

AUSTIN: It is.

JACK: To show up and be like, 'we're gonna help dig tunnels, and help you install people here.'

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: With no understanding whatsoever that there was already a city [CHUCKLES] buried beneath the—

[ART LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: 20 feet over, and now they found it, right? Because presumably this person—the

person I just shot in the back of the head has [CHUCKLES] seen that before.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Or has now seen it. Maybe they—[LAUGHING] I don't know if they called it in or not. They must have. If we run into another Millennium Break person at this point, it's clear—or another Cause person at this point, it's clear that they know about this place. But—

JACK: Oh, yeah. Definitely.

AUSTIN: I think that this place predated the—I think that this is from the or—I think this is a place that people tried to hide from some early occupation of Palisade. The arrival of the New Earth Hegemony, or of the Rapid Evening, or of Advent, the Advent Group, or any of these other places, people who would use this place a staging ground. I think it even predates the end of Twilight Mirage, when it became the place where the Divine Principality was born. I think it's very much like, an early place that they—people had to hide from the groups that were the antagonists in Twilight Mirage. So I think it's like, it's old, right?

JACK: Fascinating.

AUSTIN: It's like, you know, 5500 years old or something?

JACK: Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: So that's fun.

ART: Yeah, that's fun.

AUSTIN: So that's what we discovered here, is Old Braunton, which definitely was called something different, but we're calling it Old Braunton in the moment, you know?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: 'Oh yeah, Old Braunton,' we say and write it down.

JACK: I think that like, a little tiny light on Silverbrick's face lights up, like a tiny LED, and there's the whine that we recognize immediately as like a camera flash powering up, and their right eye just like, flashes brightly as they photograph this underground city. Like, woah, good.

AUSTIN: You look at the photograph. You look down at the photograph and you see something you did not expect moving—god, I've also realized this is also a—[CHUCKLES] I am unfortunately also doing a *Dragon's Dogma* bit. In the DLC of *Dragon's Dogma*, you eventually do descend deep enough into what you thought was like a fortress to eventually find a deep underground city that was like a bronze age, like, fantasy city, and just like that one—

[JACK LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: One of the things prowling the alleys and streets of it—you see a fucking minotaur.

JACK: [LAUGHING] Woah!

ART: Woah.

AUSTIN: In the photo, there is a tall, bulking—a bulky slash hulking figure with horns coming out of its head, marching down one of these streets with a huge two-handed weapon, like, hefted—you can't make out the weapon, it's probably a big axe or something, but you can just see that there's like a big—something big being carried as this person, you know, this being moves through—and I think that they're like 12 feet tall, you know?

JACK: Down below us in the—

AUSTIN: They're fuckin'—down below us. And I think that this—I was gonna actually read one of these challenges here, but maybe I don't—maybe we don't need to read a challenge. Maybe you've just seen a minotaur and I've introduced a new fact that we can begin to play with here. And I—

ART: Wait, is the minotaur only visible on the photo, or?

AUSTIN: I think by the time you look, it's not there, but god. Ghost minotaurs that you can only see when you—

ART: Ghost minotaurs?

AUSTIN: I mean, I will tell you, this minotaur—I'm sorry, I skipped a very important thing that maybe we didn't see here—there—it's a three-horned minotaur, almost like a triceratops minotaur.

JACK: Woah.

ART: Tricerataur.

AUSTIN: Yes. This is one of the minions, or pawns, of the Affliction known as Ravel, also known as the Hedge Maze, also known as Labyrinth's Thread.

ART: I love it as an invisible ghost.

JACK: I love it. I agree.

AUSTIN: That you can only see with the flash of a light and a camera?

JACK: Yeah.

ART: Yeah, it only shows up on film.

AUSTIN: Love it. Incredible.

JACK: It's because it's—it is emitting, in the same way that you know on earth radioactive particles emit a certain kind of energy—that these minotaurs are emitting a certain kind of electricity—electricity—energy that I cannot detect, but celluloid or whatever the film stock is—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: They burn themselves onto film stock. Oh, you know like, when you take photographs of highly radioactive stuff, and the camera picks up the white spots?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's that, but a minotaur.

ART: [CHUCKLING] But a minotaur.

AUSTIN: Right. Or, of course, when there's ghost orbs. Right.

JACK: Oh. [LAUGHS] Or when there's ghost orbs, yes, absolutely. When you see ghost orbs. God, imagine if we took a photo in *Phasmophobia* and instead of ghost orbs, it just showed up—

AUSTIN: It was a Triceratops minotaur?

JACK: [CHUCKLING] Just a minotaur.

AUSTIN: Ah. And I want to be clear, I still also think the Cause is [CHUCKLING] down here, too.

JACK: Yes. Also, these things—it's not that they will only—they are embodied, they're just invisible. You know, you could get—you could get grabbed by one.

AUSTIN: Right. Oh, yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

ART: But they might be a little more passive than your normal minotaur because they're used to the—

AUSTIN: Correct.

ART: Experience of being intangible.

JACK: Oh, that's true.

AUSTIN: Maybe. I guess. Yeah, sure. And just for clarity, also, in case anyone's wondering which Affliction is Ravel, the one on the top left. The one that looks kind of like a loose brain neuron walking around.

JACK: Oh, yes, I see it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's Ravel, so. That's—the minotaur, the Triceratops minotaur, works for Ravel.

JACK: Not depicted in the picture.

AUSTIN: "Works for" suggests—I don't know that the minotaur takes a salary, [CHUCKLES] but is a minion or pawn of Ravel.

JACK: Oh, it's a good game.

ART: They're in the—they're in the labyrinth union, so it's a good gig.

AUSTIN: Right. It's a good gig if you can get it.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Anyway, let's keep moving here. I mean, I think that this is—this is also “our intel turning out to be inaccurate. What's wrong, how do you improvise?”

[JACK CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: And I think Maidstone Cross—

ART: It's very wrong.

AUSTIN: Maidstone Cross turn—like, sees that photo and then goes like—

AUSTIN (as MAIDSTONE CROSS): He didn't say anything about minotaurs. Should I—do we have to go get more people?

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): Well, obviously I can't speak to tactical matters. I'm here as a surveyor, and as an expert on the Fundament nodes themselves. Do you think we need more people to deal with the minotaurs?

AUSTIN (as MAIDSTONE CROSS): It depends on how many minotaurs there are, and if we're going to find more people from Grey Pond.

ART (as BLANK SHORE): How could we possibly know how many 'only show up on photograph' minotaurs there are?

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): Well, we don't know that—

AUSTIN (as MAIDSTONE CROSS): Take more photographs.

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): Look, we don't—

ART (as BLANK SHORE): Unless they're all in one photo...

AUSTIN (as MAIDSTONE CROSS): We could try to find a position from which we could get a more advantageous picture.

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): Hm.

AUSTIN (as MAIDSTONE CROSS): Look.

ART (as BLANK SHORE): That's not a bad idea. Sorry for being—

AUSTIN: And points to like, an old church temple. Like an old church spire, rather, like a—you know, the top of a bell tower attached to some sort of temple.

ART: Yeah, it sort of sounds like someone wanted to split off as a decoy to try to lure ghost minotaurs into the square.

AUSTIN: [CHUCKLES] It does sound like that. Who has the—who has the camera?

ART: Roll—who goes, rolls, and see how successful they are?

[1:40:02]

JACK: I am the camera. [CHUCKLES]

AUSTIN: Ah. Oh, right, you are the camera.

JACK: [CHUCKLING] Yes.

AUSTIN: Well, roll.

JACK (as SILVERBRICK): I don't like this.

JACK: Says—[CHUCKLES]

ART: Well, no, that's not the decoy—one of us has to be the decoy.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see. You were saying—right, right, right. So that—so that they can go get the—

ART: They can go to the top of the church spire.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. You know what?

JACK: But if we're doing this, why don't we—who am I to suggest it, [CHUCKLES] but why don't we just try and, you know, slip through this—avoid this situation on our way to the Fundament node?

ART: Well, we can't—we're going to need to keep getting people through here.

JACK: Oh, so we're here as a—

AUSTIN: We're trying to extract the Fundament node.

ART: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

ART: Which isn't a—you know, so we don't want to come back with our—with our arms full, and—

JACK: Run into a load of—

ART: Get pounded by invisible minotaur—tricerataurs.

AUSTIN: Tricerataurs.

JACK: [LAUGHS] Wait—from the island Tricera?

AUSTIN: Tricera, yeah. Uh-huh. Exactly.

ART: An amateur—

AUSTIN: [LAUGHING] Well they ain't from fuckin' Minos, you know? So.

JACK: Well, you know—

AUSTIN: Palitaur? Brontaur?

JACK: Ast—what's the place called? Atlantis maybe existed.

AUSTIN: Right, sure, uh-huh.

JACK: Minos might have done a long time ago.

AUSTIN: Minos, yeah, yeah.

JACK: Um, okay. Okay, who's—who's—is it—

AUSTIN: I'll break off if you want me to break—I mean, you tell me. I think it's probably Maidstone, right? Unless—

ART: That sounds more—

AUSTIN: Unless, unless what we want to introduce is that Blank Shore has some sort of like—is a gadgets-themed hero? [LAUGHS]

[ART AND JACK LAUGH]

ART: And has like an air—has a Funkmaster Flex air horn on there?

AUSTIN: [LAUGHS] I was gonna go for like, some sort of magical technology, for like cloaking or doing decoy, you know what I mean? But yeah, Funkmaster Flex, drop a bomb on it. Yeah.

ART: [LAUGHS] Oh, no, I was just like—yeah.

AUSTIN: [MIMICS SOUND OF EXPLOSION]

ART: 'Come here, Minotaurs.'

[JACK LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Exactly.

JACK: All the minotaurs are like, 'oh, what? What's going on over there?'

AUSTIN: Do you want—who wants to roll? I mean, we don't have skills, you know what I mean? If we're gonna roll the dice, it's gonna be one die, and we're looking for a 1 or a 2, so.

ART: Um, I mean, I'll roll it because it makes more sense for Blank to fail at this.

AUSTIN: Right, sure.

ART: And we're—that's overwhelmingly likely.

AUSTIN: Well, we'll see. We've been winning, so.

JACK: Ah.

AUSTIN: Well, there's—there's—

ART: Luck ran out.

AUSTIN: Luck ran out. What happens here?

ART: I think that is—it's the like, cavalier attitude of like, 'I'll just make a big fuss, and then when they come, I'll run away.'

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: And it's hard to run away from invisible—

[AUSTIN LAUGHS]

JACK: Oh, shit.

ART: —giants.

[AUSTIN GROANS]

JACK: God. Art, can I ask you a question?

ART: Yeah.

JACK: When the three photographs that I take of this moment are developed, what do I see in them?

ART: I think it's—there's just like, eight of these motherfuckers.

AUSTIN: [LAUGHING] That's photo one. What's photo two?

ART: I think photo two is, um—okay, so, this is gonna be like an action shot. We're gonna need a fast aperture for this.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay.

ART: But I think it's like, the moment of running into a minotaur's leg, right? Like—

JACK: Oh my god.

ART: The like, cartoony, like, all four limbs forward, torso just hitting the leg, before like, falling down.

JACK: It just looks like you have just been clotheslined by the air outside of the camera. Also, it's dark, is the other thing.

ART: Or ran into like, an invisible post.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Yeah.

ART: Like a telephone pole. Like, wrapped around a telephone pole.

JACK: [LAUGHING] Jesus. I forgot they were 12 feet tall.

AUSTIN: They're twelve feet tall. What's the third photo? [CHUCKLES] How bad is it?

ART: I think—I think Blank, like, trying to scramble away.

AUSTIN: Right, sure. But fundament—

ART: I mean, we don't need to kill off Blank here.

AUSTIN: No, no. Blank can get away here. The key is you were not a successful decoy in this moment. Right?

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: So we were not able to climb—maybe in this moment, what we get is a—Maidstone and Silverbrick are like, climbing the internal church tower, like the wooden stairs, very carefully, because they're like, mostly rotted through, you know? To get to the top of this tower, so that they can take the photos to identify where all of the—how many there are, even. Or maybe we're on our way back down. That's actually more fun. We've taken those photos. We know there are eight of them. Right? We've gotten that number. And now we're like, well, shit. We have to go get Blank. Let's head down and, you know, rendezvous, and get out of here, and go get more people, maybe.

JACK: Is this an "our plans have changed suddenly"?

AUSTIN: I think it is, but here's—I was gonna throw another complication in.

JACK: No, go for it.

AUSTIN: But no, let's roll to see if it's for better or for worse. Because maybe—we didn't get—maybe the decoy wasn't good enough, but we still got the photo, and Blank is gonna be roughed up, and that's a problem, Blank will be out of action as an actor for a little bit, but, you know. But we still got the photo, and now we can change our plans. But maybe something—maybe for worse. Let me roll one die.

JACK: Ooh.

AUSTIN: That's for worse.

JACK: Ooh-hoo, that's worse.

AUSTIN: We get halfway—we get halfway down these old stairs, right? And, [FEIGNS CLEARING THROAT] two things happen at once. One, the bottom stair breaks as if something tries to put too much pressure on it. Something [CHUCKLING] way too big, as if it's trying to climb the stairs up at us, and that one—and the first—the first time it steps, it breaks, but then it manages to step on another good plank, and you can feel the whole—the whole stair structure is shaking. It will not stand up to this. And second, a small white light appears on the back of your head, Silverbrick. Much like the one I presented on the back of the—

JACK: [CHUCKLING] Oh, no.

AUSTIN: —the guard before, and I push you away, and go "we have to get out of here," and that light was coming through a window from one of the Grey Pond snipers, who must have taken this sort of weapon from one of my units. And now, I think we are—we are rushing back up to the top of the [CHUCKLING] church tower, trying to escape—

JACK: Oh, up—back up the tower, god.

AUSTIN: Well, we can't go down.

JACK: No. There's probably a minotaur there. We can't be sure.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent. Yes. I think Tricerataur has a certain flow to it, personally.

JACK: Tricerataur. The Tricerataur. I need to make my brain—when I hear that, I think of a Triceratops first.

AUSTIN: But it is. I think it has that.

JACK: But it's more mi—absolutely, but I'm thinking of like, a humanoid figure with a bull's head with three horns, when I think of—

AUSTIN: I think—but what if it has the ridge of a Triceratops?

JACK: Damn.

AUSTIN: What if it's a Triceratops minotaur? it's important that it has three horns for lore reasons.

[JACK LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Like, genuinely it is.

JACK: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: But look at this. I did a search for "Triceratops minotaur." Look at these motherfuckers.

ART: Wow.

JACK: Oh, shit.

AUSTIN: You know?

JACK: Can we get a source for this art so people know what to look for? This thing fucking rules.

AUSTIN: Yeah, the first—this is "Triceratops Warrior" by Blade1158 on DeviantArt. Looking sick as shit.

JACK: The place to go if you want to see Tricerataurs. DeviantArt.

AUSTIN: Blade1158 says "here's one that crawled from the old sub—from the old subconscious, complete with ludicrous weapons."

JACK: Fuckin' sick.

AUSTIN: Get some sort of Tricera—fuckin' sick. Blade1158, let me fucking tell you. *Killin'* it.

JACK: There's this kind of like—

ART: No one's doing it like Blade1158.

AUSTIN: Truly!

JACK: There's this kind of Damascus steel going on on this thing's weapons, do you see that?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: The like, marbled steel? Oh my god. This thing looks fuckin' sick as hell. See, I was not sold on Tricerataur until I saw this—

[AUSTIN LAUGHS]

JACK: [LAUGHING] —but now I have this image fixed in my head. Also, this is great, because nobody has ever seen a Tricerataur in motion. Ever.

AUSTIN: Correct. Ever.

JACK: You—the most you get is motion blur on a still photograph.

AUSTIN: You only see photos. Yeah. Uh-huh. God.

JACK: And because of the way that they have to be combated, there are lots of photographs of them.

AUSTIN: Right, yes. Yes. I think this is probably “tight guard patrols threaten to catch you, roll to see if we can evade them.”

JACK: Yes, absolutely.

AUSTIN: I think we've got—this is a roll to effectively get out and—I should also mark that was two failures, this is probably the final roll, right?

JACK: I think so, and I'm about to roll.

AUSTIN: Okay. Let's see it. Oof. Oof.

JACK: Oh! That's a 4. God.

AUSTIN: Now, wait a second.

JACK: Ooh.

AUSTIN: Is it a 4?

JACK: Is it a 4?

AUSTIN: Or will I “force a reroll during a conflict scene this turn, using my Frontier Syndicate power”?

JACK: Will you?

AUSTIN: I will. Reroll that.

JACK: Yes!

AUSTIN: And that's a 2.

JACK: God, it's a 2. I think what happens is automatic weapons fire rattles out, and from between two buildings we can see the bright, like, eight bright camera flashes as a Grey Pond unit engages the Tricerataurs.

AUSTIN: Ah, the Tricerataurs. Right.

JACK: And these Tricerataurs were—you know, either we were gonna into the Grey Pond unit, or we were gonna into the Tricerataurs, but they ran into each other first in these ruins below Braunton, and they started fighting. It's not—[EXHALES] out in the distance, there's a cool item, a gadget, gadget energy.

AUSTIN: Oh, gadget energy, yeah, yeah, yeah

JACK: That one of these people—that Grey Pond have, which is they have a—it's almost like a Tommy gun, but for camera flashes. It is a rotating drum that someone holds on a stick that fires a camera flash and takes a photograph, and then rotates the drum to the next lens, and this is like an auxiliary unit for this—this is like an impromptu device that the engineers of Grey Pond have made, this rotating camera.

AUSTIN: Right. That's what they are, they're engineers, right?

[1:50:00]

AUSTIN: This is like Jesset City—a Jesset City equivalent got on the line and was like, 'alright, here's what you're gonna do.'

JACK: And then—yeah, and in the same way that you might have a radio operator or something in a combat squad—

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: —these people down here move with these units who basically are constantly photographing—uh, what do we call it? Anal—on earth we call it like, analog photography as opposed to like, digital photography, right?

AUSTIN: Right, right, we do.

JACK: They are shooting and developing onto film in combat to reveal the location.

ART: Yeah, it's important to note that this does not work on—

AUSTIN: Digital film, right, uh-huh. Yes.

ART: Digital photography,

JACK: No, and if you try, what you will end up doing is [CHUCKLING] taking a picture where there is an invisible Tricerataur somewhere in it.

[AUSTIN LAUGHS]

JACK: But that's what these flashes are, these rapid flashes as this thing rotates. But it doesn't go well—for either party, I think.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JACK: And we manage to—I don't know, do you have like, a zipline that you open to get us down from the top of this church tower?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think exactly that. I think I have a zipline that actually connect—it's like a zipline that connects in two different directions, and it connects us from the place where we first came down here, so it connects that way, and it also connects to the Fundament node entry path, which is on the far end of the other side of the city, so it's a zipline that sets us up to then later—

JACK: Oh, yeah, nice.

AUSTIN: —go right from—to go over the city, the old city, instead of going down into it. And something else happens here, too, which with the success and victory—Blank, you feel like the streets make more sense as these Tricerataurs start to be killed off. I don't know that they all kill—they all get killed off, I think this place continues to be a place we don't want to go, but we've set up this kind of heavy zipline to get in there, and eventually get the Fundament node and bring it out, and like, we don't have to stay on this topic, you know, we've succeeded, we won the three out of five, right?

ART: Well, this can't be the last time we see Tricerataurs this season.

AUSTIN: No, definitely not. But I do think that it's worth saying part of what the Affliction Ravel does is that it can reroute roads and pathways, it redirects deliveries, and though it never actually like, truly moves inhabited places, it will even like, build walls that break up sightlines so you don't know where you're going. So it's just like, it—the reason why it was called the Hedge Maze for a while is because it had this Hedge Maze effect, that you could be in a place you knew very well and suddenly you felt disoriented, and here you finally—Blank feels like they can find their way out of here, and back up to the safety of the higher level, even though they've been beaten up a bunch by one of the Tricerataurs, it sounds like, so. So yeah, that's a victory for the Frontier Syndicate. I will advance—oh, I guess I get to now choose, right? This is the thing, I get to now choose one of my outcomes. Let's—

JACK: Wait, so—wait, hold on, we should look at the resolutions for the Covert Op first.

AUSTIN: You're right, I'm sorry, yes.

JACK: “The agents are discovered and exposed; can they still escape?”

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, yes.

JACK: “The agents escape without being caught; how do they celebrate?” and “the agents sacrifice themselves to accomplish their duty; is it worth it?” It sounds to me like we're going for option two here.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah. We're going for option two.

JACK: We've escaped without being caught, how do we—how do the three of us, the most mismatched trio—

AUSTIN: I mean, is—there's an obvious answer here, which is—

JACK: We go to the casino. [LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Jump cut to the casino buffet and it's the same shot except—

[ART LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: [LAUGHING] Slightly happier—happier music is playing, you know what I mean? There's some sort of like—it's like Wayne Newton is playing.

JACK: God, while—

ART: Blank is like, has a black eye, but like, also a new plate of food.

AUSTIN: [LAUGHING] Yeah. Uh-huh. I don't know how we've shot this as a Wes Anderson movie, but it a hundred percent has become one.

[JACK LAUGHS]

ART: Yeah, this is really 'what if Wes Anderson made *Ocean's Eleven*'? And—

AUSTIN: And the minotaurs were in it.

JACK: Also, what if there were Tricerataurs?

ART: And Tricerataurs were down there.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Tricerataurs are in it. Love it.

JACK: Meanwhile, you know, 300 feet below the casino buffet, [CHUCKLING] Grey Pond is fighting Tricerataurs in the dark.

AUSTIN: [LAUGHING] Right. Ah, this is a good game.

JACK: Does Brnine have a—does Brnine have a digital camera in their eyepiece? I'm trying to think—

AUSTIN: They certainly have a digital camera. I don't know if they have a—they don't have a film camera.

ART: They don't have a little polaroid in there.

AUSTIN: No. Ah, maybe they do, that feels like a Brnine thing. Well, I'll ask, I'll ask.

JACK: Well, a polaroid's tricky, because you have—

AUSTIN: Ali's editing this, so.

JACK: You have 15—[CHUCKLES] 15 very expensive negatives before you have to buy more.

AUSTIN: Yes.

[ART LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Alright, I'm advancing "Harvest the Fundament Nodes" by one to 3 out of 6.

JACK: Right, and then—I'm sorry I interrupted you before—then you get to pick.

AUSTIN: Oh, please. Yeah, I've done that now. Right?

JACK: Well, no, you have one conflict scene.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. And so now I've picked "the Authority starts a new scheme or advances an existing one."

JACK: Oh, I see. And you have advanced—

AUSTIN: I advanced "Harvest the Fundament Nodes" to 3 out of 6. I could have instead taken two extra tokens during the next downtime, or learned a secret about the Cause or a faction. I don't care about secrets, I care about power. I want the Fundament nodes. Give them to me.

JACK: They are fundamental.

AUSTIN: That's what it says—[CHUCKLES] that's what the signage says in City City's—the City City Fundament Museum.

[MUSIC OUTRO - "[Nothing is Stationary](#)" by Jack de Quidt]

JACK: [CHUCKLES] Oh, god. A museum can be a city, I've heard.

AUSTIN: A museum can be a city.